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# WYANDOTTÉ;

OR,

## THE HUTTED KNOLL.

### A Tale.

BY J. FENIMORE COOPER.

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"I venerate the Pilgrim's cause,  
Yet for the red man dare to plead:  
We bow to Heaven's recorded laws,  
He turns to Nature for his creed."—*Sprague*

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COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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NEW EDITION.

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1856.

WYANDOTTE

THE UNITED STATES

OF NEW YORK

WYANDOTTE.

OF A VOLUME

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## PREFACE.

THE history of the borders is filled with legends of the sufferings of isolated families, during the troubled scenes of colonial warfare. Those which we now offer to the reader, are distinctive in many of their leading facts, if not rigidly true in the details. The first alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction.

One of the misfortunes of a nation, is to hear little besides its own praises. Although the American revolution was probably as just an effort as was ever made by a people to resist the first inroads of oppression, the cause had its evil aspects, as well as all other human struggles. We have been so much accustomed to hear everything extolled, of late years, that could be dragged into the remotest connection with that great event, and the principles which led to it, that there is danger of overlooking truth, in a pseudo patriotism. Nothing is really patriotic, however, that is not strictly true and just; any more than it is paternal love to undermine the constitution of a child by an indiscriminate indulgence in pernicious diet. That there were demagogues in 1776, is as certain as that there are demagogues in 1843, and will probably continue to be demagogues as long as means for misleading the common mind shall exist.

A great deal of undigested morality is uttered to the world, under the disguise of a pretended public virtue. In the eye of reason, the man who deliberately and voluntarily contracts civil engagements is more strictly bound to their fulfilment, than he whose whole obligations consist of an accident over which he had not the smallest control, that of birth; though the very reverse of this is usually maintained under the influence of popular prejudice. The reader will probably discover how we view this matter, in the course of our narrative.

Perhaps this story is obnoxious to the charge of a slight anachronism, in representing the activity of the Indians a year earlier than any were actually employed in the struggle of 1775. During the century of warfare that existed between the English and French colonies, the savage tribes were important agents in furthering the views of the respective belligerents. The war was on the frontiers, and these fierce savages were, in a measure, necessary to the management of hostilities that invaded their own villages and hunting-grounds. In 1775, the enemy came from the side of the Atlantic, and it was only after the struggle had acquired force, that the operations of the interior rendered the services of such allies desirable. In other respects, without pretending to refer to any real events, the incidents of this tale are believed to be sufficiently historical for all the legitimate purposes of fiction.

In this book the writer has aimed at sketching several distinct varieties of the human race, as true

to the governing impulses of their educations, habits, modes of thinking and natures. The red man had his morality, as much as his white brother, and it is well known that even Christian ethics are coloured and governed, by standards of opinion set up on purely human authority. The honesty of one Christian is not always that of another, any more than his humanity, truth, fidelity or faith. The spirit must quit its earthly tabernacle altogether, ere it cease to be influenced by its tints and imperfections.



# THE HUTTED KNOLL.

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## CHAPTER I.

"An acorn fell from an old oak tree,  
And lay on the frosty ground—  
'O, what shall the fate of the acorn be?'  
Was whispered all around:  
By low-toned voices chiming sweet,  
Like a floweret's bell when swung—  
And grasshopper steeds were gathering fleet,  
And the beetle's hoofs up-rung."

MRS. SEBA SMITH.

THERE is a wide-spread error on the subject of American scenery. From the size of the lakes, the length and breadth of the rivers, the vast solitudes of the forests, and the seemingly boundless expanse of the prairies, the world has come to attach to it an idea of grandeur; a word that is in nearly every case, misapplied. The scenery of that portion of the American continent which has fallen to the share of the Anglo-Saxon race, very seldom rises to a scale that merits this term; when it does, it is more owing to the accessories, as in the case of the interminable woods, than to the natural face of the country. To him who is accustomed to the terrific sublimity of the Alps, the softened and yet wild grandeur of the Italian lakes, or to the noble witchery of the shores of the Mediterranean, this country is apt to seem tame, and uninteresting as a whole; though it certainly has exceptions that carry charms of this nature to the verge of loveliness.

Of the latter character is the face of most of that region which lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Mohawk with the Hudson, extending as far south, or even farther, than the line of Pennsylvania, and west to the verge of that vast rolling plain which composes Western New York. This is a region of more than ten thousand square

miles of surface, embracing to-day, ten counties at least, and supporting a rural population of near half a million of souls, excluding the river towns.

All who have seen this district of country, and who are familiar with the elements of charming, rather than grand scenery it possesses, are agreed in extolling its capabilities, and, in some instances, its realities. The want of high finish is common to everything of this sort in America; and, perhaps we may add, that the absence of picturesqueness, as connected with the works of man, is a general defect; still, this particular region, and all others resembling it—for they abound on the wide surface of the twenty-six states—has beauties of its own, that it would be difficult to meet with in any of the older portions of the earth.

They who have done us the honour to read our previous works, will at once understand that the district to which we allude, is that of which we have taken more than one occasion to write; and we return to it now, less with a desire to celebrate its charms, than to exhibit them in a somewhat novel, and yet perfectly historical aspect. Our own earlier labours will have told the reader, that all of this extended district of country, with the exception of belts of settlements along the two great rivers named, was a wilderness, anterior to the American revolution. There was a minor class of exceptions to this general rule, however, to which it will be proper to advert, lest, by conceiving us too literally, the reader may think he can convict us of a contradiction. In order to be fully understood, the explanations shall be given at a little length.

While it is true, then, that the mountainous region, which now contains the counties of Schoharie, Otsego, Chenango, Broome, Delaware, &c., was a wilderness in 1775, the colonial governors had begun to make grants of its lands, some twenty years earlier. The patent of the estate on which we are writing lies before us; and it bears the date of 1769, with an Indian grant annexed, that is a year or two older. This may be taken as a mean date for the portion of country alluded to; some of the deeds being older, and others still more recent. These grants of land were originally made, subject to quit-rents to the crown; and usually on the payment of heavy fees to the colonial officers,

after going through the somewhat supererogatory duty of "extinguishing the Indian title," as it was called. The latter were pretty effectually "extinguished" in that day, as well as in our own; and it would be a matter of curious research to ascertain the precise nature of the purchase-money given to the aborigines. In the case of the patent before us, the Indian right was "extinguished" by means of a few rifles, blankets, kettles, and beads; though the grant covers a nominal hundred thousand, and a real hundred and ten or twenty thousand acres of land.

The abuse of the grants, as land became more valuable, induced a law, restricting the number of acres patented to any one person, at any one time, to a thousand. Our monarchical predecessors had the same facilities, and it may be added, the same propensities, to rendering a law a dead letter, as belongs to our republican selves. The patent on our table, being for a nominal hundred thousand acres, contains the names of one hundred different grantees, while three several parchment documents at its side, each signed by thirty-three of these very persons, vest the legal estate in the first named, for whose sole benefit the whole concession was made; the dates of the last instruments succeeding, by one or two days, that of the royal patent itself.

Such is the history of most of the original titles to the many estates that dotted the region we have described, prior to the revolution. Money and favouritism, however, were not always the motives of these large concessions. Occasionally, services presented their claims; and many instances occur in which old officers of the army, in particular, received a species of reward, by a patent for land, the fees being duly paid, and the Indian title righteously "extinguished." These grants to ancient soldiers were seldom large, except in the cases of officers of rank; three or four thousand well-selected acres, being a sufficient boon to the younger sons of Scottish lairds, or English squires, who had been accustomed to look upon a single farm as an estate.

As most of the soldiers mentioned were used to forest life, from having been long stationed at frontier posts, and had thus become familiarized with its privations, and hardened against its dangers, it was no unusual thing for them

to sell out, or go on half-pay, when the wants of a family began to urge their claims, and to retire to their "patents," as the land itself, as well as the instrument by which it was granted, was invariably termed, with a view of establishing themselves permanently as landlords.

These grants from the crown, in the portions of the colony of New York that lie west of the river counties, were generally, if not invariably, simple concessions of the fee, subject to quit-rents to the king, and reservations of mines of the precious metals, without any of the privileges of feudal seignory, as existed in the older manors on the Hudson, on the islands, and on the Sound. Why this distinction was made, it exceeds our power to say; but, that the fact was so, as a rule, we have it in proof, by means of a great number of the original patents, themselves, that have been transmitted to us from various sources. Still, the habits of "home" entailed the name, even where the thing was not to be found. Titular manors exist, in a few instances, to this day, where no manorial rights were ever granted; and manor-houses were common appellations for the residences of the landlords of large estates, that were held in fee, without any exclusive privileges, and subject to the reservation named. Some of these manorial residences were of so primitive an appearance, as to induce the belief that the names were bestowed in pleasantry; the dwellings themselves being of logs, with the bark still on them, and the other fixtures to correspond. Notwithstanding all these drawbacks, early impressions and rooted habits could easily transfer terms to such an abode; and there was always a saddened enjoyment among these exiles, when they could liken their forest names and usages to those they had left in the distant scenes of their childhood.

The effect of the different causes we have here given was to dot the region described, though at long intervals, with spots of a semi-civilized appearance, in the midst of the vast—nay, almost boundless—expanse of forest. Some of these early settlements had made considerable advances towards finish and comfort, ere the war of '76 drove their occupants to seek protection against the inroads of the savages; and long after the influx of immigration which succeeded the peace, the fruits, the meadows, and the tilled

fields of these oases in the desert, rendered them conspicuous amidst the blackened stumps, piled logs, and smooty fallows of an active and bustling settlement. At even a much later day, they were to be distinguished by the smoother surfaces of their fields, the greater growth and more bountiful yield of their orchards, and by the general appearance of a more finished civilization, and of greater age. Here and there, a hamlet had sprung up; and isolated places, like Cherry Valley and Wyoming, were found, that have since become known to the general history of the country.

Our present tale now leads us to the description of one of those early, personal, or family settlements, that had grown up, in what was then a very remote part of the territory in question, under the care and supervision of an ancient officer of the name of Willoughby. Captain Willoughby, after serving many years, had married an American wife, and continuing his services until a son and daughter were born, he sold his commission, procured a grant of land, and determined to retire to his new possessions, in order to pass the close of his life in the tranquil pursuits of agriculture, and in the bosom of his family. An adopted child was also added to his cares. Being an educated as well as a provident man, Captain Willoughby had set about the execution of this scheme with deliberation, prudence, and intelligence. On the frontiers, or lines, as it is the custom to term the American boundaries, he had become acquainted with a Tuscarora, known by the English *sobriquet* of "Saucy Nick." This fellow, a sort of half-outcast from his own people, had early attached himself to the whites, had acquired their language, and owing to a singular mixture of good and bad qualities, blended with great native shrewdness, he had wormed himself into the confidence of several commanders of small garrisons, among whom was our captain. No sooner was the mind of the latter made up, concerning his future course, than he sent for Nick, who was then in the fort; when the following conversation took place:

"Nick," commenced the captain, passing his hand over his brow, as was his wont when in a reflecting mood; "Nick, I have an important movement in view, in which you can be of some service to me."

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