

MIANTOWONA

A Dramatic Poem

by
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Thomas Bailey Aldrich
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Long ere the Pale Face
Crossed the Great Water,
Miantowona
Passed, with her beauty,
Into a legend
Pure as a wild-flower
Found in a broken
Ledge by the seaside.

Let us revere them--
These wildwood legends,
Born of the camp-fire.
Let them be handed
Down to our children--
Richest of heirlooms.
No land may claim them:
They are ours only,
Like our grand rivers,
Like our vast prairies,
Like our dead heroes.

In the pine-forest,
Guarded by shadows,
Lieth the haunted
Pond of the Red Men.
Ringed by the emerald
Mountains, it lies there
Like an untarnished
Buckler of Silver
Dropped in that valley
By the Great Spirit!
Weird are the figures
Traced on its margins--
Vine-work and leaf-work,
Down-drooping fuchsias,
Knots of sword-grasses,
Moonlight and starlight,
Clouds scudding northward.
Sometimes an eagle
Flutters across it;
Sometimes a single
Star on its bosom
Nestles till morning.

Far in the ages,
Miantowona,
Rose of the Hurons,
Came to these waters.
Where the dank greensward
Slopes to the pebbles,
Miantowona
Sat in her anguish.
Ice to her maidens,
Ice to the chieftains,
Fire to her lover!
Here he had won her,
Here they had parted,
Here could her tears flow.
With unwet eyelash,
Miantowona
Nursed her old father,
Gray-eyed Tawanda,
Oldest of Hurons,
Soothed his complainings,
Smiled when he chid her
Vaguely for nothing--
He was so weak now,
Like a shrunk cedar
White with the hoar-frost.
Sometimes she gently
Linked arms with maidens,
Joined in their dances:
Not with her people,
Not in the wigwam,
Wept for her lover.

Ah! Who was like him?
Fleet as an arrow,
Strong as a bison,
Lithe as a panther,
Soft as the south-wind,
Who was like Wawah?
There is one other
Stronger and fleeter,
Bearing no wampum,
Wearing no war-paint,
Ruler of councils,

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