

**THE BORDER HEARTH, A
LEGEND OF
THE DELAWARE
INDIANS, WRITTEN 1800**

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The border hearth, a legend of the Delaware Indians, written 1800 by William Chandler

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WILLIAM CHANDLER

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BY

WILLIAM CHANDLER

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This legend of the Delaware Indians was written to while away the winter evenings fifty-seven years ago at Belvidere, N. J. The manuscript was laid away and almost forgotten. My grandchildren, rummaging in the attic, found it, old and faded. At their request I have printed it for them, as a souvenir of fading memories.

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THE HUNTER'S HOME.

Rude winter's blasts are whirling by,
And crackling embers upward fly
From faggots of the winter's store,
With which the hearth is cover'd o'er.
By end of which stands grandpa's chair,
A seat which none presume to share
But grandpa's pet,—his pride and joy—
A merry, restless, cheerful boy.
The trembling knees of good grandsire
To climb full off he does aspire,
Or bask him, 'twixt them and the fire.
Around the table strong and rude,
By varnish gloss or paint unhued
The busy family all arrange,
And laughing urchins there exchange
The merry and forbidden glance,
At ev'ry fav'ring turn of chance.
For brothers bold and sisters coy
Vainly essay time to employ.
Despite of all paternal care,
Young roguery will have its share.
The farmer's hand, brown with the toil
Of guiding plough through gen'rous soil,
Grasps now a manuscript of lore,
Which eagerly he's conning o'er,
Whiling away the wintry hours
In wisdom's fertile fields and bowers.
His piercing eyes, with darkling lash,
Which o'er the ancient pages flash,

Betoken, quick and keen of ken,
A feature of the frontier men.
And needed was the watchful eye
The wily Indians to espy.
For oft they lurked in silent glen
Till set of ev'ning sun, and then,
With list'ning ear close bent to ground,
Like wary serpent he would glide
Through fen and brake his tawny hide,
And prowl about the homes of men,
Till breaking day warned him again
To steal back in deep forest shade
The wary Redman's ambuscade.
Beside the father's form stalwart
The eldest son, his counterpart,
Sharpens the flint of blackened gun
Once used by a departed one,
Who now lies buried 'neath the dust,
His trusty rifle red with rust,
Till by neglect it's dusted o'er,
And flimsy cobwebs fill the bore,
Yet needs must try the marksman youth
Of ancient piece the power and truth;
For old men say "that when it rung
Its sharp report the hills among,
Ne'er failed the bullet to go through
The targe if aimed by marksman true."
And now again the truth, I ween,
By youthful hunter will be seen,
For truer eye or better shot
'Mong youthful Nimrods there is not.
His father him had taught the skill
To hit the distant mark at will;
And often he enriched their cheer

With venison of wild red deer;
And none enjoyed with better heart
Than he who played the hunter's part.

The next to grace this cheerful scene
Was maiden fair of lovely mien,
Whose willing fingers lightly ply
The sparkling needles as they fly
To weave a wreath, of varied dyes,
Under her careful guiding eyes.
Ready at hand, in heaps profuse,
Lay pliant hairs of antlered moose,
Colored by Indian's native skill
To please the most exacting will.
And brilliant plumes in chance array,
The varied hues and tints display
That sparkle on the wood bird's breast
Or glitter on the eagle's crest.
These Mary knew to work within
The wreaths upon her moccasin,
With taste and such artistic skill
As fancied her capricious will.
A finished one so small and neat,
The latchet strings and all complete,
Upon the oaken table lay.
E'en maidens of the present day
Would pride themselves could they but don
The moccasins by her put on
Without the fear of bursting lace
Or opening seams for want of space.
Health and comfort led fashion then
Which they will rarely do again.
No rustling silks or rich brocade
Clothed Mary's form, but homespun plaid

So closely wove and with such skill
 That she could smile at winter's chill
 And piercing blasts; which often played
 About her form, yet vain essayed
 To paint her cheeks a chilly blue,
 Only imparting ruddy hue.
 Then brushing by in eddying whirls,
 Her snowy neck and auburn curls,
 As if ashamed of mischief meant
 Accept defeat, their punishment.

Since when a gay and rambling child
 By sparkling streams, and mountains wild,
 Which rippled past her father's cot,
 A wild sequestered rustic spot,
 Companions few, save wild birds free
 Or lambkins frisking on the lea,
 Were wont with her to have a share
 In rambles round, or e'en a care.
 With such as these, midst nature's wild,
 Grew up the pretty frontier child,
 In beauty rare, till now one could
 Behold in blooming maidenhood
 A wild flower of the wilderness
 In all its native loveliness.
 Reared far from all the ways and wiles
 Of city's tangled life and styles,
 Where fickle fortune holds her sway,
 And fashion changes with the day.
 There wealth and art are both combined
 To polish and perfect the mind.
 Advantage such she ne'er had seen
 Or to a city ever been.
 Yet deem her not in ways uncouth,

For she was gracefulness in truth,
 The studied ways and foreign air
 We often meet in modern fair
 Formed of her loveliness no part
 And rarely grace a maiden's heart.
 'Twas artlessly she lent her aid
 To Cupid, skillful at his trade,
 Whose piercing arrows, sure and keen,
 Cleft many a hunter's heart, I ween.
 Yet for the wounds none bore her ill,
 But offered each as target still;
 Ev'ry hunter on the border
 Hoped to be fair Mary's warder,
 And willingly might one forego
 Such cares for happiness to know,
 To him was given a heart and hand
 Truest and fairest in the land;
 To keep as hostages how well
 Let lovers say, and parents tell.

Youth and beauty were Mary's share;
 Her mother equally was fair;
 Yet Father Time had come apace
 And ta'en away her youthful face,
 Whose semblance once had formed the theme
 Of many a lover's midnight dream;
 And lightly he had touched her head
 With here and there a silver thread,
 And in all ways her altered face
 Bespoke a heart the treasure place
 Of all the family's joys and cares,
 Ample enough for all their shares.
 In all this cheerful group around
 Busier one cannot be found.