

J H E

THE  
ART  
IST

FOR 1847.



J. H. E. & Co. New York

1

There are crushed and broken spirits  
That electric thoughts may thrill ;  
Lofty dreams to be embodied  
By the might of one strong will.

There are God and Heaven above thee ;  
Wilt thou languish in despair ?  
Tread thy griefs beneath thy feet,  
Scale the walls of Heaven by prayer.

'Tis the key of the Apostle,  
That will open Heaven below ;  
'Tis the ladder of the Patriarch,  
Whereon angels come and go.

## BELLOVED OF THE EVENING STAR.

AN INDIAN LEGEND.

BY MRS. E. OAKES SMITH.

### CHAPTER I.

Then list the legend long since heard  
Beside the Red man's winding river,  
What time the wilds and forests lone  
Were held by right of bow and quiver.

*Emma C. Embury.*

EVERY place of any picturesque pretension has its "Lover's Leap," a cliff, high and rugged, shelving over a boiling flood, which became at one time the scene of a thrilling tragedy. Strange that an emotion of such universal import as Love, should be treated with so little reverence by the constitution of society ; that a sentiment involving so much of human happiness or misery, affecting health, intellect, and life itself, should be the subject for gibes and jokes, instead of being met, as it should be, with solemn and holy thought, and deep, earnest reverence, as of a mystery belonging to the soul itself and not to be profaned. Laws are made not to guard the sacredness of this necessity of our being, but to guard inviolate the sacredness of contract. "This ought ye to do, and not to leave the other undone." We all weep

over the wrongs and sorrows of loving hearts ; history, literature, the dweller of the palace, and the peasant beside the "stile," each and all are alive to the same sentiment, and suffer the same griefs, yet no man has said to his neighbour, "Come, let us see if we cannot do something to right this great human wrong ; let us see to it that the congenial stand only in relation, and thus do away the greatest temptation to evil in the minds of the weak and the erring."

The Ken-dus-keag is a narrow tributary of the Penobscot in the State of Maine. Having at one time by some great convulsion forced itself through the primitive rocks of that region, its banks are left wild and broken, seeming altogether too majestic for the foaming, noisy little trough of water gurgling beneath. Two miles from the city of Bangor is a cliff upon its margin, something more than two hundred feet in height, which bows itself towards the opposite shore, whose dissevered rocks still yearn for their old companionship. Here is the place where one given to romance would be sure to look for some fine old legends, some tale of stirring adventure or beautiful sentiment, to give vitality and human interest to what might else be the waste place of nature. Accordingly we find the story of Megua (the Squirrel, literally), the graceful Indian of the Penobscot, already associated with the spot long before the European had looked upon its beauty, or made its bright waters subservient to the purposes of thrift.

Megua was not a native of this region, but a girl taken captive after the defeat of one of the tribes farther to the north. She was originally designed for sacrifice ; but her exceeding grace, her vivacity and tenderness,

so won upon the hearts of her captors that the ceremony was delayed, and finally passed out of mind. Unlike the maidens of the tribe into which she had been adopted, who were laborious, patient of fatigue, and content to be the slaves rather than companions of their warrior and hunter lovers and husbands, Megua openly refused such bondage, laughed at the burdens attempted to be forced upon her, and with such pretty petulance shrunk from wigwam toil, that she soon became the privileged pet of the tribe. In return she wrought moccasins and belts with unequalled skill and elegance, she arranged wampum for the warriors, and ornaments for the squaws in a style of excellence they had never before witnessed, so that Megua became to these children of the woods indispensable, in the same way that an accomplished milliner is so to the more civilized women of our cities.

Coquetishly fond of ornament herself, she never appeared unadorned with feathers and shells, wild berries and furs of the choicest kind ; indeed, she must have been to the Indian mind what a rare piece of art is to the civilized, a thing to be looked upon with delight and admiration disconnected with the ordinary emotions of humanity, for the pleasuring and the adorning of Megua became the delight of the tribe. The name they had given her indicated their perception of her character. Megua, the Squirrel, was in truth as freakish, as gay, as whimsical, as coquetish as this rarest masquerader of the woods, and withal as graceful, as lovable, as pertinaciously attachable.

One of the whims of Megua was to sleep in the summer nights within a cave, still to be seen to the right of the cliff. This cave is large enough to hold

five or six persons; it is open towards the water side only; below the floor the bank is nearly perpendicular, from the sides of which spring trees of the largest size, so as to hide the mouth entirely from one unacquainted with its existence. The access is difficult on account of the steepness of the shore, but the spot is sheltered and most lovely when once secured. In the days of Megua, when the forest was unbroken, the river unshackled, and nature in her primitive glory, it might well tempt a wayward girl to its secure and most tranquil retreat. Here the birds yielded a wilderness of melody, the sunbeams glistened upon the leaves, and the wind, which found no lodgment within, tilted the branches of the trees, and whispered all day in the pines on the hill top. The steady roar of the falls lent a monotonous melody, relieved at intervals by that changeful sound, as if a new gush of accumulated water gave them a deeper voice.

This freak of Megua's passed in the tribe as a freak, to all but Pusānos, the Panther, who saw something covert and mysterious in this solitary retreat. Pusānos was the son of the old chief of the tribe, a youth as agile, as alert, and as deadly too, as the creature whose name he bore. He had long been the secret lover of the girl, and no one doubted his love was returned with a singleness and devotion peculiar to one with such individuality of character as Megua; yet it was most true that she took delight in teasing her lover, in exciting his jealousy, and affecting for the whim of the moment sentiments entirely foreign to the reality. No sooner did she find Pusānos uneasy at her bower in the cave, than she became the more pertinacious in her disposition to go there.

What was at first the pretty daring of a wayward girl, became in time the weapon of a woodland coquette.\*

Whether it was that a fear of her lover grew gradually upon the mind of the girl—for indeed he became stern, silent, and observant of her motions—or whether there might have been real mystery, is now needless to inquire, for it was observed that she became daily timid and sensitive, regarding the young chief with an expression of such soulful tenderness, so entirely unlike her former gayety, that the coldness and reserve of Pusānos was the more surprising. Indifferent to her ornaments, listless in her motions, the dainty qualities of character, which had won for her the pretty appellation of Megua, seemed fast departing from the wild-wood beauty.

At the period of the change we have just described, Megua, in the exuberance of her mischief, or in the recklessness of her despondency, had slept three successive nights in the cave. The third morning she came forth pale and trembling, with her wampum girdle bound around her arm, and an arrow in her hand dabbled in blood. Returning to the lodge of her foster parents, she sat down in the farthest part alone, and weeping bitterly. Accustomed to her many moods, the old woman contented herself with wrapping the skins together beneath her head, and asking of the wound. Megua returned no answer excepting by her tears and holding up the arrow which bore upon it the totem of Pusānos. All day the poor girl sat in this

\* This cave remains as above described. The people in the vicinity call it the Devil's cave. We trust hereafter they will call it Megua's cave, as being more sonorous to "ears polite."

wise, uttering no word of complaint. As the night approached she went out and sat down by the council-fire in the centre of the village. Surprised at this strange act, the elders gathered about the spot and waited silently an explanation of her will.

## CHAPTER II.

'Tis the middle watch of a summer's night—  
The earth is dark but the heavens are bright:  
Nought is seen in the vault on high  
But the moon and the stars and the cloudless sky,  
And the flood which rolls its milky hue,  
A river of light in the welkin blue.

*Drake.*

For three years the hunting grounds of the tribes had been nearly desolate of game. The hunters pursued it through long and perilous ways, but the supply had been too scanty to meet their wants. Vainly had sacrifices been made; all spells and incantations proved of no avail; the women grew sullen and disheartened, while the men, weary of their complaints, and enfeebled by the famine, began to talk of a removal farther west. Megua had scarcely seemed able to comprehend the sufferings of the people, for she was the foster daughter of an expert hunter, and beloved as she was by all around her, she found a supply always ready for her needs; she had kept herself free from anxiety from the natural hopefulness of her character, which found itself incapable of comprehending an evil till it was forced upon her, and because as yet she had suffered little inconvenience. Now, however, she appeared weighed down by the sufferings of the people. A conviction of

want and misery, protracted and increasing, seemed to have fallen with stunning effect upon her mind.

Drawing her robe about the wounded arm, and folding her small wrist and hand over it, she arose and stood before them. She attempted to speak, but the words refused to leave her lips, and her breast only heaved with inarticulate sounds. At length she raised her head and cast a searching glance through the group. Pusânos was not there, and the glare of the torch hid him from her view as he stood with his back against a hemlock, with foot and head advanced, watching her strange proceedings. Recovering firmness, Megua went on, though her face was ashy pale, and she trembled in every limb.

"Three nights has a vision appeared to the eye of Megua. Three nights has a youth fair as the moonbeams, still and solemn, come down from the Evening Star and bid me follow him. "You must leave the tribe, Megua," he said, "for I have blighted the corn and dispersed the game for your sake, and they will perish unless you leave them." "I will go away," continued the maiden, "I will bring no more evil upon the tribe."

The Chiefs had no doubt the Great Spirit had thus signified his will to the girl, and they sat long with heads reverently bent, suffering her to depart without a word. As she left the circle and came into the shadow cast by the great trees which flanked the settlement, Pusânos sprang across her path. Megua looked up in the face of the stern young chief, and stood, so calm, so sad, so utterly bereft of all save her deep inward woe, that even he, who had folded his arms and bent his proud eye scornfully upon her, relaxed his

severity, and stooped his head to read the strange, mournful expression of her eyes. She did not move, but her lips trembled, and a tear which swelled under her lid remained there as if without its fellow.

"So then Megua follows the youth of the Evening Star," at length the chief uttered bitterly.

The girl sprang forward and clasped her fingers upon his arm, and looked up searchingly into his face, as if a dim terrible truth grew upon her mind.

"I follow the will of the Great Spirit," she at length uttered falteringly.

"And who was the fair youth stealing with honey-words to the ear of the false-hearted maiden?" whispered Pusānos.

"Megua is very foolish, but she is not false; she goes to her doom for the good of your people," she answered mournfully, for indeed grief seemed to have deprived her of the power of resentment.

Pusānos shook his head, and with a quick motion tore the robe from her wounded arm.

"Think you the Panther had set his fangs thus unless assured of wrong? Megua shall not go forth—she shall be the scorn of her sex."

The girl dropped her arms to her side, and stood for a moment as if crushed and broken-hearted at the tone and words of her lover. At length she lifted her head, with its sweet earnest air of indignant spirit, and said, "Megua would know the meaning of Pusānos."

"Oh nothing, only that she loves this youth of the Evening Star."

"Megua is doomed by the Great Spirit; she dare not love any more. She must pass as does the foam from the cataract, the mist over the river; the moon-

beam when it steals out from the glen, and leaves all to blackness and grief."

The solemn tones of her voice, and the truthfulness of her look fell like a chill upon Pusānos, and he murmured, "You do not love me, Megua."

She burst into a flood of sorrowful tears, but was silent.

"Hear me, Megua; three nights have you slept in the cave, and three nights have I sat all night upon the bank with the Ken-dus-keag between us. I saw you enter, heard your voice singing alone to the falls, and, Megua, three times did I behold the youth of whom you speak steal adown to your resting-place. The third night I sent an arrow, which should have pierced the heart of the false-hearted maiden."

Megua redoubled her tears. "I thought it was but Weeng.\* I knew not the youth of the Evening Star came to me, although I saw him descend in my dreams. Oh, Pusānos, will he take me from thee? In the Spirit Land wilt thou not find me?"

"Had you loved me, Megua, you had not slept in the cave of Weeng. Even the stars above had not dared to love the chosen of Pusānos, had she been true of heart."

Megua wrung her hands bitterly. "Poor, foolish Megua!" was all she could say.

"No, Megua—you were full of weak fancies, and now all is lost. I could not trust you, even should you bring me the great shining stone of the White Hills, which though near at hand, as you climb the cliff, is for ever seen upon a more distant peak when the sun-

\* The Indian god of sleep.

mit is gained.\* But mind me, Megua, do not attempt to escape. The arrow of Pusãnos shall find you if but a step from the village.”

Passing on a few paces he turned back, and saw her still upon the spot, with her sweet eyes fixed upon him. He returned, and would have led her away, but she shrank from his touch, and looked imploringly into his face, saying,

“Let me go, Pusãnos, it is the will of the Great Spirit; I would save thy people from further harm. If I may not go, let the arrow of the Panther finish his work; why should Megua perish by fire and torture?”

The Chief shuddered and bounded forward, as if even then his strong arm were enough to shield her from harm, although his heart was filled with the bitterness of distrust.

“Oh that Megua had died with her people! Why should she live? Where is the joy of her heart? Where is the light of her path? She is alone in her grief—no eye weeps for her—no heart pities her—her dreams are evil, and yet her heart is not bad—Oh that she might die!” She had cast herself upon the ground, and in this way gave utterance to her emotions.

\*“The Caribuncle of the White Hills” is often referred to in Indian legends, and the common people of that region have many vague and romantic stories connected with attempts to discover its existence.

## CHAPTER III.

White man! I say not that they lie  
Who preach a faith so dark and drear,  
That wedded hearts in yon cold sky  
Meet not as they were mated here.  
But scorning not thy faith, thou must,  
Stranger, in mine have equal trust.

*Hoffman.*

A MONTH went by, and the sufferings of the tribe were daily increasing. The chiefs wondered at the stay of Megua after the announcement she had made. No one doubted the truth of the revelation, and people began to scorn the girl who shrank feebly from the mission of the Great Spirit. They looked when she should go forth to her solitary doom, and leave them again to the smiles of the Spirit of Good. They came to her wigwam, and demanded that she should be given up by her foster parents for the welfare of the tribe.

Megua heard the tumult of voices, and she came to the door of the lodge. All shrank back with surprise, so pale and so changed had she become. They could still see the full lustrous eyes of the graceful Megua, the sweet earnest mouth; but her cheek was thin, and her form swayed in its feebleness like a reed in the storm. Casting her mournful glance over the group, she saw not the person of the Panther, and a deadly chill grew upon her, for she thought of the tortures of the sacrifice to which she supposed herself doomed. But no one laid grasp upon her, and she stood with folded hands, waiting when they should speak.

“Megua will obey the will of the Great Spirit,” she said meekly, observing that all were silent. Passing through the group, she took her way to the cliff upon the banks of the Ken-dus-keag, which was within the area of the village. The people followed at a distance, not doubting that she would now obey the voice of the vision which had commanded her to leave her adopted tribe for the good of the people.

Her steps were feeble, and as she went on, tears, silent and hopeless, fell from her eyes. Sometimes she stopped as if even then she clung to the idea that Pusānos would save her, for she sent keen glances to the woody covert, and up the ravine, from whence she had so often seen him emerge in her days of gladness. But he came not, and she pursued her way alone, with the people mourning, yet demanding her doom.

Reaching the verge of the cliff she stood long peering down into the roaring mass, not in terror of the fall, for she gave back no repining glance, but as if communing with the solitude and immensity of the great world, from which she must depart. At length she lifted her eyes upward, and then it seemed as if the silvery mist which hung over the river veiled her in, and she floated downward, falling, and yet sustained.

As the day closed in, the hunters, laden with spoil, were entering the village, and Pusānos was the first to detect the group in the rear of the cliff. Casting aside the burdens of the chase, he sprang with long bounds to the spot, just as the form of Megua sank downward. One moment the light figure of the youth was poised upon the verge; one moment fixed

and statue-like he stood between the spectator and the red warm light of the horizon; and then the cold gray headland loomed up as it was wont, and the river rolled beneath, chafing the rocks with its never-ceasing flow.

The people uttered a cry of grief, for the youth and maiden were the beloved of the tribe. As they lifted up their eyes, the clouds parted, and the new moon in the form of a silver bow, faint and slender, appeared as if hanging from the sky over the spot where the lovers had disappeared, and by its side was a bright star, white and most beautiful, and they knew it was Megua, beloved of the Evening Star, who thus nestled at the side of Pusānos, whose bow was placed in the heavens to protect the maiden so gentle and loving. Since that time, whenever the moon comes forth thus in the heavens, a slender bow with one meek star at her side, the Indians say it is Megua and Pusānos, and at such times they offer sacrifices to the memory of her, who through her gentle offering of herself brought them a fruitful harvest and an abundance of game. When she thus appears beside her lover, it is an omen of good.

It is not unusual for an Indian to dream in the way described in the above legend; that some great sacrifice, some immolation of himself, or some journey or labour is demanded of him for the public good, and the mandate is religiously obeyed. To shrink from the mission, to disregard the voice of the Great Spirit made audible in dreams, is considered to the last degree wicked and cowardly. Whatever evils may after-



wards befall the individual or the public, would be regarded as a penalty for his impiety. It is curious to trace the analogy in this to the belief of the ancients, when dreams were treated with solemn reverence, and oracles were consulted to expound their terrible and momentous signification. We talk indignantly of the impositions practised in this way upon the multitude, and laugh at the absurd meanings thus attached to the vagaries of a heated and will-enfranchised brain; but it is more charitable, and more in accordance with the facts of human development, to suppose that the interpreter of dreams and the consulter of oracles were both alike deluded by the vagueness of mystery in which the human mind delights; that the mummeries of the priest were practised less from the intent to deceive, than to produce a state best adapted to the purposes of clear vision. We are fast casting aside the crude shackles of superstition, and God only knows how much of the best part of religion is going also—its simpleness of faith, its earnest and affectionate hold of the heart, which clings to it with the tenacity of the Patriarch when he said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The cold intellectual assent of the understanding, however high in the abstract, is poor in comparison with that life-giving grasp which, though dimmed by excess of faith, is yet the grasp of one who feels a great and overwhelming human need.

Surely it is not well to make our religion, as the tendency of the age is, a matter for logical deduction, a subject for seventh-day speculation, when it should be a daily and hourly craving of the heart, a going forth of the spirit to commune with spirit, a beautiful lifting

of the veil of the temple to behold the mystery and glory within. The instinctive faith of the child-man is better than this, "who sees God in clouds and hears him in the wind," and who in the dimness of his reverence, gropes amid omens and dreams, in the blind fear of slighting the intimations of that all-pervading power, which he "ignorantly worships."