

“Well—who are they? Name them.”

Rip thought a moment and inquired, “Where’s Nicholaus Vedder?”

There was silence for a little while. Then an old man replied, in a thin voice, “Nicholaus Vedder? Why he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the church yard that used to tell all about him, but that’s rotted and gone too.”

“Where’s Brom Dutcher?”

“Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war. Some say he was killed at the storming of Stoney Point. Others say he was drowned in a squall. I don’t know—he never came back again.”

“Where’s Van Bummel the schoolmaster?”

“He went off to the wars, too—was a great militia general and is now in Congress.”

Rip’s heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him, too, by including such enormous lapses of time and matters he could not understand—war, Congress, Stoney Point. He had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, “Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?”

“Oh. Rip Van Winkle?” exclaimed two or three. “Oh, to be sure! That’s Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree.”

Rip beheld a precise copy of himself the day he went up the mountain, apparently as lazy and certainly as ragged! The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity. In the midst of his bewilderment the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was and what was his name?

“God knows,” he exclaimed, at his wit’s end, “I’m not myself. That’s me yonder—no—that’s somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they’ve changed my gun, and everything’s changed—and I’m changed—and I can’t tell what’s my name, or who I am!”

The bystanders began to look at each other, nod, wink, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper also about securing the gun and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief. At this critical moment a woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the greybearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, who began to cry. “Hush, Rip,” cried she, “the old man won’t hurt you.” The name of the child and the tone of the mother’s voice awakened

a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" he asked.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him—but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

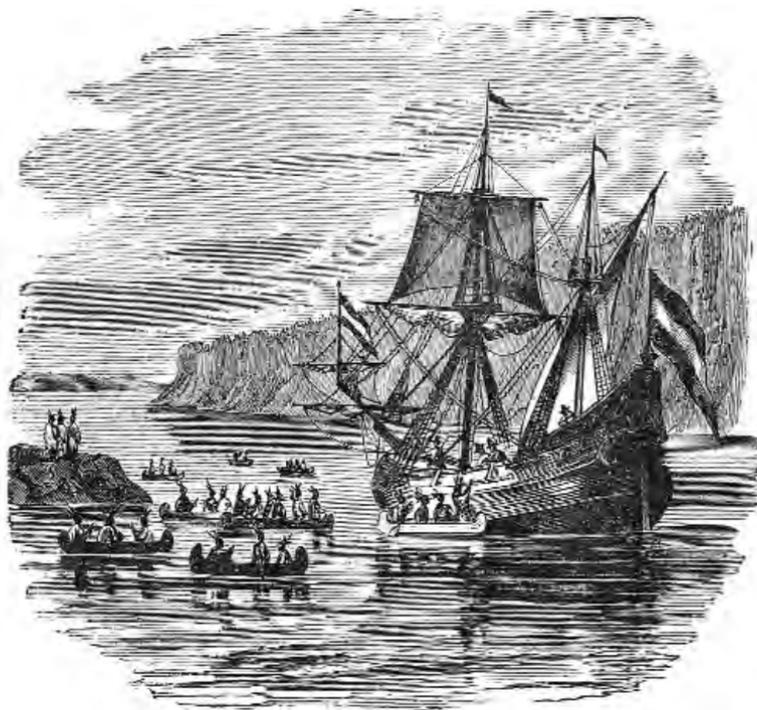
Rip had but one question more to ask, but he put it with a faltering voice—

"Where's your mother?"

"She died but a short time ago. She broke a blood vessel in a fit of passion at a peddler."

There was a bit of comfort at least in this news. The honest man could contain himself no longer—he caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" he cried. "Young Rip Van Winkle once, old Rip Van Winkle now! Does nobody know Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman tottering out from among the crowd put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment exclaimed, "Sure enough! It is Rip Van Winkle. Welcome home again, old neighbor. Where have you been these twenty long years?"



henry hudson's ship, the half moon

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it. Some winked at each other and put their tongues in their cheeks, and the self-important man in the cocked hat screwed down the corners of his mouth and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the crowd.