

LITERATURE, &c.

FROM AMERICAN TRADITIONS, IN FRASER'S MAGAZINE,
BY JOHN GALT.

THE INDIAN AND THE HUNTER,
OR, THE SIEGE OF MICFORD.

ONE fine afternoon, in the latter end of July, a weary hunter was seen hastily passing along the small and seldom frequented path that leads from Wincer to Micford: from his soiled dress and anxious look, it was evident that he was the bearer of important intelligence. At that time, the war for American independence was raging in the eastern part of Vermont, but had not yet reached the settlement towards which he was journeying, and which was situated on the banks of the Tontoo, to the west of the Green Mountains; the range which divides that state from north to south.

The inhabitants of Micford had been disturbed by the report, that the Indians in their vicinity, headed by their formidable chief Chinchusa, had joined the British cause, to which they themselves were opposed; and this Hunter, who was named Fisher, bore them the news that Wincer, which was a larger settlement than their own, had been destroyed by the savages. Fisher said, that he had been present during the destruction which was attended with terrible slaughter. Chinchusa, followed by his band, had attacked the unsuspecting inhabitants; and, after effecting an entrance, which he did without resistance, set the houses on fire, and slew all who fell into his hands in endeavouring to avoid the flames. He had himself escaped with difficulty, along with one of the settlers, and was pursued for some distance through the woods by Chinchusa and several of his Indians, when his companion, having unfortunately stumbled in leaping over a fallen tree, was surrounded and slain. Immediately Micford became the scene of busy preparation, and Fisher was unanimously chosen to direct the formation of the defences, every one endeavouring to render them as strong as possible; and in order that they might more easily discern the approach of their subtle adversaries, he ordered the underwood, which extended to the skirts of the forest, to be carefully removed, and a sentinel to be placed in the branches of a lofty elm that stood within the village. They then barricaded their only street; the houses without the wooded picket were dismantled, and their owners retired within the village.

Though the sun was set, and the men had worked from the dawn, they were still labouring, in the hope of being able to complete their tasks before darkness had set in, during which they expected to be attacked. Fisher, having himself relieved the guard in the tree, vainly attempted to pierce the gloom that surrounded him, and had for some time been casting eager looks over Micford, when he observed a light glimmering among the eastern defences. Supposing, however, that it was only the lantern of the guard stationed there, he did not at first deem it worthy of any particular attention, till he noticed that it had increased to a small flame. Before ascending the tree, he had given strict orders that every fire should be extinguished, and he thought himself no longer justified in delaying to alarm those below when he saw the light. Accordingly, having discharged his gun, he descended from his station. On reaching the ground, several of the settlers met him, whom he told to follow; and having ran to the spot where he had seen the light, they discovered that the stakes and palisades were on fire. They did not at first suspect that the Indians had done it; but on one of them stepping out to examine the damage, a shot from the wood severely wounded him. As it was necessary, however, that the flames should be got under, Fisher ordered the inhabitants (who, guided by the light, were now collected together,) to tear up some of the stakes nearest the blazing heap, that the fire might die out for want of nourishment, and also to roll a number of logs to fill up the gap. While this was going on, they were surprised at a furious attack in the opposite direction, which was with difficulty repelled. The moon, which had been hitherto obscured in clouds, now shone forth with unusual splendor, and displayed the assailants to the Americans, who had previously nothing to direct their aim. It likewise greatly diminished the advantage which the Indians had possessed by making the latter strikingly apparent in the light of the fire. The settlers, following Fisher, rushed thro' the opening, and assaulted the Indians, who, entirely unprepared for so sudden an attack, were driven back a short distance; but Chinchusa, rallying them, they rushed again to the combat, and the settlers, overwhelmed by their numbers, were in their turn obliged to retire within their bulworks. The Indians having suffered severely by the late conflict, did not follow up their advantage, but allowed their adversaries time to repair the damage. Most of the inhabitants were partial to the management of Fisher, but there were several dissatisfied persons who took every opportunity of thwarting his plans; among whom a young settler,

named Dixon, was conspicuous: and who, it was whispered, aimed at the command himself. His conduct had for some time been noticed by the hunter, and by several of the elder inhabitants, who spoke to him concerning it; but he denied it, saying, that as he did not see any danger, he was averse to be confined in the village, (Fisher having desired all the settlers to remain within their defences.) Upon this being told him, Fisher said their could be no objections to his leaving them if he chose, but that it would be at his own peril; and he warned him, that though Chinchusa had been defeated in his attempt to storm their village, he would be on the alert to take all stragglers.

Next morning Dixon proceeded to the woods, watched by most of his companions; but he had barely entered the forest when he re-appeared, running at his utmost speed, and pursued by Chinchusa, who was easily distinguished from the other Indians by a large tuft of feathers, and who was rapidly gaining on his fugitive. At length Dixon came within gun shot of the palisades, and the settlers began to hope that he might escape; but his pursuer, levelling his gun, shot him dead. Fisher, who had been intently watching the issue of the pursuit, now hurriedly lifting his rifle, fired, and struck one of the feathers from the head of the retreating chief. The Indians, at this, with a dreadful yell, and led by the furious Chinchusa, rushed forward, and endeavoured to surmount the pickets, but were bravely opposed by the inhabitants. What the besieged most dreaded was famine, to avert which, became now the endeavor of Fisher. Micford being situated on the banks of the Tontoo, which washed the western side of the settlement, he proposed to descend it for assistance and provisions; and no objections being made to this offer, he accordingly entered a canoe, and swiftly paddled down the stream, without, as he thought being discovered by the enemy. Having proceeded all night, he next morning arrived near the spot where it was necessary to disembark, and entering a small cove, he fastened his canoe to the trunk of a tree, whose branches would tend to conceal it; and taking his arms, he prepared to continue his journey on foot, when he heard the voices of several persons on the river. Having silently advanced to the mouth of the inlet, he saw two canoes full of his enemies rapidly approaching; and, as he understood the Indian language, he found out that an attack had been made on Micford during the night, to cover the departure of this party, and that they thought he could not be far in advance; when one proposed to land and lie in ambush, to which the others consented, and paddled to the creek where Fisher's canoe lay. Thinking that he had no time to lose, he entered a large swamp, where he was effectually concealed by the long rushes; but he had hardly crouched among them, when he heard the cry of astonishment that burst from his enemies on finding his boat, and could plainly hear their conjectures as to which way he had gone, some thinking that he had taken the route to Kaford, and others to Moarck. After consulting together some time, they divided into two parties, one going to each of the above settlements. Fisher waited until they had departed; and having passed through the swamp, he struck off in a straight direction to Moarck, in order to arrive before his enemies, who had taken the common route. The sun was setting when he reached the village; but the settlers, having heard his recital, were eager to go to the assistance of Micford, and resolved to set out that evening after he had rested.

Fisher accordingly told them the plans of the Indians, and proposed that they should endeavour to surprise them, when their canoes would serve to convey the provisions. For which purpose they went along the road, in hopes of meeting their adversaries, but without success; for as they had seen no traces of Fisher during a great part of the day, they had returned, not going to Moarck. On approaching the cove, Fisher advanced to the place where he had lain hid in the morning, that he might ascertain whether they were departed, or whether those who had gone to Kaford were yet returned, and joyfully observed that their companions had not rejoined them. He then crept cautiously back to his comrades, informed them how their enemies were situated, and gave his opinion how they should attack them; which was, that those who were good swimmers, should, while their friends were assailing the Indians by land, float down the river into the creek, and seizing their canoes, thus deprive them of the means of escape. This proposal was approved by all; and having put aside their bundles, Fisher conducted them to the edge of the rushes. Thence he proceeded onwards to engage with the Indians, leaving with those who had offered to take the canoes, strict orders not to attempt it till they heard the noise of the combat. He had hardly finished his directions, when they heard the cries of the Indians, who had then discovered them and who were preparing to resist their attack. Those who were to swim, immediately dashed into the water; and Fisher command-

ing half to follow him, directed the remainder to creep through the flags, and not to fire until their companions were on the point of seizing the canoes, which would most likely enable them to bear them in safety to the river, while he should try to avert the attention of the Indians.

Darting onwards through the rushes, they were within a few paces of their enemies (who had kept up a continual discharge in their direction, but without effect,) before they fired, but who, being partly protected by the trees, were not so much injured as they had hoped. Some, however, ran to secure their canoes; but seeing several of the swimmers already in them, while others were climbing over the sides, they maddened at the sight, and with piercing yells, rushed on, hurling their tomahawks, most of which, from the eagerness with which they were cast, whizzed over the heads of those at whom they were aimed; others entered the canoes, from whence they were wrenched by the hands of the eager Americans, who were endeavouring to defend themselves with their knives and paddles. This unequal contest would not have lasted long, but the discharge which was now fired from the bushes overthrew several of the assailants, besides having the effect of raising the courage of those it assisted, who now turned on their astonished enemies, and furiously drove them from the canoes, which they immediately pushed from the shores; while the others, leaping into the water, tried to overturn them, but were struck down by the heavy blows of the paddles. One of the canoes, however, being unfortunately seized by an Indian, was immediately upset, precipitating those it contained, headlong into the river, who, on rising above water, were quickly engaged with their frantic enemies; when those who were concealed, having reloaded, they poured another volley on the Indians, who were thereby reduced to nearly an equality in number with the others, and were no longer able to impede their retreat. During these transactions, Fisher, with his companions, was desperately contending with those on land, being obliged to use the empty rifles in defending themselves against their superiorly armed enemies, who, having received an accession of strength in those who had been defeated on the river, were beginning to drive them back, when they likewise were joined by the party which had come from their ambush, and succeeded in surrounding most of the Indians, who, refusing to submit, were soon put to death. After they had thus destroyed one half of their foes, they thought that the best way to entrap the others would be to remain hid in the place where they were; and they scarcely had time to conceal themselves and the dead bodies of those they had slain, when they heard the approach of the party returning from Kaford who advanced without the least suspicion, and were soon close on the ambuscade, from whence a deadly discharge was poured on them, which sent them flying back into the woods. The Americans then placed their bundles in the canoes, and paddled up to Micford, where they arrived the following morning, and were gladly received by the despairing inhabitants, who had suffered severely in several attacks which Chinchusa had made on them; and being now almost equal in numbers to those led by him, they were determined no longer patiently to await his assaults, but when he came without the shelter of the woods, to sally forth, and endeavour to prevent his return. The plan being thus arranged, they waited with impatience until Chinchusa should again advance to the attack, which he did about mid-day, and in his usual manner, furiously rushing against the defences. In the meanwhile, a band of the besieged threw open a gate at the opposite side, and by making a long circuit, had almost succeeded in intercepting his retreat, when they were perceived by Chinchusa himself, who, uttering a cry of surprise, and followed by his Indians, ran towards the small space that was open to the woods, and with several of his companions, were successful enough to pass it; while those who could not do so, seeing no escape, turned all their endeavours to the destruction of their opponents, who, too eager, instead of destroying them with their rifles from a distance, after a single volley, engaged with their hand to hand. Fisher had in vain tried to restrain their eagerness; but seeing that his endeavors were fruitless, now aided them to the utmost of his power, directing them on no account to leave the smallest opening for the escape of their prey, and to refrain from grappling with the Indians, who were so much more skilful in the use of the knife and tomahawk. But some disregarding his advice, drawing their knives, and throwing aside their muskets instantly closed with their desperate enemies, and were almost immediately dashed to the ground, their fate serving as a warning to their companions, who with their guns broke down every guard that their opponents could offer; but some of whom, by their superior address, evading the blows, grappled with their destroyers, and were generally victorious. Fisher, who had hitherto borne down all who opposed him,