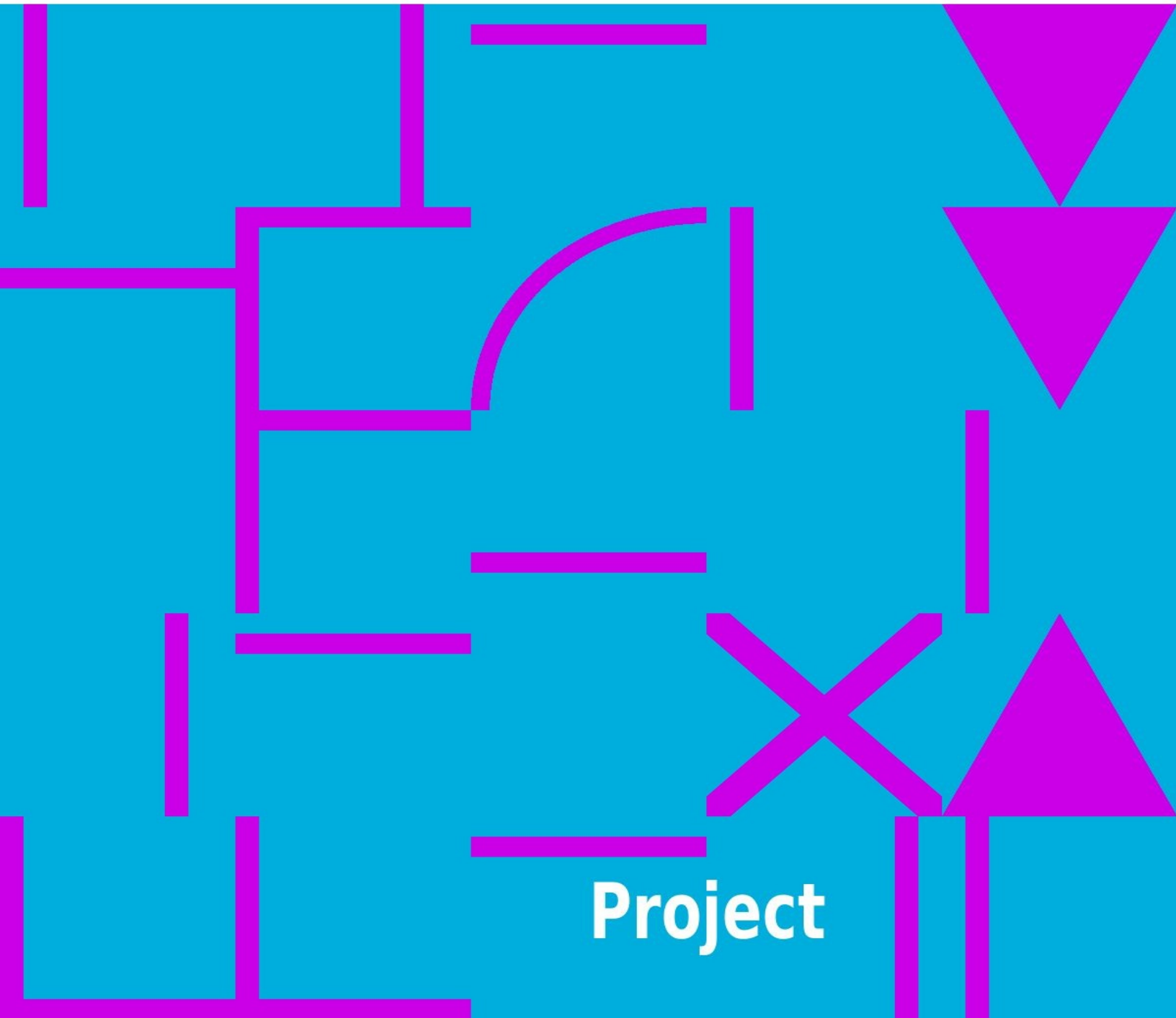
The Scouts of the Valley

Joseph A. Altsheler



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CHAPTER I. THE LONE CANOE

A light canoe of bark, containing a single human figure, moved swiftly up one of the twin streams that form the Ohio. The water, clear and deep, coming through rocky soil, babbled gently at the edges, where it lapped the land, but in the center the full current flowed steadily and without noise.

The thin shadows of early dusk were falling, casting a pallid tint over the world, a tint touched here and there with living fire from the sun, which was gone, though leaving burning embers behind. One glowing shaft, piercing straight through the heavy forest that clothed either bank, fell directly upon the figure in the boat, as a hidden light illuminates a great picture, while the rest is left in shadow. It was no common forest runner who sat in the middle of the red beam. Yet a boy, in nothing but years, he swung the great paddle with an ease and vigor that the strongest man in the West might have envied. His rifle, with the stock carved beautifully, and the long, slender blue barrel of the border, lay by his side. He could bring the paddle into the boat, grasp the rifle, and carry it to his shoulder with a single, continuous movement.

His most remarkable aspect, one that the casual observer even would have noticed, was an extraordinary vitality. He created in the minds of those who saw him a feeling that he lived intensely every moment of his life. Born and-bred in the forest, he was essentially its child, a perfect physical being, trained by the utmost hardship and danger, and with every faculty, mental and physical, in complete coordination. It is only by a singular combination of time and place, and only once in millions of chances, that Nature produces such a being.

The canoe remained a few moments in the center of the red light, and its occupant, with a slight swaying motion of the paddle, held it steady in the current, while he listened. Every feature stood out in the glow, the firm chin, the straight strong nose, the blue eyes, and the thick yellow hair. The red blue, and yellow beads on his dress of beautifully tanned deerskin flashed in the brilliant rays. He was the great picture of fact, not of fancy, a human being animated by a living, dauntless soul.

He gave the paddle a single sweep and shot from the light into the shadow. His canoe did not stop until it grazed the northern shore, where bushes and overhanging boughs made a deep shadow. It would have taken a keen eye now to have seen either the canoe or its occupant, and Henry Ware paddled slowly

and without noise in the darkest heart of the shadow.

The sunlight lingered a little longer in the center of the stream. Then the red changed to pink. The pink, in its turn, faded, and the whole surface of the river was somber gray, flowing between two lines of black forest.

The coming of the darkness did not stop the boy. He swung a little farther out into the stream, where the bushes and hanging boughs would not get in his way, and continued his course with some increase of speed.

The great paddle swung swiftly through the water, and the length of stroke was amazing, but the boy's breath did not come faster, and the muscles on his arms and shoulders rippled as if it were the play of a child. Henry was in waters unknown to him. He had nothing more than hearsay upon which to rely, and he used all the wilderness caution that he had acquired through nature and training. He called into use every faculty of his perfect physical being. His trained eyes continually pierced the darkness. At times, he stopped and listened with ears that could hear the footfall of the rabbit, but neither eye nor ear brought report of anything unusual. The river flowed with a soft, sighing sound. Now and then a wild creature stirred in the forest, and once a deer came down to the margin to drink, but this was the ordinary life of the woods, and he passed it by.

He went on, hour after hour. The river narrowed. The banks grew higher and rockier, and the water, deep and silvery under the moon, flowed in a somewhat swifter current. Henry gave a little stronger sweep to the paddle, and the speed of the canoe was maintained. He still kept within the shadow of the northern bank.

He noticed after a while that fleecy vapor was floating before the moon. The night seemed to be darkening, and a rising wind came out of the southwest. The touch of the air on, his face was damp. It was the token of rain, and he felt that it would not be delayed long.

It was no part of his plan to be caught in a storm on the Monongahela. Besides the discomfort, heavy rain and wind might sink his frail canoe, and he looked for a refuge. The river was widening again, and the banks sank down until they were but little above the water. Presently he saw a place that he knew would be suitable, a stretch of thick bushes and weeds growing into the very edge of the water, and extending a hundred yards or more along the shore.

He pushed his canoe far into the undergrowth, and then stopped it in shelter so close that, keen as his own eyes were, he could scarcely see the main stream of the river. The water where he came to rest was not more than a foot deep, but he remained in the canoe, half reclining and wrapping closely around himself and his rifle a beautiful blanket woven of the tightest fiber.

His position, with his head resting on the edge of the canoe and his shoulder pressed against the side, was full of comfort to him, and he awaited calmly whatever might come. Here and there were little spaces among the leaves overhead, and through them he saw a moon, now almost hidden by thick and rolling vapors, and a sky that had grown dark and somber. The last timid star had ceased to twinkle, and the rising wind was wet and cold. He was glad of the blanket, and, skilled forest runner that he was, he never traveled without it. Henry remained perfectly still. The light canoe did not move beneath his weight the fraction of an inch. His upturned eyes saw the little cubes of sky that showed through the leaves grow darker and darker. The bushes about him were now bending before the wind, which blew steadily from the south, and presently drops of rain began to fall lightly on the water.

The boy, alone in the midst of all that vast wilderness, surrounded by danger in its most cruel forms, and with a black midnight sky above him, felt neither fear nor awe. Being what nature and circumstance had made him, he was conscious, instead, of a deep sense of peace and comfort. He was at ease, in a nest for the night, and there was only the remotest possibility that the prying eye of an enemy would see him. The leaves directly over his head were so thick that they formed a canopy, and, as he heard the drops fall upon them, it was like the rain on a roof, that soothes the one beneath its shelter.

Distant lightning flared once or twice, and low thunder rolled along the southern horizon, but both soon ceased, and then a rain, not hard, but cold and persistent, began to fall, coming straight down. Henry saw that it might last all night, but he merely eased himself a little in the canoe, drew the edges of the blanket around his chin, and let his eyelids droop.

The rain was now seeping through the leafy canopy of green, but he did not care. It could not penetrate the close fiber of the blanket, and the fur cap drawn far down on his head met the blanket. Only his face was uncovered, and when a cold drop fell upon it, it was to him, hardened by forest life, cool and pleasant to the touch.

Although the eyelids still drooped, he did not yet feel the tendency to sleep. It was merely a deep, luxurious rest, with the body completely relaxed, but with the senses alert. The wind ceased to blow, and the rain came down straight with an even beat that was not unmusical. No other sound was heard in the forest, as the ripple of the river at the edges was merged into it. Henry began to feel the desire for sleep by and by, and, laying the paddle across the boat in such a way that it sheltered his face, he closed his eyes. In five minutes he would have been sleeping as soundly as a man in a warm bed under a roof, but with a quick

motion he suddenly put the paddle aside and raised himself a little in the canoe, while one hand slipped down under the folds of the blanket to the hammer of his rifle.

His ear had told him in time that there was a new sound on the river. He heard it faintly above the even beat of the rain, a soft sound, long and sighing, but regular. He listened, and then he knew it. It was made by oars, many of them swung in unison, keeping admirable time.

Henry did not yet feel fear, although it must be a long boat full of Indian warriors, as it was not likely, that anybody else would be abroad upon these waters at such a time. He made no attempt to move. Where he lay it was black as the darkest cave, and his cool judgment told him that there was no need of flight.

The regular rhythmic beat of the oars came nearer, and presently as he looked through the covert of leaves the dusky outline of a great war canoe came into view. It contained at least twenty warriors, of what tribe he could not tell, but they were wet, and they looked cold and miserable. Soon they were opposite him, and he saw the outline of every figure. Scalp locks drooped in the rain, and he knew that the warriors, hardy as they might be, were suffering.

Henry expected to see the long boat pass on, but it was turned toward a shelving bank fifty or sixty yards below, and they beached it there. Then all sprang out, drew it up on the land, and, after turning it over, propped it up at an angle. When this was done they sat under it in a close group, sheltered from the rain. They were using their great canoe as a roof, after the habit of Shawnees and Wyandots.

The boy watched them for a long time through one of the little openings in the bushes, and he believed that they would remain as they were all night, but presently he saw a movement among them, and a little flash of light. He understood it. They were trying to kindle a fire-with flint and steel, under the shelter of the boat. He continued to watch them 'lazily and without alarm.

Their fire, if they succeeded in making it, would cast no light upon him in the dense covert, but they would be outlined against the flame, and he could see them better, well enough, perhaps, to tell to what tribe they belonged.

He watched under his lowered eyelids while the warriors, gathered in a close group to make a shelter from stray puffs of wind, strove with flint and steel. Sparks sprang up and went out, but Henry at last saw a little blaze rise and cling to life. Then, fed with tinder and bark, it grew under the roof made by the boat until it was ruddy and strong. The boat was tilted farther back, and the fire, continuing to grow, crackled cheerfully, while the flames leaped higher.

By a curious transfer of the senses, Henry, as he lay in the thick blackness felt the influence of the fire, also. Its warmth was upon his face, and it was pleasing to see the red and yellow light victorious against the sodden background of the rain and dripping forest. The figures of the warriors passed and repassed before the fire, and the boy in the boat moved suddenly. His body was not shifted more than an inch, but his surprise was great.

A warrior stood between him and the fire, outlined perfectly against the red light. It was a splendid figure, young, much beyond the average height, the erect and noble head crowned with the defiant scalplock, the strong, slightly curved nose and the massive chin cut as clearly as if they had been carved in copper. The man who had laid aside a wet blanket was bare now to the waist, and Henry could see the powerful muscles play on chest and shoulders as he moved.

The boy knew him. It was Timmendiquas, the great White Lightning of the Wyandots, the youngest, but the boldest and ablest of all the Western chiefs. Henry's pulses leaped a little at the sight of his old foe and almost friend. As always, he felt admiration at the sight of the young chief. It was not likely that he would ever behold such another magnificent specimen of savage manhood.

The presence of Timmendiquas so far east was also full of significance. The great fleet under Adam Colfax, and with Henry and his comrades in the van, had reached Pittsburgh at last. Thence the arms, ammunition, and other supplies were started on the overland journey for the American army, but the five lingered before beginning the return to Kentucky. A rumor came that the Indian alliance was spreading along the entire frontier, both west and north. It was said that Timmendiquas, stung to fiery energy by his defeats, was coming east to form a league with the Iroquois, the famous Six Nations. These warlike tribes were friendly with the Wyandots, and the league would be a formidable danger to the Colonies, the full strength of which was absorbed already in the great war.

But the report was a new call of battle to Henry, Shif'less Sol, and the others. The return to Kentucky was postponed. They could be of greater service here, and they plunged into the great woods to the north and, east to see what might be stirring among the warriors.

Now Henry, as he looked at Timmendiquas, knew that report had told the truth. The great chief would not be on the fringe of the Iroquois country, if he did not have such a plan, and he had the energy and ability to carry it through. Henry shuddered at the thought of the tomahawk flashing along every mile of a frontier so vast, and defended so thinly. He was glad in every fiber that he and his comrades had remained to hang upon the Indian hordes, and be heralds of their marches. In the forest a warning usually meant the saving of life.

The rain ceased after a while, although water dripped from the trees everywhere. But the big fire made an area of dry earth about it, and the warriors replaced the long boat in the water. Then all but four or five of them lay beside the coals and went to sleep. Timmendiquas was one of those who remained awake, and Henry saw that he was in deep thought. He walked back and forth much like a white man, and now and then he folded his hands behind his back, looking toward the earth, but not seeing it. Henry could guess what was in his mind. He would draw forth the full power of the Six Nations, league them with the Indians of the great valley, and hurl them all in one mass upon the frontier. He was planning now the means to the end.

The chief, in his little walks back and forth, came close to the edge of the bushes in which Henry lay, It was not at all probable that he would conclude to search among them, but some accident, a chance, might happen, and Henry began to feel a little alarm. Certainly, the coming of the day would make his refuge insecure, and he resolved to slip away while it was yet light.

The boy rose a little in the boat, slowly and with the utmost caution, because the slightest sound out of the common might arouse Timmendiquas to the knowledge of a hostile presence. The canoe must make no plash in the water. Gradually he unwrapped the blanket and tied it in a folded square at his back. Then he took thought a few moments. The forest was so silent now that he did not believe he could push the canoe through the bushes without being heard. He would leave it there for use another day and go on foot through the woods to his comrades.

Slowly he put one foot down the side until it rested on the bottom, and then he remained still. The chief had paused in his restless walk back and forth. Could it be possible that he had heard so slight a sound as that of a human foot sinking softly into the water? Henry waited with his rifle ready. If necessary he would fire, and then dart away among the bushes.

Five or six intense moments passed, and the chief resumed his restless pacing. If he had heard, he had passed it by as nothing, and Henry raised the other foot out of the canoe. He was as delicate in his movement as a surgeon mending the human eye, and he had full cause, as not eye alone, but life as well, depended upon his success. Both feet now rested upon the muddy bottom, and he stood there clear of the boat.

The chief did not stop again, and as the fire had burned higher, his features were disclosed more plainly in his restless walk back and forth before the flames. Henry took a final look at the lofty features, contracted now into a frown, then began to wade among the bushes, pushing his way softly. This was

the most delicate and difficult task of all. The water must not be allowed to plash around him nor the bushes to rustle as he passed. Forward he went a yard, then two, five, ten, and his feet were about to rest upon solid earth, when a stick submerged in the mud broke under his moccasin with a snap singularly loud in the silence of the night.

Henry sprang at once upon dry land, whence he cast back a single swift glance. He saw the chief standing rigid and gazing in the direction from which the sound had come. Other warriors were just behind him, following his look, aware that there was an unexpected presence in the forest, and resolved to know its nature.

Henry ran northward. So confident was he in his powers and the protecting darkness of the night that he sent back a sharp cry, piercing and defiant, a cry of a quality that could come only from a white throat. The warriors would know it, and he intended for them to know it. Then, holding his rifle almost parallel with his body, he darted swiftly away through the black spaces of the forest. But an answering cry came to his, the Indian yell taking up his challenge, and saying that the night would not check pursuit.

Henry maintained his swift pace for a long time, choosing the more open places that he might make no noise among the bushes and leaves. Now and then water dripped in his face, and his moccasins were wet from the long grass, but his body was warm and dry, and he felt little weariness. The clouds were now all gone, and the stars sprang out, dancing in a sky of dusky blue. Trained eyes could see far in the forest despite the night, and Henry felt that he must be wary. He recalled the skill and tenacity of Timmendiquas. A fugitive could scarcely be trailed in the darkness, but the great chief would spread out his forces like a fan and follow.

He had been running perhaps three hours when he concluded to stop in a thicket, where he lay down on the damp grass, and rested with his head under his arm.

His breath had been coming a little faster, but his heart now resumed its regular beat. Then he heard a soft sound, that of footsteps. He thought at first that some wild animal was prowling near, but second thought convinced him that human beings had come. Gazing through the thicket, he saw an Indian warrior walking among the trees, looking searchingly about him as if he were a scout. Another, coming from a different direction, approached him, and Henry felt sure that they were of the party of Timmendiquas. They had followed him in some manner, perhaps by chance, and it behooved Mm now to lie close.

A third warrior joined them and they began to examine the ground. Henry realized that it was much lighter. Keen eyes under such a starry sky could see much, and they might strike his trail. The fear quickly became fact. One of the warriors, uttering a short cry, raised his head and beckoned to the others. He had seen broken twigs or trampled grass, and Henry, knowing that it was no time to hesitate, sprang from his covert. Two of the warriors caught a glimpse of his dusky figure and fired, the bullets cutting the leaves close to his head, but Henry ran so fast that he was lost to view in an instant.

The boy was conscious that his position contained many elements of danger. He was about to have another example of the tenacity and resource of the great young chief of the Wyandots, and he felt a certain anger. He, did not wish to be disturbed in his plans, he wished to rejoin his comrades and move farther east toward the chosen lands of the Six Nations; instead, he must spend precious moments running for his life.

Henry did not now flee toward the camp of his friends. He was too wise, too unselfish, to bring a horde down upon them, and he curved away in a course that would take him to the south of them. He glanced up and saw that the heavens were lightening yet more. A thin gray color like a mist was appearing in the east. It was the herald of day, and now the Indians would be able to find his trail. But Henry was not afraid. His anger over the loss of time quickly passed, and he ran swiftly on, the fall of his moccasins making scarcely any noise as he passed.

It was no unusual incident. Thousands of such pursuits occurred in the border life of our country, and were lost to the chronicler. For generations they were almost a part of the daily life of the frontier, but the present, while not out of the common in itself, had, uncommon phases. It was the most splendid type of white life in all the wilderness that fled, and the finest type of red life that followed.

It was impossible for Henry to feel anger or hate toward Timmendiquas. In his place he would have done what he was doing. It was hard to give up these great woods and beautiful lakes and rivers, and the wild life that wild men lived and loved. There was so much chivalry in the boy's nature that he could think of all these things while he fled to escape the tomahawk or the stake.

Up came the sun. The gray light turned to silver, and then to red and blazing gold. A long, swelling note, the triumphant cry of the pursuing warriors, rose behind him. Henry turned his head for one look. He saw a group of them poised for a moment on the crest of a low hill and outlined against the broad flame in the east. He saw their scalp locks, the rifles in their hands, and their bare chests shining bronze in the glow. Once more he sent back his defiant cry, now in answer to theirs, and then, calling upon his reserves of strength and endurance,

fled with a speed that none of the warriors had ever seen surpassed.

Henry's flight lasted all that day, and he used every device to evade the pursuit, swinging by vines, walking along fallen logs, and wading in brooks. He did not see the warriors again, but instinct warned him that they were yet following. At long intervals he would rest for a quarter of an hour or so among the bushes, and at noon he ate a little of the venison that he always carried. Three hours later he came to the river again, and swimming it he turned on his course, but kept to the southern side. When the twilight was falling once more he sat still in dense covert for a long time. He neither saw nor heard a sign of human presence, and he was sure now that the pursuit had failed. Without an effort he dismissed it from his mind, ate a little more of the venison, and made his bed for the night.

The whole day had been bright, with a light wind blowing, and the forest was dry once more. As far as Henry could see it circled away on every side, a solid dark green, the leaves of oak and beech, maple and elm making a soft, sighing sound as they waved gently in the wind. It told Henry of nothing but peace. He had eluded the pursuit, hence it was no more. This was a great, friendly forest, ready to shelter him, to soothe him, and to receive him into its arms for peaceful sleep.

He found a place among thick trees where the leaves of last year lay deep upon the ground. He drew up enough of them for a soft bed, because now and for the moment he was a forest sybarite. He was wise enough to take his ease when he found it, knowing that it would pay his body to relax.

He lay down upon the leaves, placed the rifle by his side, and spread the blanket over himself and the weapon. The twilight was gone, and the night, dark and without stars, as he wished to see it, rolled up, fold after fold, covering and hiding everything. He looked a little while at a breadth of inky sky showing through the leaves, and then, free from trouble or fear, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER II. THE MYSTERIOUS HAND

Henry slept until a rosy light, filtering through the leaves, fell upon his face. Then he sprang up, folded the blanket once more upon his back, and looked about him. Nothing had come in the night to disturb him, no enemy was near, and the morning sun was bright and beautiful. The venison was exhausted, but he bathed his face in the brook and resumed his journey, traveling with a long, swift stride that carried him at great speed.

The boy was making for a definite point, one that he knew well, although nearly all the rest of this wilderness was strange to him. The country here was rougher than it usually is in the great valley to the west, and as he advanced it became yet more broken, range after range of steep, stony hills, with fertile but narrow little valleys between. He went on without hesitation for at least two hours, and then stopping under a great oak he uttered a long, whining cry, much like the howl of a wolf.

It was not a loud note, but it was singularly penetrating, carrying far through the forest. A sound like an echo came back, but Henry knew that instead of an echo it was a reply to his own signal. Then he advanced boldly and swiftly and came to the edge of a snug little valley set deep among rocks and trees like a bowl. He stopped behind the great trunk of a beech, and looked into the valley with a smile of approval.

Four human figures were seated around a fire of smoldering coals that gave forth no smoke. They appeared to be absorbed in some very pleasant task, and a faint odor that came to Henry's nostrils filled him with agreeable anticipations. He stepped forward boldly and called:

“Jim, save that piece for me!”

Long Jim Hart halted in mid-air the large slice of venison that he had toasted on a stick. Paul Cotter sprang joyfully to his feet, Silent Tom Ross merely looked up, but Shif'less Sol said:

“Thought Henry would be here in time for breakfast.”

Henry walked down in the valley, and the shiftless one regarded him keenly.

“I should judge, Henry Ware, that you've been hevin' a foot race,” he drawled.

“And why do you think that?” asked Henry.

“I kin see where the briars hev been rakin' across your leggins. Reckon that

wouldn't happen, 'less you was in a pow'ful hurry.”

“You're right,” said Henry. “Now, Jim, you've been holding that venison in the air long enough. Give it to me, and after I've eaten it I'll tell you all that I've been doing, and all that's been done to me.”

Long Jim handed him the slice. Henry took a comfortable seat in the circle before the coals, and ate with all the appetite of a powerful human creature whose food had been more than scanty for at least two days.

“Take another piece,” said Long Jim, observing him with approval. “Take two pieces, take three, take the whole deer. I always like to see a hungry man eat. It gives him sech satisfaction that I git a kind uv taste uv it myself.”

Henry did not offer a word 'of explanation until his breakfast was over. Then lie leaned back, sighing twice with deep content, and said:

“Boys, I've got a lot to tell.”

Shif'less Sol moved into an easier position on the leaves.

“I guess it has somethin' to do with them scratches on your leggins.”

“It has,” continued Henry with emphasis, “and I want to say to you boys that I've seen Timmendiquas, the great White Lightning of the Wyandots.”

“Timmendiquas!” exclaimed the others together.

“No less a man than he,” resumed Henry. “I've looked upon his very face, I've seen him in camp with warriors, and I've had the honor of being pursued by him and his men more hours than I can tell. That's why you see those briar scratches on my leggins, Sol.”

“Then we cannot doubt that he is here to stir the Six Nations to continued war,” said Paul Cotter, “and he will succeed. He is a mighty chief, and his fire and eloquence will make them take up the hatchet. I'm glad that we've come. We delayed a league once between the Shawnees and the Miamis; I don't think we can stop this one, but we may get some people out of the way before the blow falls.”

“Who are these Six Nations, whose name sounds so pow'ful big up here?” asked Long Jim.

“Their name is as big as it sounds,” replied Henry. “They are the Onondagas, the Mohawks, Oneidas, Senecas, Cayugas, and Tuscaroras. They used to be the Five Nations, but the Tuscaroras came up from the south and fought against them so bravely that they were adopted into the league, as a new and friendly tribe. The Onondagas, so I've heard, formed the league a long, long time ago, and their head chief is the grand sachem or high priest of them all, but the head

chief of the Mohawks is the leading war chief."

"I've heard," said Paul, "that the Wyandots are kinsmen of all these tribes, and on that account they will listen with all the more friendliness to Timmendiquas."

"Seems to me," said Tom Ross, "that we've got a most tre-men-je-ous big job ahead."

"Then," said Henry, "we must make a most tremendous big effort."

"That's so," agreed all.

After that they spoke little. The last coals were covered up, and the remainder of the food was put in their pouches. Then they sat on the leaves, and every one meditated until such time as he might have something worth saying. Henry's thoughts traveled on a wide course, but they always came back to one point. They had heard much at Pittsburgh of a famous Mohawk chief called Thayendanegea, but most often known to the Americans as Brant. He was young, able, and filled with intense animosity against the white people, who encroached, every year, more and more upon the Indian hunting grounds. His was a soul full kin to that of Timmendiquas, and if the two met it meant a great council and a greater endeavor for the undoing of the white man. What more likely than that they intended to meet?

"All of you have heard of Thayendanegea, the Mohawk?" said Henry.

They nodded.

"It's my opinion that Timmendiquas is on the way to meet him. I remember hearing a hunter say at Pittsburgh that about a hundred miles to the east of this point was a Long House or Council House of the Six Nations. Timmendiquas is sure to go there, and we must go, too. We must find out where they intend to strike. What do you say?"

"We go there!" exclaimed four voices together.

Seldom has a council of war been followed by action so promptly.

As Henry spoke the last word he rose, and the others rose with him. Saying no more, he led toward the east, and the others followed him, also saying no more. Separately every one of them was strong, brave, and resourceful, but when the five were together they felt that they had the skill and strength of twenty. The long rest at Pittsburgh had restored them after the dangers and hardship of their great voyage from New Orleans.

They carried in horn and pouch ample supplies of powder and bullet, and they did not fear any task.

Their journey continued through hilly country, clothed in heavy forest, but

often without undergrowth. They avoided the open spaces, preferring to be seen of men, who were sure to be red men, as little as possible. Their caution was well taken. They saw Indian signs, once a feather that had fallen from a scalp lock, once footprints, and once the bone of a deer recently thrown away by him who had eaten the meat from it. The country seemed to be as wild as that of Kentucky. Small settlements, so they had heard, were scattered at great distances through the forest, but they saw none. There was no cabin smoke, no trail of the plow, just the woods and the hills and the clear streams. Buffalo had never reached this region, but deer were abundant, and they risked a shot to replenish their supplies.

They camped the second night of their march on a little peninsula at the confluence of two creeks, with the deep woods everywhere. Henry judged that they were well within the western range of the Six Nations, and they cooked their deer meat over a smothered fire, nothing more than a few coals among the leaves. When supper was over they arranged soft places for themselves and their blankets, all except Long Jim, whose turn it was to scout among the woods for a possible foe.

“Don't be gone long, Jim,” said Henry as he composed himself in a comfortable position. “A circle of a half mile about us will do.”

“I'll not be gone more'n an hour,” said Long Jim, picking up his rifle confidently, and flitting away among the woods.

“Not likely he'll see anything,” said Shif'less Sol, “but I'd shorely like to know what White Lightning is about. He must be terrible stirred up by them beatin's he got down on the Ohio, an' they say that Mohawk, Thayendanegea is a whoppin' big chief, too. They'll shorely make a heap of trouble.”

“But both of them are far from here just now,” said Henry, “and we won't bother about either.”

He was lying on some leaves at the foot of a tree with his arm under his head and his blanket over his body. He had a remarkable capacity for dismissing trouble or apprehension, and just then he was enjoying great physical and mental peace. He looked through half closed eyes at his comrades, who also were enjoying repose, and his fancy could reproduce Long Jim in the forest, slipping from tree to tree and bush to bush, and finding no menace.

“Feels good, doesn't it, Henry?” said the shiftless one. “I like a clean, bold country like this. No more plowin' around in swamps for me.”

“Yes,” said Henry sleepily, “it's a good country.”

The hour slipped smoothly by, and Paul said:

“Time for Long Jim to be back.”

“Jim don't do things by halves,” said the shiftless one. “Guess he's beatin' up every squar' inch o' the bushes. He'll be here soon.”

A quarter of an hour passed, and Long Jim did not return; a half hour, and no sign of him. Henry cast off the blanket and stood up. The night was not very dark and he could see some distance, but he did not see their comrade.

“I wonder why he's so slow,” he said with a faint trace of anxiety.

“He'll be 'long directly,” said Tom Ross with confidence.

Another quarter of an hour, and no Long Jim. Henry sent forth the low penetrating cry of the wolf that they used so often as a signal.

“He cannot fail to hear that,” he said, “and he'll answer.”

No answer came. The four looked at one another in alarm. Long Jim had been gone nearly two hours, and he was long overdue. His failure to reply to the signal indicated either that something ominous had happened or that—he had gone much farther than they meant for him to go.

The others had risen to their feet, also, and they stood a little while in silence.

“What do you think it means?” asked Paul.

“It must be all right,” said Shif'less Sol. “Mebbe Jim has lost the camp.”

Henry shook his head.

“It isn't that,” he said. “Jim is too good a woodsman for such a mistake. I don't want to look on the black side, boys, but I think something has happened to Jim.”

“Suppose you an' me go an' look for him,” said Shif'less Sol, “while Paul and Tom stay here an' keep house.”

“We'd better do it,” said Henry. “Come, Sol.”

The two, rifles in the hollows of their arms, disappeared in the darkness, while Tom and Paul withdrew into the deepest shadow of the trees and waited.

Henry and the shiftless one pursued an anxious quest, going about the camp in a great circle and then in another yet greater. They did not find Jim, and the dusk was so great that they saw no evidences of his trail. Long Jim had disappeared as completely as if he had left the earth for another planet. When they felt that they must abandon the search for the time, Henry and Shif'less Sol looked at each other in a dismay that the dusk could not hide.

“Mebbe be saw some kind uv a sign, an' has followed it,” said the shiftless one hopefully. “If anything looked mysterious an' troublesome, Jim would want

to hunt it down."

"I hope so," said Henry, "but we've got to go back to the camp now and report failure. Perhaps he'll show up to-morrow, but I don't like it, Sol, I don't like it!"

"No more do I," said Shif'less Sol. "'Tain't like Jim not to come back, ef he could. Mebbe he'll drop in afore day, anyhow."

They returned to the camp, and two inquiring figures rose up out of the darkness.

"You ain't seen him?" said Tom, noting that but two figures had returned.

"Not a trace," replied Henry. "It's a singular thing."

The four talked together a little while, and they were far from cheerful. Then three sought sleep, while Henry stayed on watch, sitting with his back against a tree and his rifle on his knees. All the peace and content that he had felt earlier in the evening were gone. He was oppressed by a sense of danger, mysterious and powerful. It did not seem possible that Long Jim could have gone away in such a noiseless manner, leaving no trace behind. But it was true.

He watched with both ear and eye as much for Long Jim as for an enemy. He was still hopeful that he would see the long, thin figure coming among the bushes, and then hear the old pleasant drawl. But he did not see the figure, nor did he hear the drawl.

Time passed with the usual slow step when one watches. Paul, Sol, and Tom were asleep, but Henry was never wider awake in his life. He tried to put away the feeling of mystery and danger. He assured himself that Long Jim would soon come, delayed by some trail that he had sought to solve. Nothing could have happened to a man so brave and skillful. His nerves must be growing weak when he allowed himself to be troubled so much by a delayed return.

But the new hours came, one by one, and Long Jim came with none of them. The night remained fairly light, with a good moon, but the light that it threw over the forest was gray and uncanny. Henry's feeling of mystery and danger deepened. Once he thought he heard a rustling in the thicket and, finger on the trigger of his rifle, he stole among the bushes to discover what caused it. He found nothing and, returning to his lonely watch, saw that Paul, Sol, and Tom were still sleeping soundly. But Henry was annoyed greatly by the noise, and yet more by his failure to trace its origin. After an hour's watching he looked a second time. The result was once more in vain, and he resumed his seat upon the leaves, with his back reclining against an oak. Here, despite the fact that the night was growing darker, nothing within range of a rifle shot could escape his eyes.

Nothing stirred. The noise did not come a second time from the thicket. The very silence was oppressive. There was no wind, not even a stray puff, and the bushes never rustled. Henry longed for a noise of some kind to break that terrible, oppressive silence. What he really wished to hear was the soft crunch of Long Jim's moccasins on the grass and leaves.

The night passed, the day came, and Henry awakened his comrades. Long Jim was still missing and their alarm was justified. Whatever trail lie might have struck, he would have returned in the night unless something had happened to him. Henry had vague theories, but nothing definite, and he kept them to himself. Yet they must make a change in their plans. To go on and leave Long Jim to whatever fate might be his was unthinkable. No task could interfere with the duty of the five to one another.

“We are in one of the most dangerous of all the Indian countries,” said Henry. “We are on the fringe of the region over which the Six Nations roam, and we know that Timmendiquas and a band of the Wyandots are here also. Perhaps Miamis and Shawnees have come, too.”

“We've got to find Long Jim,” said Silent Tom briefly.

They went about their task in five minutes. Breakfast consisted of cold venison and a drink from a brook. Then they began to search the forest. They felt sure that such woodsmen as they, with the daylight to help them, would find some trace of Long Jim, but they saw none at all, although they constantly widened their circle, and again tried all their signals. Half the forenoon passed in the vain search, and then they held a council.

“I think we'd better scatter,” said Shif'less Sol, “an' meet here again when the sun marks noon.”

It was agreed, and they took careful note of the place, a little hill crowned with a thick cluster of black oaks, a landmark easy to remember. Henry turned toward the south, and the forest was so dense that in two minutes all his comrades were lost to sight. He went several miles, and his search was most rigid. He was amazed to find that the sense of mystery and danger that he attributed to the darkness of the night did not disappear wholly in the bright daylight. His spirit, usually so optimistic, was oppressed by it, and he had no belief that they would find Long Jim.

At the set time he returned to the little hill crowned with the black oaks, and as he approached it from one side he saw Shif'less Sol coming from another. The shiftless one walked despondently. His gait was loose and shambling-a rare thing with him, and Henry knew that he, too, had failed. He realized now that he had

not expected anything else. Shif'less Sol shook his head, sat down on a root and said nothing. Henry sat down, also, and the two exchanged a look of discouragement.

“The others will be here directly,” said Henry, “and perhaps Long Jim will be with one of them.”

But in his heart he knew that it would not be so, and the shiftless one knew that he had no confidence in his own words.

“If not,” said Henry, resolved to see the better side, “we'll stay anyhow until we find him. We can't spare good old Long Jim.”

Shif'less Sol did not reply, nor did Henry speak again, until lie saw the bushes moving slightly three or four hundred yards away.

“There comes Tom,” he said, after a single comprehensive glance, “and he's alone.”

Tom Ross was also a dejected figure. He looked at the two on the hill, and, seeing that the man for whom they were searching was not with them, became more dejected than before.

“Paul's our last chance,” he said, as he joined them. “He's gen'rally a lucky boy, an' mebbe it will be so with him to-day.”

“I hope so,” said Henry fervently. “He ought to be along in a few minutes.”

They waited patiently, although they really had no belief that Paul would bring in the missing man, but Paul was late. The noon hour was well past. Henry took a glance at the sun. Noon was gone at least a half hour, and he stirred uneasily.

“Paul couldn't get lost in broad daylight,” he said.

“No,” said Shif'less Sol, “he couldn't get lost!”

Henry noticed his emphasis on the word “lost,” and a sudden fear sprang up in his heart. Some power had taken away Long Jim; could the same power have seized Paul? It was a premonition, and he paled under his brown, turning away lest the others see his face. All three now examined the whole circle of the horizon for a sight of moving bushes that would tell of the boy's coming.

The forest told nothing. The sun blazed brightly over everything, and Paul, like Long Jim, did not come. He was an hour past due, and the three, oppressed already by Long jim's disappearance, were convinced that he would not return. But they gave him a half hour longer. Then Henry said:

“We must hunt for him, but we must not separate. Whatever happens we three must stay together.”

“I'm not hankerin' to roam 'roun jest now all by myself,” said the shiftless one, with an uneasy laugh.

The three hunted all that afternoon for Paul. Once they saw trace of footsteps, apparently his, in some soft earth, but they were quickly, lost on hard ground, and after that there was nothing. They stopped shortly before sunset at the edge of a narrow but deep creek.

“What do you think of it, Henry?” asked Shif'less Sol.

“I don't know what to think,” replied the youth, “but it seems to me that whatever took away Jim has taken away Paul, also.”

“Looks like it,” said Sol, “an' I guess it follers that we're in the same kind o' danger.”

“We three of us could put up a good fight,” said Henry, “and I propose that we don't go back to that camp, but spend the night here.”

“Yes, an' watch good,” said Tom Ross.

Their new camp was made quickly in silence, merely the grass under the low boughs of a tree. Their supper was a little venison, and then they watched the coming of the darkness. It was a heavy hour for the three. Long Jim was gone, and then Paul-Paul, the youngest, and, in a way, the pet of the little band.

“Ef we could only know how it happened,” whispered Shif'less Sol, “then we might rise up an' fight the danger an' git Paul an' Jim back. But you can't shoot at somethin' you don't see or hear. In all them fights o' ours, on the Ohio an' Mississippi we knowed what wuz ag'inst us, but here we don't know nothin'.”

“It is true, Sol,” sighed Henry. “We were making such big plans, too, and before we can even start our force is cut nearly in half. To-morrow we'll begin the hunt again. We'll never desert Paul and Jim, so long as we don't know they're dead.”

“It's my watch,” said Tom. “You two sleep. We've got to keep our strength.”

Henry and the shiftless one acquiesced, and seeking the softest spots under the tree sat down. Tom Ross took his place about ten feet in front of them, sitting on the ground, with his hands clasped around his knees, and his rifle resting on his arm. Henry watched him idly for a little while, thinking all the time of his lost comrades. The night promised to be dark, a good thing for them, as the need of hiding was too evident.

Shif'less Sol soon fell asleep, as Henry, only three feet away, knew by his soft and regular breathing, but the boy himself was still wide-eyed.

The darkness seemed to sink down like a great blanket dropping slowly, and

the area of Henry's vision narrowed to a small circle. Within this area the distinctive object was the figure of Tom Ross, sitting with his rifle across his knees. Tom had an infinite capacity for immobility. Henry had never seen another man, not even an Indian, who could remain so long in one position contented and happy. He believed that the silent one could sit as he was all night.

His surmise about Tom began to have a kind of fascination for him. Would he remain absolutely still? He would certainly shift an arm or a leg. Henry's interest in the question kept him awake. He turned silently on the other side, but, no matter how intently he studied the sitting figure of his comrade, he could not see it stir. He did not know how long he had been awake, trying thus to decide a question that should be of no importance at such a time. Although unable to sleep, he fell into a dreamy condition, and continued vaguely to watch the rigid and silent sentinel.

He suddenly saw Tom stir, and he came from his state of languor. The exciting question was solved at last. The man would not sit all night absolutely immovable. There could be no doubt of the fact that he had raised an arm, and that his figure had straightened. Then he stood up, full height, remained motionless for perhaps ten seconds, and then suddenly glided away among the bushes.

Henry knew what this meant. Tom had heard something moving in the thickets, and, like a good sentinel, he had gone to investigate. A rabbit, doubtless, or perhaps a sneaking raccoon. Henry rose to a sitting position, and drew his own rifle across his knees. He would watch while Tom was gone, and then lie would sink quietly back, not letting his comrade know that lie had taken his place.

The faintest of winds began to stir among the thickets. Light clouds drifted before the moon. Henry, sitting with his rifle across his knees, and Shif'less Sol, asleep in the shadows, were invisible, but Henry saw beyond the circle of darkness that enveloped them into the grayish light that fell over the bushes. He marked the particular point at which he expected Tom Ross to appear, a slight opening that held out invitation for the passage of a man.

He waited a long time, ten minutes, twenty, a half hour, and the sentinel did not return. Henry came abruptly out of his dreamy state. He felt with all the terrible thrill of certainty that what happened to Long Jim and Paul had happened also to Silent Tom Ross. He stood erect, a tense, tall figure, alarmed, but not afraid. His eyes searched the thickets, but saw nothing. The slight movement of the bushes was made by the wind, and no other sound reached his ears.

But he might be mistaken after all! The most convincing premonitions were sometimes wrong! He would give Tom ten minutes more, and he sank down in a crouching position, where he would offer the least target for the eye.

The appointed time passed, and neither sight nor sound revealed any sign of Tom Ross. Then Henry awakened Shif'less Sol, and whispered to him all that he had seen.

“Whatever took Jim and Paul has took him,” whispered the shiftless one at once.

Henry nodded.

“An' we're bound to look for him right now,” continued Shif'less Sol.

“Yes,” said Henry, “but we must stay together. If we follow the others, Sol, we must follow 'em together.”

“It would be safer,” said Sol. “I've an idee that we won't find Tom, an' I want to tell you, Henry, this thing is gittin' on my nerves.”

It was certainly on Henry's, also, but without reply he led the way into the bushes, and they sought long and well for Silent Tom, keeping at the same time a thorough watch for any danger that might molest themselves. But no danger showed, nor did they find Tom or his trail. He, too, had vanished into nothingness, and Henry and Sol, despite their mental strength, felt cold shivers. They came back at last, far toward morning, to the bank of the creek. It was here as elsewhere a narrow but deep stream flowing between banks so densely wooded that they were almost like walls.

“It will be daylight soon,” said Shif'less Sol, “an' I think we'd better lay low in thicket an' watch. It looks ez ef we couldn't find anything, so we'd better wait an' see what will find us.”

“It looks like the best plan to me,” said Henry, “but I think we might first hunt a while on the other side of the creek. We haven't looked any over there.”

“That's so,” replied Shif'less Sol, “but the water is at least seven feet deep here, an' we don't want to make any splash swimmin'. Suppose you go up stream, an' I go down, an' the one that finds a ford first kin give a signal. One uv us ought to strike shallow water in three or four hundred yards.”

Henry followed the current toward the south, while Sol moved up the stream. The boy went cautiously through the dense foliage, and the creek soon grew wider and shallower. At a distance of about three hundred yards lie came to a point where it could be waded easily. Then he uttered the low cry that was their signal, and went back to meet Shif'less Sol. He reached the exact point at which

they had parted, and waited. The shiftless one did not come. The last of his comrades was gone, and he was alone in the forest.

CHAPTER III. THE HUT ON THE ISLET

Henry Ware waited at least a quarter of an hour by the creek on the exact spot at which he and Solomon Hyde, called the shiftless one, had parted, but he knew all the while that his last comrade was not coming. The same powerful and mysterious hand that swept the others away had taken him, the wary and cunning Shif'less Sol, master of forest lore and with all the five senses developed to the highest pitch. Yet his powers had availed him nothing, and the boy again felt that cold chill running down his spine.

Henry expected the omnipotent force to come against him, also, but his instinctive caution made him turn and creep into the thickest of the forest, continuing until he found a place in the bushes so thoroughly hidden that no one could see him ten feet away. There he lay down and rapidly ran over in his mind the events connected with the four disappearances. They were few, and he had little on which to go, but his duty to seek his four comrades, since he alone must do it, was all the greater. Such a thought as deserting them and fleeing for his own life never entered his mind. He would not only seek them, but he would penetrate the mystery of the power that had taken them.

It was like him now to go about his work with calmness and method. To approach an arduous task right one must possess freshness and vigor, and one could have neither without sleep. His present place of hiding seemed to be as secure as any that could be found. So composing himself he took all chances and sought slumber. Yet it needed a great effort of the will to calm his nerves, and it was a half hour before he began to feel any of the soothing effect that precedes sleep. But fall asleep he did at last, and, despite everything, he slept soundly until the morning.

Henry did not awake to a bright day. The sun had risen, but it was obscured by gray clouds, and the whole heavens were somber. A cold wind began to blow, and with it came drops of rain. He shivered despite the enfolding blanket. The coming of the morning had invariably brought cheerfulness and increase of spirits, but now he felt depression. He foresaw heavy rain again, and it would destroy any but the deepest trail. Moreover, his supplies of food were exhausted and he must replenish them in some manner before proceeding further.

A spirit even as bold and strong as Henry's might well have despaired. He had found his comrades, only to lose them again, and the danger that had threatened

them, and the elements as well, now threatened him, too. An acute judge of sky and air, he knew that the rain, cold, insistent, penetrating, would fall all day, and that he must seek shelter if he would keep his strength. The Indians themselves always took to cover at such times.

He wrapped the blanket around himself, covering his body well from neck to ankle, putting his rifle just inside the fold, but with his hand upon it, ready for instant use if it should be needed. Then he started, walking straight ahead until he came to the crown of a little hill. The clouds meanwhile thickened, and the rain, of the kind that he had foreseen and as cold as ice, was blown against him. The grass and bushes were reeking, and his moccasins became sodden. Despite the vigorous walking, lie felt the wet cold entering his system. There come times when the hardiest must yield, and he saw the increasing need of refuge.

He surveyed the country attentively from the low hill. All around was a dull gray horizon from which the icy rain dripped everywhere. There was no open country. All was forest, and the heavy rolling masses of foliage dripped with icy water, too.

Toward the south the land seemed to dip down, and Henry surmised that in a valley he would be more likely to find the shelter that he craved. He needed it badly. As he stood there he shivered again and again from head to foot, despite the folds of the blanket. So he started at once, walking fast, and feeling little fear of a foe. It was not likely that any would be seeking him at such a time. The rain struck him squarely in the face now. Water came from his moccasins every time his foot was pressed against the earth, and, no matter how closely he drew the folds of the blanket, little streams of it, like ice to the touch, flowed down his neck and made their way under his clothing. He could not remember a time when he had felt more miserable.

He came in about an hour to the dip which, as he had surmised, was the edge of a considerable valley. He ran down the slope, and looked all about for some place of shelter, a thick windbreak in the lee of a hill, or an outcropping of stone, but he saw neither, and, as he continued the search, he came to marshy ground. He saw ahead among the weeds and bushes the gleam of standing pools, and he was about to turn back, when he noticed three or four stones, in a row and about a yard from one another, projecting slightly above the black muck. It struck him that the stones would not naturally be in the soft mud, and, his curiosity aroused, he stepped lightly from one stone to another. When he came to the last stone that he had seen from the hard ground he beheld several more that had been hidden from him by the bushes. Sure now that he had happened upon something not created by nature alone, he followed these stones, leading like steps into the very

depths of the swamp, which was now deep and dark with ooze all about him. He no longer doubted that the stones, the artificial presence of which might have escaped the keenest eye and most logical mind, were placed there for a purpose, and he was resolved to know its nature.

The stepping stones led him about sixty yards into the swamp, and the last thirty yards were at an angle from the first thirty. Then he came to a bit of hard ground, a tiny islet in the mire, upon which he could stand without sinking at all. He looked back from there, and he could not see his point of departure. Bushes, weeds, and saplings grew out of the swamp to a height of a dozen or fifteen feet, and he was inclosed completely. All the vegetation dripped with cold water, and the place was one of the most dismal that he had ever seen. But he had no thought of turning back.

Henry made a shrewd guess as to whither the path led, but he inferred from the appearance of the stepping stones-chiefly from the fact that an odd one here and there had sunk completely out of sight-that they had not been used in a long time, perhaps for years. He found on the other side of the islet a second line of stones, and they led across a marsh, that was almost like a black liquid, to another and larger island.

Here the ground was quite firm, supporting a thick growth of large trees. It seemed to Henry that this island might be seventy or eighty yards across, and he began at once to explore it. In the center, surrounded so closely by swamp oaks that they almost formed a living wall, he found what he had hoped to find, and his relief was so great that, despite his natural and trained stoicism, he gave a little cry of pleasure when he saw it.

A small lodge, made chiefly of poles and bark after the Iroquois fashion, stood within the circle of the trees, occupying almost the whole of the space. It was apparently abandoned long ago, and time and weather had done it much damage. But the bark walls, although they leaned in places at dangerous angles, still stood. The bark roof was pierced by holes on one side, but on the other it was still solid, and shed all the rain from its slope.

The door was open, but a shutter made of heavy pieces of bark cunningly joined together leaned against the wall, and Henry saw that he could make use of it. He stepped inside. The hut had a bark floor which was dry on one side, where the roof was solid, but dripping on the other. Several old articles of Indian use lay about. In one corner was a basket woven of split willow and still fit for service. There were pieces of thread made of Indian hemp and the inner bark of the elm. There were also a piece of pottery and a large, beautifully carved wooden spoon such as every Iroquois carried. In the corner farthest from the

door was a rude fireplace made of large flat stones, although there was no opening for the smoke.

Henry surveyed it all thoughtfully, and he came to the conclusion that it was a hut for hunting, built by some warrior of an inquiring mind who had found this secret place, and who had recognized its possibilities. Here after an expedition for game he could lie hidden from enemies and take his comfort without fear. Doubtless he had sat in this hut on rainy days like the present one and smoked his pipe in the long, patient calm of which the Indian is capable.

Yes, there was the pipe, unnoticed before, trumpet shaped and carved beautifully, lying on a small bark shelf. Henry picked it tip and examined the bowl. It was as dry as a bone, and not a particle of tobacco was left there. He believed that it had not been used for at least a year. Doubtless the Indian who had built this hunting lodge had fallen in some foray, and the secret of it had been lost until Henry Ware, seeking through the cold and rain, had stumbled upon it.

It was nothing but a dilapidated little lodge of poles and bark, all a-leak, but the materials of a house were there, and Henry was strong and skillful. He covered the holes in the roof with fallen pieces of bark, laying heavy pieces of wood across them to hold them in place. Then he lifted the bark shutter into position and closed the door. Some drops of rain still came in through the roof, but they were not many, and he would not mind them for the present. Then he opened the door and began his hardest task.

He intended to build a fire on the flat stones, and, securing fallen wood, he stripped off the bark and cut splinters from the inside. It was slow work and he was very cold, his wet feet sending chills through him, but he persevered, and the little heap of dry splinters grew to a respectable size. Then he cut larger pieces, laying them on one side while he worked with his flint and steel on the splinters.

Flint and steel are not easily handled even by the most skillful, and Henry saw the spark leap up and die out many times before it finally took hold of the end of the tiniest splinter and grew. He watched it as it ran along the little piece of wood and ignited another and then another, the beautiful little red and yellow flames leaping up half a foot in height. Already he felt the grateful warmth and glow, but he would not let himself indulge in premature joy. He fed it with larger and larger pieces until the flames, a deeper and more beautiful red and yellow, rose at least two feet, and big coals began to form. He left the door open a while in order that the smoke might go out, but when the fire had become mostly coals he closed it again, all except a crack of about six inches, which would serve at once

to let any stray smoke out, and to let plenty of fresh air in.

Now Henry, all his preparations made, no detail neglected, proceeded to luxuriate. He spread the soaked blanket out on the bark floor, took off the sodden moccasins and placed them at one angle of the fire, while he sat with his bare feet in front. What a glorious warmth it was! It seemed to enter at his toes and proceed upward through his body, seeking out every little nook and cranny, to dry and warm it, and fill it full of new glow and life.

He sat there a long time, his being radiating with physical comfort. The moccasins dried on one side, and he turned the other. Finally they dried all over and all through, and he put them on again. Then he hung the blanket on the bark wall near the fire, and it, too, would be dry in another hour or so. He foresaw a warm and dry place for the night, and sleep. Now if one only had food! But he must do without that for the present.

He rose and tested all his bones and muscles. No stiffness or soreness had come from the rain and cold, and he was satisfied. He was fit for any physical emergency. He looked out through the crevice. Night was coming, and on the little island in the swamp it looked inexpressibly black and gloomy. His stomach complained, but he shrugged his shoulders, acknowledging primitive necessity, and resumed his seat by the fire. There he sat until the blanket had dried, and deep night had fully come.

In the last hour or two Henry did not move. He remained before the fire, crouched slightly forward, while the generous heat fed the flame of life in him. A glowing bar, penetrating the crevice at the door, fell on the earth outside, but it did not pass beyond the close group of circling trees. The rain still fell with uncommon steadiness and persistence, but at times hail was mingled with it. Henry could not remember in his experience a more desolate night. It seemed that the whole world dwelt in perpetual darkness, and that he was the only living being on it. Yet within the four or five feet square of the hut it was warm and bright, and he was not unhappy.

He would forget the pangs of hunger, and, wrapping himself in the dry blanket, he lay down before the bed of coals, having first raked ashes over them, and he slept one of the soundest sleeps of his life. All night long, the dull cold rain fell, and with it, at intervals, came gusts of hail that rattled like bird shot on the bark walls of the hut. Some of the white pellets blew in at the door, and lay for a moment or two on the floor, then melted in the glow of the fire, and were gone.

But neither wind, rain nor hail awoke Henry. He was as safe, for the time, in

the hut on the islet, as if he were in the fort at Pittsburgh or behind the palisades at Wareville. Dawn came, the sky still heavy and dark with clouds, and the rain still falling.

Henry, after his first sense of refreshment and pleasure, became conscious of a fierce hunger that no amount of the will could now keep quiet. His was a powerful system, needing much nourishment, and he must eat. That hunger became so great that it was acute physical pain. He was assailed by it at all points, and it could be repelled by only one thing, food. He must go forth, taking all risks, and seek it.

He put on fresh wood, covering it with ashes in order that it might not blaze too high, and left the islet. The stepping stones were slippery with water, and his moccasins soon became soaked again, but he forgot the cold and wet in that ferocious hunger, the attacks of which became more violent every minute. He was hopeful that he might see a deer, or even a squirrel, but the animals themselves were likely to keep under cover in such a rain. He expected a hard hunt, and it would be attended also by much danger—these woods must be full of Indians—but he thought little of the risk. His hunger was taking complete possession of his mind. He was realizing now that one might want a thing so much that it would drive away all other thoughts.

Rifle in hand, ready for any quick shot, he searched hour after hour through the woods and thickets. He was wet, bedraggled, and as fierce as a famishing panther, but neither skill nor instinct guided him to anything. The rabbit hid in his burrow, the squirrel remained in his hollow tree, and the deer did not leave his covert.

Henry could not well calculate the passage of time, it seemed so fearfully long, and there was no one to tell him, but he judged that it must be about noon, and his temper was becoming that of the famished panther to which he likened himself. He paused and looked around the circle of the dripping woods. He had retained his idea of direction and he knew that he could go straight back to the hut in the swamp. But he had no idea of returning now. A power that neither he nor anyone else could resist was pushing him on his search.

Searching the gloomy horizon again, he saw against the dark sky a thin and darker line that he knew to be smoke. He inferred, also, with certainty, that it came from an Indian camp, and, without hesitation, turned his course toward it. Indian camp though it might be, and containing the deadliest of foes, he was glad to know something lived beside himself in this wilderness.

He approached with great caution, and found his surmise to be correct. Lying

full length in a wet thicket he saw a party of about twenty warriors-Mohawks he took them to be-in an oak opening. They had erected bark shelters, they had good fires, and they were cooking. He saw them roasting the strips over the coals-bear meat, venison, squirrel, rabbit, bird-and the odor, so pleasant at other times, assailed his nostrils. But it was now only a taunt and a torment. It aroused every possible pang of hunger, and every one of them stabbed like a knife.

The warriors, so secure in their forest isolation, kept no sentinels, and they were enjoying themselves like men who had everything they wanted. Henry could hear them laughing and talking, and he watched them as they ate strip after strip of the delicate, tender meat with the wonderful appetite that the Indian has after long fasting. A fierce, unreasoning anger and jealousy laid hold of him. He was starving, and they rejoiced in plenty only fifty yards away. He began to form plans for a piratical incursion upon them. Half the body of a deer lay near the edge of the opening, he would rush upon it, seize it, and dart away. It might be possible to escape with such spoil.

Then he recalled his prudence. Such a thing was impossible. The whole band of warriors would be upon him in an instant. The best thing that he could do was to shut out the sight of so much luxury in which he could not share, and he crept away among the bushes wondering what he could do to drive away those terrible pains. His vigorous system was crying louder than ever for the food that would sustain it. His eyes were burning a little too brightly, and his face was touched with fever.

Henry stopped once to catch a last glimpse of the fires and the feasting Indians under the bark shelters. He saw a warrior raise a bone, grasping it in both hands, and bite deep into the tender flesh that clothed it. The sight inflamed him into an anger almost uncontrollable. He clenched his fist and shook it at the warrior, who little suspected the proximity of a hatred so intense. Then he bent his head down and rushed away among the wet bushes which in rebuke at his lack of caution raked him across the face.

Henry walked despondently back toward the islet in the swamp. The aspect of air and sky had not changed. The heavens still dripped icy water, and there was no ray of cheerfulness anywhere. The game remained well hidden.

It was a long journey back, and as he felt that he was growing weak he made no haste. He came to dense clumps of bushes, and plowing his way through them, he saw a dark opening under some trees thrown down by an old hurricane. Having some vague idea that it might be the lair of a wild animal, he thrust the muzzle of his rifle into the darkness. It touched a soft substance. There was a growl, and a black form shot out almost into his face. Henry sprang aside, and in

an instant all his powers and faculties returned. He had stirred up a black bear, and before the animal, frightened as much as he was enraged, could run far the boy, careless how many Indians might hear, threw up his rifle and fired.

His aim was good. The bear, shot through the head, fell, and was dead. Henry, transformed, ran up to him. Bear life had been given up to sustain man's. Here was food for many days, and he rejoiced with a great joy. He did not now envy those warriors back there.

The bear, although small, was very fat. Evidently he had fed well on acorns and wild honey, and he would yield up steaks which, to one with Henry's appetite, would be beyond compare. He calculated that it was more than a mile to the swamp, and, after a few preliminaries, he flung the body of the bear over his shoulder. Through some power of the mind over the body his full strength had returned to him miraculously, and when he reached the stepping stones he crossed from one to another lightly and firmly, despite the weight that he carried.

He came to the little bark hut which he now considered his own. The night had fallen again, but some coals still glowed under the ashes, and there was plenty of dry wood. He did everything decently and in order. He took the pelt from the bear, carved the body properly, and then, just as the Indians had done, he broiled strips over the coals. He ate them one after another, slowly, and tasting all the savor, and, intense as was the mere physical pleasure, it was mingled with a deep thankfulness. Not only was the life nourished anew in him, but he would now regain the strength to seek his comrades.

When he had eaten enough he fastened the body of the bear, now in several portions, on hooks high upon the walls, hooks which evidently had been placed there by the former owner of the hut for this very purpose. Then, sure that the savor of the food would draw other wild animals, he brought one of the stepping stones and placed it on the inside of the door. The door could not be pushed aside without arousing him, and, secure in the knowledge, he went to sleep before the coals.

CHAPTER IV. THE RED CHIEFS

Henry awoke only once, and that was about half way between midnight and morning, when his senses, never still entirely, even in sleep, warned him that something was at the door. He rose cautiously upon his arm, saw a dark muzzle at the crevice, and behind it a pair of yellow, gleaming eyes. He knew at once that it was a panther, probably living in the swamp and drawn by the food. It must be very hungry to dare thus the smell of man. Henry's hand moved slowly to the end of a stick, the other end of which was a glowing coal. Then he seized it and hurled it directly at the inquisitive head.

The hot end of the stick struck squarely between the yellow eyes. There was a yelp of pain, and the boy heard the rapid pad of the big cat's feet as it fled into the swamp. Then he turned over on his side, and laughed in genuine pleasure at what was to him a true forest joke. He knew the panther would not come, at least not while he was in the hut, and he calmly closed his eyes once more. The old Henry was himself again.

He awoke in the morning to find that the cold rain was still falling. It seemed to him that it had prepared to rain forever, but he was resolved, nevertheless, now that he had food and the strength that food brings, to begin the search for his comrades. The islet in the swamp would serve as his base-nothing could be better-and he would never cease until he found them or discovered what had become of them.

A little spring of cold water flowed from the edge of the islet to lose itself quickly in the swamp. Henry drank there after his breakfast, and then felt as strong and active as ever. As he knew, the mind may triumph over the body, but the mind cannot save the body without food. Then he made his precious bear meat secure against the prowling panther or others of his kind, tying it on hanging boughs too high for a jump and too slender to support the weight of a large animal. This task finished quickly, he left the swamp and returned toward the spot where lie had seen the Mohawks.

The falling rain and the somber clouds helped Henry, in a way, as the whole forest was enveloped in a sort of gloom, and he was less likely to be seen. But when he had gone about half the distance he heard Indians signaling to one another, and, burying himself as usual in the wet bushes, he saw two small groups of warriors meet and talk. Presently they separated, one party going

toward the east and the other toward the west. Henry thought they were out hunting, as the Indians usually took little care of the morrow, eating all their food in a few days, no matter how great the supply might be.

When he drew near the place he saw three more Indians, and these were traveling directly south. He was quite sure now that his theory was correct. They were sending out hunters in every direction, in order that they might beat up the woods thoroughly for game, and his own position anywhere except on the islet was becoming exceedingly precarious. Nevertheless, using all his wonderful skill, he continued the hunt. He had an abiding faith that his four comrades were yet alive, and he meant to prove it.

In the afternoon the clouds moved away a little, and the rain decreased, though it did not cease. The Indian signs multiplied, and Henry felt sure that the forest within a radius of twenty miles of his islet contained more than one camp. Some great gathering must be in progress and the hunters were out to supply it with food. Four times he heard the sound of shots, and thrice more he saw warriors passing through the forest. Once a wounded deer darted past him, and, lying down in the bushes, he saw the Indians following the fleeing animal. As the day grew older the trails multiplied. Certainly a formidable gathering of bands was in progress, and, feeling that he might at any time be caught in a net, he returned to the islet, which had now become a veritable fort for him.

It was not quite dark when he arrived, and he found all as it had been except the tracks of two panthers under the boughs to which he had fastened the big pieces of bear meat. Henry felt a malicious satisfaction at the disappointment of the panthers.

“Come again, and have the same bad luck,” he murmured.

At dusk the rain ceased entirely, and he prepared for a journey in the night. He examined his powder carefully to see that no particle of it was wet, counted the bullets in his pouch, and then examined the skies. There was a little moon, not too much, enough to show him the way, but not enough to disclose him to an enemy unless very near. Then he left the islet and went swiftly through the forest, laying his course a third time toward the Indian camp. He was sure now that all the hunters had returned, and he did not expect the necessity of making any stops for the purpose of hiding. His hopes were justified, and as he drew near the camp he became aware that its population had increased greatly. It was proved by many signs. New trails converged upon it, and some of them were very broad, indicating that many warriors had passed. They had passed, too, in perfect confidence, as there was no effort at concealment, and Henry surmised that no white force of any size could be within many days' march of this place.

But the very security of the Indians helped his own design. They would not dream that any one of the hated race was daring to come almost within the light of their fires.

Henry had but one fear just now, and that was dogs. If the Indians had any of their mongrel curs with them, they would quickly scent him out and give the alarm with their barking. But he believed that the probabilities were against it. This, so he thought then, was a war or hunting camp, and it was likely that the Indians would leave the dogs at their permanent villages. At any rate he would take the risk, and he drew slowly toward the oak opening, where some Indians stood about. Beyond them, in another dip of the valley, was a wider opening which he had not seen on his first trip, and this contained not only bark shelters, but buildings that indicated a permanent village. The second and larger opening was filled with a great concourse of warriors.

Fortunately the foliage around the opening was very dense, many trees and thickets everywhere. Henry crept to the very rim, where, lying in the blackest of the shadows, and well hidden himself, he could yet see nearly everything in the camp. The men were not eating now, although it was obvious that the hunters had done well. The dressed bodies of deer and bear hung in the bark shelters. Most of the Indians sat about the fires, and it seemed to Henry that they had an air of expectancy. At least two hundred were present, and all of them were in war paint, although there were several styles of paint. There was a difference in appearance, too, in the warriors, and Henry surmised that representatives of all the tribes of the Iroquois were there, coming to the extreme western boundary or fringe of their country.

While Henry watched them a half dozen who seemed by their bearing and manner to be chiefs drew together at a point not far from him and talked together earnestly. Now and then they looked toward the forest, and he was quite sure that they were expecting somebody, a person of importance. He became deeply interested. He was lying in a dense clump of hazel bushes, flat upon his stomach, his face raised but little above the ground. He would have been hidden from the keenest eye only ten feet away, but the faces of the chiefs outlined against the blazing firelight were so clearly visible to him that he could see every change of expression. They were fine-looking men, all of middle age, tall, lean, their noses hooked, features cut clean and strong, and their heads shaved, all except the defiant scalp lock, into which the feather of an eagle was twisted. Their bodies were draped in fine red or blue blankets, and they wore leggins and moccasins of beautifully tanned deerskin.

They ceased talking presently, and Henry heard a distant wailing note from the

west. Some one in the camp replied with a cry in kind, and then a silence fell upon them all. The chiefs stood erect, looking toward the west. Henry knew that he whom they expected was at hand.

The cry was repeated, but much nearer, and a warrior leaped into the opening, in the full blaze of the firelight. He was entirely naked save for a breech cloth and moccasins, and he was a wild and savage figure. He stood for a moment or two, then faced the chiefs, and, bowing before them, spoke a few words in the Wyandot tongue-Henry knew already by his paint that he was a Wyandot.

The chiefs inclined their heads gravely, and the herald, turning, leaped back into the forest. In two or three minutes six men, including the herald, emerged from the woods, and Henry moved a little when he saw the first of the six, all of whom were Wyandots. It was Timmendiquas, head chief of the Wyandots, and Henry had never seen him more splendid in manner and bearing than he was as he thus met the representatives of the famous Six Nations. Small though the Wyandot tribe might be, mighty was its valor and fame, and White Lightning met the great Iroquois only as an equal, in his heart a superior.

It was an extraordinary thing, but Henry, at this very moment, burrowing in the earth that he might not lose his life at the hands of either, was an ardent partisan of Timmendiquas. It was the young Wyandot chief whom he wished to be first, to make the greatest impression, and he was pleased when he heard the low hum of admiration go round the circle of two hundred savage warriors. It was seldom, indeed, perhaps never, that the Iroquois had looked upon such a man as Timmendiquas.

Timmendiquas and his companions advanced slowly toward the chiefs, and the Wyandot overtopped all the Iroquois. Henry could tell by the manner of the chiefs that the reputation of the famous White Lightning had preceded him, and that they had already found fact equal to report.

The chiefs, Timmendiquas among them, sat down on logs before the fire, and all the warriors withdrew to a respectful distance, where they stood and watched in silence. The oldest chief took his long pipe, beautifully carved and shaped like a trumpet, and filled it with tobacco which he lighted with a coal from the fire. Then he took two or three whiffs and passed the pipe to Timmendiquas, who did the same. Every chief smoked the pipe, and then they sat still, waiting in silence.

Henry was so much absorbed in this scene, which was at once a spectacle and a drama, that he almost forgot where he was, and that he was an enemy. He wondered now at their silence. If this was a council surely they would discuss whatever question had brought them there! But he was soon enlightened. That

low far cry came again, but from the east. It was answered, as before, from the camp, and in three or four minutes a warrior sprang from the forest into the opening. Like the first, he was naked except for the breech cloth and moccasins. The chiefs rose at his coming, received his salute gravely, and returned it as gravely. Then he returned to the forest, and all waited in the splendid calm of the Indian.

Curiosity pricked Henry like a nettle. Who was coming now? It must be some man of great importance, or they would not wait so silently. There was the same air of expectancy that had preceded the arrival of Timmendiquas. All the warriors looked toward the eastern wall of the forest, and Henry looked the same way. Presently the black foliage parted, and a man stepped forth, followed at a little distance by seven or eight others. The stranger, although tall, was not equal in height to Timmendiquas, but he, too, had a lofty and splendid presence, and it was evident to anyone versed at all in forest lore that here was a great chief. He was lean but sinewy, and he moved with great ease and grace. He reminded Henry of a powerful panther. He was dressed, after the manner of famous chiefs, with the utmost care. His short military coat of fine blue cloth bore a silver epaulet on either shoulder. His head was not bare, disclosing the scalp lock, like those of the other Indians; it was covered instead with a small hat of felt, round and laced. Hanging carelessly over one shoulder was a blanket of blue cloth with a red border. At his side, from a belt of blue leather swung a silver-mounted small sword. His leggins were of superfine blue cloth and his moccasins of deerskin. Both were trimmed with small beads of many colors.

The new chief advanced into the opening amid the dead silence that still held all, and Timmendiquas stepped forward to meet him. These two held the gaze of everyone, and what they and they alone did had become of surpassing interest. Each was haughty, fully aware of his own dignity and importance, but they met half way, looked intently for a moment or two into the eyes of each other, and then saluted gravely.

All at once Henry knew the stranger. He had never seen him before, but his impressive reception, and the mixture of military and savage attire revealed him. This could be none other than the great Mohawk war chief, Thayendanegea, the Brant of the white men, terrible name on the border. Henry gazed at him eagerly from his covert, etching his features forever on his memory. His face, lean and strong, was molded much like that of Timmendiquas, and like the Wyandot he was young, under thirty.

Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea-it was truly he-returned to the fire, and once again the trumpet-shaped pipe was smoked by all. The two young chiefs

received the seats of favor, and others sat about them. But they were not the only great chiefs present, though all yielded first place to them because of their character and exploits.

Henry was not mistaken in his guess that this was an important council, although its extent exceeded even his surmise. Delegates and head chiefs of all the Six Nations were present to confer with the warlike Wyandots of the west who had come so far east to meet them. Thayendanegea was the great war chief of the Mohawks, but not their titular chief. The latter was an older man, Te-kie-ho-ke (Two Voices), who sat beside the younger. The other chiefs were the Onondaga, Tahtoo-ta-hoo (The Entangled); the Oneida, O-tat-sheh-te (Bearing a Quiver); the Cayuga, Te-ka-ha-hoonk (He Who Looks Both Ways); the Seneca, Kan-ya-tai-jo (Beautiful Lake); and the Tuscarora, Ta-ha-en-te-yahwak-hon (Encircling and Holding Up a Tree). The names were hereditary, and because in a dim past they had formed the great confederacy, the Onondagas were first in the council, and were also the high priests and titular head of the Six Nations. But the Mohawks were first on-the war path.

All the Six Nations were divided into clans, and every clan, camping in its proper place, was represented at this meeting.

Henry had heard much at Pittsburgh of the Six Nations, their wonderful league, and their wonderful history. He knew that according to the legend the league had been formed by Hiawatha, an Onondaga. He was opposed in this plan by Tododaho, then head chief of the Onondagas, but he went to the Mohawks and gained the support of their great chief, Dekanawidah. With his aid the league was formed, and the solemn agreement, never broken, was made at the Onondaga Lake. Now they were a perfect little state, with fifty chiefs, or, including the head chiefs, fifty-six.

Some of these details Henry was to learn later. He was also to learn many of the words that the chiefs said through a source of which he little dreamed at the present. Yet he divined much of it from the meeting of the fiery Wyandots with the highly developed and warlike power of the Six Nations.

Thayendanegea was talking now, and Timmendiquas, silent and grave, was listening. The Mohawk approached his subject indirectly through the trope, allegory, and simile that the Indian loved. He talked of the unseen deities that ruled the life of the Iroquois through mystic dreams. He spoke of the trees, the rocks, and the animals, all of which to the Iroquois had souls. He called on the name of the Great Spirit, which was Aieroski before it became Manitou, the Great Spirit who, in the Iroquois belief, had only the size of a dwarf because his soul was so mighty that he did not need body.

“This land is ours, the land of your people and mine, oh, chief of the brave Wyandots,” he said to Timmendiquas. “Once there was no land, only the waters, but Aieroski raised the land of Konspioni above the foam. Then he sowed five handfuls of red seed in it, and from those handfuls grew the Five Nations. Later grew up the Tuscaroras, who have joined us and other tribes of our race, like yours, great chief of the brave Wyandots.”

Timmendiquas still said nothing. He did not allow an eyelid to flicker at this assumption of superiority for the Six Nations over all other tribes. A great warrior he was, a great politician also, and he wished to unite the Iroquois in a firm league with the tribes of the Ohio valley. The coals from the great fire glowed and threw out an intense heat. Thayendanegea unbuttoned his military coat and threw it back, revealing a bare bronze chest, upon which was painted the device of the Mohawks, a flint and steel. The chests of the Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca head chiefs were also bared to the glow. The device on the chest of the Onondaga was a cabin on top of a hill, the Caytiga's was a great pipe, and the figure of a mountain adorned the Seneca bronze.

“We have had the messages that you have sent to us, Timmendiquas,” said Thayendanegea, “and they are good in the eyes of our people, the Rotinonsionni (the Mohawks). They please, too, the ancient tribe, the Kannoseone (the Onondagas), the valiant Hotinonsionni (the Senecas), and all our brethren of the Six Nations. All the land from the salt water to the setting sun was given to the red men by Aieroski, but if we do not defend it we cannot keep it.”

“It is so,” said Timmendiquas, speaking for the first time. “We have fought them on the Ohio and in Kaintuck-ee, where they come with their rifles and axes. The whole might of the Wyandots, the Shawnees, the Miamis, the Illinois, the Delawares, and the Ottawas has gone forth against them. We have slain many of them, but we have failed to drive them back. Now we have come to ask the Six Nations to press down upon them in the east with all your power, while we do the same in the west. Surely then your Aieroski and our Manitou, who are the same, will not refuse us success.”

The eyes of Thayendanegea glistened.

“You speak well, Timmendiquas,” he said. “All the red men must unite to fight for the land of Konspioni which Aieroski raised above the sea, and we be two, you and I, Timmendiquas, fit to lead them to battle.”

“It is so,” said Timmendiquas gravely.

CHAPTER V. THE IROQUOIS TOWN

Henry lay fully an hour in the bushes. He had forgotten about the dogs that he dreaded, but evidently he was right in his surmise that the camp contained none. Nothing disturbed him while he stared at what was passing by the firelight. There could be no doubt that the meeting of Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea portended great things, but he would not be stirred from his task of rescuing his comrades or discovering their fate.

They two, great chiefs, sat long in close converse. Others-older men, chiefs, also-came at times and talked with them. But these two, proud, dominating, both singularly handsome men of the Indian type, were always there. Henry was almost ready to steal away when he saw a new figure approaching the two chiefs. The walk and bearing of the stranger were familiar, and HENRY knew him even before his face was lighted tip by the fire. It was Braxton Wyatt, the renegade, who had escaped the great battles on both the Ohio and the Mississippi, and who was here with the Iroquois, ready to do to his own race all the evil that he could. Henry felt a shudder of repulsion, deeper than any Indian could inspire in him. They fought for their own land and their own people, but Braxton Wyatt had violated everything that an honest man should hold sacred.

Henry, on the whole, was not surprised to see him. Such a chance was sure to draw Braxton Wyatt. Moreover, the war, so far as it pertained to the border, seemed to be sweeping toward the northeast, and it bore many stormy petrels upon its crest.

He watched Wyatt as he walked toward one of the fires. There the renegade sat down and talked with the warriors, apparently on the best of terms. He was presently joined by two more renegades, whom Henry recognized as Blackstaffe and Quarles. Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea rose after a while, and walked toward the center of the camp, where several of the bark shelters had been enclosed entirely. Henry judged that one had been set apart for each, but they were lost from his view when they passed within the circling ring of warriors.

Henry believed that the Iroquois and Wyandots would form a fortified camp here, a place from which they would make sudden and terrible forays upon the settlements. He based his opinion upon the good location and the great number of saplings that had been cut down already. They would build strong lodges and then a palisade around them with the saplings. He was speedily confirmed in this

opinion when he saw warriors come to the forest with hatchets and begin to cut down more saplings. He knew then that it was time to go, as a wood chopper might blunder upon him at any time.

He slipped from his covert and was quickly gone in the forest. His limbs were somewhat stiff from lying so long in one position, but that soon wore away, and he was comparatively fresh when he came once more to the islet in the swamp. A good moon was now shining, tipping the forest with a fine silvery gray, and Henry purveyed with the greatest satisfaction the simple little shelter that he had found so opportunely. It was a good house, too, good to such a son of the deepest forest as was Henry. It was made of nothing but bark and poles, but it had kept out all that long, penetrating rain of the last three or four days, and when he lifted the big stone aside and opened the door it seemed as snug a place as he could have wished.

He left the door open a little, lighted a small fire on the flat stones, having no fear that it would be seen through the dense curtain that shut him in, and broiled big bear steaks on the coals. When he had eaten and the fire had died he went out and sat beside the hut. He was well satisfied with the day's work, and he wished now to think with all the concentration that one must put upon a great task if he expects to achieve it. He intended to invade the Indian camp, and he knew full well that it was the most perilous enterprise that he had ever attempted. Yet scouts and hunters had done such things and had escaped with their lives. He must not shrink from the path that others had trodden.

He made up his mind firmly, and partly thought out his plan of operations. Then he rested, and so sanguine was his temperament that he began to regard the deed itself as almost achieved. Decision is always soothing after doubt, and he fell into a pleasant dreamy state. A gentle wind was blowing, the forest was dry and the leaves rustled with the low note that is like the softest chord of a violin. It became penetrating, thrillingly sweet, and hark! it spoke to him in a voice that he knew. It was the same voice that he had heard on the Ohio, mystic, but telling him to be of heart and courage. He would triumph over hardships and dangers, and he would see his friends again.

Henry started up from his vision. The song was gone, and he heard only the wind softly moving the leaves. It had been vague and shadowy as gossamer, light as the substance of a dream, but it was real to him, nevertheless, and the deep glow of certain triumph permeated his being, body and mind. It was not strange that he had in his nature something of the Indian mysticism that personified the winds and the trees and everything about him. The Manitou of the red man and the ancient Aieroski of the Iroquois were the same as his own

God. He could not doubt that he had a message. Down on the Ohio he had had the same message more than once, and it had always come true.

He heard a slight rustling among the bushes, and, sitting perfectly still, he saw a black bear emerge into the open. It had gained the islet in some manner, probably floundering through the black mire, and the thought occurred to him that it was the mate of the one he had slain, drawn perhaps by instinct on the trail of a lost comrade. He could have shot the bear as he sat-and he would need fresh supplies of food soon-but he did not have the heart to do it.

The bear sniffed a little at the wind, which was blowing the human odor away from him, and sat back on his haunches. Henry did not believe that the animal had seen him or was yet aware of his presence, although he might suspect. There was something humorous and also pathetic in the visitor, who cocked his head on one side and looked about him. He made a distinct appeal to Henry, who sat absolutely still, so still that the little bear could not be sure at first that he was a human being. A minute passed, and the red eye of the bear rested upon the boy. Henry felt pleasant and sociable, but he knew that he could retain friendly relations only by remaining quiet.

“If I have eaten your comrade, my friend,” he said to himself, “it is only because of hard necessity.” The bear, little, comic, and yet with that touch of pathos about him, cocked his head a little further over on one side, and as a silver shaft of moonlight fell upon him Henry could see one red eye gleaming. It was a singular fact, but the boy, alone in the wilderness, and the loser of his comrades, felt for the moment a sense of comradeship with the bear, which was also alone, and doubtless the loser of a comrade, also. He uttered a soft growling sound like the satisfied purr of a bear eating its food.

The comical bear rose a little higher on his hind paws, and looked in astonishment at the motionless figure that uttered sounds so familiar. Yet the figure was not familiar. He had never seen a human being before, and the shape and outline were very strange to him. It might be some new kind of animal, and he was disposed to be inquiring, because there was nothing in these forests which the black bear was afraid of until man came.

He advanced a step or two and growled gently. Then he reared up again on his hind paws, and cocked his held to one side in his amusing manner. Henry, still motionless, smiled at him. Here, for an instant at least, was a cheery visitor and companionship. He at least would not break the spell.

“You look almost as if you could talk, old fellow,” he said to himself, “and if I knew your language I'd ask you a lot of questions.”

The bear, too, was motionless now, torn by doubt and curiosity. It certainly was a singular figure that sat there, fifteen or twenty yards before him, and he had the most intense curiosity to solve the mystery of this creature. But caution held him back.

There was a sudden flaw in the light breeze. It shifted about and brought the dreadful man odor to the nostrils of the honest black bear. It was something entirely new to him, but it contained the quality of fear. That still strange figure was his deadliest foe. Dropping down upon his four paws, he fled among the trees, and then scrambled somehow through the swamp to the mainland.

Henry sighed. Despite his own friendly feeling, the bear, warned by instinct, was afraid of him, and, as he was bound to acknowledge to himself, the bear's instinct was doubtless right. He rose, went into the hut, and slept heavily through the night. In the morning he left the islet once more to scout in the direction of the Indian camp, but he found it a most dangerous task. The woods were full of warriors hunting. As he had judged, the game was abundant, and he heard rifles cracking in several directions. He loitered, therefore, in the thickest of the thickets, willing to wait until night came for his enterprise. It was advisable, moreover, to wait, because he did not see yet just how he was going to succeed. He spent nearly the whole day shifting here and there through the forest, but late in the afternoon, as the Indians yet seemed so numerous in the woods, he concluded to go back toward the islet.

He was about two miles from the swamp when he heard a cry, sharp but distant. It was that of the savages, and Henry instinctively divined the cause. A party of the warriors had come somehow upon his trail, and they would surely follow it. It was a mischance that he had not expected. He waited a minute or two, and then heard the cry again, but nearer. He knew that it would come no more, but it confirmed him in his first opinion.

Henry had little fear of being caught, as the islet was so securely hidden, but he did not wish to take even a remote chance of its discovery. Hence he ran to the eastward of it, intending as the darkness came, hiding his trail, to double back and regain the hut.

He proceeded at a long, easy gait, his mind not troubled by the pursuit. It was to him merely an incident that should be ended as soon as possible, annoying perhaps, but easily cured. So he swung lightly along, stopping at intervals among the bushes to see if any of the warriors had drawn near, but he detected nothing. Now and then he looked up to the sky, willing that night should end this matter quickly and peacefully.

His wish seemed near fulfillment. An uncommonly brilliant sun was setting. The whole west was a sea of red and yellow fire, but in the east the forest was already sinking into the dark. He turned now, and went back toward the west on a line parallel with the pursuit, but much closer to the swamp. The dusk thickened rapidly. The sun dropped over the curve of the world, and the vast complex maze of trunks and boughs melted into a solid black wall. The incident of the pursuit was over and with it its petty annoyances. He directed his course boldly now for the stepping stones, and traveled fast. Soon the first of them would be less than a hundred yards away.

But the incident was not over. Wary and skillful though the young forest runner might be, he had made one miscalculation, and it led to great consequences. As he skirted the edge of the swamp in the darkness, now fully come, a dusky figure suddenly appeared. It was a stray warrior from some small band, wandering about at will. The meeting was probably as little expected by him as it was by Henry, and they were so close together when they saw each other that neither had time to raise his rifle. The warrior, a tall, powerful man, dropping his gun and snatching out a knife, sprang at once upon his enemy.

Henry was borne back by the weight and impact, but, making an immense effort, he recovered himself and, seizing the wrist of the Indian's knife hand, exerted all his great strength. The warrior wished to change the weapon from his right band, but he dared not let go with the other lest he be thrown down at once, and with great violence. His first rush having failed, he was now at a disadvantage, as the Indian is not generally a wrestler. Henry pushed him back, and his hand closed tighter and tighter around the red wrist. He wished to tear the knife from it, but he, too, was afraid to let go with the other hand, and so the two remained locked fast. Neither uttered a cry after the first contact, and the only sounds in the dark were their hard breathing, which turned to a gasp now and then, and the shuffle of their feet over the earth.

Henry felt that it must end soon. One or the other must give way. Their sinews were already strained to the cracking point, and making a supreme effort he bore all his weight upon the warrior, who, unable to sustain himself, went down with the youth upon him. The Indian uttered a groan, and Henry, leaping instantly to his feet, looked down upon his fallen antagonist, who did not stir. He knew the cause. As they fell the point of the knife bad been turned upward, and it had entered the Indian's heart.

Although he had been in peril at his hands, Henry looked at the slain man in a sort of pity. He had not wished to take anyone's life, and, in reality, he had not been the direct cause of it. But it was a stern time and the feeling soon passed.

The Wyandot, for such he was by his paint, would never have felt a particle of remorse had the victory been his.

The moon was now coming out, and Henry looked down thoughtfully at the still face. Then the idea came to him, in fact leaped up in his brain, with such an impulse that it carried conviction. He would take this warrior's place and go to the Indian camp. So eager was he, and so full of his plan, that he did not feel any repulsion as he opened the warrior's deerskin shirt and took his totem from a place near his heart. It was a little deerskin bag containing a bunch of red feathers. This was his charm, his magic spell, his bringer of good luck, which had failed him so woefully this time. Henry, not without a touch of the forest belief, put it inside his own hunting shirt, wishing, although he laughed at himself, that if the red man's medicine had any potency it should be on his own side.

Then he found also the little bag in which the Indian carried his war paint and the feather brush with which he put it on. The next hour witnessed a singular transformation. A white youth was turned into a red warrior. He cut his own hair closely, all except a tuft in the center, with his sharp hunting knife. The tuft and the close crop he stained black with the Indian's paint. It was a poor black, but he hoped that it would pass in the night. He drew the tuft into a scalplock, and intertwined it with a feather from the Indian's own tuft. Then he stained his face, neck, hands, and arms with the red paint, and stood forth a powerful young warrior of a western nation.

He hid the Indian's weapons and his own raccoon-skin cap in the brush. Then he took the body of the fallen warrior to the edge of the swamp and dropped it in. His object was not alone concealment, but burial as well. He still felt sorry for the unfortunate Wyandot, and he watched him until he sank completely from sight in the mire. Then he turned away and traveled a straight course toward the great Indian camp.

He stopped once on the way at a clear pool irradiated by the bright moonlight, and looked attentively at his reflection. By night, at least, it was certainly that of an Indian, and, summoning all his confidence, he continued upon his chosen and desperate task.

Henry knew that the chances were against him, even with his disguise, but he was bound to enter the Indian camp, and he was prepared to incur all risks and to endure all penalties. He even felt a certain lightness of heart as he hurried on his way, and at length saw through the forest the flare of light from the Indian camp.

He approached cautiously at first in order that he might take a good look into

the camp, and he was surprised at what he saw. In a single day the village had been enlarged much more. It seemed to him that it contained at least twice as many warriors. Women and children, too, had come, and he heard a stray dog barking here and there. Many more fires than usual were burning, and there was a great murmur of voices.

Henry was much taken aback at first. It seemed that he was about to plunge into the midst of the whole Iroquois nation, and at a time, too, when something of extreme importance was going on, but a little reflection showed that he was fortunate. Amid so many people, and so much ferment it was not at all likely that he would be noticed closely. It was his intention, if the necessity came, to pass himself off as a warrior of the Shawnee tribe who had wandered far eastward, but he meant to avoid sedulously the eye of Timmendiquas, who might, through his size and stature, divine his identity.

As Henry lingered at the edge of the camp, in indecision whether to wait a little or plunge boldly into the light of the fires, he became aware that all sounds in the village-for such it was instead of a camp-had ceased suddenly, except the light tread of feet and the sound of many people talking low. He saw through the bushes that all the Iroquois, and with them the detachment of Wyandots under White Lightning, were going toward a large structure in the center, which he surmised to be the Council House. He knew from his experience with the Indians farther west that the Iroquois built such structures.

He could no longer doubt that some ceremony of the greatest importance was about to begin, and, dismissing indecision, he left the bushes and entered the village, going with the crowd toward the great pole building, which was, indeed, the Council House.

But little attention was paid to Henry. He would have drawn none at all, had it not been for his height, and when a warrior or two glanced at him he uttered some words in Shawnee, saying that he had wandered far, and was glad to come to the hospitable Iroquois. One who could speak a little Shawnee bade him welcome, and they went on, satisfied, their minds more intent upon the ceremony than upon a visitor.

The Council House, built of light poles and covered with poles and thatch, was at least sixty feet long and about thirty feet wide, with a large door on the eastern side, and one or two smaller ones on the other sides. As Henry arrived, the great chiefs and sub-chiefs of the Iroquois were entering the building, and about it were grouped many warriors and women, and even children. But all preserved a decorous solemnity, and, knowing the customs of the forest people so well, he was sure that the ceremony, whatever it might be, must be of a highly

sacred nature. He himself drew to one side, keeping as much as possible in the shadow, but he was using to its utmost power every faculty of observation that Nature had given him.

Many of the fires were still burning, but the moon had come out with great brightness, throwing a silver light over the whole village, and investing with attributes that savored of the mystic and impressive this ceremony, held by a savage but great race here in the depths of the primeval forest. Henry was about to witness a Condoling Council, which was at once a mourning for chiefs who had fallen in battle farther east with his own people and the election and welcome of their successors.

The chiefs presently came forth from the Council House or, as it was more generally called, the Long House, and, despite the greatness of Thayendanegea, those of the Onondaga tribe, in virtue of their ancient and undisputed place as the political leaders and high priests of the Six Nations, led the way. Among the stately Onondaga chiefs were: Atotarho (The Entangled), Skanawati (Beyond the River), Tehatkahtons (Looking Both Ways), Tehayatkwarayen (Red Wings), and Hahiron (The Scattered). They were men of stature and fine countenance, proud of the titular primacy that belonged to them because it was the Onondaga, Hiawatha, who had formed the great confederacy more than four hundred years before our day, or just about the time Columbus was landing on the shores of the New World.

Next to the Onondagas came the fierce and warlike Mohawks, who lived nearest to Albany, who were called Keepers of the Eastern Gate, and who were fully worthy of their trust. They were content that the Onondagas should lead in council, so long as they were first in battle, and there was no jealousy between them. Among their chiefs were Koswensiroutha (Broad Shoulders) and Satekariwate (Two Things Equal).

Third in rank were the Senecas, and among their chiefs were Kanokarih (The Threatened) and Kanyadariyo (Beautiful Lake).

These three, the Onondagas, Mohawks, and Senecas, were esteemed the three senior nations. After them, in order of precedence, came the chiefs of the three junior nations, the Oneidas, Cayugas, and Tuscaroras. All of the great chiefs had assistant chiefs, usually relatives, who, in case of death, often succeeded to their places. But these assistants now remained in the crowd with other minor chiefs and the mass of the warriors. A little apart stood Timmendiquas and his Wyandots. He, too, was absorbed in the ceremony so sacred to him, an Indian, and he did not notice the tall figure of the strange Shawnee lingering in the deepest of the shadows.

The head chiefs, walking solemnly and never speaking, marched across the clearing, and then through the woods to a glen, where two young warriors had kindled a little fire of sticks as a signal of welcome. The chiefs gathered around the fire and spoke together in low tones. This was Deyuhnyon Kwarakda, which means “The Reception at the Edge of the Wood.”

Henry and some others followed, as it was not forbidden to see, and his interest increased. He shared the spiritual feeling which was impressed upon the red faces about him. The bright moonlight, too, added to the effect, giving it the tinge of an old Druidical ceremony.

The chiefs relapsed into silence and sat thus about ten minutes. Then rose the sound of a chant, distant and measured, and a procession of young and inferior chiefs, led by Oneidas, appeared, slowly approaching the fire. Behind them were warriors, and behind the warriors were many women and children. All the women were in their brightest attire, gay with feather headdresses and red, blue, or green blankets from the British posts.

The procession stopped at a distance of about a dozen yards from the chiefs about the council fire, and the Oneida, Kathlahon, formed the men in a line facing the head chiefs, with the women and children grouped in an irregular mass behind them. The singing meanwhile had stopped. The two groups stood facing each other, attentive and listening.

Then Hahiron, the oldest of the Onondagas, walked back and forth in the space between the two groups, chanting a welcome. Like all Indian songs it was monotonous. Every line he uttered with emphasis and a rising inflection, the phrase “Haih-haih” which may be translated “Hail to thee!” or better, “All hail!” Nevertheless, under the moonlight in the wilderness and with rapt faces about him, it was deeply impressive. Henry found it so.

Hahiron finished his round and went back to his place by the fire. Atotarho, head chief of the Onondagas, holding in his hands beautifully beaded strings of Iroquois wampum, came forward and made a speech of condolence, to which Kathlahon responded. Then the head chiefs and the minor chiefs smoked pipes together, after which the head chiefs, followed by the minor chiefs, and these in turn by the crowd, led the way back to the village.

Many hundreds of persons were in this procession, which was still very grave and solemn, every one in it impressed by the sacred nature of this ancient rite. The chief entered the great door of the Long House, and all who could find places not reserved followed. Henry went in with the others, and sat in a corner, making himself as small as possible. Many women, the place of whom was high

among the Iroquois, were also in the Long House.

The head chiefs sat on raised seats at the north end of the great room. In front of them, on lower seats, were the minor chiefs of the three older nations on the left, and of the three younger nations on the right. In front of these, but sitting on the bark floor, was a group of warriors. At the east end, on both high and low seats, were warriors, and facing them on the western side were women, also on both high and low seats. The southern side facing the chiefs was divided into sections, each with high and low seats. The one on the left was occupied by men, and the one on the right by women. Two small fires burned in the center of the Long House about fifteen feet apart.

It was the most singular and one of the most impressive scenes that Henry had ever beheld. When all had found their seats there was a deep silence. Henry could hear the slight crackling made by the two fires as they burned, and the light fell faintly across the multitude of dark, eager faces. Not less than five hundred people were in the Long House, and here was the red man at his best, the first of the wild, not the second or third of the civilized, a drop of whose blood in his veins brings to the white man now a sense of pride, and not of shame, as it does when that blood belongs to some other races.

The effect upon Henry was singular. He almost forgot that he was a foe among them on a mission. For the moment he shared in their feelings, and he waited with eagerness for whatever might come.

Thayendanegea, the Mohawk, stood up in his place among the great chiefs. The role he was about to assume belonged to Atotarho, the Onondaga, but the old Onondaga assigned it for the occasion to Thayendanegea, and there was no objection. Thayendanegea was an educated man, he had been in England, he was a member of a Christian church, and he had translated a part of the Bible from English into his own tongue, but now he was all a Mohawk, a son of the forest.

He spoke to the listening crowd of the glories of the Six Nations, how Hah-gweh-di-yu (The Spirit of Good) had inspired Hiawatha to form the Great Confederacy of the Five Nations, afterwards the Six; how they had held their hunting grounds for nearly two centuries against both English and French; and how they would hold them against the Americans. He stopped at moments, and deep murmurs of approval went through the Long House. The eyes of both men and women flashed as the orator spoke of their glory and greatness. Timmendiquas, in a place of honor, nodded approval. If he could he would form such another league in the west.

The air in the Long House, breathed by so many, became heated. It seemed to

have in it a touch of fire. The orator's words burned. Swift and deep impressions were left upon the excited brain. The tall figure of the Mohawk towered, gigantic, in the half light, and the spell that he threw over all was complete.

He spoke about half an hour, but when he stopped he did not sit down. Henry knew by the deep breath that ran through the Long House that something more was coming from Thayendanegea. Suddenly the red chief began to sing in a deep, vibrant voice, and this was the song that he sung:

This was the roll of you,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

You that joined in the work,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

You that finished the task,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

The Great League,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

There was the same incessant repetition of “Haih haih!” that Henry had noticed in the chant at the edge of the woods, but it seemed to give a cumulative effect, like the roll of thunder, and at every slight pause that deep breath of approval ran through the crowd in the Long House. The effect of the song was indescribable. Fire ran in the veins of all, men, women, and children. The great pulses in their throats leaped up. They were the mighty nation, the ever-victorious, the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, that had held at bay both the French and the English since first a white man was seen in the land, and that would keep back the Americans now.

Henry glanced at Timmendiquas. The nostrils of the great White Lightning were twitching. The song reached to the very roots of his being, and aroused all his powers. Like Thayendanegea, he was a statesman, and he saw that the Americans were far more formidable to his race than English or French had ever been. The Americans were upon the ground, and incessantly pressed upon the red man, eye to eye. Only powerful leagues like those of the Iroquois could withstand them.

Thayendanegea sat down, and then there was another silence, a period lasting about two minutes. These silences seemed to be a necessary part of all Iroquois rites. When it closed two young warriors stretched an elm bark rope across the room from east to west and near the ceiling, but between the high chiefs and the minor chiefs. Then they hung dressed skins all along it, until the two grades of chiefs were hidden from the view of each other. This was the sign of mourning, and was followed by a silence. The fires in the Long House had died down somewhat, and little was to be seen but the eyes and general outline of the people. Then a slender man of middle years, the best singer in all the Iroquois nation, arose and sang:

To the great chiefs bring we greeting,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

To the dead chiefs, kindred greeting,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

To the strong men 'round him greeting,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

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To the mourning women greeting,
All hail! All hail! All hail!

There our grandsires' words repeating,
All hail! All hail!  All hail!

Graciously, Oh, grandsires, hear,
All hail! All hail!  All hail!
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The singing voice was sweet, penetrating, and thrilling, and the song was sad. At the pauses deep murmurs of sorrow ran through the crowd in the Long House. Grief for the dead held them all. When he finished, Satekariwate, the Mohawk, holding in his hands three belts of wampum, uttered a long historical chant telling of their glorious deeds, to which they listened patiently. The chant over, he handed the belts to an attendant, who took them to Thayendanegea, who held them for a few moments and looked at them gravely.

One of the wampum belts was black, the sign of mourning; another was purple, the sign of war; and the third was white, the sign of peace. They were beautiful pieces of workmanship, very old.

When Hiawatha left the Onondagas and fled to the Mohawks he crossed a lake supposed to be the Oneida. While paddling along he noticed that man tiny black, purple, and white shells clung to his paddle. Reaching the shore he found such shells in long rows upon the beach, and it occurred to him to use them for the depiction of thought according to color. He strung them on threads of elm bark, and afterward, when the great league was formed, the shells were made to represent five clasped hands. For four hundred years the wampum belts have been sacred among the Iroquois.

Now Thayendanegea gave the wampum belts back to the attendant, who returned them to Satekariwate, the Mohawk. There was a silence once more, and then the chosen singer began the Consoling Song again, but now he did not sing it alone. Two hundred male voices joined him, and the time became faster. Its tone changed from mourning and sorrow to exultation and menace. Everyone thought of war, the tomahawk, and victory. The song sung as it was now became a genuine battle song, rousing and thrilling. The Long House trembled with the mighty chorus, and its volume poured forth into the encircling dark woods.

All the time the song was going on, Satekariwate, the Mohawk, stood holding the belts in his hand, but when it was over he gave them to an attendant, who carried them to another head chief. Thayendanegea now went to the center of the room and, standing between the two fires, asked who were the candidates for the places of the dead chiefs.

The dead chiefs were three, and three tall men, already chosen among their

own tribes, came forward to succeed them. Then a fourth came, and Henry was startled. It was Timmendiquas, who, as the bravest chief of the brave Wyandots, was about to become, as a signal tribute, and as a great sign of friendship, an adopted son and honorary chief of the Mohawks, Keepers of the Western Gate, and most warlike of all the Iroquois tribes.

As Timmendiquas stood before Thayendanegea, a murmur of approval deeper than any that had gone before ran through all the crowd in the Long House, and it was deepest on the women's benches, where sat many matrons of the Iroquois, some of whom were chiefs-a woman could be a chief among the Iroquois.

The candidates were adjudged acceptable by the other chiefs, and Thayendanegea addressed them on their duties, while they listened in grave silence. With his address the sacred part of the rite was concluded. Nothing remained now but the great banquet outside—although that was much—and they poured forth to it joyously, Thayendanegea, the Mohawk, and Timmendiquas, the Wyandot, walking side by side, the finest two red chiefs on all the American continent.

CHAPTER VI. THE EVIL SPIRIT'S WORK

Henry slipped forth with the crowd from the Long House, stooping somewhat and shrinking into the smallest possible dimensions. But there was little danger now that any one would notice him, as long as he behaved with prudence, because all grief and solemnity were thrown aside, and a thousand red souls intended to rejoice. A vast banquet was arranged. Great fires leaped up all through the village. At every fire the Indian women, both young and old, were already far forward with the cooking. Deer, bear, squirrel, rabbit, fish, and every other variety of game with which the woods and rivers of western New York and Pennsylvania swarmed were frying or roasting over the coals, and the air was permeated with savory odors. There was a great hum of voices and an incessant chattering. Here in the forest, among themselves, and in complete security, the Indian stoicism was relaxed. According to their customs everybody fell to eating at a prodigious rate, as if they had not tasted anything for a month, and as if they intended to eat enough now to last another month.

It was far into the night, because the ceremonies had lasted a long time, but a brilliant moon shone down upon the feasting crowd, and the flames of the great fires, yellow and blue, leaped and danced. This was an oasis of light and life. Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea sat together before the largest fire, and they ate with more restraint than the others. Even at the banquet they would not relax their dignity as great chiefs. Old Skanawati, the Onondaga, old Atotarho, Onondaga, too, Satekariwate, the Mohawk, Kanokarih, the Seneca, and others, head chiefs though they were of the three senior tribes, did not hesitate to eat as the rich Romans of the Empire ate, swallowing immense quantities of all kinds of meat, and drinking a sort of cider that the women made. Several warriors ate and drank until they fell down in a stupor by the fires. The same warriors on the hunt or the war path would go for days without food, enduring every manner of hardship. Now and then a warrior would leap up and begin a chant telling of some glorious deed of his. Those at his own fire would listen, but elsewhere they took no notice.

In the largest open space a middle-aged Onondaga with a fine face suddenly uttered a sharp cry: “Hehmio!” which he rapidly repeated twice. Two score voices instantly replied, “Heh!” and a rush was made for him. At least a hundred gathered around him, but they stood in a respectful circle, no one nearer than ten

feet. He waved his hand, and all sat down on the ground. Then, he, too, sat down, all gazing at him intently and with expectancy.

He was a professional story-teller, an institution great and honored among the tribes of the Iroquois farther back even than Hiawatha. He began at once the story of the warrior who learned to talk with the deer and the bear, carrying it on through many chapters. Now and then a delighted listener would cry “Hah!” but if anyone became bored and fell asleep it was considered an omen of misfortune to the sleeper, and he was chased ignominiously to his tepee. The Iroquois romancer was better protected than the white one is. He could finish some of his stories in one evening, but others were serials. When he arrived at the end of the night's installment he would cry, “Si-ga!” which was equivalent to our “To be continued in our next.” Then all would rise, and if tired would seek sleep, but if not they would catch the closing part of some other story-teller's romance.

At three fires Senecas were playing a peculiar little wooden flute of their own invention, that emitted wailing sounds not without a certain sweetness. In a corner a half dozen warriors hurt in battle were bathing their wounds with a soothing lotion made from the sap of the bass wood.

Henry lingered a while in the darkest corners, witnessing the feasting, hearing the flutes and the chants, listening for a space to the story-tellers and the enthusiastic “Hahs!” They were so full of feasting and merrymaking now that one could almost do as he pleased, and he stole toward the southern end of the village, where he had noticed several huts, much more strongly built than the others. Despite all his natural skill and experience his heart beat very fast when he came to the first. He was about to achieve the great exploration upon which he had ventured so much. Whether he would find anything at the end of the risk he ran, he was soon to see.

The hut, about seven feet square and as many feet in height, was built strongly of poles, with a small entrance closed by a clapboard door fastened stoutly on the outside with withes. The hut was well in the shadow of tepees, and all were still at the feasting and merrymaking. He cut the withes with two sweeps of his sharp hunting knife, opened the door, bent his head, stepped in and then closed the door behind him, in order that no Iroquois might see what had happened.

It was not wholly dark in the hut, as there were cracks between the poles, and bars of moonlight entered, falling upon a floor of bark. They revealed also a figure lying full length on one side of the hut. A great pulse of joy leaped up in Henry's throat, and with it was a deep pity, also. The figure was that of Shif'less Sol, but he was pale and thin, and his arms and legs were securely bound with thongs of deerskin.

Leaning over, Henry cut the thongs of the shiftless one, but he did not stir. Great forester that Shif'less Sol was, and usually so sensitive to the lightest movement, he perceived nothing now, and, had he not found him bound, Henry would have been afraid that he was looking upon his dead comrade. The hands of the shiftless one, when the hands were cut, had fallen limply by his side, and his face looked all the more pallid by contrast with the yellow hair which fell in length about it. But it was his old-time friend, the dauntless Shif'less Sol, the last of the five to vanish so mysteriously.

Henry bent down and pulled him by the shoulder. The captive yawned, stretched himself a little, and lay still again with closed eyes. Henry shook him a second time and more violently. Shif'less Sol sat up quickly, and Henry knew that indignation prompted the movement. Sol held his arms and legs stiffly and seemed to be totally unconscious that they were unbound. He cast one glance upward, and in the dim light saw the tall warrior bending over him.

“I'll never do it, Timmendiquas or White Lightning, whichever name you like better!” he exclaimed. “I won't show you how to surprise the white settlements. You can burn me at the stake or tear me in pieces first. Now go away and let me sleep.”

He sank back on the bark, and started to close his eyes again. It was then that he noticed for the first time that his hands were unbound. He held them up before his face, as if they were strange objects wholly unattached to himself, and gazed at them in amazement. He moved his legs and saw that they, too, were unbound. Then he turned his startled gaze upward at the face of the tall warrior who was looking down at him. Shif'less Sol was wholly awake now. Every faculty in him was alive, and he pierced through the Shawnee disguise. He knew who it was. He knew who had come to save him, and he sprang to his feet, exclaiming the one word:

“Henry!”

The hands of the comrades met in the clasp of friendship which only many dangers endured together can give.

“How did you get here?” asked the shiftless one in a whisper.

“I met an Indian in the forest,” replied Henry, “and well I am now he.”

Shif'less Sol laughed under his breath.

“I see,” said he, “but how did you get through the camp? It's a big one, and the Iroquois are watchful. Timmendiquas is here, too, with his Wyandots.”

“They are having a great feast,” replied Henry, “and I could go about almost

unnoticed. Where are the others, Sol?”

“In the cabins close by.”

“Then we'll get out of this place. Quick! Tie up your hair! In the darkness you can easily pass for an Indian.”

The shiftless one drew his hair into a scalp lock, and the two slipped from the cabin, closing the door behind them and deftly retying the thongs, in order that the discovery of the escape might occur as late as possible. Then they stood a few moments in the shadow of the hut and listened to the sounds of revelry, the monotone of the story-tellers, and the chant of the singers.

“You don't know which huts they are in, do you?” asked Henry, anxiously.

“No, I don't,” replied the shiftless one.

“Get back!” exclaimed Henry softly. “Don't you see who's passing out there?”

“Braxton Wyatt,” said Sol. “I'd like to get my hands on that scoundrel. I've had to stand a lot from him.”

“The score must wait. But first we'll provide you with weapons. See, the Iroquois have stacked some of their rifles here while they're at the feast.”

A dozen good rifles had been left leaning against a hut near by, and Henry, still watching lest he be observed, chose the best, with its ammunition, for his comrade, who, owing to his semi-civilized attire, still remained in the shadow of the other hut.

“Why not take four?” whispered the shiftless one. “We'll need them for the other boys.”

Henry took four, giving two to his comrade, and then they hastily slipped back to the other side of the hut. A Wyandot and a Mohawk were passing, and they had eyes of hawks. Henry and Sol waited until the formidable pair were gone, and then began to examine the huts, trying to surmise in which their comrades lay.

“I haven't seen 'em a-tall, a-tall,” said Sol, “but I reckon from the talk that they are here. I was s'prised in the woods, Henry. A half dozen reds jumped on me so quick I didn't have time to draw a weepin. Timmendiquas was at the head uv 'em an' he just grinned. Well, he is a great chief, if he did truss me up like a fowl. I reckon the same thing happened to the others.”

“Come closer, Sol! Come closer!” whispered Henry. “More warriors are walking this way. The feast is breaking up, and they'll spread all through the camp.”

A terrible problem was presented to the two. They could no longer search

among the strong huts, for their comrades. The opportunity to save had lasted long enough for one only. But border training is stern, and these two had uncommon courage and decision.

“We must go now, Sol,” said Henry, “but we'll come back.”

“Yes,” said the shiftless one, “we'll come back.”

Darting between the huts, they gained the southern edge of the forest before the satiated banqueters could suspect the presence of an enemy. Here they felt themselves safe, but they did not pause. Henry led the way, and Shif'less Sol followed at a fair degree of speed.

“You'll have to be patient with me for a little while, Henry,” said Sol in a tone of humility. “When I wuz layin' thar in the lodge with my hands an' feet tied I wuz about eighty years old, jest ez stiff ez could be from the long tyin'. When I reached the edge o' the woods the blood wuz flowin' lively enough to make me 'bout sixty. Now I reckon I'm fifty, an' ef things go well I'll be back to my own nateral age in two or three hours.”

“You shall have rest before morning,” said Henry, “and it will be in a good place, too. I can promise that.”

Shif'less Sol looked at him inquiringly, but he did not say anything. Like the rest of the five, Sol had acquired the most implicit confidence in their bold young leader. He had every reason to feel good. That painful soreness was disappearing from his ankles. As they advanced through the woods, weeks dropped from him one by one. Then the months began to roll away, and at last time fell year by year. As they approached the deeps of the forest where the swamp lay, Solomon Hyde, the so called shiftless one, and wholly undeserving of the name, was young again.

“I've got a fine little home for us, Sol,” said Henry. “Best we've had since that time we spent a winter on the island in the lake. This is littler, but it's harder to find. It'll be a fine thing to know you're sleeping safe and sound with five hundred Iroquois warriors only a few miles away.”

“Then it'll suit me mighty well,” said Shif'less Sol, grinning broadly. “That's jest the place fur a lazy man like your humble servant, which is me.”

They reached the stepping stones, and Henry paused a moment.

“Do you feel steady enough, Sol, to jump from stone to stone?” he asked.

“I'm feelin' so good I could fly ef I had to,” he replied. “Jest you jump on, Henry, an' fur every jump you take you'll find me only one jump behind you!”

Henry, without further ado, sprang from one stone to another, and behind him,

stone for stone, came the shiftless one. It was now past midnight, and the moon was obscured. The keenest eyes twenty yards away could not have seen the two dusky figures as they went by leaps into the very heart of the great, black swamp. They reached the solid ground, and then the hut.

“Here, Sol,” said Henry, “is my house, and yours, also, and soon, I hope, to be that of Paul, Tom, and Jim, too.”

“Henry,” said Shif'less Sol, “I'm shorely glad to come.”

They went inside, stacked their captured rifles against the wall, and soon were sound asleep.

Meanwhile sleep was laying hold of the Iroquois village, also. They had eaten mightily and they had drunk mightily. Many times had they told the glories of Hode-no-sau-nee, the Great League, and many times had they gladly acknowledged the valor and worth of Timmendiquas and the brave little Wyandot nation. Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea had sat side by side throughout the feast, but often other great chiefs were with them-Skanawati, Atotarho, and Hahiron, the Onondagas; Satekariwate, the Mohawk; Kanokarih and Kanyadoriyo, the Senecas; and many others.

Toward midnight the women and the children left for the lodges, and soon the warriors began to go also, or fell asleep on the ground, wrapped in their blankets. The fires were allowed to sink low, and at last the older chiefs withdrew, leaving only Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea.

“You have seen the power and spirit of the Iroquois,” said Thayendanegea. “We can bring many more warriors than are here into the field, and we will strike the white settlements with you.”

“The Wyandots are not so many as the warriors of the Great League,” said Timmendiquas proudly, “but no one has ever been before them in battle.”

“You speak truth, as I have often heard it,” said Thayendanegea thoughtfully. Then he showed Timmendiquas to a lodge of honor, the finest in the village, and retired to his own.

The great feast was over, but the chiefs had come to a momentous decision. Still chafing over their defeat at Oriskany, they would make a new and formidable attack upon the white settlements, and Timmendiquas and his fierce Wyandots would help them. All of them, from the oldest to the youngest, rejoiced in the decision, and, not least, the famous Thayendanegea. He hated the Americans most because they were upon the soil, and were always pressing forward against the Indian. The Englishmen were far away, and if they prevailed in the great war, the march of the American would be less rapid. He would strike

once more with the Englishmen, and the Iroquois could deliver mighty blows on the American rearguard. He and his Mohawks, proud Keepers of the Western Gate, would lead in the onset. Thayendanegea considered it a good night's work, and he slept peacefully.

The great camp relapsed into silence. The warriors on the ground breathed perhaps a little heavily after so much feasting, and the fires were permitted to smolder down to coals. Wolves and panthers drawn by the scent of food crept through the thickets toward the faint firelight, but they were afraid to draw near. Morning came, and food and drink were taken to the lodges in which four prisoners were held, prisoners of great value, taken by Timmendiquas and the Wyandots, and held at his urgent insistence as hostages.

Three were found as they had been left, and when their bonds were loosened they ate and drank, but the fourth hut was empty. The one who spoke in a slow, drawling way, and the one who seemed to be the most dangerous of them all, was gone. Henry and Sol had taken the severed thongs with them, and there was nothing to show how the prisoner had disappeared, except that the withes fastening the door had been cut.

The news spread through the village, and there was much excitement. Thayendanegea and Timmendiquas came and looked at the empty hut. Timmendiquas may have suspected how Shif'less Sol had gone, but he said nothing. Others believed that it was the work of Hahgweh-da-et-gah (The Spirit of Evil), or perhaps Ga-oh (The Spirit of the Winds) had taken him away.

“It is well to keep a good watch on the others,” said Timmendiquas, and Thayendanegea nodded.

That day the chiefs entered the Long House again, and held a great war council. A string of white wampum about a foot in length was passed to every chief, who held it a moment or two before handing it to his neighbors. It was then laid on a table in the center of the room, the ends touching. This signified harmony among the Six Nations. All the chiefs had been summoned to this place by belts of wampum sent to the different tribes by runners appointed by the Onondagas, to whom this honor belonged. All treaties had to be ratified by the exchange of belts, and now this was done by the assembled chiefs.

Timmendiquas, as an honorary chief of the Mohawks, and as the real head of a brave and allied nation, was present throughout the council. His advice was asked often, and when he gave it the others listened with gravity and deference. The next day the village played a great game of lacrosse, which was invented by the Indians, and which had been played by them for centuries before the arrival

of the white man. In this case the match was on a grand scale, Mohawks and Cayugas against Onondagas and Senecas.

The game began about nine o'clock in the morning in a great natural meadow surrounded by forest. The rival sides assembled opposite each other and bet heavily. All the stakes, under the law of the game, were laid upon the ground in heaps here, and they consisted of the articles most precious to the Iroquois. In these heaps were rifles, tomahawks, scalping knives, wampum, strips of colored beads, blankets, swords, belts, moccasins, leggins, and a great many things taken as spoil in forays on the white settlements, such is small mirrors, brushes of various kinds, boots, shoes, and other things, the whole making a vast assortment.

These heaps represented great wealth to the Iroquois, and the older chiefs sat beside them in the capacity of stakeholders and judges.

The combatants, ranged in two long rows, numbered at least five hundred on each side, and already they began to show an excitement approaching that which animated them when they would go into battle. Their eyes glowed, and the muscles on their naked backs and chests were tense for the spring. In order to leave their limbs perfectly free for effort they wore no clothing at all, except a little apron reaching from the waist to the knee.

The extent of the playground was marked off by two pair of “byes” like those used in cricket, planted about thirty rods apart. But the goals of each side were only about thirty feet apart.

At a signal from the oldest of the chiefs the contestants arranged themselves in two parallel lines facing each other, inside the area and about ten rods apart. Every man was armed with a strong stick three and a half to four feet in length, and curving toward the end. Upon this curved end was tightly fastened a network of thongs of untanned deerskin, drawn until they were rigid and taut. The ball with which they were to play was made of closely wrapped elastic skins, and was about the size of an ordinary apple.

At the end of the lines, but about midway between them, sat the chiefs, who, besides being judges and stakeholders, were also score keepers. They kept tally of the game by cutting notches upon sticks. Every time one side put the ball through the other's goal it counted one, but there was an unusual power exercised by the chiefs, practically unknown to the games of white men. If one side got too far ahead, its score was cut down at the discretion of the chiefs in order to keep the game more even, and also to protract it sometimes over three or four days. The warriors of the leading side might grumble among one another at the

amount of cutting the chiefs did, but they would not dare to make any protest. However, the chiefs would never cut the leading side down to an absolute parity with the other. It was always allowed to retain a margin of the superiority it had won.

The game was now about to begin, and the excitement became intense. Even the old judges leaned forward in their eagerness, while the brown bodies of the warriors shone in the sun, and the taut muscles leaped up under the skin. Fifty players on each side, sticks in hand, advanced to the center of the ground, and arranged themselves somewhat after the fashion of football players, to intercept the passage of the ball toward their goals. Now they awaited the coming of the ball.

There were several young girls, the daughters of chiefs. The most beautiful of these appeared. She was not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, as slender and graceful as a young deer, and she was dressed in the finest and most richly embroidered deerskin. Her head was crowned with a red coronet, crested with plumes, made of the feathers of the eagle and heron. She wore silver bracelets and a silver necklace.

The girl, bearing in her hand the ball, sprang into the very center of the arena, where, amid shouts from all the warriors, she placed it upon the ground. Then she sprang back and joined the throng of spectators. Two of the players, one from each side, chosen for strength and dexterity, advanced. They hooked the ball together in their united bats and thus raised it aloft, until the bats were absolutely perpendicular. Then with a quick, jerking motion they shot it upward. Much might be gained by this first shot or stroke, but on this occasion the two players were equal, and it shot almost absolutely straight into the air. The nearest groups made a rush for it, and the fray began.

Not all played at once, as the crowd was so great, but usually twenty or thirty on each side struck for the ball, and when they became exhausted or disabled were relieved by similar groups. All eventually came into action.

The game was played with the greatest fire and intensity, assuming sometimes the aspect of a battle. Blows with the formidable sticks were given and received. Brown skins were streaked with blood, heads were cracked, and a Cayuga was killed. Such killings were not unusual in these games, and it was always considered the fault of the man who fell, due to his own awkwardness or unwariness. The body of the dead Cayuga was taken away in disgrace.

All day long the contest was waged with undiminished courage and zeal, party relieving party. The meadow and the surrounding forest resounded with the

shouts and yells of combatants and spectators. The old squaws were in a perfect frenzy of excitement, and their shrill screams of applause or condemnation rose above every other sound.

On this occasion, as the contest did not last longer than one day, the chiefs never cut down the score of the leading side. The game closed at sunset, with the Senecas and Onondagas triumphant, and richer by far than they were in the morning. The Mohawks and Cayugas retired, stripped of their goods and crestfallen.

Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea, acting as umpires watched the game closely to its finish, but not so the renegades Braxton Wyatt and Blackstaffe. They and Quarles had wandered eastward with some Delawares, and had afterward joined the band of Wyandots, though Timmendiquas gave them no very warm welcome. Quarles had left on some errand a few days before. They had rejoiced greatly at the trapping of the four, one by one, in the deep bush. But they had felt anger and disappointment when the fifth was not taken, also. Now both were concerned and alarmed over the escape of Shif'less Sol in the night, and they drew apart from the Indians to discuss it.

“I think,” said Wyatt, “that Hyde did not manage it himself, all alone. How could he? He was bound both hand and foot; and I've learned, too, Blackstaffe, that four of the best Iroquois rifles have been taken. That means one apiece for Hyde and the three prisoners that are left.”

The two exchanged looks of meaning and understanding.

“It must have been the boy Ware who helped Hyde to get away,” said Blackstaffe, “and their taking of the rifles means that he and Hyde expect to rescue the other three in the same way. You think so, too?”

“Of course,” replied Wyatt. “What makes the Indians, who are so wonderfully alert and watchful most of the time, become so careless when they have a great feast?”

Blackstaffe shrugged his shoulders.

“It is their way,” he replied. “You cannot change it. Ware must have noticed what they were about, and he took advantage of it. But I don't think any of the others will go that way.”

“The boy Cotter is in here,” said Braxton Wyatt, tapping the side of a small hut. “Let's go in and see him.”

“Good enough,” said Blackstaffe. “But we mustn't let him know that Hyde has escaped.”

Paul, also bound hand and foot, was lying on an old wolfskin. He, too, was pale and thin-the strict confinement had told upon him heavily-but Paul's spirit could never be daunted. He looked at the two renegades with hatred and contempt.

“Well, you're in a fine fix,” said Wyatt sneeringly. “We just came in to tell you that we took Henry Ware last night.”

Paul looked him straight and long in the eye, and he knew that the renegade was lying.

“I know better,” he said.

“Then we will get him,” said Wyatt, abandoning the lie, “and all of you will die at the stake.”

“You, will not get him,” said Paul defiantly, “and as for the rest of us dying at the stake, that's to be seen. I know this: Timmendiquas considers us of value, to be traded or exchanged, and he's too smart a man to destroy what he regards as his own property. Besides, we may escape. I don't want to boast, Braxton Wyatt, but you know that we're hard to hold.”

Then Paul managed to turn over with his face to the wall, as if he were through with them. They went out, and Braxton Wyatt said sulkily:

“Nothing to be got out of him.”

“No,” said Blackstaffe, “but we must urge that the strictest kind of guard be kept over the others.”

The Iroquois were to remain some time at the village, because all their forces were not yet gathered for the great foray they had in mind. The Onondaga runners were still carrying the wampum belts of purple shells, sign of war, to distant villages of the tribes, and parties of warriors were still coming in. A band of Cayugas arrived that night, and with them they brought a half starved and sick, Lenni-Lenape, whom they had picked up near the camp. The Lenni-Lenape, who looked as if he might have been when in health a strong and agile warrior, said that news had reached him through the Wyandots of the great war to be waged by the Iroquois on the white settlements, and the spirits would not let him rest unless he bore his part in it. He prayed therefore to be accepted among them.

Much food was given to the brave Lenni-Lenape, and he was sent to a lodge to rest. To-morrow he would be well, and he would be welcomed to the ranks of the Cayugas, a Younger nation. But when the morning came, the lodge was empty. The sick Lenni-Lenape was gone, and with him the boy, Paul, the

youngest of the prisoners. Guards bad been posted all around the camp, but evidently the two had slipped between. Brave and advanced as were the Iroquois, superstition seized upon them. Hah-gweli-da-et-gah was at work among them, coming in the form of the famished Lenni-Lenape. He had steeped them in a deep sleep, and then he had vanished with the prisoner in Se-oh (The Night). Perhaps lie had taken away the boy, who was one of a hated race, for some sacrifice or mystery of his own. The fears of the Iroquois rose. If the Spirit of Evil was among them, greater harm could be expected.

But the two renegades, Blackstaffe and Wyatt, raged. They did not believe in the interference of either good spirits or bad spirits, and just now their special hatred was a famished Lenni-Lenape warrior.

“Why on earth didn't I think of it?” exclaimed Wyatt. “I'm sure now by his size that it was the fellow Hyde. Of Course he slipped to the lodge, let Cotter out, and they dodged about in the darkness until they escaped in the forest. I'll complain to Timmendiquas.”

He was as good as his word, speaking of the laxness of both Iroquois and Wyandots. The great White Lightning regarded him with an icy stare.

“You say that the boy, Cotter, escaped through carelessness?” he asked.

“I do,” exclaimed Wyatt.

“Then why did you not prevent it?”

Wyatt trembled a little before the stern gaze of the chief.

“Since when,” continued Timmendiquas, “have you, a deserter front your own people, had the right to hold to account the head chief of the Wyandots?” Braxton Wyatt, brave though he undoubtedly was, trembled yet more. He knew that Timmendiquas did not like him, and that the Wyandot chieftain could make his position among the Indians precarious.

“I did not mean to say that it was the fault of anybody in particular,” he exclaimed hastily, “but I've been hearing so much talk about the Spirit of Evil having a hand in this that I couldn't keep front saying something. Of course, it was Henry Ware and Hyde who did it!”

“It may be,” said Timmendiquas icily, “but neither the Manitou of the Wyandots, nor the Aieroski of the Iroquois has given to me the eyes to see everything that happens in the dark.”

Wyatt withdrew still in a rage, but afraid to say more. He and Blackstaffe held many conferences through the day, and they longed for the presence of Simon Girty, who was farther west.

That night an Onondaga runner arrived from one of the farthest villages of the Mohawks, far east toward Albany. He had been sent from a farther village, and was not known personally to the warriors in the great camp, but he bore a wampum belt of purple shells, the sign of war, and he reported directly to Thayendanegea, to whom he brought stirring and satisfactory words. After ample feasting, as became one who had come so far, he lay upon soft deerskins in one of the bark huts and sought sleep.

But Braxton Wyatt, the renegade, could not sleep. His evil spirit warned him to rise and go to the huts, where the two remaining prisoners were kept. It was then about one o'clock in the morning, and as he passed he saw the Onondaga runner at the door of one of the prison lodges. He was about to cry out, but the Onondaga turned and struck him such a violent blow with the butt of a pistol, snatched from under his deerskin tunic, that he fell senseless. When a Mohawk sentinel found and revived him an hour later, the door of the hut was open, and the oldest of the prisoners, the one called Ross, was gone.

Now, indeed, were the Iroquois certain that the Spirit of Evil was among them. When great chiefs like Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea were deceived, how could a common warrior hope to escape its wicked influence!

But Braxton Wyatt, with a sore and aching head, lay all day on a bed of skins, and his friend, Moses Blackstaffe, could give him no comfort.

The following night the camp was swept by a sudden and tremendous storm of thunder and lightning, wind and rain. Many of the lodges were thrown down, and when the storm finally whirled itself away, it was found that the last of the prisoners, he of the long arms and long legs, had gone on the edge of the blast.

Truly the Evil Spirit had been hovering over the Iroquois village.

CHAPTER VII. CATHARINE MONTOUR

The five lay deep in the swamp, reunited once more, and full of content. The great storm in which Long Jim, with the aid of his comrades, had disappeared, was whirling off to the eastward. The lightning was flaring its last on the distant horizon, but the rain still pattered in the great woods.

It was a small hut, but the five could squeeze in it. They were dry, warm, and well armed, and they had no fear of the storm and the wilderness. The four after their imprisonment and privations were recovering their weight and color. Paul, who had suffered the most, had, on the other hand, made the quickest recovery, and their present situation, so fortunate in contrast with their threatened fate a few days before, made a great appeal to his imagination. The door was allowed to stand open six inches, and through the crevice he watched the rain pattering on the dark earth. He felt an immense sense of security and comfort. Paul was hopeful by nature and full of courage, but when he lay bound and alone in a hut in the Iroquois camp it seemed to him that no chance was left. The comrades had been kept separate, and he had supposed the others to be dead. But here he was snatched from the very pit of death, and all the others had been saved from a like fate.

“If I'd known that you were alive and uncaptured, Henry,” he said, “I'd never have given up hope. It was a wonderful thing you did to start the chain that drew us all away.”

“It's no more than Sol or Tom or any of you would have done,” said Henry.

“We might have tried it,” said Long Jim Hart, “but I ain't sure that we'd have done it. Likely ez not, ef it had been left to me my scalp would be dryin' somewhat in the breeze that fans a Mohawk village. Say, Sol, how wuz it that you talked Onondaga when you played the part uv that Onondaga runner. Didn't know you knowed that kind uv Injun lingo.”

Shif'less Sol drew himself up proudly, and then passed a thoughtful hand once or twice across his forehead.

“Jim,” he said, “I've told you often that Paul an' me hez the instincts uv the eddicated. Learnin' always takes a mighty strong hold on me. Ef I'd had the chance, I might be a purfessor, or mebbe I'd be writin' poetry. I ain't told you about it, but when I wuz a young boy, afore I moved with the settlers, I wuz up in these parts an' I learned to talk Iroquois a heap. I never thought it would be the

use to me it hez been now. Ain't it funny that sometimes when you put a thing away an' it gits all covered with rust and mold, the time comes when that same forgot little thing is the most vallyble article in the world to you."

"Weren't you scared, Sol," persisted Paul, "to face a man like Brant, an' pass yourself off as an Onondaga?"

"No, I wuzn't," replied the shiftless one thoughtfully, "I've been wuss scared over little things. I guess that when your life depends on jest a motion o' your hand or the turnin' o' a word, Natur' somehow comes to your help an' holds you up. I didn't get good an' skeered till it wuz all over, an' then I had one fit right after another."

"I've been skeered fur a week without stoppin'," said Tom Ross; "jest beginnin' to git over it. I tell you, Henry, it wuz pow'ful lucky fur us you found them steppin' stones, an' this solid little place in the middle uv all that black mud."

"Makes me think uv the time we spent the winter on that island in the lake," said Long Jim. "That waz shorely a nice place an' pow'ful comf'table we wuz thar. But we're a long way from it now. That island uv ours must be seven or eight hundred miles from here, an' I reckon it's nigh to fifteen hundred to New Orleans, whar we wuz once."

"Shet up," said Tom Ross suddenly. "Time fur all uv you to go to sleep, an' I'm goin' to watch."

"I'll watch," said Henry.

"I'm the oldest, an' I'm goin' to have my way this time," said Tom.

"Needn't quarrel with me about it," said Shif'less Sol. "A lazy man like me is always willin' to go to sleep. You kin hev my watch, Tom, every night fur the next five years."

He ranged himself against the wall, and in three minutes was sound asleep. Henry and Paul found room in the line, and they, too, soon slept. Tom sat at the door, one of the captured rifles across his knees, and watched the forest and the swamp. He saw the last flare of the distant lightning, and he listened to the falling of the rain drops until they vanished with the vanishing wind, leaving the forest still and without noise.

Tom was several years older than any of the others, and, although powerful in action, he was singularly chary of speech. Henry was the leader, but somehow Tom looked upon himself as a watcher over the other four, a sort of elder brother. As the moon came out a little in the wake of the retreating clouds, he

regarded them affectionately.

“One, two, three, four, five,” he murmured to himself. “We're all here, an' Henry come fur us. That is shorely the greatest boy the world hez ever seed. Them fellers Alexander an' Hannibal that Paul talks about couldn't hev been knee high to Henry. Besides, ef them old Greeks an' Romans hed hed to fight Wyandots an' Shawnees an' Iroquois ez we've done, whar'd they hev been?”

Tom Ross uttered a contemptuous little sniff, and on the edge of that sniff Alexander and Hannibal were wafted into oblivion. Then he went outside and walked about the islet, appreciating for the tenth time what a wonderful little refuge it was. He was about to return to the hut when he saw a dozen dark blots along the high bough of a tree. He knew them. They were welcome blots. They were wild turkeys that had found what had seemed to be a secure roosting place in the swamp.

Tom knew that the meat of the little bear was nearly exhausted, and here was more food come to their hand. “We're five pow'ful feeders, an' we'll need you,” he murmured, looking up at the turkeys, “but you kin rest thar till nearly mornin'.”

He knew that the turkeys would not stir, and he went back to the hut to resume his watch. Just before the first dawn he awoke Henry.

“Henry,” he said, “a lot uv foolish wild turkeys hev gone to rest on the limb of a tree not twenty yards from this grand manshun uv ourn. 'Pears to me that wild turkeys wuz made fur hungry fellers like us to eat. Kin we risk a shot or two at 'em, or is it too dangerous?”

“I think we can risk the shots,” said Henry, rising and taking his rifle. “We're bound to risk something, and it's not likely that Indians are anywhere near.”

They slipped from the cabin, leaving the other three still sound asleep, and stepped noiselessly among the trees. The first pale gray bar that heralded the dawn was just showing in the cast.

“Thar they are,” said Tom Ross, pointing at the dozen dark blots on the high bough.

“We'll take good aim, and when I say 'fire!' we'll both pull trigger,” said Henry.

He picked out a huge bird near the end of the line, but he noticed when he drew the bead that a second turkey just behind the first was directly in his line of fire. The fact aroused his ambition to kill both with one bullet. It was not a mere desire to slaughter or to display marksmanship, but they needed the extra turkey

for food.

“Are you ready, Tom?” he asked. “Then fire.”

They pulled triggers, there were two sharp reports terribly loud to both under the circumstances, and three of the biggest and fattest of the turkeys fell heavily to the ground, while the rest flapped their wings, and with frightened gobbles flew away.

Henry was about to rush forward, but Silent Tom held him back.

“Don't show yourself, Henry! Don't show yourself!” he cried in tense tones.

“Why, what's the matter?” asked the boy in surprise.

“Don't you see that three turkeys fell, and we are only two to shoot? An Injun is layin' 'roun' here some whar, an' he drawed a bead on one uv them turkeys at the same time we did.”

Henry laughed and put away Tom's detaining hand.

“There's no Indian about,” he said. “I killed two turkeys with one shot, and I'm mighty proud of it, too. I saw that they were directly in the line of the bullet, and it went through both.”

Silent Tom heaved a mighty sigh of relief, drawn up from great depths.

“I'm tre-men-jeous-ly glad uv that, Henry,” he said. “Now when I saw that third turkey come tumblin' down I wuz shore that one Injun or mebbe more had got on this snug little place uv ourn in the swamp, an' that we'd hev to go to fightin' ag'in. Thar come times, Henry, when my mind just natchally rises up an' rebels ag'in fightin', 'specially when I want to eat or sleep. Ain't thar anythin' else but fight, fight, fight, 'though I 'low a feller hez got to expect a lot uv it out here in the woods?”

They picked up the three turkeys, two gobblers and a hen, and found them large and fat as butter. More than once the wild turkey had come to their relief, and, in fact, this bird played a great part in the life of the frontier, wherever that frontier might be, as it shifted steadily westward. As they walked back toward the hut they faced three figures, all three with leveled rifles.

“All right, boys,” sang out Henry. “It's nobody but Tom and myself, bringing in our breakfast.”

The three dropped their rifles.

“That's good,” said Shif'less Sol. “When them shots roused us out o' our beauty sleep we thought the whole Iroquois nation, horse, foot, artillery an' baggage wagons, wuz comin' down upon us. So we reckoned we'd better go out an' lick 'em afore it wuz too late.

“But it's you, an' you've got turkeys, nothin' but turkeys. Sho' I reckoned from the peart way Long Jim spoke up that you wuz loaded down with hummin' birds' tongues, ortylans, an' all them other Roman and Rooshian delicacies Paul talks about in a way to make your mouth water. But turkeys! jest turkeys! Nothin' but turkeys!”

“You jest wait till you see me cookin' 'em, Sol Hyde,” said Long Jim. “Then your mouth'll water, an' it'll take Henry and Tom both to hold you back.”

But Shif'less Sol's mouth was watering already, and his eyes were glued on the turkeys.

“I'm a pow'ful lazy man, ez you know, Saplin',” he said, “but I'm goin' to help you pick them turkeys an' get 'em ready for the coals. The quicker they are cooked the better it'll suit me.”

While they were cooking the turkeys, Henry, a little anxious lest the sound of the shots had been heard, crossed on the stepping stones and scouted a bit in the woods. But there was no sign of Indian presence, and, relieved, he returned to the islet just as breakfast was ready.

Long Jim had exerted all his surpassing skill, and it was a contented five that worked on one of the turkeys—the other two being saved for further needs.

“What's goin' to be the next thing in the line of our duty, Henry?” asked Long Jim as they ate.

“We'll have plenty to do, from all that Sol tells us,” replied the boy. “It seems that they felt so sure of you, while you were prisoners, that they often talked about their plans where you could hear them. Sol has told me of two or three talks between Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea, and from the last one he gathered that they're intending a raid with a big army against a place called Wyoming, in the valley of a river named the Susquehanna. It's a big settlement, scattered all along the river, and they expect to take a lot of scalps. They're going to be helped by British from Canada and Tories. Boys, we're a long way from home, but shall we go and tell them in Wyoming what's coming?”

“Of course,” said the four together.

“Our bein' a long way from home don't make any difference,” said Shif'less Sol. “We're generally a long way from home, an' you know we sent word back from Pittsburgh to Wareville that we wuz stayin' a while here in the east on mighty important business.”

“Then we go to the Wyoming Valley as straight and as fast as we can,” said Henry. “That's settled. What else did you bear about their plans, Sol?”

“They're to break up the village here soon and then they'll march to a place called Tioga. The white men an' I hear that's to be a lot uv 'em-will join 'em thar or sooner. They've sent chiefs all the way to our Congress at Philydelphy, pretendin' peace, an' then, when they git our people to thinkin' peace, they'll jump on our settlements, the whole ragin' army uv 'em, with tomahawk an' knife. A white man named John Butler is to command 'em.”

Paul shuddered.

“I've heard of him,” he said. “They called him 'Indian' Butler at Pittsburgh. He helped lead the Indians in that terrible battle of the Oriskany last year. And they say he's got a son, Walter Butler, who is as bad as he is, and there are other white leaders of the Indians, the Johnsons and Claus.”

“'Pears ez ef we would be needed,” said Tom Ross.

“I don't think we ought to hurry,” said Henry. “The more we know about the Indian plans the better it will be for the Wyoming people. We've a safe and comfortable hiding place here, and we can stay and watch the Indian movements.”

“Suits me,” drawled Shif'less Sol. “My legs an' arms are still stiff from them deerskin thongs an' ez Long Jim is here now to wait on me I guess I'll take a rest from travelin.”

“You'll do all your own waitin' on yourself,” rejoined Long Jim; “an' I'm afraid you won't be waited on so Pow'ful well, either, but a good deal better than you deserve.”

They lay on the islet several days, meanwhile keeping a close watch on the Indian camp. They really had little to fear except from hunting parties, as the region was far from any settled portion of the country, and the Indians were not likely to suspect their continued presence. But the hunters were numerous, and all the squaws in the camp were busy jerking meat. It was obvious that the Indians were preparing for a great campaign, but that they would take their own time. Most of the scouting was done by Henry and Sol, and several times they lay in the thick brushwood and watched, by the light of the fires, what was passing in the Indian camp.

On the fifth night after the rescue of Long Jim, Henry and Shif'less Sol lay in the covert. It was nearly midnight, but the fires still burned in the Indian camp, warriors were polishing their weapons, and the women were cutting up or jerking meat. While they were watching they heard from a point to the north the sound of a voice rising and failing in a kind of chant.

“Another war party comin',” whispered Shif'less Sol, “an' singin' about the

victories that they're goin' to win."

"But did you notice that voice?" Henry whispered back. "It's not a man's, it's a woman's."

"Now that you speak of it, you're right," said Shif'less Sol. "It's funny to hear an Injun woman chantin' about battles as she comes into camp. That's the business o' warriors."

"Then this is no ordinary woman," said Henry.

"They'll pass along that trail there within twenty yards of us, Sol, and we want to see her."

"So we do," said Sol, "but I ain't breathin' while they pass."

They flattened themselves against the earth until the keenest eye could not see them in the darkness. All the time the singing was growing louder, and both remained, quite sure that it was the voice of a woman. The trail was but a short distance away, and the moon was bright. The fierce Indian chant swelled, and presently the most singular figure that either had ever seen came into view.

The figure was that of an Indian woman, but lighter in color than most of her kind. She was middle-aged, tall, heavily built, and arrayed in a strange mixture of civilized and barbaric finery, deerskin leggins and moccasins gorgeously ornamented with heads, a red dress of European cloth with a red shawl over it, and her head bare except for bright feathers, thrust in her long black hair, which hung loosely down her back. She held in one hand a large sharp tomahawk, which she swung fiercely in time to her song. Her face had the rapt, terrible expression of one who had taken some fiery and powerful drug, and she looked neither to right nor to left as she strode on, chanting a song of blood, and swinging the keen blade.

Henry and Shif'less Sol shuddered. They had looked upon terrible human figures, but nothing so frightful as this, a woman with the strength of a man and twice his rage and cruelty. There was something weird and awful in the look of that set, savage face, and the tone of that Indian chant. Brave as they were, Henry and the shiftless one felt fear, as perhaps they had never felt it before in their lives. Well they might! They were destined to behold this woman again, under conditions the most awful of which the human mind can conceive, and to witness savagery almost unbelievable in either man or woman. The two did not yet know it, but they were looking upon Catharine Montour, daughter of a French Governor General of Canada and an Indian woman, a chieftainess of the Iroquois, and of a memory infamous forever on the border, where she was known as "Queen Esther."

Shif'less Sol shuddered again, and whispered to Henry:

“I didn't think such women ever lived, even among the Indians.”

A dozen warriors followed Queen Esther, stepping in single file, and their manner showed that they acknowledged her their leader in every sense. She was truly an extraordinary woman. Not even the great Thayendanegea himself wielded a stronger influence among the Iroquois. In her youth she had been treated as a white woman, educated and dressed as a white woman, and she had played a part in colonial society at Albany, New York, and Philadelphia. But of her own accord she had turned toward the savage half of herself, had become wholly a savage, had married a savage chief, bad been the mother of savage children, and here she was, at midnight, striding into an Iroquois camp in the wilderness, her head aflame with visions of blood, death, and scalps.

The procession passed with the terrifying female figure still leading, still singing her chant, and the curiosity of Henry and Shif'less Sol was so intense that, taking all risks, they slipped along in the rear to see her entry.

Queen Esther strode into the lighted area of the camp, ceased her chant, and looked around, as if a queen had truly come and was waiting to be welcomed by her subjects. Thayendanegea, who evidently expected her, stepped forward and gave her the Indian salute. It may be that he received her with mild enthusiasm. Timmendiquas, a Wyandot and a guest, though an ally, would not dispute with him his place as real head of the Six Nations, but this terrible woman was his match, and could inflame the Iroquois to almost anything that she wished.

After the arrival of Queen Esther the lights in the Iroquois village died down. It was evident to both Henry and the shiftless one that they had been kept burning solely in the expectation of the coming of this formidable woman and her escort. It was obvious that nothing more was to be seen that night, and they withdrew swiftly through the forest toward their islet. They stopped once in an oak opening, and Shif'less Sol shivered slightly.

“Henry,” he said, “I feel all through me that somethin' terrible is comin'. That woman back thar has clean give me the shivers. I'm more afraid of her than I am of Timmendiquas or Thayendanegea. Do you think she is a witch?”

“There are no such things as witches, but she was uncanny. I'm afraid, Sol, that your feeling about something terrible going to happen is right.”

It was about two o'clock in the morning when they reached the islet. Tom Ross was awake, but the other two slumbered peacefully on. They told Tom what they had seen, and he told them the identity of the terrible woman.

“I heard about her at Pittsburgh, an' I've heard tell, too, about her afore I went

to Kentucky to live. She's got a tre-men-jeous power over the Iroquois. They think she ken throw spells, an' all that sort of thing-an' mebbe she kin."

Two nights later it was Henry and Tom who lay in the thickets, and then they saw other formidable arrivals in the Indian camp. Now they were white men, an entire company in green uniforms, Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens, as Henry afterward learned; and with them was the infamous John Butler, or "Indian" Butler, as he was generally known on the New York and Pennsylvania frontier, middle-aged, short and fat, and insignificant of appearance, but energetic, savage and cruel in nature. He was a descendant of the Duke of Ormond, and had commanded the Indians at the terrible battle of the Oriskany, preceding Burgoyne's capture the year before.

Henry and Tom were distant spectators at an extraordinary council around one of the fires. In this group were Timmendiquas, Thayendanegea, Queen Esther, high chiefs of the distant nations, and the white men, John Butler, Moses Blackstaffe, and the boy, Braxton Wyatt. It seemed to Henry that Timmendiquas, King of the Wyandots, was superior to all the other chiefs present, even to Thayendanegea. His expression was nobler than that of the great Mohawk, and it had less of the Indian cruelty.

Henry and Tom could not hear 'anything that was said, but they felt sure the Iroquois were about to break up their village and march on the great campaign they had planned. The two and their comrades could render no greater service than to watch their march, and then warn those upon whom the blow was to fall.

The five left their hut on the islet early the next morning, well equipped with provisions, and that day they saw the Iroquois dismantle their village, all except the Long House and two or three other of the more solid structures, and begin the march. Henry and his comrades went parallel with them, watching their movements as closely as possible.

CHAPTER VIII. A CHANGE OF TENANTS

The five were engaged upon one of their most dangerous tasks, to keep with the Indian army, and yet to keep out of its hands, to observe what was going on, and to divine what was intended from what they observed. Fortunately it, was early summer, and the weather being very beautiful they could sleep without shelter. Hence they found it convenient to sleep sometimes by daylight, posting a watch always, and to spy upon the Indian camp at night. They saw other reinforcements come for the Indian army, particularly a strong division of Senecas, under two great war chiefs of theirs, Sangerachte and Hiokatoo, and also a body of Tories.

Then they saw them go into their last great camp at Tioga, preparatory to their swift descent upon the Wyoming Valley. About four hundred white men, English Canadians and Tories, were present, and eight hundred picked warriors of the Six Nations under Thayendanegea, besides the little band of Wyandots led by the resolute Timmendiquas. “Indian” Butler was in general command of the whole, and Queen Esther was the high priestess of the Indians, continually making fiery speeches and chanting songs that made the warriors see red. Upon the rear of this extraordinary army hung a band of fierce old squaws, from whom every remnant of mercy and Gentleness had departed.

From a high rock overlooking a valley the five saw “Indian” Butler's force start for its final march upon Wyoming. It was composed of many diverse elements, and perhaps none more bloodthirsty ever trod the soil of America. In some preliminary skirmish a son of Queen Esther had been slain, and now her fury knew no limits. She took her place at the very head of the army, whirling her great tomahawk about her head, and neither “Indian” Butler nor Thayendanegea dared to interfere with her in anything great or small.

Henry and his comrades, as they left their rock and hastened toward the valley of Wyoming, felt that now they were coming into contact with the great war itself. They had looked upon a uniformed enemy for the first time, and they might soon see the colonial buff and blue of the eastern army. Their hearts thrilled high at new scenes and new dangers.

They had gathered at Pittsburgh, and, through the captivity of the four in the Iroquois camp, they had some general idea of the Wyoming Valley and the direction in which it lay, and, taking one last look at the savage army, they sped

toward it. The time was the close, of June, and the foliage was still dark green. It was a land of low mountain, hill, rich valley, and clear stream, and it was beautiful to every one of the five. Much of their course lay along the Susquehanna, and soon they saw signs of a more extended cultivation than any that was yet to be witnessed in Kentucky. From the brow of a little hill they beheld a field of green, and in another field a man plowing.

“That's wheat,” said Tom Ross.

“But we can't leave the man to plow,” said Henry, “or he'll never harvest that wheat. We'll warn him.”

The man uttered a cry of alarm as five wild figures burst into his field. He stopped abruptly, and snatched up a rifle that lay across the plow handles. Neither Henry nor his companions realized that their forest garb and long life in the wilderness made them look more like Indians than white men. But Henry threw up a hand as a sign of peace.

“We're white like yourselves,” he cried, “and we've come to warn you! The Iroquois and the Tories are marching into the valley!”

The man's face blanched, and he cast a hasty look toward a little wood, where stood a cabin from which smoke was rising. He could not doubt on a near view that these were white like himself, and the words rang true.

“My house is strong,” he said, “and I can beat them off. Maybe you will help me.”

“We'd help you willingly enough,” said Henry, “if this were any ordinary raiding band, but 'Indian' Butler, Brant, and Queen Esther are coming at the head of twelve or fifteen hundred men. How could we hold a house, no matter how thick its walls, against such an army as that? Don't hesitate a moment! Get up what you can and gallop.”

The man, a Connecticut settler-Jennings was his name-left his plow in the furrow, galloped on his horse to his house, mounted his wife and children on other horses, and, taking only food and clothing, fled to Stroudsburg, where there was a strong fort. At a later day he gave Henry heartfelt thanks for his warning, as six hours afterward the vanguard of the horde burned his home and raged because its owner and his family were gone with their scalps on their own heads.

The five were now well into the Wyoming Valley, where the Lenni-Lenape, until they were pushed westward by other tribes, had had their village Wy-wa-mieh, which means in their language Wyoming. It was a beautiful valley running twenty miles or more along the Susquehanna, and about three miles broad. On

either side rose mountain walls a thousand feet in height, and further away were peaks with mists and vapors around their crests. The valley itself blazed in the summer sunshine, and the river sparkled, now in gold, now in silver, as the light changed and fell.

More cultivated fields, more houses, generally of stout logs, appeared, and to all that they saw the five bore the fiery beacon. Simon Jennings was not the only man who lived to thank them for the warning. Others were incredulous, and soon paid the terrible price of unbelief.

The five hastened on, and as they went they looked about them with wondering eyes-there were so many houses, so many cultivated fields, and so many signs of a numerous population. They had emerged almost for the first time from the wilderness, excepting their memorable visit to New Orleans, although this was a very different region. Long Jim spoke of it.

“I think I like it better here than at New Or-leeyuns,” he said. “We found some nice Frenchmen an' Spaniards down thar, but the ground feels firmer under my feet here.”

“The ground feels firmer,” said Paul, who had some of the prescience of the seer, “but the skies are no brighter. They look red to me sometimes, Jim.”

Tom Ross glanced at Paul and shook his head ominously. A woodsman, he had his superstitions, and Paul's words weighed upon his mind. He began to fear a great disaster, and his experienced eye perceived at once the defenseless state of the valley. He remembered the council of the great Indian force in the deep woods, and the terrible face of Queen Esther was again before him.

“These people ought to be in blockhouses, every one uv 'em,” he said. “It ain't no time to be plowin' land.”

Yet peace seemed to brood still over the valley. It was a fine river, beautiful with changing colors. The soil on either side was as deep and fertile as that of Kentucky, and the line of the mountains cut the sky sharp and clear. Hills and slopes were dark green with foliage.

“It must have been a gran' huntin' ground once,” said Shif'less Sol.

The alarm that the five gave spread fast, and other hunters and scouts came in, confirming it. Panic seized the settlers, and they began to crowd toward Forty Fort on the west side of the river. Henry and his comrades themselves arrived there toward the close of evening, just as the sun had set, blood red, behind the mountains. Some report of them had preceded their coming, and as soon as they had eaten they were summoned to the presence of Colonel Zebulon Butler, who commanded the military force in the valley. Singularly enough, he was a cousin

of “Indian” Butler, who led the invading army.

The five, dressed in deerskin hunting shirts, leggins, and moccasins, and everyone carrying a rifle, hatchet, and knife, entered a large low room, dimly lighted by some wicks burning in tallow. A man of middle years, with a keen New England face, sat at a little table, and several others of varying ages stood near.

The five knew instinctively that the man at the table was Colonel Butler, and they bowed, but they did not show the faintest trace of subservience. They had caught suspicious glances from some of the officers who stood about the commander, and they stiffened at once. Colonel Butler looked involuntarily at Henry-everybody always took him, without the telling, for leader of the group.

“We have had report of you,” he said in cool noncommittal tones, “and you have been telling of great Indian councils that you have seen in the woods. May I ask your name and where you belong?”

“My name,” replied Henry with dignity, “is Henry Ware, and I come from Kentucky. My friends here are Paul Cotter, Solomon Hyde, Tom Ross, and Jim Hart. They, too, come from Kentucky.”

Several of the men gave the five suspicious glances. Certainly they were wild enough in appearance, and Kentucky was far away. It would seem strange that new settlers in that far land should be here in Pennsylvania. Henry saw clearly that his story was doubted.

“Kentucky, you tell me?” said Colonel Butler. “Do you mean to say you have come all that tremendous distance to warn us of an attack by Indians and Tories?”

Several of the others murmured approval, and Henry flushed a little, but he saw that the commander was not unreasonable. It was a time when men might well question the words of strangers. Remembering this, he replied:

“No, we did not come from Kentucky just to warn you. In fact, we came from a point much farther than that. We came from New Orleans to Pittsburgh with a fleet loaded with supplies for the Continental armies, and commanded by Adam Colfax of New Hampshire.”

The face of Colonel Butler brightened.

“What!” he exclaimed, “you were on that expedition? It seems to me that I recall hearing of great services rendered to it by some independent scouts.”

“When we reached Pittsburgh,” continued Henry, “it was our first intention to go back to Kentucky, but we heard that a great war movement was in progress to

the eastward, and we thought that we would see what was going on. Four of us have been captives among the Iroquois. We know much of their plans, and we know, too, that Timmendiquas, the great chief of the Wyandots, whom we fought along the Ohio, has joined them with a hand of his best warriors. We have also seen Thayendanegea, every one of us."

"You have seen Brant?" exclaimed Colonel Butler, calling the great Mohawk by his white name.

"Yes," replied Henry. "We have seen him, and we have also seen the woman they call Queen Esther. She is continually urging the Indians on."

Colonel Butler seemed convinced, and invited them to sit down. He also introduced the officers who were with him, Colonel John Durkee, Colonel Nathan Dennison, Lieutenant Colonel George Dorrance, Major John Garrett, Captain Samuel Ransom, Captain Dethrie Hewitt, and some others.

"Now, gentlemen, tell us all that you saw," continued Colonel Butler courteously. "You will pardon so many questions, but we must be careful. You will see that yourselves. But I am a New England man myself, from Connecticut, and I have met Adam Colfax. I recall now that we have heard of you, also, and we are grateful for your coming. Will you and your comrades tell us all that you have seen and heard?"

The five felt a decided change in the atmosphere. They were no longer possible Tories or renegades, bringing an alarm at one point when it should be dreaded at another. The men drew closely around them, and listened as the tallow wicks sputtered in the dim room. Henry spoke first, and the others in their turn. Every one of them spoke tersely but vividly in the language of the forest. They felt deeply what they had seen, and they drew the same picture for their listeners. Gradually the faces of the Wyoming men became shadowed. This was a formidable tale that they were hearing, and they could not doubt its truth.

"It is worse than I thought it could be," said Colonel Butler at last. "How many men do you say they have, Mr. Ware?"

"Close to fifteen hundred."

"All trained warriors and soldiers. And at the best we cannot raise more than three hundreds including old men and boys, and our men, too, are farmers."

"But we can beat them. Only give us a chance, Colonel!" exclaimed Captain Ransom.

"I'm afraid the chance will come too soon," said Colonel Butler, and then turning to the five: "Help us all you can. We need scouts and riflemen. Come to

the fort for any food and ammunition you may need."

The five gave their most earnest assurances that they would stay, and do all in their power. In fact, they had come for that very purpose. Satisfied now that Colonel Butler and his officers had implicit faith in them they went forth to find that, despite the night and the darkness, fugitives were already crossing the river to seek refuge in Forty Fort, bringing with them tales of death and devastation, some of which were exaggerated, but too many true in all their hideous details. Men had been shot and scalped in the fields, houses were burning, women and children were captives for a fate that no one could foretell. Red ruin was already stalking down the valley.

The farmers were bringing their wives and children in canoes and dugouts across the river. Here and there a torch light flickered on the surface of the stream, showing the pale faces of the women and children, too frightened to cry. They had fled in haste, bringing with them only the clothes they wore and maybe a blanket or two. The borderers knew too well what Indian war was, with all its accompaniments of fire and the stake.

Henry and his comrades helped nearly all that night. They secured a large boat and crossed the river again and again, guarding the fugitives with their rifles, and bringing comfort to many a timid heart. Indian bands had penetrated far into the Wyoming Valley, but they felt sure that none were yet in the neighborhood of Forty Fort.

It was about three o'clock in the morning when the last of the fugitives who had yet come was inside Forty Fort, and the labors of the five, had they so chosen, were over for the time. But their nerves were tuned to so high a pitch, and they felt so powerfully the presence of danger, that they could not rest, nor did they have any desire for sleep.

The boat in which they sat was a good one, with two pairs of oars. It had been detailed for their service, and they decided to pull up the river. They thought it possible that they might see the advance of the enemy and bring news worth the telling. Long Jim and Tom Ross took the oars, and their powerful arms sent the boat swiftly along in the shadow of the western bank. Henry and Paul looked back and saw dim lights at the fort and a few on either shore. The valley, the high mountain wall, and everything else were merged in obscurity.

Both the youths were oppressed heavily by the sense of danger, not for themselves, but for others. In that Kentucky of theirs, yet so new, few people lived beyond the palisades, but here were rich and scattered settlements; and men, even in the face of great peril, are always loth to abandon the homes that

they have built with so much toil.

Tom Ross and Long Jim continued to pull steadily with the long strokes that did not tire them, and the lights of the fort and houses sank out of sight. Before them lay the somber surface of the rippling river, the shadowy hills, and silence. The world seemed given over to the night save for themselves, but they knew too well to trust to such apparent desertion. At such hours the Indian scouts come, and Henry did not doubt that they were already near, gathering news of their victims for the Indian and Tory horde. Therefore, it was the part of his comrades and himself to use the utmost caution as they passed up the river.

They bugged the western shore, where they were shadowed by banks and bushes, and now they went slowly, Long Jim and Tom Ross drawing their oars so carefully through the water that there was never a plash to tell of their passing. Henry was in the prow of the boat, bent forward a little, eyes searching the surface of the river, and ears intent upon any sound that might pass on the bank. Suddenly he gave a little signal to the rowers and they let their oars rest.

“Bring the boat in closer to the bank,” he whispered. “Push it gently among those bushes where we cannot be seen from above.”

Tom and Jim obeyed. The boat slid softly among tall bushes that shadowed the water, and was hidden completely. Then Henry stepped out, crept cautiously nearly up the bank, which was here very low, and lay pressed closely against the earth, but supported by the exposed root of a tree. He had heard voices, those of Indians, he believed, and he wished to see. Peering through a fringe of bushes that lined the bank he saw seven warriors and one white face sitting under the boughs of a great oak. The face was that of Braxton Wyatt, who was now in his element, with a better prospect of success than any that he had ever known before. Henry shuddered, and for a moment he regretted that he had spared Wyatt's life when he might have taken it.

But Henry was lying against the bank to hear what these men might be saying, not to slay. Two of the warriors, as he saw by their paint, were Wyandots, and he understood the Wyandot tongue. Moreover, his slight knowledge of Iroquois came into service, and gradually he gathered the drift of their talk. Two miles nearer Forty Fort was a farmhouse one of the Wyandots had seen it-not yet abandoned by its owner, who believed that his proximity to Forty Fort assured his safety. He lived there with his wife and five children, and Wyatt and the Indians planned to raid the place before daylight and kill them all. Henry had heard enough. He slid back from the bank to the water and crept into the boat.

“Pull back down the river as gently as you can,” he whispered, “and then I'll

tell you.”

The skilled oarsmen carried the boat without a splash several hundred yards down the stream, and then Henry told the others of the fiendish plan that he had heard.

“I know that man,” said Shif'less Sol. “His name is Standish. I was there nine or ten hours ago, an' I told him it wuz time to take his family an' run. But he knowed more'n I did. Said he'd stay, he wuzn't afraid, an' now he's got to pay the price.”

“No, he mustn't do that,” said Henry. “It's too much to pay for just being foolish, when everybody is foolish sometimes. Boys, we can yet save that man an' his wife and children. Aren't you willing to do it?”

“Why, course,” said Long Jim. “Like ez not Standish will shoot at us when we knock on his door, but let's try it.”

The others nodded assent.

“How far back from the river is the Standish house, Sol?” asked Henry.

“'Bout three hundred yards, I reckon, and' it ain't more'n a mile down.”

“Then if we pull with all our might, we won't be too late. Tom, you and Jim give Sol and me the oars now.”

Henry and the shiftless one were fresh, and they sent the boat shooting down stream, until they stopped at a point indicated by Sol. They leaped ashore, drew the boat down the bank, and hastened toward a log house that they saw standing in a clump of trees. The enemy had not yet come, but as they swiftly approached the house a dog ran barking at them. The shiftless one swung his rifle butt, and the dog fell unconscious.

“I hated to do it, but I had to,” he murmured. The next moment Henry was knocking at the door.

“Up! Up!” he cried, “the Indians are at hand, and you must run for your lives!”

How many a time has that terrible cry been heard on the American border!

The sound of a man's voice, startled and angry, came to their ears, and then they heard him at the door.

“Who are you?” he cried. “Why are you beating on my door at such a time?”

“We are friends, Mr. Standish,” cried Henry, “and if you would save your wife and children you must go at once! Open the door! Open, I say!”

The man inside was in a terrible quandary. It was thus that renegades or

Indians, speaking the white man's tongue, sometimes bade a door to be opened, in order that they might find an easy path to slaughter. But the voice outside was powerfully insistent, it had the note of truth; his wife and children, roused, too, were crying out, in alarm. Henry knocked again on the door and shouted to him in a voice, always increasing in earnestness, to open and flee. Standish could resist no longer. He took down the bar and flung open the door, springing back, startled at the five figures that stood before him. In the dusk he did not remember Shif'less Sol.

“Mr. Standish,” Henry said, speaking rapidly, “we are, as you can see, white. You will be attacked here by Indians and renegades within half an hour. We know that, because we heard them talking from the bushes. We have a boat in the river; you can reach it in five minutes. Take your wife and children, and pull for Forty Fort.”

Standish was bewildered.

“How do I know that you are not enemies, renegades, yourselves?” he asked.

“If we had been that you'd be a dead man already,” said Shif'less Sol.

It was a grim reply, but it was unanswerable, and Standish recognized the fact. His wife had felt the truth in the tones of the strangers, and was begging him to go. Their children were crying at visions of the tomahawk and scalping knife now so near.

“We'll go,” said Standish. “At any rate, it can't do any harm. We'll get a few things together.”

“Do not wait for anything!” exclaimed Henry. “You haven't a minute to spare! Here are more blankets! Take them and run for the boat! Sol and Jim, see them on board, and then come back!”

Carried away by such fire and earnestness, Standish and his family ran for the boat. Jim and the shiftless one almost threw them on board, thrust a pair of oars into the bands of Standish, another into the hands of his wife, and then told them to pull with all their might for the fort.

“And you,” cried Standish, “what becomes of you?”

Then a singular expression passed over his face-he had guessed Henry's plan.

“Don't you trouble about us,” said the shiftless one. “We will come later. Now pull! pull!”

Standish and his wife swung on the oars, and in two minutes the boat and its occupants were lost in the darkness. Tom Ross and Sol did not pause to watch them, but ran swiftly back to the house. Henry was at the door.

“Come in,” he said briefly, and they entered. Then he closed the door and dropped the bar into place. Shif'less Sol and Paul were already inside, one sitting on the chair and the other on the edge of the bed. Some coals, almost hidden under ashes, smoldered and cast a faint light in the room, the only one that the house had, although it was divided into two parts by a rough homespun curtain. Henry opened one of the window shutters a little and looked out. The dawn had not yet come, but it was not a dark night, and he looked over across the little clearing to the trees beyond. On that side was a tiny garden, and near the wall of the house some roses were blooming. He could see the glow of pink and red. But no enemy bad yet approached. Searching the clearing carefully with those eyes of his, almost preternaturally keen, he was confident that the Indians were still in the woods. He felt an intense thrill of satisfaction at the success of his plan so far.

He was not cruel, he never rejoiced in bloodshed, but the borderer alone knew what the border suffered, and only those who never saw or felt the torture could turn the other cheek to be smitten. The Standish house had made a sudden and ominous change of tenants.

“It will soon be day,” said Henry, “and farmers are early risers. Kindle up that fire a little, will you, Sol? I want some smoke to come out of the chimney.”

The shiftless one raked away the ashes, and put on two or three pieces of wood that lay on the hearth. Little flames and smoke arose. Henry looked curiously about the house. It was the usual cabin of the frontier, although somewhat larger. The bed on which Shif'less Sol sat was evidently that of the father and mother, while two large ones behind the curtain were used by the children. On the shelf stood a pail half full of drinking water, and by the side of it a tin cup. Dried herbs hung over the fireplace, and two or three chests stood in the corners. The clothing of the children was scattered about. Unprepared food for breakfast stood on a table. Everything told of a hasty flight and its terrible need. Henry was already resolved, but his heart hardened within him as he saw.

He took the hatchet from his belt and cut one of the hooks for the door bar nearly in two. The others said not a word. They had no need to speak. They understood everything that he did. He opened the window again and looked out. Nothing yet appeared. “The dawn will come in three quarters of an hour,” he said, “and we shall not have to wait long for what we want to do.”

He sat down facing the door. All the others were sitting, and they, too, faced the door. Everyone had his rifle across his knees, with one hand upon the hammer. The wood on the hearth sputtered as the fire spread, and the flames grew. Beyond a doubt a thin spire of smoke was rising from the chimney, and a

watching eye would see this sign of a peaceful and unsuspecting mind.

“I hope Braxton Wyatt will be the first to knock at our door,” said Shif'less Sol.

“I wouldn't be sorry,” said Henry.

Paul was sitting in a chair near the fire, and he said nothing. He hoped the waiting would be very short. The light was sufficient for him to see the faces of his comrades, and he noticed that they were all very tense. This was no common watch that they kept. Shif'less Sol remained on the bed, Henry sat on another of the chairs, Tom Ross was on one of the chests with his back to the wall. Long Jim was near the curtain. Close by Paul was a home-made cradle. He put down his hand and touched it. He was glad that it was empty now, but the sight of it steeled his heart anew for the task that lay before them.

Ten silent minutes passed, and Henry went to the window again. He did not open it, but there was a crack through which he could see. The others said nothing, but watched his face. When he turned away they knew that the moment was at hand.

“They've just come from the woods,” he said, “and in a minute they'll be at the door. Now, boys, take one last look at your rifles.”

A minute later there was a sudden sharp knock at the door, but no answer came from within. The knock was repeated, sharper and louder, and Henry, altering his voice as much as possible, exclaimed like one suddenly awakened from sleep:

“Who is it? What do you want?”

Back came a voice which Henry knew to be that of Braxton Wyatt:

“We've come from farther up the valley. We're scouts, we've been up to the Indian country. We're half starved. Open and give us food!”

“I don't believe you,” replied Henry. “Honest people don't come to my door at this time in the morning.”

Then ensued a few moments of silence, although Paul, with his vivid fancy, thought he heard whispering on the other side of the door.

“Open!” cried Wyatt, “or we'll break your door down!” Henry said nothing, nor did any of the others. They did not stir. The fire crackled a little, but there was no other sound in the Standish house. Presently they heard a slight noise outside, that of light feet.

“They are going for a log with which to break the door in,” whispered Henry. “They won't have to look far. The wood pile isn't fifty feet away.”

“An' then,” said Shif'less Sol, “they won't have much left to do but to take the scalps of women an' little children.”

Every figure in the Standish house stiffened at the shiftless one's significant words, and the light in the eyes grew sterner. Henry went to the door, put his ear to the line where it joined the wall, and listened.

“They've got their log,” he said, “and in half a minute they'll rush it against the door.”

He came back to his old position. Paul's heart began to thump, and his thumb fitted itself over the trigger of his cocked rifle. Then they heard rapid feet, a smash, a crash, and the door flew open. A half dozen Iroquois and a log that they held between them were hurled into the middle of the room. The door had given away so easily and unexpectedly that the warriors could not check themselves, and two or three fell with the log. But they sprang like cats to their feet, and with their comrades uttered a cry that filled the whole cabin with its terrible sound and import.

The Iroquois, keen of eyes and quick of mind, saw the trap at once. The five grim figures, rifle in hand and finger on trigger, all waiting silent and motionless were far different from what they expected. Here could be no scalps, with the long, silky hair of women and children.

There was a moment's pause, and then the Indians rushed at their foes. Five fingers pulled triggers, flame leaped from five muzzles, and in an instant the cabin was filled with smoke and war shouts, but the warriors never had a chance. They could only strike blindly with their tomahawks, and in a half minute three of them, two wounded, rushed through the door and fled to the woods. They had been preceded already by Braxton Wyatt, who had hung back craftily while the Iroquois broke down the door.

CHAPTER IX. WYOMING

The five made no attempt to pursue. In fact, they did not leave the cabin, but stood there a while, looking down at the fallen, hideous with war paint, but now at the end of their last trail. Their tomahawks lay upon the floor, and glittered when the light from the fire fell upon them. Smoke, heavy with the odor of burned gunpowder, drifted about the room.

Henry threw open the two shuttered windows, and fresh currents of air poured into the room. Over the mountains in the east came the first shaft of day. The surface of the river was lightening.

“What shall we do with them?” asked Paul, pointing to the silent forms on the floor.

“Leave them,” said Henry. “Butler's army is burning everything before it, and this house and all in it is bound to go. You notice, however, that Braxton Wyatt is not here.”

“Trust him to escape every time,” said Shif'less Sol. “Of course he stood back while the Indians rushed the house. But ez shore ez we live somebody will get him some day. People like that can't escape always.”

They slipped from the house, turning toward the river bank, and not long after it was full daylight they were at Forty Fort again, where they found Standish and his family. Henry replied briefly to the man's questions, but two hours later a scout came in and reported the grim sight that he had seen in the Standish home. No one could ask for further proof of the fealty of the five, who sought a little sleep, but before noon were off again.

They met more fugitives, and it was now too dangerous to go farther up the valley. But not willing to turn back, they ascended the mountains that hem it in, and from the loftiest point that they could find sought a sight of the enemy.

It was an absolutely brilliant day in summer. The blue of the heavens showed no break but the shifting bits of white cloud, and the hills and mountains rolled away, solid masses of rich, dark green. The river, a beautiful river at any time, seemed from this height a great current of quicksilver. Henry pointed to a place far up the stream where black dots appeared on its surface. These dots were moving, and they came on in four lines.

“Boys,” he said, “you know what those lines of black dots are?”

“Yes,” replied Shif'less Sol, “it's Butler's army of Indians, Tories, Canadians, an' English. They've come from Tioga Point on the river, an' our Colonel Butler kin expect 'em soon.”

The sunlight became dazzling, and showed the boats, despite the distance, with startling clearness. The five, watching from their peak, saw them turn in toward the land, where they poured forth a motley stream of red men and white, a stream that was quickly swallowed up in the forest.

“They are coming down through the woods on the fort, said Tom Ross.

“And they're coming fast,” said Henry. “It's for us to carry the warning.”

They sped back to the Wyoming fort, spreading the alarm as they passed, and once more they were in the council room with Colonel Zebulon Butler and his officers around him.

“So they are at hand, and you have seen them?” said the colonel.

“Yes,” replied Henry, the spokesman, “they came down from Tioga Point in boats, but have disembarked and are advancing through the woods. They will be here today.”

There was a little silence in the room. The older men understood the danger perhaps better than the younger, who were eager for battle.

“Why should we stay here and wait for them?” exclaimed one of the younger captains at length-some of these captains were mere boys. “Why not go out, meet them, and beat them?”

“They outnumber us about five to one,” said Henry. “Brant, if he is still with them, though he may have gone to some other place from Tioga Point, is a great captain. So is Timmendiquas, the Wyandot, and they say that the Tory leader is energetic and capable.”

“It is all true!” exclaimed Colonel Butler. “We must stay in the fort! We must not go out to meet them! We are not strong enough!”

A murmur of protest and indignation came from the younger officers.

“And leave the valley to be ravaged! Women and children to be scalped, while we stay behind log walls!” said one of them boldly.

The men in the Wyoming fort were not regular troops, merely militia, farmers gathered hastily for their own defense.

Colonel Butler flushed.

“We have induced as many as we could to seek refuge,” he said. “It hurts me as much as you to have the valley ravaged while we sit quiet here. But I know

that we have no chance against so large a force, and if we fall what is to become of the hundreds whom we now protect?”

But the murmur of protest grew. All the younger men were indignant. They would not seek shelter for themselves while others were suffering. A young lieutenant saw from a window two fires spring up and burn like torch lights against the sky. They were houses blazing before the Indian brand.

“Look at that!” he cried, pointing with an accusing finger, “and we are here, under cover, doing nothing!”

A deep angry mutter went about the room, but Colonel Butler, although the flush remained on his face, still shook his head. He glanced at Tom Ross, the oldest of the five.

“You know about the Indian force,” he exclaimed. “What should we do?”

The face of Tom Ross was very grave, and he spoke slowly, as was his wont.

“It's a hard thing to set here,” he exclaimed, “but it will be harder to go out an' meet 'em on their own ground, an' them four or five to one.”

“We must not go out,” repeated the Colonel, glad of such backing.

The door was thrust open, and an officer entered.

“A rumor has just arrived, saying that the entire Davidson family has been killed and scalped,” he said.

A deep, angry cry went up. Colonel Butler and the few who stood with him were overborne. Such things as these could not be endured, and reluctantly the commander gave his consent. They would go out and fight. The fort and its enclosures were soon filled with the sounds of preparation, and the little army was formed rapidly.

“We will fight by your side, of course,” said Henry, “but we wish to serve on the flank as an independent band. We can be of more service in that manner.”

The colonel thanked them gratefully.

“Act as you think best,” he said.

The five stood near one of the gates, while the little force formed in ranks. Almost for the first time they were gloomy upon going into battle. They had seen the strength of that army of Indians, renegades, Tories, Canadians, and English advancing under the banner of England, and they knew the power and fanaticism of the Indian leaders. They believed that the terrible Queen Esther, tomahawk in hand, had continually chanted to them her songs of blood as they came down the river. It was now the third of July, and valley and river were beautiful in the golden sunlight. The foliage showed vivid and deep green on

either line of high hills. The summer sun had never shown more kindly over the lovely valley.

The time was now three o'clock. The gates of the fort were thrown open, and the little army marched out, only three hundred, of whom seventy were old men, or boys so young that in our day they would be called children. Yet they marched bravely against the picked warriors of the Iroquois, trained from infancy to the forest and war, and a formidable body of white rovers who wished to destroy the little colony of “rebels,” as they called them.

Small though it might be, it was a gallant army. Young and old held their heads high. A banner was flying, and a boy beat a steady insistent roll upon a drum. Henry and his comrades were on the left flank, the river was on the right. The great gates had closed behind them, shutting in the women and the children. The sun blazed down, throwing everything into relief with its intense, vivid light playing upon the brown faces of the borderers, their rifles and their homespun clothes. Colonel Butler and two or three of his officers were on horseback, leading the van. Now that the decision was to fight, the older officers, who had opposed it, were in the very front. Forward they went, and spread out a little, but with the right flank still resting on the river, and the left extended on the plain.

The five were on the edge of the plain, a little detached from the others, searching the forest for a sign of the enemy, who was already so near. Their gloom did not decrease. Neither the rolling of the drum nor the flaunting of the banner had any effect. Brave though the men might be, this was not the way in which they should meet an Indian foe who outnumbered them four or five to one.

“I don't like it,” muttered Tom Ross.

“Nor do I,” said Henry, “but remember that whatever happens we all stand together.”

“We remember!” said the others.

On-they went, and the five moving faster were now ahead of the main force some hundred yards. They swung in a little toward the river. The banks here were highland off to the left was a large swamp. The five now checked speed and moved with great wariness. They saw nothing, and they heard nothing, either, until they went forty or fifty yards farther. Then a low droning sound came to their ears. It was the voice of one yet far away, but they knew it. It was the terrible chant of Queen Esther, in this moment the most ruthless of all the savages, and inflaming them continuously for the combat.

The five threw themselves flat on their faces, and waited a little. The chant

grew louder, and then through the foliage they saw the ominous figure approaching. She was much as she had been on that night when they first beheld her. She wore the same dress of barbaric colors, she swung the same great tomahawk about her head, and sang all the time of fire and blood and death.

They saw behind her the figures of chiefs, naked to the breech cloth for battle, their bronze bodies glistening with the war paint, and bright feathers gleaming in their hair. Henry recognized the tall form of Timmendiquas, notable by his height, and around him his little band of Wyandots, ready to prove themselves mighty warriors to their eastern friends the Iroquois. Back of these was a long line of Indians and their white allies, Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens and Butler's Rangers in the center, bearing the flag of England. The warriors, of whom the Senecas were most numerous, were gathered in greatest numbers on their right flank, facing the left flank of the Americans. Sangerachte and Hiokatoo, who had taken two English prisoners at Braddock's defeat, and who had afterwards burned them both alive with his own hand, were the principal leaders of the Senecas. Henry caught a glimpse of “Indian” Butler in the center, with a great blood-red handkerchief tied around his head, and, despite the forest, he noticed with a great sinking of the heart how far the hostile line extended. It could wrap itself like a python around the defense.

“It's a tale that will soon be told,” said Paul.

They went back swiftly, and warned Colonel Butler that the enemy was at band. Even as they spoke they heard the loud wailing chant of Queen Esther, and then came the war whoop, pouring from a thousand throats, swelling defiant and fierce like the cry of a wounded beast. The farmers, the boys, and the old men, most of whom had never been in battle, might well tremble at this ominous sound, so great in volume and extending so far into the forest. But they stood firm, drawing themselves into a somewhat more compact body, and still advancing with their banners flying, and the boy beating out that steady roll on the drum.

The enemy now came into full sight, and Colonel Butler deployed his force in line of battle, his right resting on the high bank of the river and his left against the swamp. Forward pressed the motley army of the other Butler, he of sanguinary and cruel fame, and the bulk of his force came into view, the sun shining down on the green uniforms of the English and the naked brown bodies of the Iroquois.

The American commander gave the order to fire. Eager fingers were already on the trigger, and a blaze of light ran along the entire rank. The Royal Greens and Rangers, although replying with their own fire, gave back before the storm

of bullets, and the Wyoming men, with a shout of triumph, sprang forward. It was always a characteristic of the border settler, despite many disasters and a knowledge of Indian craft and cunning, to rush straight at his foe whenever he saw him. His, unless a trained forest warrior himself, was a headlong bravery, and now this gallant little force asked for nothing but to come to close grips with the enemy.

The men in the center with “Indian” Butler gave back still more. With cries of victory the Wyoming men pressed forward, firing rapidly, and continuing to drive the mongrel white force. The rifles were cracking rapidly, and smoke arose over the two lines. The wind caught wisps of it and carried them off down the river.

“It goes better than I thought,” said Paul as he reloaded his rifle.

“Not yet,” said Henry, “we are fighting the white men only. Where are all the Indians, who alone outnumber our men more than two to one?”

“Here they come,” said Shif'less Sol, pointing to the depths of the swamp, which was supposed to protect the left flank of the Wyoming force.

The five saw in the spaces, amid the briars and vines, scores of dark figures leaping over the mud, naked to the breech cloth, armed with rifle and tomahawk, and rushing down upon the unprotected side of their foe. The swamp had been but little obstacle to them.

Henry and his comrades gave the alarm at once. As many as possible were called off immediately from the main body, but they were not numerous enough to have any effect. The Indians came through the swamp in hundreds and hundreds, and, as they uttered their triumphant yell, poured a terrible fire into the Wyoming left flank. The defenders were forced to give ground, and the English and Tories came on again.

The fire was now deadly and of great volume. The air was filled with the flashing of the rifles. The cloud of smoke grew heavier, and faces, either from heat or excitement, showed red through it. The air was filled with bullets, and the Wyoming force was being cut down fast, as the fire of more than a thousand rifles converged upon it.

The five at the fringe of the swamp loaded and fired as fast as they could at the Indian horde, but they saw that it was creeping closer and closer, and that the hail of bullets it sent in was cutting away the whole left flank of the defenders. They saw the tall figure of Timmendiquas, a very god of war, leading on the Indians, with his fearless Wyandots in a close cluster around him. Colonel John Durkee, gathering up a force of fifty or sixty, charged straight at the warriors, but

he was killed by a withering volley, which drove his men back.

Now occurred a fatal thing, one of those misconceptions which often decide the fate of a battle. The company of Captain Whittlesey, on the extreme left, which was suffering most severely, was ordered to fall back. The entire little army, which was being pressed hard now, seeing the movement of Whittlesey, began to retreat. Even without the mistake it is likely they would have lost in the face of such numbers.

The entire horde of Indians, Tories, Canadians, English, and renegades, uttering a tremendous yell, rushed forward. Colonel Zebulon Butler, seeing the crisis, rode up and down in front of his men, shouting: “Don't leave me, my children! the victory is ours!” Bravely his officers strove to stop the retreat. Every captain who led a company into action was killed. Some of these captains were but boys. The men were falling by dozens.

All the Indians, by far the most formidable part of the invading force, were through the swamp now, and, dashing down their unloaded rifles, threw themselves, tomahawk in hand, upon the defense. Not more than two hundred of the Wyoming men were left standing, and the impact of seven or eight hundred savage warriors was so great that they were hurled back in confusion. A wail of grief and terror came from the other side of the river, where a great body of women and children were watching the fighting.

“The battle's lost,” said Shif'less Sol.

“Beyond hope of saving it,” said Henry, “but, boys, we five are alive yet, and we'll do our best to help the others protect the retreat.”

They kept under cover, fighting as calmly as they could amid such a terrible scene, picking off warrior after warrior, saving more than one soldier ere the tomahawk fell. Shif'less Sol took a shot at “Indian” Butler, but he was too far away, and the bullet missed him.

“I'd give five years of my life if he were fifty yards nearer,” exclaimed the shiftless one.

But the invading force came in between and he did not get another shot. There was now a terrible medley, a continuous uproar, the crashing fire of hundreds of rifles, the shouts of the Indians, and the cries of the wounded. Over them all hovered smoke and dust, and the air was heavy, too, with the odor of burnt gunpowder. The division of old men and very young boys stood next, and the Indians were upon them, tomahawk in hand, but in the face of terrible odds all bore themselves with a valor worthy of the best of soldiers. Three fourths of them died that day, before they were driven back on the fort.

The Wyoming force was pushed away from the edge of the swamp, which had been some protection to the left, and they were now assailed from all sides except that of the river. “Indian” Butler raged at the head of his men, who had been driven back at first, and who had been saved by the Indians. Timmendiquas, in the absence of Brant, who was not seen upon this field, became by valor and power of intellect the leader of all the Indians for this moment. The Iroquois, although their own fierce chiefs, I-Tiokatoo, Sangerachte, and the others fought with them, unconsciously obeyed him. Nor did the fierce woman, Queen Esther, shirk the battle. Waving her great tomahawk, she was continually among the warriors, singing her song of war and death.

They were driven steadily back toward the fort, and the little band crumbled away beneath the deadly fire. Soon none would be left unless they ran for their lives. The five drew away toward the forest. They saw that the fort itself could not hold out against such a numerous and victorious foe, and they had no mind to be trapped. But their retreat was slow, and as they went they sent bullet after bullet into the Indian flank. Only a small percentage of the Wyoming force was left, and it now broke. Colonel Butler and Colonel Dennison, who were mounted, reached the fort. Some of the men jumped into the river, swam to the other shore and escaped. Some swam to a little island called Monocacy, and hid, but the Tories and Indians hunted them out and slew them. One Tory found his brother there, and killed him with his own hand, a deed of unspeakable horror that is yet mentioned by the people of that region. A few fled into the forest and entered the fort at night.

CHAPTER X. THE BLOODY ROCK

Seeing that all was lost, the five drew farther away into the woods. They were not wounded, yet their faces were white despite the tan. They had never before looked upon so terrible a scene. The Indians, wild with the excitement of a great triumph and thirsting for blood, were running over the field scalping the dead, killing some of the wounded, and saving others for the worst of tortures. Nor were their white allies one whit behind them. They bore a full part in the merciless war upon the conquered. Timmendiquas, the great Wyandot, was the only one to show nobility. Several of the wounded he saved from immediate death, and he tried to hold back the frenzied swarm of old squaws who rushed forward and began to practice cruelties at which even the most veteran warrior might shudder. But Queen Esther urged them on, and “Indian” Butler himself and the chiefs were afraid of her.

Henry, despite himself, despite all his experience and powers of self-control, shuddered from head to foot at the cries that came from the lost field, and he was sure that the others were doing the same. The sun was setting, but its dying light, brilliant and intense, tinged the field as if with blood, showing all the yelling horde as the warriors rushed about for scalps, or danced in triumph, whirling their hideous trophies about their heads. Others were firing at men who were escaping to the far bank of the Susquehanna, and others were already seeking the fugitives in their vain hiding places on the little islet.

The five moved farther into the forest, retreating slowly, and sending in a shot now and then to protect the retreat of some fugitive who was seeking the shelter of the woods. The retreat had become a rout and then a massacre. The savages raged up and down in the greatest killing they had known since Braddock's defeat. The lodges of the Iroquois would be full of the scalps of white men.

All the five felt the full horror of the scene, but it made its deepest impress, perhaps, upon Paul. He had taken part in border battles before, but this was the first great defeat. He was not blind to the valor and good qualities of the Indian and his claim upon the wilderness, but he saw the incredible cruelties that he could commit, and he felt a horror of those who used him as an ally, a horror that he could never dismiss from his mind as long as he lived.

“Look!” he exclaimed, “look at that!”

A man of seventy and a boy of fourteen were running for the forest. They

might have been grandfather and grandson. Undoubtedly they had fought in the Battalion of the Very Old and the Very Young, and now, when everything else was lost, they were seeking to save their lives in the friendly shelter of the woods. But they were pursued by two groups of Iroquois, four warriors in one, and three in the other, and the Indians were gaining fast.

“I reckon we ought to save them,” said Shif'less Sol.

“No doubt of it,” said Henry. “Paul, you and Sol move off to the right a little, and take the three, while the rest of us will look out for the four.”

The little band separated according to the directions, Paul and Sol having the lighter task, as the others were to meet the group of four Indians at closer range. Paul and Sol were behind some trees, and, turning at an angle, they ran forward to intercept the three Indians. It would have seemed to anyone who was not aware of the presence of friends in the forest that the old man and the boy would surely be overtaken and be tomahawked, but three rifles suddenly flashed among the foliage. Two of the warriors in the group of four fell, and a third uttered a yell of pain. Paul and Shif'less Sol fired at the same time at the group of three. One fell before the deadly rifle of Shif'less Sol, but Paul only grazed his man. Nevertheless, the whole pursuit stopped, and the boy and the old man escaped to the forest, and subsequently to safety at the Moravian towns.

Paul, watching the happy effect of the shots, was about to say something to Shif'less Sol, when an immense force was hurled upon him, and he was thrown to the ground. His comrade was served in the same way, but the shiftless one was uncommonly strong and agile. He managed to writhe half way to his knees, and he shouted in a tremendous voice:

“Run, Henry, run! You can't do anything for us now!”

Braxton Wyatt struck him fiercely across the mouth. The blood came, but the shiftless one merely spat it out, and looked curiously at the renegade.

“I've often wondered about you, Braxton,” he said calmly. “I used to think that anybody, no matter how bad, had some good in him, but I reckon you ain't got none.”

Wyatt did not answer, but rushed forward in search of the others. But Henry, Silent Tom, and Long Jim had vanished. A powerful party of warriors had stolen upon Shif'less Sol and Paul, while they were absorbed in the chase of the old man and the boy, and now they were prisoners, bound securely. Braxton Wyatt came back from the fruitless search for the three, but his face was full of savage joy as he looked down at the captured two.

“We could have killed you just as easily,” he said, “but we didn't want to do

that. Our friends here are going to have their fun with you first.”

Paul's cheeks whitened a little at the horrible suggestion, but Shif'less Sol faced them boldly. Several white men in uniform had come up, and among them was an elderly one, short and squat, and with a great flame colored handkerchief tied around his bead.

“You may burn us alive, or you may do other things jest ez bad to us, all under the English flag,” said Shif'less Sol, “but I'm thinkin' that a lot o' people in England will be ashamed uv it when they hear the news.”

“Indian” Butler and his uniformed soldiers turned away, leaving Shif'less Sol and Paul in the hands of the renegade and the Iroquois. The two prisoners were jerked to their feet and told to march.

“Come on, Paul,” said Shif'less Sol. “'Tain't wuth while fur us to resist. But don't you quit hopin', Paul. We've escaped from many a tight corner, an' mebbe we're goin' to do it ag'in.”

“Shut up!” said Braxton Wyatt savagely. “If you say another word I'll gag you in a way that will make you squirm.”

Shif'less Sol looked him squarely in the eye. Solomon Hyde, who was not shiftless at all, had a dauntless soul, and he was not afraid now in the face of death preceded by long torture.

“I had a dog once, Braxton Wyatt,” he said, “an' I reckon he wuz the meanest, ornierest cur that ever lived. He liked to live on dirt, the dirtier the place he could find the better; he'd rather steal his food than get it honestly; he wuz sech a coward that he wuz afeard o' a rabbit, but ef your back wuz turned to him he'd nip you in the ankle. But bad ez that dog wuz, Braxton, he wuz a gentleman 'longside o' you.”

Some of the Indians understood English, and Wyatt knew it. He snatched a pistol from his belt, and was about to strike Sol with the butt of it, but a tall figure suddenly appeared before him, and made a commanding gesture. The gesture said plainly: “Do not strike; put that pistol back!” Braxton Wyatt, whose soul was afraid within him, did not strike, and he put the pistol back.

It was Timmendiquas, the great White Lightning of the Wyandots, who with his little detachment had proved that day how mighty the Wyandot warriors were, full equals of Thayendanegea's Mohawks, the Keepers of the Western Gate. He was bare to the waist. One shoulder was streaked with blood from a slight wound, but his countenance was not on fire with passion for torture and slaughter like those of the others.

“There is no need to strike prisoners,” he said in English. “Their fate will be decided later.”

Paul thought that he caught a look of pity from the eyes of the great Wyandot, and Shif'less Sol said:

“I'm sorry, Timmendiquas, since I had to be captured, that you didn't capture me yourself. I'm glad to say that you're a great warrior.”

Wyatt growled under his breath, but he was still afraid to speak out, although he knew that Timmendiquas was merely a distant and casual ally, and had little authority in that army. Yet he was overawed, and so were the Indians with him.

“We were merely taking the prisoners to Colonel Butler,” he said. “That is all.”

Timmendiquas stared at him, and the renegade's face fell. But he and the Indians went on with the prisoners, and Timmendiquas looked after them until they were out of sight.

“I believe White Lightning was sorry that we'd been captured,” whispered Shif'less Sol.

“I think so, too,” Paul whispered back.

They had no chance for further conversation, as they were driven rapidly now to that point of the battlefield which lay nearest to the fort, and here they were thrust into the midst of a gloomy company, fellow captives, all bound tightly, and many wounded. No help, no treatment of any kind was offered for hurts. The Indians and renegades stood about and yelled with delight when the agony of some man's wound wrung from him a groan. The scene was hideous in every respect. The setting sun shone blood red over forest, field, and river. Far off burning houses still smoked like torches. But the mountain wall in the east, was growing dusky with the coming twilight. From the island, where they were massacring the fugitives in their vain hiding places, came the sound of shots and cries, but elsewhere the firing had ceased. All who could escape had done so already, and of the others, those who were dead were fortunate.

The sun sank like a red ball behind the mountains, and darkness swept down over the earth. Fires began to blaze up here and there, some for terrible purpose. The victorious Iroquois; stripped to the waist and painted in glaring colors, joined in a savage dance that would remain forever photographed on the eye of Paul Cotter. As they jumped to and fro, hundreds of them, waving aloft tomahawks and scalping knives, both of which dripped red, they sang their wild chant of war and triumph. White men, too, as savage as they, joined them. Paul shuddered again and again from head to foot at this sight of an orgy such as the

mass of mankind escapes, even in dreams.

The darkness thickened, the dance grew wilder. It was like a carnival of demons, but it was to be incited to a yet wilder pitch. A singular figure, one of extraordinary ferocity, was suddenly projected into the midst of the whirling crowd, and a chant, shriller and fiercer, rose above all the others. The figure was that of Queen Esther, like some monstrous creature out of a dim past, her great tomahawk stained with blood, her eyes bloodshot, and stains upon her shoulders. Paul would have covered his eyes had his hands not been tied instead, he turned his head away. He could not bear to see more. But the horrible chant came to his ears, nevertheless, and it was reinforced presently by other sounds still more terrible. Fires sprang up in the forest, and cries came from these fires. The victorious army of “Indian” Butler was beginning to burn the prisoners alive. But at this point we must stop. The details of what happened around those fires that night are not for the ordinary reader. It suffices to say that the darkest deed ever done on the soil of what is now the United States was being enacted.

Shif'less Sol himself, iron of body and soul, was shaken. He could not close his ears, if he would, to the cries that came from the fires, but he shut his eyes to keep out the demon dance. Nevertheless, he opened them again in a moment. The horrible fascination was too great. He saw Queen Esther still shaking her tomahawk, but as he looked she suddenly darted through the circle, warriors willingly giving way before her, and disappeared in the darkness. The scalp dance went on, but it had lost some of its fire and vigor.

Shif'less Sol felt relieved.

“She's gone,” he whispered to Paul, and the boy, too, then opened his eyes. The rest of it, the mad whirlings and jumpings of the warriors, was becoming a blur before him, confused and without meaning.

Neither he nor Shif'less Sol knew how long they had been sitting there on the ground, although it had grown yet darker, when Braxton Wyatt thrust a violent foot against the shiftless one and cried:

“Get up! You're wanted!”

A half dozen Seneca warriors were with him, and there was no chance of resistance. The two rose slowly to their feet, and walked where Braxton Wyatt led. The Senecas came on either side, and close behind them, tomahawks in their hands. Paul, the sensitive, who so often felt the impression of coming events from the conditions around him, was sure that they were marching to their fate. Death he did not fear so greatly, although he did not want to die, but when a shriek came to him from one of the fires that convulsive shudder shook him

again from head to foot. Unconsciously he strained at his bound arms, not for freedom, but that he might thrust his fingers in his ears and shut out the awful sounds. Shif'less Sol, because he could not use his hands, touched his shoulder gently against Paul's.

“Paul,” he whispered, “I ain't sure that we're goin' to die, leastways, I still have hope; but ef we do, remember that we don't have to die but oncet.”

“I'll remember, Sol,” Paul whispered back.

“Silence, there!” exclaimed Braxton Wyatt. But the two had said all they wanted to say, and fortunately their senses were somewhat dulled. They had passed through so much that they were like those who are under the influence of opiates. The path was now dark, although both torches and fires burned in the distance. Presently they heard that chant with which they had become familiar, the dreadful notes of the hyena woman, and they knew that they were being taken into her presence, for what purpose they could not tell, although they were sure that it was a bitter one. As they approached, the woman's chant rose to an uncommon pitch of frenzy, and Paul felt the blood slowly chilling within him.

“Get up there!” exclaimed Braxton Wyatt, and the Senecas gave them both a push. Other warriors who were standing at the edge of an open space seized them and threw them forward with much violence. When they struggled into a sitting position, they saw Queen Esther standing upon a broad flat rock and whirling in a ghastly dance that had in it something Oriental. She still swung the great war hatchet that seemed always to be in her hand. Her long black hair flew wildly about her head, and her red dress gleamed in the dusk. Surely no more terrible image ever appeared in the American wilderness! In front of her, lying upon the ground, were twenty bound Americans, and back of them were Iroquois in dozens, with a sprinkling of their white allies.

What it all meant, what was about to come to pass, nether Paul nor Shif'less Sol could guess, but Queen Esther sang:

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We have found them, the Yengees
Who built their houses in the valley,
They came forth to meet us in battle,
Our rifles and tomahawks cut them down,
As the Yengees lay low the forest.
Victory and glory Aieroski gives to his children,
The Mighty Six Nations, greatest of men.

There will be feasting in the lodges of the Iroquois,
And scalps will hang on the high ridge pole,
But wolves will roam where the Yengees dwelt
And will gnaw the bones of them all,
Of the man, the woman, and the child.
Victory and glory Aieroski gives to his children,
The Mighty Six Nations, greatest of men.
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Such it sounded to Shif'less Sol, who knew the tongue of the Iroquois, and so it went on, verse after verse, and at the end of each verse came the refrain, in which the warriors joined:

“Victory and glory Aieroski gives to his children. The mighty Six Nations, greatest of men.”

“What under the sun is she about?” whispered Shif'less Sol.

“It is a fearful face,” was Paul's only reply.

Suddenly the woman, without stopping her chant, made a gesture to the warriors. Two powerful Senecas seized one of the bound prisoners, dragged him to his feet, and held him up before her. She uttered a shout, whirled the great tomahawk about her head, its blade glittering in the moonlight, and struck with all her might. The skull of the prisoner was cleft to the chin, and without a cry he fell at the feet of the woman who had killed him. Paul uttered a shout of horror, but it was lost in the joyful yells of the Iroquois, who, at the command of the woman, offered a second victim. Again the tomahawk descended, and again a man fell dead without a sound.

Shif'less Sol and Paul wrenched at their thongs, but they could not move them. Braxton Wyatt laughed aloud. It was strange to see how fast one with a bad nature could fall when the opportunities were spread before him. Now he was as cruel as the Indians themselves. Wilder and shriller grew the chant of the savage queen. She was intoxicated with blood. She saw it everywhere. Her tomahawk clove a third skull, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, a seventh, and eighth. As fast as they fell the warriors at her command brought up new victims for her weapon. Paul shut his eyes, but he knew by the sounds what was passing. Suddenly a stern voice cried:

“Hold, woman! Enough of this! Will your tomahawk never be satisfied?”

Paul understood it, the meaning, but not the words. He opened his eyes and saw the great figure of Timmendiquas striding forward, his hand upraised in protest.

The woman turned her fierce gaze upon the young chief. “Timmendiquas,” she said, “we are the Iroquois, and we are the masters. You are far from your own land, a guest in our lodges, and you cannot tell those who have won the victory how they shall use it. Stand back!”

A loud laugh came from the Iroquois. The fierce old chiefs, Hiokatoo and Sangerachte, and a dozen warriors thrust themselves before Timmendiquas. The woman resumed her chant, and a hundred throats pealed out with her the chorus:

Victory and glory Aieroski gives to his children The mighty Six Nations, greatest of men.

She gave the signal anew. The ninth victim stood before her, and then fell, cloven to the chin; then the tenth, and the eleventh, and the twelfth, and the thirteenth, and the fourteenth, and the fifteenth, and the sixteenth-sixteen bound men killed by one woman in less than fifteen minutes. The four in that group who were left had all the while been straining fearfully at their bonds. Now they had slipped or broken them, and, springing to their feet, driven on by the mightiest of human impulses, they dashed through the ring of Iroquois and into the forest. Two were hunted down by the warriors and killed, but the other two, Joseph Elliott and Lebbeus Hammond, escaped and lived to be old men, feeling that life could never again hold for them anything so dreadful as that scene at “The Bloody Rock.”

A great turmoil and confusion arose as the prisoners fled and the Indians pursued. Paul and Shif'less Sol; full of sympathy and pity for the fugitives and having felt all the time that their turn, too, would come under that dreadful tomahawk, struggled to their feet. They did not see a form slip noiselessly behind them, but a sharp knife descended once, then twice, and the bands of both fell free.

“Run! run!” exclaimed the voice of Timmendiquas, low but penetrating. “I would save you from this!”

Amid the darkness and confusion the act of the great Wyandot was not seen by the other Indians and the renegades. Paul flashed him one look of gratitude, and then he and Shif'less Sol darted away, choosing a course that led them from the crowd in pursuit of the other flying fugitives.

At such a time they might have secured a long lead without being noticed, had it not been for the fierce swarm of old squaws who were first in cruelty that night. A shrill wild howl arose, and the pointing fingers of the old women showed to the warriors the two in flight. At the same time several of the squaws darted forward to intercept the fugitives.

“I hate to hit a woman,” breathed Shif'less Sol to Paul, “but I'm goin' to do it now.”

A hideous figure sprang before them. Sol struck her face with his open hand, and with a shriek she went down. He leaped over her, although she clawed at his feet as he passed, and ran on, with Paul at his side. Shots were now fired at him, but they went wild, but Paul, casting a look backward out of the corner of his eye, saw that a real pursuit, silent and deadly, had begun. Five Mohawk warriors,

running swiftly, were only a few hundred yards away. They carried rifle, tomahawk, and knife, and Paul and Shif'less Sol were unarmed. Moreover, they were coming fast, spreading out slightly, and the shiftless one, able even at such a time to weigh the case coolly, saw that the odds were against them. Yet he would not despair. Anything might happen. It was night. There was little organization in the army of the Indians and of their white allies, which was giving itself up to the enjoyment of scalps and torture. Moreover, he and Paul were, animated by the love of life, which is always stronger than the desire to give death.

Their flight led them in a diagonal line toward the mountains. Only once did the pursuers give tongue. Paul tripped over a root, and a triumphant yell came from the Mohawks. But it merely gave him new life. He recovered himself in an instant and ran faster. But it was terribly hard work. He could hear Shif'less Sol's sobbing breath by his side, and he was sure that his own must have the same sound for his comrade.

“At any rate one uv 'em is beat,” gasped Shif'less Sol. “Only four are ban-in' on now.”

The ground rose a little and became rougher. The lights from the Indian fires had sunk almost out of sight behind them, and a dense thicket lay before them. Something stirred in the thicket, and the eyes of Shif'less Sol caught a glimpse of a human shoulder. His heart sank like a plummet in a pool. The Indians were ahead of them. They would be caught, and would be carried back to become the victims of the terrible tomahawk.

The figure in the bushes rose a little higher, the muzzle of a rifle was projected, and flame leaped from the steel tube.

But it was neither Shif'less Sol nor Paul who fell. They heard a cry behind them, and when Shif'less Sol took a hasty glance backward he saw one of the Mohawks fall. The three who were left hesitated and stopped. When a second shot was fired from the bushes and another Mohawk went down, the remaining two fled.

Shif'less Sol understood now, and he rushed into the bushes, dragging Paul after him. Henry, Tom, and Long Jim rose up to receive them.

“So you wuz watchin' over us!” exclaimed the shiftless one joyously. “It wuz you that clipped off the first Mohawk, an' we didn't even notice the shot.”

“Thank God, you were here!” exclaimed Paul. “You don't know what Sol and I have seen!”

Overwrought, he fell forward, but his comrades caught him.

CHAPTER XI. THE MELANCHOLY FLIGHT

Paul revived in a few minutes. They were still lying in the bushes, and when he was able to stand up again, they moved at an angle several hundred yards before they stopped. One pistol was thrust into Paul's hand and another into that of Shif'less Sol.

“Keep those until we can get rifles for you,” said Henry. “You may need 'em to-night.”

They crouched down in the thicket and looked back toward the Indian camp. The warriors whom they had repulsed were not returning with help, and, for the moment, they seemed to have no enemy to fear, yet they could still see through the woods the faint lights of the Indian camps, and to Paul, at least, came the echoes of distant cries that told of things not to be written.

“We saw you captured, and we heard Sol's warning cry,” said Henry. “There was nothing to do but run. Then we hid and waited a chance for rescue.”

“It would never have come if it had not been for Timmendiquas,” said Paul.

“Timmendiquas!” exclaimed Henry.

“Yes, Timmendiquas,” said Paul, and then he told the story of “The Bloody Rock,” and how, in the turmoil and excitement attending the flight of the last four, Timmendiquas had cut the bonds of Shif'less Sol and himself.

“I think the mind o' White Lightnin', Injun ez he is,” said Shif'less Sol, “jest naterally turned aginst so much slaughter an' torture o' prisoners.”

“I'm sure you're right,” said Henry.

“'Pears strange to me,” said Long Jim Hart, “that Timmendiquas was made an Injun. He's jest the kind uv man who ought to be white, an' he'd be pow'ful useful, too. I don't jest eggzactly understan' it.”

“He has certainly saved the lives of at least three of us,” said Henry. “I hope we will get a chance to pay him back in full.”

“But he's the only one,” said Shif'less Sol, thinking of all that he had seen that night. “The Iroquois an' the white men that's allied with 'em won't ever get any mercy from me, ef any uv 'em happen to come under my thumb. I don't think the like o' this day an' night wuz ever done on this continent afore. I'm for revenge, I am, like that place where the Bible says, 'an eye for an eye, an' a tooth for a tooth,' an' I'm goin' to stay in this part o' the country till we git it!”

It was seldom that Shif'less Sol spoke with so much passion and energy.

“We're all going to stay with you, Sol,” said Henry. “We're needed here. I think we ought to circle about the fort, slip in if we can, and fight with the defense.”

“Yes, we'll do that,” said Shif'less Sol, “but the Wyoming fort can't ever hold out. Thar ain't a hundred men left in it fit to fight, an' thar are more than than a thousand howlin' devils outside ready to attack it. Thar may be worse to come than anything we've yet seen.”

“Still, we'll go in an' help,” said Henry. “Sol, when you an' Paul have rested a little longer we'll make a big loop around in the woods, and come up to the fort on the other side.”

They were in full accord, and after an hour in the bushes, where they lay completely hidden, recovering their vitality and energy, they undertook to reach the fort and cabins inclosed by the palisades. Paul was still weak from shock, but Shif'less Sol had fully recovered. Neither bad weapons, but they were sure that the want could be supplied soon. They curved around toward the west, intending to approach the fort from the other side, but they did not wholly lose sight of the fires, and they heard now and then the triumphant war whoop. The victors were still engaged in the pleasant task of burning the prisoners to death. Little did the five, seeing and feeling only their part of it there in the dark woods, dream that the deeds of this day and night would soon shock the whole civilized world, and remain, for generations, a crowning act of infamy. But they certainly felt it deeply enough, and in each heart burned a fierce desire for revenge upon the Iroquois.

It was almost midnight when they secured entrance into the fort, which was filled with grief and wailing. That afternoon more than one hundred and fifty women within those walls had been made widows, and six hundred children had been made orphans. But few men fit to bear arms were left for its defense, and it was certain that the allied British and Indian army would easily take it on the morrow. A demand for its surrender in the name of King George III of England had already been made, and, sitting at a little rough table in the cabin of Thomas Bennett, the room lighted only by a single tallow wick, Colonel Butler and Colonel Dennison were writing an agreement that the fort be surrendered the next day, with what it should contain. But Colonel Butler put his wife on a horse and escaped with her over the mountains.

Stragglers, evading the tomahawk in the darkness, were coming in, only to be surrendered the next day; others were pouring forth in a stream, seeking the

shelter of the mountains and the forest, preferring any dangers that might be found there to the mercies of the victors.

When Shif'less Sol learned that the fort was to be given up, he said:

“It looks ez ef we had escaped from the Iroquois jest in time to beg 'em to take us back.”

“I reckon I ain't goin' to stay 'roun' here while things are bein' surrendered,” said Long Jim Hart.

“I'll do my surrenderin' to Iroquois when they've got my hands an' feet tied, an' six or seven uv 'em are settin' on my back,” said Tom Ross.

“We'll leave as soon as we can get arms for Sol and Paul,” said Henry. “Of course it would be foolish of us to stay here and be captured again. Besides, we'll be needed badly enough by the women and children that are going.”

Good weapons were easily obtained in the fort. It was far better to let Sol and Paul have them than to leave them for the Indians. They were able to select two fine rifles of the Kentucky pattern, long and slender barreled, a tomahawk and knife for each, and also excellent double-barreled pistols. The other three now had double-barreled pistols, too. In addition they resupplied themselves with as much ammunition as scouts and hunters could conveniently carry, and toward morning left the fort.

Sunrise found them some distance from the palisades, and upon the flank of a frightened crowd of fugitives. It was composed of one hundred women and children and a single man, James Carpenter, who was doing his best to guide and protect them. They were intending to flee through the wilderness to the Delaware and Lehigh settlements, chiefly Fort Penn, built by Jacob Stroud, where Stroudsburg now is.

When the five, darkened by weather and looking almost like Indians themselves, approached, Carpenter stepped forward and raised his rifle. A cry of dismay rose from the melancholy line, a cry so intensely bitter that it cut Henry to the very heart. He threw up his hand, and exclaimed in a loud voice:

“We are friends, not Indians or Tories! We fought with you yesterday, and we are ready to fight for you now!”

Carpenter dropped the muzzle of the rifle. He had fought in the battle, too, and he recognized the great youth and his comrades who had been there with him.

“What do you want of us?” asked he.

“Nothing,” replied Henry, “except to help you.”

Carpenter looked at them with a kind of sad pathos.

“You don't belong here in Wyoming,” he said, “and there's nothing to make you stick to us. What are you meaning to do?”

“We will go with you wherever you intend to go,” replied Henry; “do fighting for you if you need it, and hunt game for you, which you are certain to need.”

The weather-beaten face of the farmer worked.

“I thought God had clean deserted us,” he said, “but I'm ready to take it back. I reckon that he has sent you five to help me with all these women and little ones.”

It occurred to Henry that perhaps God, indeed, had sent them for this very purpose, but he replied simply:

“You lead on, and we'll stay in the rear and on the sides to watch for the Indians. Draw into the woods, where we'll be hidden.”

Carpenter, obscure hero, shouldered his rifle again, and led on toward the woods. The long line of women and children followed. Some of the women carried in their arms children too small to walk. Yet they were more hopeful now when they saw that the five were friends. These lithe, active frontiersmen, so quick, so skillful, and so helpful, raised their courage. Yet it was a most doleful flight. Most of these women had been made widows the day before, some of them had been made widows and childless at the same time, and wondered why they should seek to live longer. But the very mental stupor of many of them was an aid. They ceased to cry out, and some even ceased to be afraid.

Henry, Shif'less Sol, and Tom dropped to the rear. Paul and Long Jim were on either flank, while Carpenter led slowly on toward the mountains.

“'Pears to me,” said Tom, “that the thing fur us to do is to hurry 'em up ez much ez possible.”

“So the Indians won't see 'em crossing the plain,” said Henry. “We couldn't defend them against a large force, and it would merely be a massacre. We must persuade them to walk faster.”

Shif'less Sol was invaluable in this crisis. He could talk forever in his-placid way, and, with his gentle encouragement, mild sarcasm, and anecdotes of great feminine walkers that he had known, he soon had them moving faster.

Henry and Tom dropped farther to the rear. They could see ahead of them the long dark line, coiling farther into the woods, but they could also see to right and left towers of smoke rising in the clear morning sunlight. These, they knew, came from burning houses, and they knew, also, that the valley would be ravaged from end to end and from side to side. After the surrender of the fort the

Indians would divide into small bands, going everywhere, and nothing could escape them.

The sun rose higher, gilding the earth with glowing light, as if the black tragedy had never happened, but the frontiersmen recognized their greatest danger in this brilliant morning. Objects could be seen at a great distance, and they could be seen vividly.

Keen of sight and trained to know what it was they saw, Henry, Sol, and Tom searched the country with their eyes, on all sides. They caught a distant glimpse of the Susquehanna, a silver spot among some trees, and they saw the sunlight glancing off the opposite mountains, but for the present they saw nothing that seemed hostile.

They allowed the distance between them and the retreating file to grow until it was five or six hundred yards, and they might have let it grow farther, but Henry made a signal, and the three lay down in the grass.

“You see 'em, don't you!” the youth whispered to his comrade.

“Yes, down thar at the foot o' that hillock,” replied Shif'less Sol; “two o' em, an' Senecas, I take it.”

“They've seen that crowd of women and children,” said Henry.

It was obvious that the flying column was discovered. The two Indians stepped upon the hillock and gazed under their hands. It was too far away for the three to see their faces, but they knew the joy that would be shown there. The two could return with a few warriors and massacre them all.

“They must never get back to the other Indians with their news,” whispered Henry. “I hate to shoot men from ambush, but it's got to be done. Wait, they're coming a little closer.”

The two Senecas advanced about thirty yards, and stopped again.

“S'pose you fire at the one on the right, Henry,” said Tom, “an' me an' Sol will take the one to the left.”

“All right,” said Henry. “Fire!”

They wasted no time, but pulled trigger. The one at whom Henry had aimed fell, but the other, uttering a cry, made off, wounded, but evidently with plenty of strength left.

“We mustn't let him escape! We mustn't let him carry a warning!” cried Henry.

But Shif'less Sol and Tom Ross were already in pursuit, covering the ground with long strides, and reloading as they ran. Under ordinary circumstances no one of the three would have fired at a man running for his life, but here the

necessity was vital. If he lived, carrying the tale that he had to tell, a hundred innocent ones might perish. Henry followed his comrades, reloading his own rifle, also, but he stayed behind. The Indian had a good lead, and he was gaining, as the others were compelled to check speed somewhat as they put the powder and bullets in their rifles. But Henry was near enough to Shif'less Sol and Silent Tom to hear them exchange a few words.

“How far away is that savage?” asked Shif'less Sol.

“Hundred and eighty yards,” said Tom Ross.

“Well, you take him in the head, and I'll take him in the body.”

Henry saw the two rifle barrels go up and two flashes of flame leap from the muzzles. The Indian fell forward and lay still. They went up to him, and found that he was shot through the head and also through the body.

“We may miss once, but we don't twice,” said Tom Ross.

The human mind can be influenced so powerfully by events that the three felt no compunction at all at the shooting of this fleeing Indian. It was but a trifle compared with what they had seen the day and night before.

“We'd better take the weapons an' ammunition o' both uv 'em,” said Sol. “They may be needed, an' some o' the women in that crowd kin shoot.”

They gathered up the arms, powder, and ball, and waited a little to see whether the shots had been heard by any other Indians, but there was no indication of the presence of more warriors, and the rejoined the fugitives. Long Jim had dropped back to the end of the line, and when he saw that his comrades carried two extra rifles, he understood.

“They didn't give no alarm, did they?” he asked in a tone so low that none of the fugitives could hear.

“They didn't have any chance,” replied Henry. “We've brought away all their weapons and ammunition, but just say to the women that we found them in an abandoned house.”

The rifles and the other arms were given to the boldest and most stalwart of the women, and they promised to use them if the need came. Meanwhile the flight went on, and the farther it went the sadder it became. Children became exhausted, and had to be carried by people so tired that they could scarcely walk themselves. There was nobody in the line who had not lost some beloved one on that fatal river bank, killed in battle, or tortured to death. As they slowly ascended the green slope of the mountain that inclosed a side of the valley, they looked back upon ruin and desolation. The whole black tragedy was being

consummated. They could see the houses in flames, and they knew that the Indian war parties were killing and scalping everywhere. They knew, too, that other bodies of fugitives, as stricken as their own, were fleeing into the mountains, they scarcely knew whither.

As they paused a few moments and looked back, a great cry burst from the weakest of the women and children. Then it became a sad and terrible wail, and it was a long time before it ceased. It was an awful sound, so compounded of despair and woe and of longing for what they had lost that Henry choked, and the tears stood in Paul's eyes. But neither the five nor Carpenter made any attempt to check the wailing. They thought it best for them to weep it out, but they hurried the column as much as they could, often carrying some of the smaller children themselves. Paul and Long Jim were the best as comforters. The two knew how, each in his own way, to soothe and encourage. Carpenter, who knew the way to Fort Penn, led doggedly on, scarcely saying a word. Henry, Shif'less Sol, and Tom were the rear guard, which was, in this case, the one of greatest danger and responsibility.

Henry was thankful that it was only early summer the Fourth of July, the second anniversary of the Declaration of Independence-and that the foliage was heavy and green on the slopes of the mountain. In this mass of greenery the desolate column was now completely hidden from any observer in the valley, and he believed that other crowds of fugitives would be hidden in the same manner. He felt sure that no living human being would be left in the valley, that it would be ravaged from end to end and then left to desolation, until new people, protected by American bayonets, should come in and settle it again.

At last they passed the crest of the ridge, and the fires in the valley, those emblems of destruction, were hidden. Between them and Fort Penn, sixty miles away, stretched a wilderness of mountain, forest, and swamp. But the five welcomed the forest. A foe might lie there in ambush, but they could not see the fugitives at a distance. What the latter needed now was obscurity, the green blanket of the forest to hide them. Carpenter led on over a narrow trail; the others followed almost in single file now, while the five scouted in the woods on either flank and at the rear. Henry and Shif'less Sol generally kept together, and they fully realized the overwhelming danger should an Indian band, even as small as ten or a dozen warriors, appear. Should the latter scatter, it would be impossible to protect all the women and children from their tomahawks.

The day was warm, but the forest gave them coolness as well as shelter. Henry and Sol were seldom so far back that they could not see the end of the melancholy line, now moving slowly, overborne by weariness. The shiftless one

shook his head sadly.

“No matter what happens, some uv 'em will never get out o' these woods.”

His words came true all too soon. Before the afternoon closed, two women, ill before the flight, died of terror and exhaustion, and were buried in shallow graves under the trees. Before dark a halt was made at the suggestion of Henry, and all except Carpenter and the scouts sat in a close, drooping group. Many of the children cried, though the women had all ceased to weep. They had some food with them, taken in the hurried flight, and now the men asked them to eat. Few could do it, and others insisted on saving what little they had for the children. Long Jim found a spring near by, and all drank at it.

The six men decided that, although night had not yet come, it would be best to remain there until the morning. Evidently the fugitives were in no condition, either mental or physical, to go farther that day, and the rest was worth more than the risk.

When this decision was announced to them, most of the women took it apathetically. Soon they lay down upon a blanket, if one was to be had; otherwise, on leaves and branches. Again Henry thanked God that it was summer, and that these were people of the frontier, who could sleep in the open. No fire was needed, and, outside of human enemies, only rain was to be dreaded.

And yet this band, desperate though its case, was more fortunate than some of the others that fled from the Wyoming Valley. It had now to protect it six men Henry and Paul, though boys in years, were men in strength and ability—five of whom were the equals of any frontiersmen on the whole border. Another crowd of women was escorted by a single man throughout its entire flight.

Henry and his comrades distributed themselves in a circle about the group. At times they helped gather whortleberries as food for the others, but they looked for Indians or game, intending to shoot in either case. When Paul and Henry were together they once heard a light sound in a thicket, which at first they were afraid was made by an Indian scout, but it was a deer, and it bounded away too soon for either to get a shot. They could not find other game of any kind, and they came back toward the camp-if a mere stop in the woods, without shelter of any kind, could be called a camp.

The sun was now setting, blood red. It tinged the forest with a fiery mist, reminding the unhappy group of all that they had seen. But the mist was gone in a few moments, and then the blackness of night came with a weird moaning wind that told of desolation. Most of the children, having passed through every phase of exhaustion and terror, had fallen asleep. Some of the women slept, also,

and others wept. But the terrible wailing note, which the nerves of no man could stand, was heard no longer.

The five gathered again at a point near by, and Carpenter came to them.

“Men,” he said simply, “don't know much about you, though I know you fought well in the battle that we lost, but for what you're doin' now nobody can ever repay you. I knew that I never could get across the mountains with all these weak ones.”

The five merely said that any man who was a man would help at such a time. Then they resumed their march in a perpetual circle about the camp.

Some women did not sleep at all that night. It is not easy to conceive what the frontier women of America endured so many thousands of times. They had seen their husbands, brothers, and sons killed in the battle, and they knew that the worst of torture had been practiced in the Indian camp. Many of them really did not want to live any longer. They merely struggled automatically for life. The darkness settled down thicker and thicker; the blackness in the forest was intense, and they could see the faces of one another only at a little distance. The desolate moan of the wind came through the leaves, and, although it was July, the night grew cold. The women crept closer together, trying to cover up and protect the children. The wind, with its inexpressibly mournful note, was exactly fitted to their feelings. Many of them wondered why a Supreme Being had permitted such things. But they ceased to talk. No sound at all came from the group, and any one fifty yards away, not forewarned, could not have told that they were there.

Henry and Paul met again about midnight, and sat a long time on a little hillock. Theirs had been the most dangerous of lives on the most dangerous of frontiers, but they had never been stirred as they were tonight. Even Paul, the mildest of the five, felt something burning within him, a fire that only one thing could quench.

“Henry,” said he, “we're trying to get these people to Fort Penn, and we may get some of them there, but I don't think our work will be ended them. I don't think I could ever be happy again if we went straight from Fort Penn to Kentucky.”

Henry understood him perfectly.

“No, Paul,” he said, “I don't want to go, either, and I know the others don't. Maybe you are not willing to tell why we want to stay, but it is vengeance. I know it's Christian to forgive your enemies, but I can't see what I have seen, and hear what I have heard, and do it.”

“When the news of these things spreads,” said Paul, “they'll send an army from the east. Sooner or later they'll just have to do it to punish the Iroquois and their white allies, and we've got to be here to join that army.”

“I feel that way, too, Paul,” said Henry.

They were joined later by the other three, who stayed a little while, and they were in accord with Henry and Paul.

Then they began their circles about the camp again, always looking and always listening. About two o'clock in the morning they heard a scream, but it was only the cry of a panther. Before day there were clouds, a low rumble of distant thunder, and faint far flashes of lightning. Henry was in dread of rain, but the lightning and thunder ceased, and the clouds went away. Then dawn came, rosy and bright, and all but three rose from the earth. The three-one woman and two children-had died in silence in the night, and they were buried, like the others, in shallow graves in the woods. But there was little weeping or external mourning over them. All were now heavy and apathetic, capable of but little more emotion.

Carpenter resumed his position at the head of the column, which now moved slowly over the mountain through a thick forest matted with vines and bushes and without a path. The march was now so painful and difficult that they did not make more than two miles an hour. The stronger of them helped the men to gather more whortleberries, as it was easy to see that the food they had with them would never last until they reached Fort Penn, should they ever reach it.

The condition of the country into which they had entered steadily grew worse. They were well into the mountains, a region exceedingly wild and rough, but little known to the settlers, who had gone around it to build homes in the fertile and beautiful valley of Wyoming. The heavy forest was made all the more difficult by the presence everywhere of almost impassable undergrowth. Now and then a woman lay down under the bushes, and in two cases they died there because the power to live was no longer in them. They grew weaker and weaker. The food that they had brought from the Wyoming fort was almost exhausted, and the wild whortleberries were far from sustaining. Fortunately there was plenty of water flowing tinder the dark woods and along the mountainside. But they were compelled to stop at intervals of an hour or two to rest, and the more timid continually expected Indian ambush.

The five met shortly after noon and took another reckoning of the situation. They still realized to the full the dangers of Indian pursuit, which in this case might be a mere matter of accident. Anybody could follow the broad trail left by

the fugitives, but the Iroquois, busy with destruction in the valley, might not follow, even if they saw it. No one could tell. The danger of starvation or of death from exhaustion was more imminent, more pressing, and the five resolved to let scouting alone for the rest of the day and seek game.

“There's bound to be a lot of it in these woods,” said Shif'less Sol, “though it's frightened out of the path by our big crowd, but we ought to find it.”

Henry and Shif'less Sol went in one direction, and Paul, Tom, and Long Jim in another. But with all their hunting they succeeded in finding only one little deer, which fell to the rifle of Silent Tom. It made small enough portions for the supper and breakfast of nearly a hundred people, but it helped wonderfully, and so did the fires which Henry and his comrades would now have built, even had they not been needed for the cooking. They saw that light and warmth, the light and warmth of glowing coals, would alone rouse life in this desolate band.

They slept the second night on the ground among the trees, and the next morning they entered that gloomy region of terrible memory, the Great Dismal Swamp of the North, known sometimes, to this day, as “The Shades of Death.”

CHAPTER XII. THE SHADES OF DEATH

“The Shades of Death” is a marsh on a mountain top, the great, wet, and soggy plain of the Pocono and Broad mountains. When the fugitives from Wyoming entered it, it was covered with a dense growth of pines, growing mostly out of dark, murky water, which in its turn was thick with a growth of moss and aquatic plants. Snakes and all kinds of creeping things swarmed in the ooze. Bear and panther were numerous.

Carpenter did not know any way around this terrible region, and they were compelled to enter it. Henry was again devoutly thankful that it was summer. In such a situation with winter on top of it only the hardiest of men could survive.

But they entered the swamp, Carpenter silent and dogged, still leading. Henry and his comrades kept close to the crowd. One could not scout in such a morass, and it proved to be worse than they had feared. The day turned gray, and it was dark among the trees. The whole place was filled with gloomy shadows. It was often impossible to judge whether fairly solid soil or oozy murk lay before them. Often they went down to their waists. Sometimes the children fell and were dragged up again by the stronger. Now and then rattle snakes coiled and hissed, and the women killed them with sticks. Other serpents slipped away in the slime. Everybody was plastered with mud, and they became mere images of human beings.

In the afternoon they reached a sort of oasis in the terrible swamp, and there they buried two more of their number who had perished from exhaustion. The rest, save a few, lay upon the ground as if dead. On all sides of them stretched the pines and the soft black earth. It looked to the fugitives like a region into which no human beings had ever come, or ever would come again, and, alas! to most of them like a region from which no human being would ever emerge.

Henry sat upon a piece of fallen brushwood near the edge of the morass, and looked at the fugitives, and his heart sank within him. They were hardly in the likeness of his own kind, and they seemed practically lifeless now. Everything was dull, heavy, and dead. The note of the wind among the leaves was somber. A long black snake slipped from the marshy grass near his feet and disappeared soundlessly in the water. He was sick, sick to death at the sight of so much suffering, and the desire for vengeance, slow, cold, and far more lasting than any hot outburst, grew within him. A slight noise, and Shif'less Sol stood beside him.

“Did you hear?” asked the shiftless one, in a significant tone.

“Hear what?” asked Henry, who had been deep in thought.

“The wolf howl, just a very little cry, very far away an' under the horizon, but thar all the same. Listen, thar she goes ag'in!”

Henry bent his ear and distinctly heard the faint, whining note, and then it came a third time.

He looked tip at Shif'less Sol, and his face grew white—but not for himself.

“Yes,” said Shif'less Sol. He understood the look. “We are pursued. Them wolves howlin' are the Iroquois. What do you reckon we're goin' to do, Henry?”

“Fight!” replied the youth, with fierce energy. “Beat 'em off!”

“How?”

Henry circled the little oasis with the eye of a general, and his plan came.

“You'll stand here, where the earth gives a footing,” he said, “you, Solomon Hyde, as brave a man as I ever saw, and with you will be Paul Cotter, Tom Ross, Jim Hart, and Henry Ware, old friends of yours. Carpenter will at once lead the women and children on ahead, and perhaps they will not hear the battle that is going to be fought here.”

A smile of approval, slow, but deep and comprehensive, stole over the face of Solomon Hyde, surnamed, wholly without fitness, the shiftless one. “It seems to me,” he said, “that I've heard o' them four fellers you're talkin' about, an' ef I wuz to hunt all over this planet an' them other planets that Paul tells of, I couldn't find four other fellers that I'd ez soon have with me.”

“We've got to stand here to the death,” said Henry.

“You're shorely right,” said Shif'less Sol.

The hands of the two comrades met in a grip of steel.

The other three were called and were told of the plan, which met with their full approval. Then the news was carried to Carpenter, who quickly agreed that their course was the wisest. He urged all the fugitives to their feet, telling them that they must reach another dry place before night, but they were past asking questions now, and, heavy and apathetic, they passed on into the swamp.

Paul watched the last of them disappear among the black bushes and weeds, and turned back to his friends on the oasis. The five lay down behind a big fallen pine, and gave their weapons a last look. They had never been armed better. Their rifles were good, and the fine double-barreled pistols, formidable weapons, would be a great aid, especially at close quarters.

“I take it,” said Tom Ross, “that the Iroquois can't get through at all unless they come along this way, an' it's the same ez ef we wuz settin' on solid earth, poppin' em over, while they come sloshin' up to us.”

“That's exactly it,” said Henry. “We've a natural defense which we can hold against much greater numbers, and the longer we hold 'em off, the nearer our people will be to Fort Penn.”

“I never felt more like fightin' in my life,” said Tom Ross.

It was a grim utterance, true of them all, although not one among them was bloodthirsty.

“Can any of you hear anything?” asked Henry. “Nothin',” replied Shif'less Sol, after a little wait, “nothin' from the women goin', an' nothin' from the Iroquois comin'.”

“We'll just lie close,” said Henry. “This hard spot of ground isn't more than thirty or forty feet each way, and nobody can get on it without our knowing it.”

The others did not reply. All lay motionless upon their sides, with their shoulders raised a little, in order that they might take instant aim when the time came. Some rays of the sun penetrated the canopy of pines, and fell across the brown, determined faces and the lean brown hands that grasped the long, slender-barreled Kentucky rifles. Another snake slipped from the ground into the black water and swam away. Some water animal made a light splash as he, too, swam from the presence of these strange intruders. Then they beard a sighing sound, as of a foot drawn from mud, and they knew that the Iroquois were approaching, savages in war, whatever they might be otherwise, and expecting an easy prey. Five brown thumbs cocked their rifles, and five brown forefingers rested upon the triggers. The eyes of woodsmen who seldom missed looked down the sights.

The sound of feet in the mud came many times. The enemy was evidently drawing near.

“How many do you think are out thar?” whispered Shif'less Sol to Henry.

“Twenty, at least, it seems to me by the sounds.” “I s'pose the best thing for us to do is to shoot at the first head we see.”

“Yes, but we mustn't all fire at the same man.”

It was suggested that Henry call off the turns of the marksmen, and he agreed to do so. Shif'less Sol was to fire first. The sounds now ceased. The Iroquois evidently had some feeling or instinct that they were approaching an enemy who was to be feared, not weak and unarmed women and children.

The five were absolutely motionless, finger on trigger. The American wilderness had heroes without number. It was Horatius Cocles five times over, ready to defend the bridge with life. Over the marsh rose the weird cry of an owl, and some water birds called in lonely fashion.

Henry judged that the fugitives were now three quarters of a mile away, out of the sound of rifle shot. He had urged Carpenter to marshal them on as far as he could. But the silence endured yet a while longer. In the dull gray light of the somber day and the waning afternoon the marsh was increasingly dreary and mournful. It seemed that it must always be the abode of dead or dying things.

The wet grass, forty yards away, moved a little, and between the boughs appeared the segment of a hideous dark face, the painted brow, the savage black eyes, and the hooked nose of the Mohawk. Only Henry saw it, but with fierce joy-the tortures at Wyoming leaped up before him-he fired at the painted brow. The Mohawk uttered his death cry and fell back with a splash into the mud and water of the swamp. A half dozen bullets were instantly fired at the base of the smoke that came from Henry's rifle, but the youth and his comrades lay close and were unharmed. Shif'less Sol and Tom were quick enough to catch glimpses of brown forms, at which they fired, and the cries coming back told that they had hit.

“That's something,” said Henry. “One or two Iroquois at least will not wear the scalp of white woman or child at their belts.”

“Wish they'd try to rush us,” said Shif'less Sol. “I never felt so full of fight in my life before.”

“They may try it,” said Henry. “I understand that at the big battle of the Oriskany, farther up in the North, the Iroquois would wait until a white man behind a tree would fire, then they would rush up and tomahawk him before he could reload.”

“They don't know how fast we kin reload,” said Long Jim, “an' they don't know that we've got these double-barreled pistols, either.”

“No, they don't,” said Henry, “and it's a great thing for us to have them. Suppose we spread out a little. So long as we keep them from getting a lodging on the solid earth we hold them at a great disadvantage.”

Henry and Paul moved off a little toward the right, and the others toward the left. They still had good cover, as fallen timber was scattered all over the oasis, and they were quite sure that another attack would be made soon. It came in about fifteen minutes. The Iroquois suddenly fired a volley at the logs and brush, and when the five returned the fire, but with more deadly effect, they leaped

forward in the mud and attempted to rush the oasis, tomahawk in hand.

But the five reloaded so quickly that they were able to send in a second volley before the foremost of the Iroquois could touch foot on solid earth. Then the double barreled pistols came into play. The bullets sent from short range drove back the savages, who were amazed at such a deadly and continued fire. Henry caught sight of a white face among these assailants, and he knew it to be that of Braxton Wyatt. Singularly enough he was not amazed to see it there. Wyatt, sinking deeper and deeper into savagery and cruelty, was just the one to lead the Iroquois in such a pursuit. He was a fit match for Walter Butler, the infamous son of the Indian leader, who was soon to prove himself worse than the worst of the savages, as Thayendanegea himself has written.

Henry drew a bead once on Braxton Wyatt-he had no scruples now about shooting him-but just as he was about to pull the trigger Wyatt darted behind a bush, and a Seneca instead received the bullet. He also saw the renegade, Blackstaffe, but he was not able to secure a shot at him, either. Nevertheless, the Iroquois attack was beaten back. It was a foregone conclusion that the result would be so, unless the force was in great numbers. It is likely, also, that the Iroquois at first had thought only a single man was with the fugitives, not knowing that the five had joined them later.

Two of the Iroquois were slain at the very edge of the solid ground, but their bodies fell back in the slime, and the others, retreating fast for their lives, could not carry them off. Paul, with a kind of fascinated horror, watched the dead painted bodies sink deeper. Then one was entirely gone. The hand of the other alone was left, and then it, too, was gone. But the five had held the island, and Carpenter was leading the fugitives on toward Fort Penn. They had not only held it, but they believed that they could continue to hold it against anything, and their hearts became exultant. Something, too, to balance against the long score, lay out there in the swamp, and all the five, bitter over Wyoming, were sorry that Braxton Wyatt was not among them.

The stillness came again. The sun did not break through the heavy gray sky, and the somber shadows brooded over “The Shades of Death.” They heard again the splash of water animals, and a swimming snake passed on the murky surface. Then they heard the wolf's long cry, and the long cry of wolf replying.

“More Iroquois coming,” said Shif'less Sol. “Well, we gave them a pretty warm how d'ye do, an' with our rifles and double-barreled pistols I'm thinkin' that we kin do it ag'in.”

“We can, except in one case,” said Henry, “if the new party brings their

numbers up to fifty or sixty, and they wait for night, they can surround us in the darkness. Perhaps it would be better for us to slip away when twilight comes. Carpenter and the train have a long lead now."

"Yes," said Shif'less Sol, "Now, what in tarnation is that?"

"A white flag," said Paul. A piece of cloth that had once been white had been hoisted on the barrel of a rifle at a point about sixty yards away.

"They want a talk with us," said Henry.

"If it's Braxton Wyatt," said Long Jim, "I'd like to take a shot at him, talk or no talk, an' ef I missed, then take another."

"We'll see what they have to say," said Henry, and he called aloud: "What do you want with us?"

"To talk with you," replied a clear, full voice, not that of Braxton Wyatt.

"Very well," replied Henry, "show yourself and we will not fire upon you."

A tall figure was upraised upon a grassy hummock, and the hands were held aloft in sign of peace. It was a splendid figure, at least six feet four inches in height. At that moment some rays of the setting sun broke through the gray clouds and shone full upon it, lighting up the defiant scalp lock interwoven with the brilliant red feather, the eagle face with the curved Roman beak, and the mighty shoulders and chest of red bronze. It was a genuine king of the wilderness, none other than the mighty Timmendiquas himself, the great White Lightning of the Wyandots.

"Ware," he said, "I would speak with you. Let us talk as one chief to another."

The five were amazed. Timmendiquas there! They were quite sure that he had come up with the second force, and he was certain to prove a far more formidable leader than either Braxton Wyatt or Moses Blackstaffe. But his demand to speak with Henry Ware might mean something.

"Are you going to answer him?" said Shif'less Sol.

"Of course," replied Henry.

"The others, especially Wyatt and Blackstaffe, might shoot."

"Not while Timmendiquas holds the flag of truce; they would not dare."

Henry stood up, raising himself to his full height. The same ruddy sunlight piercing the somber gray of the clouds fell upon another splendid figure, a boy only in years, but far beyond the average height of man, his hair yellow, his eyes a deep, clear blue, his body clothed in buckskin, and his whole attitude that of one without fear. The two, the white and the red, kings of their kind, confronted

each other across the marsh.

“What do you wish with me, Timmendiquas?” asked Henry. In the presence of the great Wyandot chief the feeling of hate and revenge that had held his heart vanished. He knew that Paul and Shif'less Sol would have sunk under the ruthless tomahawk of Queen Esther, if it had not been for White Lightning. He himself had owed him his life on another and more distant occasion, and he was not ungrateful. So there was warmth in his tone when he spoke.

“Let us meet at the edge of the solid ground,” said Timmendiquas, “I have things to say that are important and that you will be glad to hear.”

Henry walked without hesitation to the edge of the swamp, and the young chief, coming forward, met him. Henry held out his hand in white fashion, and the young chief took it. There was no sound either from the swamp or from those who lay behind the logs on the island, but some of the eyes of those hidden in the swamps watched both with burning hatred.

“I wish to tell you, Ware,” said Timmendiquas, speaking with the dignity becoming a great chief, “that it was not I who led the pursuit of the white men's women and children. I, and the Wyandots who came with me, fought as best we could in the great battle, and I will slay my enemies when I can. We are warriors, and we are ready to face each other in battle, but we do not seek to kill the squaw in the tepee or the papoose in its birch-bark cradle.”

The face of the great chief seemed stirred by some deep emotion, which impressed Henry all the more because the countenance of Timmendiquas was usually a mask.

“I believe that you tell the truth,” said Henry gravely.

“I and my Wyandots,” continued the chief, “followed a trail through the woods. We found that others, Senecas and Mohawks, led by Wyatt and Blackstaffe, who are of your race, had gone before, and when we came up there had just been a battle. The Mohawks and Senecas had been driven back. It was then we learned that the trail was made by women and little children, save you and your comrades who stayed to fight and protect them.”

“You speak true words, Timmendiquas,” said Henry.

“The Wyandots have remained in the East to fight men, not to kill squaws and papooses,” continued Timmendiquas. “So I say to you, go on with those who flee across the mountains. Our warriors shall not pursue you any longer. We will turn back to the valley from which we come, and those of your race, Blackstaffe and Wyatt, shall go with us.”

The great chief spoke quietly, but there was an edge to his tone that told that every word was meant. Henry felt a glow of admiration. The true greatness of Timmendiquas spoke.

“And the Iroquois?” he said, “will they go back with you?”

“They will. They have killed too much. Today all the white people in the valley are killed or driven away. Many scalps have been taken, those of women and children, too, and men have died at the stake. I have felt shame for their deeds, Ware, and it will bring punishment upon my brethren, the Iroquois. It will make so great a noise in the world that many soldiers will come, and the villages of the Iroquois will cease to be.”

“I think it is so, Timmendiquas,” said Henry. “But you will be far away then in your own land.”

The chief drew himself up a little.

“I shall remain with the Iroquois,” he said. “I have promised to help them, and I must do so.”

“I can't blame you for that,” said Henry, “but I am glad that you do not seek the scalps of women and children. We are at once enemies and friends, Timmendiquas.”

White Lightning bowed gravely. He and Henry touched hands again, and each withdrew, the chief into the morass, while Henry walked back toward his comrades, holding himself erect, as if no enemy were near.

The four rose up to greet him. They had heard part of what was said, and Henry quickly told them the rest.

“He's shorely a great chief,” said Shif'less Sol. “He'll keep his word, too. Them people on ahead ain't got anything more to fear from pursuit.”

“He's a statesman, too,” said Henry. “He sees what damage the deeds of Wyoming Valley will do to those who have done them. He thinks our people will now send a great army against the Iroquois, and I think so, too.”

“No nation can stand a thing like that,” said Paul, “and I didn't dream it could happen.”

They now left the oasis, and went swiftly along the trail left by the fugitives. All of them had confidence in the word of Timmendiquas. There was a remote chance that some other band had entered the swamp at a different point, but it was remote, indeed, and it did not trouble them much.

Night was now over the great swamp. The sun no longer came through the gray clouds, but here and there were little flashes of flame made by fireflies. Had

not the trail been so broad and deep it could easily have been lost, but, being what it was, the skilled eyes of the frontiersmen followed it without trouble.

“Some uv 'em are gittin' pow'ful tired,” said Tom Ross, looking at the tracks in the mud. Then he suddenly added: “Here's whar one's quit forever.”

A shallow grave, not an hour old, had been made under some bushes, and its length indicated that a woman lay there. They passed it by in silence. Henry now appreciated more fully than ever the mercy of Timmendiquas. The five and Carpenter could not possibly have protected the miserable fugitives against the great chief, with fifty Wyandots and Iroquois at his back. Timmendiquas knew this, and he had done what none of the Indians or white allies around him would have done.

In another hour they saw a man standing among some vines, but watchful, and with his rifle in the hollow of his arm. It was Carpenter, a man whose task was not less than that of the five. They were in the thick of it and could see what was done, but he had to lead on and wait. He counted the dusk figures as they approached him, one, two, three, four, five, and perhaps no man ever felt greater relief. He advanced toward them and said huskily:

“There was no fight! They did not attack!”

“There was a fight,” said Henry, “and we beat them back; then a second and a larger force came up, but it was composed chiefly of Wyandots, led by their great chief, Timmendiquas. He came forward and said that they would not pursue women and children, and that we could go in safety.”

Carpenter looked incredulous.

“It is true,” said Henry, “every word of it.”

“It is more than Brant would have done,” said Carpenter, “and it saves us, with your help.”

“You were first, and the first credit is yours, Mr. Carpenter,” said Henry sincerely.

They did not tell the women and children of the fight at the oasis, but they spread the news that there would be no more pursuit, and many drooping spirits revived. They spent another day in the Great Dismal Swamp, where more lives were lost. On the day after their emergence from the marsh, Henry and his comrades killed two deer, which furnished greatly needed food, and on the day after that, excepting those who had died by the way, they reached Fort Penn, where they were received into shelter and safety.

The night before the fugitives reached Fort Penn, the Iroquois began the

celebration of the Thanksgiving Dance for their great victory and the many scalps taken at Wyoming. They could not recall another time when they had secured so many of these hideous trophies, and they were drunk with the joy of victory. Many of the Tories, some in their own clothes, and some painted and dressed like Indians, took part in it.

According to their ancient and honored custom they held a grand council to prepare for it. All the leading chiefs were present, Sangerachte, Hiokatoo, and the others. Braxton Wyatt, Blackstaffe, and other white men were admitted. After their deliberations a great fire was built in the center of the camp, the squaws who had followed the army feeding it with brushwood until it leaped and roared and formed a great red pyramid. Then the chiefs sat down in a solemn circle at some distance, and waited.

Presently the sound of a loud chant was heard, and from the farthest point of the camp emerged a long line of warriors, hundreds and hundreds of them, all painted in red and black with horrible designs. They were naked except the breechcloth and moccasins, and everyone waved aloft a tomahawk as he sang.

Still singing and brandishing the tomahawks, which gleamed in the red light, the long procession entered the open space, and danced and wheeled about the great fire, the flames casting a lurid light upon faces hideous with paint or the intoxication of triumph. The glare of their black eyes was like those of Eastern eaters of hasheesh or opium, and they bounded to and fro as if their muscles were springs of steel. They sang:

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We have met the Bostonians [*] in battle,
We slew them with our rifles and tomahawks.
Few there are who escaped our warriors.
Ever-victorious is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee.

   [* Note: All the Americans were often called Bostonians by
   the Indians as late as the Revolutionary War.]

Mighty has been our taking of scalps,
They will fill all the lodges of the Iroquois.
We have burned the houses of the Bostonians.
Ever-victorious is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee.

The wolf will prowl in their corn-fields,
The grass will grow where their blood has soaked;
Their bones will lie for the buzzard to pick.
Ever-victorious is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee.

We came upon them by river and forest;
As we smote Wyoming we will smite the others,
We will drive the Bostonians back to the sea.
Ever-victorious is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee.
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The monotonous chant with the refrain, “Ever-victorious is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee,” went on for many verses. Meanwhile the old squaws never

ceased to feed the bonfire, and the flames roared, casting a deeper and more vivid light over the distorted faces of the dancers and those of the chiefs, who sat gravely beyond.

Higher and higher leaped the warriors. They seemed unconscious of fatigue, and the glare in their eyes became that of maniacs. Their whole souls were possessed by the orgy. Beads of sweat, not of exhaustion, but of emotional excitement, appeared upon their faces and naked bodies, and the red and black paint streaked together horribly.

For a long time this went on, and then the warriors ceased suddenly to sing, although they continued their dance. A moment later a cry which thrilled every nerve came from a far point in the dark background. It was the scalp yell, the most terrible of all Indian cries, long, high-pitched, and quavering, having in it something of the barking howl of the wolf and the fiendish shriek of a murderous maniac. The warriors instantly took it up, and gave it back in a gigantic chorus.

A ghastly figure bounded into the circle of the firelight. It was that of a woman, middle-aged, tall and powerful, naked to the waist, her body covered with red and black paint, her long black hair hanging in a loose cloud down her back. She held a fresh scalp, taken from a white head, aloft in either band. It was Catharine Montour, and it was she who had first emitted the scalp yell. After her came more warriors, all bearing scalps. The scalp yell was supposed to be uttered for every scalp taken, and, as they had taken more than three hundred, it did not cease for hours, penetrating every part of the forest. All the time Catharine Montour led the dance. None bounded higher than she. None grimaced more horribly.

While they danced, six men, with their hands tied behind them and black caps on their heads, were brought forth and paraded around amid hoots and yells and brandishing of tomahawks in their faces. They were the surviving prisoners, and the black caps meant that they were to be killed and scalped on the morrow. Stupefied by all through which they had gone, they were scarcely conscious now.

Midnight came. The Iroquois still danced and sang, and the calm stars looked down upon the savage and awful scene. Now the dancers began to weary. Many dropped unconscious, and the others danced about them where they lay. After a while all ceased. Then the chiefs brought forth a white dog, which Hiokatoo killed and threw on the embers of the fire. When it was thoroughly roasted, the chiefs cut it in pieces and ate it. Thus closed the Festival of Thanksgiving for the victory of Wyoming.

CHAPTER XIII. A FOREST PAGE

When the survivors of the band of Wyoming fugitives that the five had helped were behind the walls of Fort Penn, securing the food and rest they needed so greatly, Henry Ware and his comrades felt themselves relieved of a great responsibility. They were also aware how much they owed to Timmendiquas, because few of the Indians and renegades would have been so forbearing. Thayendanegea seemed to them inferior to the great Wyandot. Often when Brant could prevent the torture of the prisoners and the slaughter of women and children, he did not do it. The five could never forget these things in after life, when Brant was glorified as a great warrior and leader. Their minds always turned to Timmendiquas as the highest and finest of Indian types.

While they were at Fort Penn two other parties came, in a fearful state of exhaustion, and also having paid the usual toll of death on the way. Other groups reached the Moravian towns, where they were received with all kindness by the German settlers. The five were able to give some help to several of these parties, but the beautiful Wyoming Valley lay utterly in ruins. The ruthless fury of the savages and of many of the Tories, Canadians, and Englishmen, can scarcely be told. Everything was slaughtered or burned. As a habitation of human beings or of anything pertaining to human beings, the valley for a time ceased to be. An entire population was either annihilated or driven out, and finally Butler's army, finding that nothing more was left to be destroyed, gathered in its war parties and marched northward with a vast store of spoils, in which scalps were conspicuous. When they repassed Tioga Point, Timmendiquas and his Wyandots were still with them. Thayendanegea was also with them here, and so was Walter Butler, who was destined shortly to make a reputation equaling that of his father, “Indian” Butler. Nor had the terrible Queen Esther ever left them. She marched at the head of the army, singing, horrid chants of victory, and swinging the great war tomahawk, which did not often leave her hand.

The whole force was re-embarked upon the Susquehanna, and it was still full of the impulse of savage triumph. Wild Indian songs floated along the stream or through the meadows, which were quiet now. They advanced at their ease, knowing that there was nobody to attack them, but they were watched by five woodsmen, two of whom were boys. Meanwhile the story of Wyoming, to an extent that neither Indians nor woodsmen themselves suspected, was spreading

from town to town in the East, to invade thence the whole civilized world, and to stir up an indignation and horror that would make the name Wyoming long memorable. Wyoming had been a victory for the flag under which the invaders fought, but it sadly tarnished the cause of that flag, and the consequences were to be seen soon.

Henry Ware, Paul Cotter, Sol Hyde, Tom Ross, and Jim Hart were thinking little of distant consequences, but they were eager for the present punishment of these men who had committed so much cruelty. From the bushes they could easily follow the canoes, and could recognize some of their occupants. In one of the rear boats sat Braxton Wyatt and a young man whom they knew to be Walter Butler, a pallid young man, animated by the most savage ferocity against the patriots. He and Wyatt seemed to be on the best of terms, and faint echoes of their laughter came to the five who were watching among the bushes on the river bank. Certainly Braxton Wyatt and he were a pair well met.

“Henry,” said Shif'less Sol longingly, “I think I could jest about reach Braxton Wyatt with a bullet from here. I ain't over fond o' shootin' from ambush, but I done got over all scruples so fur ez he's concerned. Jest one bullet, one little bullet, Henry, an' ef I miss I won't ask fur a second chance.”

“No, Sol, it won't do,” said Henry. “They'd get off to hunt us. The whole fleet would be stopped, and we want 'em to go on as fast as possible.”

“I s'pose you're right, Henry,” said the shiftless one sadly, “but I'd jest like to try it once. I'd give a month's good huntin' for that single trial.”

After watching the British-Indian fleet passing up the river, they turned back to the site of the Wyoming fort and the houses near it. Here everything had been destroyed. It was about dusk when they approached the battlefield, and they heard a dreadful howling, chiefly that of wolves.

“I think we'd better turn away,” said Henry. “We couldn't do anything with so many.”

They agreed with him, and, going back, followed the Indians up the Susquehanna. A light rain fell that night, but they slept under a little shed, once attached to a house which had been destroyed by fire. In some way the shed had escaped the flames, and it now came into timely use. The five, cunning in forest practice, drew up brush on the sides, and half-burned timber also, and, spreading their blankets on ashes which had not long been cold, lay well sheltered from the drizzling rain, although they did not sleep for a long time.

It was the hottest period of the year in America, but the night had come on cool, and the rain made it cooler. The five, profiting by experience, often carried

with them two light blankets instead of one heavy one. With one blanket beneath the body they could keep warmer in case the weather was cold.

Now they lay in a row against the standing wall of the old outhouse, protected by a six- or seven-foot slant of board roof. They had eaten of a deer that they had shot in the morning, and they had a sense of comfort and rest that none of them had known before in many days. Henry's feelings were much like those that he had experienced when he lay in the bushes in the little canoe, wrapped up from the storm and hidden from the Iroquois. But here there was an important increase of pleasure, the pattering of the rain on the board roof, a pleasant, soothing sound to which millions of boys, many of them afterwards great men, have listened in America.

It grew very dark about them, and the pleasant patter, almost musical in its rhythm, kept up. Not much wind was blowing, and it, too, was melodious. Henry lay with his head on a little heap of ashes, which was covered by his under blanket, and, for the first time since he had brought the warning to Wyoming, he was free from all feeling of danger. The picture itself of the battle, the defeat, the massacre, the torture, and of the savage Queen Esther cleaving the heads of the captives, was at times as vivid as ever, and perhaps would always return now and then in its original true colors, but the periods between, when youth, hope, and strength had their way, grew longer and longer.

Now Henry's eyelids sank lower and lower. Physical comfort and the presence of his comrades caused a deep satisfaction that permeated his whole being. The light wind mingled pleasantly with the soft summer rain. The sound of the two grew strangely melodious, almost piercingly sweet, and then it seemed to be human. They sang together, the wind and rain, among the leaves, and the note that reached his heart, rather than his ear, thrilled him with courage and hope. Once more the invisible voice that had upborne him in the great valley of the Ohio told him, even here in the ruined valley of Wyoming, that what was lost would be regained. The chords ended, and the echoes, amazingly clear, floated far away in the darkness and rain. Henry roused himself, and came from the imaginative borderland. He stirred a little, and said in a quiet voice to Shif'less Sol:

“Did you hear anything, Sol?”

“Nothin' but the wind an' the rain.”

Henry knew that such would be the answer.

“I guess you didn't hear anything either, Henry,” continued the shiftless one, “'cause it looked to me that you wuz 'bout ez near sleep ez a feller could be

without bein' ackshooally so.”

“I was drifting away,” said Henry.

He was beginning to realize that he had a great power, or rather gift. Paul was the sensitive, imaginative boy, seeing everything in brilliant colors, a great builder of castles, not all of air, but Henry's gift went deeper. It was the power to evoke the actual living picture of the event that bad not yet occurred, something akin in its nature to prophecy, based perhaps upon the wonderful power of observation, inherited doubtless, from countless primitive ancestors. The finest product of the wilderness, he saw in that wilderness many things that others did not see, and unconsciously he drew his conclusions from superior knowledge.

The song had ceased a full ten minutes, and then came another note, a howl almost plaintive, but, nevertheless, weird and full of ferocity. All knew it at once. They had heard the cry of wolves too often in their lives, but this had an uncommon note like the yell of the Indian in victory. Again the cry arose, nearer, haunting, and powerful. The five, used to the darkness, could see one another's faces, and the look that all gave was the same, full of understanding and repulsion.

“It has been a great day for the wolf in this valley,” whispered Paul, “and striking our trail they think they are going to find what they have been finding in such plenty before.”

“Yes,” nodded Henry, “but do you remember that time when in the house we took the place of the man, his wife and children, just before the Indians came?”

“Yes,” said Paul.

“We'll treat them wolves the same way,” said Shif'less Sol.

“I'm glad of the chance,” said Long Jim.

“Me, too,” said Tom Ross.

The five rose up to sitting positions against the board wall, and everyone held across his knees a long, slender barreled rifle, with the muzzle pointing toward the forest. All accomplished marksmen, it would only be a matter of a moment for the stock to leap to the shoulder, the eye to glance down the barrel, the finger to pull the trigger, and the unerring bullet to leap forth.

“Henry, you give the word as usual,” said Shif'less Sol.

Henry nodded.

Presently in the darkness they heard the pattering of light feet, and they saw many gleaming eyes draw near. There must have been at least thirty of the wolves, and the five figures that they saw reclining, silent and motionless,

against the unburned portion of the house might well have been those of the dead and scalped, whom they had found in such numbers everywhere. They drew near in a semicircular group, its concave front extended toward the fire, the greatest wolves at the center. Despite many feastings, the wolves were hungry again. Nothing had opposed them before, but caution was instinctive. The big gray leaders did not mind the night or the wind or the rain, which they had known all their lives, and which they counted as nothing, but they always had involuntary suspicion of human figures, whether living or not, and they approached slowly, wrinkling back their noses and sniffing the wind which blew from them instead of the five figures. But their confidence increased as they advanced. They had found many such burned houses as this, but they had found nothing among the ruins except what they wished.

The big leaders advanced more boldly, glaring straight at the human figures, a slight froth on their lips, the lips themselves curling back farther from the strong white teeth. The outer ends of the concave semicircle also drew in. The whole pack was about to spring upon its unresisting prey, and it is, no doubt, true that many a wolfish pulse beat a little higher in anticipation. With a suddenness as startling figures raised themselves, five long, dark tubes leaped to their shoulders, and with a suddenness that was yet more terrifying, a gush of flame shot from five muzzles. Five of the wolves-and they were the biggest and the boldest, the leaders-fell dead upon the ashes of the charred timbers, and the others, howling their terror to the dark, skies, fled deep into the forest.

Henry strode over and pushed the body of the largest wolf with his foot.

“I suppose we only gratified a kind of sentiment in shooting those wolves,” he said, “but I for one am glad we did it.”

“So am I,” said Paul.

“Me, too,” said the other three together.

They went back to their positions near the wall, and one by one fell asleep. No more wolves howled that night anywhere near them.

When the five awakened the next morning the rain had ceased, and a splendid sun was tinting a blue sky with gold. Jim Hart built a fire among the blackened logs, and cooked venison. They had also brought from Fort Penn a little coffee, which Long Jim carried with a small coffee pot in his camp kit, and everyone had a small tin cup. He made coffee for them, an uncommon wilderness luxury, in which they could rarely indulge, and they were heartened and strengthened by it.

Then they went again up the valley, as beautiful as ever, with its silver river in the center, and its green mountain walls on either side. But the beauty was for the eye only. It did not reach the hearts of those who had seen it before. All of the five loved the wilderness, but they felt now how tragic silence and desolation

could be where human life and all the daily ways of human life had been.

It was mid-summer, but the wilderness was already reclaiming its own. The game knew that man was gone, and it had come back into the valley. Deer ate what had grown in the fields and gardens, and the wolves were everywhere. The whole black tragedy was written for miles. They were never out of sight of some trace of it, and their anger grew again as they advanced in the blackened path of the victorious Indians.

It was their purpose now to hang on the Indian flank as scouts and skirmishers, until an American army was formed for a campaign against the Iroquois, which they were sure must be conducted sooner or later. Meanwhile they could be of great aid, gathering news of the Indian plans, and, when that army of which they dreamed should finally march, they could help it most of all by warning it of ambush, the Indian's deadliest weapon.

Everyone of the five had already perceived a fact which was manifest in all wars with the Indians along the whole border from North to South, as it steadily shifted farther West. The practical hunter and scout was always more than a match for the Indian, man for man, but, when the raw levies of settlers were hastily gathered to stem invasion, they were invariably at a great disadvantage. They were likely to be caught in ambush by overwhelming numbers, and to be cut down, as had just happened at Wyoming. The same fate might attend an invasion of the Iroquois country, even by a large army of regular troops, and Henry and his comrades resolved upon doing their utmost to prevent it. An army needed eyes, and it could have none better than those five pairs. So they went swiftly up the valley and northward and eastward, into the country of the Iroquois. They had a plan of approaching the upper Mohawk village of Canajoharie, where one account says that Thayendanegea was born, although another credits his birthplace to the upper banks of the Ohio.

They turned now from the valley to the deep woods. The trail showed that the great Indian force, after disembarking again, split into large parties, everyone loaded with spoil and bound for its home village. The five noted several of the trails, but one of them consumed the whole attention of Silent Tom Ross.

He saw in the soft soil near a creek bank the footsteps of about eight Indians, and, mingled with them, other footsteps, which he took to be those of a white woman and of several children, captives, as even a tyro would infer. The soul of Tom, the good, honest, and inarticulate frontiersman, stirred within him. A white woman and her children being carried off to savagery, to be lost forevermore to their kind! Tom, still inarticulate, felt his heart pierced with sadness at the tale that the tracks in the soft mud told so plainly. But despair was not the only

emotion in his heart. The silent and brave man meant to act.

“Henry,” he said, “see these tracks here in the soft spot by the creek.”

The young leader read the forest page, and it told him exactly the same tale that it had told Tom Ross.

“About a day old, I think,” he said.

“Just about,” said Tom; “an' I reckon, Henry, you know what's in my mind.”

“I think I do,” said Henry, “and we ought to overtake them by to-morrow night. You tell the others, Tom.”

Tom informed Shif'less Sol, Paul, and Long Jim in a few words, receiving from everyone a glad assent, and then the five followed fast on the trail. They knew that the Indians could not go very fast, as their speed must be that of the slowest, namely, that of the children, and it seemed likely that Henry's prediction of overtaking them on the following night would come true.

It was an easy trail. Here and there were tiny fragments of cloth, caught by a bush from the dress of a captive. In one place they saw a fragment of a child's shoe that had been dropped off and abandoned. Paul picked up the worn piece of leather and examined it.

“I think it was worn by a girl,” he said, “and, judging from its size, she could not have been more than eight years old. Think of a child like that being made to walk five or six hundred miles through these woods!”

“Younger ones still have had to do it,” said Shif'less Sol gravely, “an' them that couldn't-well, the tomahawk.”

The trail was leading them toward the Seneca country, and they had no doubt that the Indians were Senecas, who had been more numerous than any others of the Six Nations at the Wyoming battle. They came that afternoon to a camp fire beside which the warriors and captives had slept the night before.

“They ate bar meat an' wild turkey,” said Long Jim, looking at some bones on the ground.

“An' here,” said Tom Ross, “on this pile uv bushes is whar the women an' children slept, an' on the other side uv the fire is whar the warriors lay anywhars. You can still see how the bodies uv some uv 'cm crushed down the grass an' little bushes.”

“An' I'm thinkin',” said Shif'less Sol, as he looked at the trail that led away from the camp fire, “that some o' them little ones wuz gittin' pow'ful tired. Look how these here little trails are wobblin' about.”

“Hope we kin come up afore the Injuns begin to draw thar tomahawks,” said

Tom Ross.

The others were silent, but they knew the dreadful significance of Tom's remark, and Henry glanced at them all, one by one.

“It's the greatest danger to be feared,” he said, “and we must overtake them in the night when they are not suspecting. If we attack by day they will tomahawk the captives the very first thing.”

“Shorely,', said the shiftless one.

“Then,” said Henry, “we don't need to hurry. We'll go on until about midnight, and then sleep until sunrise.”

They continued at a fair pace along a trail that frontiersmen far less skillful than they could have followed. But a silent dread was in the heart of every one of them. As they saw the path of the small feet staggering more and more they feared to behold some terrible object beside the path.

“The trail of the littlest child is gone,” suddenly announced Paul.

“Yes,” said Henry, “but the mother has picked it up and is carrying it. See how her trail has suddenly grown more uneven.”

“Poor woman,” said Paul. “Henry, we're just bound to overtake that band.”

“We'll do it,” said Henry.

At the appointed time they sank down among the thickest bushes that they could find, and slept until the first upshot of dawn. Then they resumed the trail, haunted always by that fear of finding something terrible beside it. But it was a trail that continually grew slower. The Indians themselves were tired, or, feeling safe from pursuit, saw no need of hurry. By and by the trail of the smallest child reappeared.

“It feels a lot better now,” said Tom Ross. “So do I.”

They came to another camp fire, at which the ashes were not yet cold. Feathers were scattered about, indicating that the Indians had taken time for a little side hunt, and had shot some birds.

“They can't be more than two or three hours ahead,” said Henry, “and we'll have to go on now very cautiously.”

They were in a country of high hills, well covered with forests, a region suited to an ambush, which they feared but little on their own account; but, for the sake of extreme caution, they now advanced slowly. The afternoon was long and warm, but an hour before sunset they looked over a hill into a glade, and saw the warriors making camp for the night.

The sight they beheld made the pulses of the five throb heavily. The Indians had already built their fire, and two of them were cooking venison upon it. Others were lying on the grass, apparently resting, but a little to one side sat a woman, still young and of large, strong figure, though now apparently in the last stages of exhaustion, with her feet showing through the fragments of shoes that she wore. Her head was bare, and her dress was in strips. Four children lay beside her' the youngest two with their heads in her lap. The other two, who might be eleven and thirteen each, had pillowed their heads on their arms, and lay in the dull apathy that comes from the finish of both strength and hope. The woman's face was pitiful. She had more to fear than the children, and she knew it. She was so worn that the skin hung loosely on her face, and her eyes showed despair only. The sad spectacle was almost more than Paul could stand.

“I don't like to shoot from ambush,” he said, “but we could cut down half of those warriors at our firs fire and rush in on the rest.”

“And those we didn't cut down at our first volley would tomahawk the woman and children in an instant,” replied Henry. “We agreed, you know, that it would be sure to happen. We can't do anything until night comes, and then we've got to be mighty cautious.”

Paul could not dispute the truth of his words, and they withdrew carefully to the crest of a hill, where they lay in the undergrowth, watching the Indians complete their fire and their preparations for the night. It was evident to Henry that they considered themselves perfectly safe. Certainly they had every reason for thinking so. It was not likely that white enemies were within a hundred miles of them, and, if so, it could only be a wandering hunter or two, who would flee from this fierce band of Senecas who bad taken revenge for the great losses that they' had suffered the year before at the Oriskany.

They kept very little watch and built only a small fire, just enough for broiling deer meat which they carried. They drank at a little spring which ran from under a ledge near them, and gave portions of the meat to the woman and children. After the woman had eaten, they bound her hands, and she lay back on the grass, about twenty feet from the camp fire. Two children lay on either side of her, and they were soon sound asleep. The warriors, as Indians will do when they are free from danger and care, talked a good deal, and showed all the signs of having what was to them a luxurious time. They ate plentifully, lolled on the grass, and looked at some hideous trophies, the scalps that they carried at their belts. The woman could not keep from seeing these, too, but her face did not change from its stony aspect of despair. Then the light of the fire went out, the sun sank behind the mountains, and the five could no longer see the little group of

captives and captors.

They still waited, although eagerness and impatience were tugging at the hearts of every one of them. But they must give the Indians time to fall asleep if they would secure rescue, and not merely revenge. They remained in the bushes, saying but little and eating of venison that they carried in their knapsacks.

They let a full three hours pass, and the night remained dark, but with a faint moon showing. Then they descended slowly into the valley, approaching by cautious degrees the spot where they knew the Indian camp lay. This work required at least three quarters of an hour, and they reached a point where they could see the embers of the fire and the dark figures lying about it. The Indians, their suspicions lulled, had put out no sentinels, and all were asleep. But the five knew that, at the first shot, they would be as wide awake as if they had never slept, and as formidable as tigers. Their problem seemed as great as ever. So they lay in the bushes and held a whispered conference.

“It's this,” said Henry. “We want to save the woman and the children from the tomahawks, and to do so we must get them out of range of the blade before the battle begins.” “How?” said Tom Ross.

“I've got to slip up, release the woman, arm her, tell her to run for the woods with the children, and then you four must do the most of the rest.”

“Do you think you can do it, Henry?” asked Shif'less Sol.

“I can, as I will soon show you. I'm going to steal forward to the woman, but the moment you four hear an alarm open with your rifles and pistols. You can come a little nearer without being heard.”

All of them moved up close to the Indian camp, and lay hidden in the last fringe of bushes except Henry. He lay almost flat upon the ground, carrying his rifle parallel with his side, and in his right hand. He was undertaking one of the severest and most dangerous tests known to a frontiersman. He meant to crawl into the very midst of a camp of the Iroquois, composed of the most alert woodsmen in the world, men who would spring up at the slightest crackle in the brush. Woodmen who, warned by some sixth sense, would awaken at the mere fact of a strange presence.

The four who remained behind in the bushes could not keep their hearts from beating louder and faster. They knew the tremendous risk undertaken by their comrade, but there was not one of them who would have shirked it, had not all yielded it to the one whom they knew to be the best fitted for the task.

Henry crept forward silently, bringing to his aid all the years of skill that he had acquired in his life in the wilds. His body was like that of a serpent, going

forward, coil by coil. He was near enough now to see the embers of the fire not yet quite dead, the dark figures scattered about it, sleeping upon the grass with the long ease of custom, and then the outline of the woman apart from the others with the children about her. Henry now lay entirely flat, and his motions were genuinely those of a serpent. It was by a sort of contraction and relaxation of the body that he moved himself, and his progress was absolutely soundless.

The object of his advance was the woman. He saw by the faint light of the moon that she was not yet asleep. Her face, worn and weather beaten, was upturned to the skies, and the stony look of despair seemed to have settled there forever. She lay upon some pine boughs, and her hands were tied behind her for the night with deerskin.

Henry contorted himself on, inch by inch, for all the world like a great snake. Now he passed the sleeping Senecas, hideous with war paint, and came closer to the woman. She was not paying attention to anything about her, but was merely looking up at the pale, cold stars, as if everything in the world had ceased for her.

Henry crept a little nearer. He made a slight noise, as of a lizard running through the grass, but the woman took no notice. He crept closer, and there he lay flat upon the grass within six feet of her, his figure merely a slightly darker blur against the dark blur of the earth. Then, trusting to the woman's courage and strength of mind, he emitted a hiss very soft and low, like the warning of a serpent, half in fear and half in anger.

The woman moved a little, and looked toward the point from which the sound had come. It might have been the formidable hiss of a coiling rattlesnake that she heard, but she felt no fear. She was too much stunned, too near exhaustion to be alarmed by anything, and she did not look a second time. She merely settled back on the pine boughs, and again looked dully up at the pale, cold stars that cared so little for her or hers.

Henry crept another yard nearer, and then he uttered that low noise, sibilant and warning, which the woman, the product of the border, knew to be made by a human being. She raised herself a little, although it was difficult with her bound hands to sit upright, and saw a dark shadow approaching her. That dark shadow she knew to be the figure of a man. An Indian would not be approaching in such a manner, and she looked again, startled into a sudden acute attention, and into a belief that the incredible, the impossible, was about to happen. A voice came from the figure, and its quality was that of the white voice, not the red.

“Do not move,” said that incredible voice out of the unknown. “I have come

for your rescue, and others who have come for the same purpose are near. Turn on one side, and I will cut the bonds that hold your arms."

The voice, the white voice, was like the touch of fire to Mary Newton. A sudden fierce desire for life and for the lives of her four children awoke within her just when hope had gone the call to life came. She had never heard before a voice so full of cheer and encouragement. It penetrated her whole being. Exhaustion and despair fled away.

"Turn a little on your side," said the voice.

She turned obediently, and then felt the sharp edge of cold steel as it swept between her wrists and cut the thongs that held them together. Her arms fell apart, and strength permeated every vein of her being.

"We shall attack in a few moments," said the voice, "but at the first shots the Senecas will try to tomahawk you and your children. Hold out your hands."

She held out both hands obediently. The handle of a tomahawk was pressed into one, and the muzzle of a double-barreled pistol into the other. Strength flowed down each hand into her body.

"If the time comes, use them; you are strong, and you know how," said the voice. Then she saw the dark figure creeping away.

CHAPTER XIV. THE PURSUIT ON THE RIVER

The story of the frontier is filled with heroines, from the far days of Hannah Dustin down to the present, and Mary Newton, whom the unknown figure in the dark had just aroused, is one of them. It had seemed to her that God himself had deserted her, but at the last moment he had sent some one. She did not doubt, she could not doubt, because the bonds had been severed, and there she lay with a deadly weapon in either hand. The friendly stranger who had come so silently was gone as he had come, but she was not helpless now. Like many another frontier woman, she was naturally lithe and powerful, and, stirred by a great hope, all her strength had returned for the present.

Nobody who lives in the wilderness can wholly escape superstition, and Mary Newton began to believe that some supernatural creature had intervened in her behalf. She raised herself just a little on one elbow and surveyed the surrounding thicket. She saw only the dead embers of the fire, and the dark forms of the Indians lying upon the bare ground. Had it not been for the knife and pistol in her hand, she could have believed that the voice was only a dream.

There was a slight rustling in the thicket, and a Seneca rose quickly to his knees, grasping his rifle in both hands. The woman's fingers clutched the knife and pistol more tightly, and her whole gaunt figure trembled. The Seneca listened only a moment. Then he gave a sharp cry, and all the other warriors sprang up. But three of them rose only to fall again, as the rifles cracked in the bushes, while two others staggered from wounds.

The triumphant shout of the frontiersmen came from the thicket, and then they rushed upon the camp. Quick as a flash two of the Senecas started toward the woman and children with their tomahawks, but Mary Newton was ready. Her heart had leaped at the shots when the Senecas fell, and she kept her courage. Now she sprang to her full height, and, with the children screaming at her feet, fired one barrel of the pistol directly into the face of the first warrior, and served the second in the same way with the other barrel when he was less than four feet away. Then, tomahawk in hand, she rushed forward. In judging Mary Newton, one must consider time and place.

But happily there was no need for her to use her tomahawk. As the five rushed in, four of them emptied their double-barreled pistols, while Henry swung his clubbed rifle with terrible effect. It was too much for the Senecas. The apparition

of the armed woman, whom they had left bound, and the deadly fire from the five figures that sprang upon them, was like a blow from the hand of Aieroski. The unhurt and wounded fled deep into the forest, leaving their dead behind. Mary Newton, her great deed done, collapsed from emotion and weakness. The screams of the children sank in a few moments to frightened whimpers. But the oldest, when they saw the white faces, knew that rescue had come.

Paul brought water from the brook in his cap, and Mary Newton was revived; Jim was reassuring the children, and the other three were in the thickets, watching lest the surviving Senecas return for attack.

“I don't know who you are, but I think the good God himself must have sent you to our rescue,” said Mary Newton reverently.

“We don't know,” said Paul, “but we are doing the best we can. Do you think you can walk now?”

“Away from the savages? Yes!” she said passionately. She looked down at the dead figures of the Senecas, and she did not feel a single trace of pity for them. Again it is necessary to consider time and place.

“Some of my strength came back while I was lying here,” she said, “and much more of it when you drove away the Indians.”

“Very well,” said Henry, who had returned to the dead camp fire with his comrades, “we must start on the back trail at once. The surviving Senecas, joined by other Iroquois, will certainly pursue, and we need all the start that we can get.”

Long Jim picked up one of the two younger children and flung him over his shoulder; Tom Ross did as much for the other, but the older two scorned help. They were full of admiration for the great woodsmen, mighty heroes who had suddenly appeared out of the air, as it were, and who had swept like a tornado over the Seneca band. It did not seem possible now that they, could be retaken.

But Mary Newton, with her strength and courage, had also recovered her forethought.

“Maybe it will not be better to go on the back trail,” she said. “One of the Senecas told me to-day that six or seven miles farther on was a river flowing into the Susquehanna, and that they would cross this river on a boat now concealed among bushes on the bank. The crossing was at a sudden drop between high banks. Might not we go on, find the boat, and come back in it down the river and into the Susquehanna?”

“That sounds mighty close to wisdom to me,” said Shif'less Sol. “Besides, it's

likely to have the advantage o' throwin' the Iroquois off our track. They'll think, o' course, that we've gone straight back, an' we'll pass 'em ez we're going forward."

"It's certainly the best plan," said Henry, "and it's worth our while to try for that hidden boat of the Iroquois. Do you know the general direction?"

"Almost due north."

"Then we'll make a curve to the right, in order to avoid any Iroquois who may be returning to this camp, and push for it."

Henry led the way over hilly, rough ground, and the others followed in a silent file, Long Jim and Tom still carrying the two smallest children, who soon fell asleep on their shoulders. Henry did not believe that the returning Iroquois could follow their trail on such a dark night, and the others agreed with him.

After a while they saw the gleam of water. Henry knew that it must be very near, or it would have been wholly invisible on such a dark night.

"I think, Mrs. Newton," he said, "that this is the river of which you spoke, and the cliffs seem to drop down just as you said they would."

The woman smiled.

"Yes," she said, "you've done well with my poor guess, and the boat must be hidden somewhere near here."

Then she sank down with exhaustion, and the two older children, unable to walk farther, sank down beside her. But the two who slept soundly on the shoulders of Long Jim and Tom Ross did not awaken. Henry motioned to Jim and Tom to remain there, and Shif'less Sol bent upon them a quizzical and approving look.

"Didn't think it was in you, Jim Hart, you old horny-handed galoot," he said, "carryin' a baby that tender. Knew Jim could sling a little black bar 'roun' by the tail, but I didn't think you'd take to nussin' so easy."

"I'd luv you to know, Sol Hyde," said Jim Hart in a tone of high condescension, "that Tom Ross an' me are civilized human bein's. In face uv danger we are ez brave ez forty thousand lions, but with the little an' the weak we're as easy an' kind an' soft ez human bein's are ever made to be."

"You're right, old hoss," said Tom Ross.

"Well," said the shiftless one, "I can't argify with you now, ez the general hez called on his colonel, which is me, an' his major, which is Paul, to find him a nice new boat like one o' them barges o' Clepatry that Paul tells about, all solid silver, with red silk sails an' gold oars, an' we're meanin' to do it."

Fortune was with them, and in a quarter of an hour they discovered, deep among bushes growing in the shallow water, a large, well-made boat with two pairs of oars and with small supplies of parched corn and venison hidden in it.

“Good luck an' bad luck come mixed,” said the shift-less one, “an' this is shorely one o' our pieces o' good luck. The woman an' the children are clean tuckered out, an' without this boat we could never hev got them back. Now it's jest a question o' rowin' an' fightin'.”

“Paul and I will pull her out to the edge of the clear water,” said Henry, “while you can go back and tell the others, Sol.”

“That just suits a lazy man,” said Sol, and he walked away jauntily. Under his apparent frivolity he concealed his joy at the find, which he knew to be of such vast importance. He approached the dusky group, and his really tender heart was stirred with pity for the rescued captives. Long Jim and Silent Tom held the smaller two on their shoulders, but the older ones and the woman, also, had fallen asleep. Sol, in order to conceal his emotion, strode up rather roughly. Mary Newton awoke.

“Did you find anything?” she asked.

“Find anything?” repeated Shif'less Sol. “Well, Long Jim an' Tom here might never hev found anything, but Henry an' Paul an' me, three eddicated men, scholars, I might say, wuz jest natcherally bound to find it whether it wuz thar or not. Yes, we've unearthed what Paul would call an argosy, the grandest craft that ever floated on this here creek, that I never saw before, an' that I don't know the name uv. She's bein' floated out now, an' I, the Gran' Hidalgo an' Majordomo, hev come to tell the princes and princesses, an' the dukes and dukesses, an' all the other gran' an' mighty passengers, that the barge o' the Dog o' Venice is in the stream, an' the Dog, which is Henry Ware, is waitin', settin' on the Pup to welcome ye.”

“Sol,” said Long Jim, “you do talk a power uv foolishness, with your Dogs an' Pups.”

“It ain't foolishness,” rejoined the shiftless one. “I heard Paul read it out o' a book oncet, plain ez day. They've been ruled by Dogs at Venice for more than a thousand years, an' on big 'casions the Dog comes down a canal in a golden barge, settin' on the Pup. I'll admit it 'pears strange to me, too, but who are you an' me, Jim Hart, to question the ways of foreign countries, thousands o' miles on the other side o' the sea?”

“They've found the boat,” said Tom Ross, “an' that's enough!”

“Is it really true?” asked Mrs. Newton.

“It is,” replied Shif'less Sol, “an' Henry an' Paul are in it, waitin' fur us. We're thinkin', Mrs. Newton, that the roughest part of your trip is over.”

In another five minutes all were in the boat, which was a really fine one, and they were delighted. Mary Newton for the first time broke down and wept, and no one disturbed her. The five spread the blankets on the bottom of the boat, where the children soon went to sleep once more, and Tom Ross and Shif'less Sol took the oars.

“Back in a boat ag'in,” said the shiftless one exultantly. “Makes me feel like old times. My fav'rite mode o' travelin' when Jim Hart, 'stead o' me, is at the oars.”

“Which is most o' the time,” said Long Jim.

It was indeed a wonderful change to these people worn by the wilderness. They lay at ease now, while two pairs of powerful arms, with scarcely an effort, propelled the boat along the stream. The woman herself lay down on the blankets and fell asleep with the children. Henry at the prow, Tom Ross at the stern, and Paul amidships watched in silence, but with their rifles across their knees. They knew that the danger was far from over. Other Indians were likely to use this stream, unknown to them, as a highway, and those who survived of their original captors could pick up their trail by daylight. And the Senecas, being mad for revenge, would surely get help and follow. Henry believed that the theory of returning toward the Wyoming Valley was sound. That region had been so thoroughly ravaged now that all the Indians would be going northward. If they could float down a day or so without molestation, they would probably be safe. The creek, or, rather, little river, broadened, flowing with a smooth, fairly swift current. The forest on either side was dense with oak, hickory, maple, and other splendid trees, often with a growth of underbrush. The three riflemen never ceased to watch intently. Henry always looked ahead. It would have been difficult for any ambushed marksman to have escaped his notice. But nothing occurred to disturb them. Once a deer came down to drink, and fled away at sight of the phantom boat gliding almost without noise on the still waters. Once the far scream of a panther came from the woods, but Mary Newton and her children, sleeping soundly, did not hear it. The five themselves knew the nature of the sound, and paid no attention. The boat went steadily on, the three riflemen never changing their position, and soon the day began to come. Little arrows of golden light pierced through the foliage of the trees, and sparkled on the surface of the water. In the cast the red sun was coming from his nightly trip. Henry looked down at the sleepers. They were overpowered by exhaustion, and would not awake of their own accord for a long time.

Shif'less Sol caught his look.

“Why not let 'em sleep on?” he said.

Then he and Jim Hart took the oars, and the shiftless one and Tom Ross resumed their rifles. The day was coming fast, and the whole forest was soon transfused with light.

No one of the five had slept during the night. They did not feel the need of sleep, and they were upborne, too, by a great exaltation. They had saved the prisoners thus far from a horrible fate, and they were firmly resolved to reach, with them, some strong settlement and safety. They felt, too, a sense of exultation over Brant, Sangerachte, Hiokatoo, the Butlers, the Johnsons, Wyatt, and all the crew that had committed such terrible devastation in the Wyoming Valley and elsewhere.

The full day clothed the earth in a light that turned from silver to gold, and the woman and the children still slept. The five chewed some strips of venison, and looked rather lugubriously at the pieces they were saving for Mary Newton and the children.

“We ought to hev more'n that,” said Shif'less Sol. “Ef the worst comes to the worst, we've got to land somewhar an' shoot a deer.”

“But not yet,” said Henry in a whisper, lest he wake the sleepers. “I think we'll come into the Susquehanna pretty soon, and its width will be a good thing for us. I wish we were there now. I don't like this narrow stream. Its narrowness affords too good an ambush.”

“Anyway, the creek is broadenin' out fast,” said the shiftless one, “an' that is a good sign. What's that you see ahead, Henry—ain't it a river?”

“It surely is,” replied Henry, who caught sight of a broad expanse of water, “and it's the Susquehanna. Pull hard, Sol! In five more minutes we'll be in the river.”

It was less than five when they turned into the current of the Susquehanna, and less than five more when they heard a shout behind them, and saw at least a dozen canoes following. The canoes were filled with Indians and Tories, and they had spied the fugitives.

“Keep the women and the children down, Paul,” cried Henry.

All knew that Henry and Shif'less Sol were the best shots, and, without a word, Long Jim and Tom, both powerful and skilled watermen, swung heavily on the oars, while Henry and Shif'less Sol sat in the rear with their rifles ready. Mary Newton awoke with a cry at the sound of the shots, and started to rise, but

Paul pushed her down.

“We're on the Susquehanna now, Mrs. Newton,” he said, “and we are pursued. The Indians and Tories have just seen us, but don't be afraid. The two who are watching there are the best shots in the world.”

He looked significantly at Henry and Shif'less Sol, crouching in the stern of the boat like great warriors from some mighty past, kings of the forest whom no one could overcome, and her courage came back. The children, too, had awakened with frightened cries, but she and Paul quickly soothed them, and, obedient to commands, the four, and Mary Newton with them, lay flat upon the bottom of the boat, which was now being sent forward rapidly by Jim Hart and Tom. Paul took up his rifle and sat in a waiting attitude, either to relieve one of the men at the oars or to shoot if necessary.

The clear sun made forest and river vivid in its light. The Indians, after their first cry, made no sound, but so powerful were Long Jim and Tom that they were gaining but little, although some of the boats contained six or eight rowers.

As the light grew more intense Henry made out the two white faces in the first boat. One was that of Braxton Wyatt, and the other, he was quite sure, belonged to the infamous Walter Butler. Hot anger swept through all his veins, and the little pulses in his temples began to beat like trip hammers. Now the picture of Wyoming, the battle, the massacre, the torture, and Queen Esther wielding her great tomahawk on the bound captives, grew astonishingly vivid, and it was printed blood red on his brain. The spirit of anger and defiance, of a desire to taunt those who had done such things, leaped up in his heart.

“Are you there, Braxton Wyatt?” he called clearly across the intervening water. “Yes, I see that it is you, murderer of women and children, champion of the fire and stake, as savage as any of the savages. And it is you, too, Walter Butler, wickeder son of a wicked father. Come a little closer, won't you? We've messengers here for both of you!”

He tapped lightly the barrel of his own rifle and that of Shif'less Sol, and repeated his request that they come a little closer.

They understood his words, and they understood, also, the significant gesture when he patted the barrel of the rifles. The hearts of both Butler and Wyatt were for the moment afraid, and their boat dropped back to third place. Henry laughed aloud when he saw. The Viking rage was still upon him. This was the primeval wilderness, and these were no common foes.

“I see that you don't want to receive our little messengers,” he cried. “Why have you dropped back to third place in the line, Braxton Wyatt and Walter

Butler, when you were first only a moment ago? Are you cowards as well as murderers of women and children?”

“That's pow'ful good talk,” said Shif'less Sol admiringly. “Henry, you're a real orator. Give it to 'em, an' mebbe I'll get a chance at one o' them renegades.”

It seemed that Henry's words had an effect, because the boat of the renegades pulled up somewhat, although it did not regain first place. Thus the chase proceeded down the Susquehanna.

The Indian fleet was gaining a little, and Shif'less Sol called Henry's attention to it.

“Don't you think I'd better take a shot at one o' them rowers in the first boat?” he said to Henry. “Wyatt an' Butler are a leetle too fur away.”

“I think it would give them a good hint, Sol!” said Henry. “Take that fellow on the right who is pulling so hard.”

The shiftless one raised his rifle, lingered but a little over his aim, and pulled the trigger. The rower whom Henry had pointed out fell back in the boat, his hands slipping from the handles of his oars. The boat was thrown into confusion, and dropped back in the race. Scattering shots were fired in return, but all fell short, the water spurting up in little jets where they struck.

Henry, who had caught something of the Indian nature in his long stay among them in the northwest, laughed in loud irony.

“That was one of our little messengers, and it found a listener!” he shouted. “And I see that you are afraid, Braxton Wyatt and Walter Butler, murderers of women and children! Why don't you keep your proper places in the front?”

“That's the way to talk to 'em,” whispered Shif'less Sol, as he reloaded. “Keep it up, an' mebbe we kin git a chance at Braxton Wyatt hisself. Since Wyoming I'd never think o' missin' sech a chance.”

“Nor I, either,” said Henry, and he resumed in his powerful tones: “The place of a leader is in front, isn't it? Then why don't you come up?”

Braxton Wyatt and Walter Butler did not come up. They were not lacking in courage, but Wyatt knew what deadly marksmen the fugitive boat contained, and he had also told Butler. So they still hung back, although they raged at Henry Ware's taunts, and permitted the Mohawks and Senecas to take the lead in the chase.

“They're not going to give us a chance,” said Henry. “I'm satisfied of that. They'll let redskins receive our bullets, though just now I'd rather it were the two white ones. What do you think, Sol, of that leading boat? Shouldn't we give

another hint?”

“I agree with you, Henry,” said the shiftless one. “They're comin' much too close fur people that ain't properly interduced to us. This promiskus way o' meetin' up with strangers an' lettin' 'em talk to you jest ez ef they'd knowed you all their lives hez got to be stopped. It's your time, Henry, to give 'em a polite hint, an' I jest suggest that you take the big fellow in the front o' the boat who looks like a Mohawk.”

Henry raised his rifle, fired, and the Mohawk would row no more. Again confusion prevailed in the pursuing fleet, and there was a decline of enthusiasm. Braxton Wyatt and Walter Butler raged and swore, but, as they showed no great zeal for the lead themselves, the Iroquois did not gain on the fugitive boat. They, too, were fast learning that the two who crouched there with their rifles ready were among the deadliest marksmen in existence. They fired a dozen shots, perhaps, but their rifles did not have the long range of the Kentucky weapons, and again the bullets fell short, causing little jets of water to spring up.

“They won't come any nearer, at least not for the present,” said Henry, “but will hang back just out of rifle range, waiting for some chance to help them.”

Shif'less Sol looked the other way, down the Susquehanna, and announced that he could see no danger. There was probably no Indian fleet farther down the river than the one now pursuing them, and the danger was behind them, not before.

Throughout the firing, Silent Tom Ross and Long Jim Hart had not said a word, but they rowed with a steadiness and power that would have carried oarsmen of our day to many a victory. Moreover, they had the inducement not merely of a prize, but of life itself, to row and to row hard. They had rolled up their sleeves, and the mighty muscles on those arms of woven steel rose and fell as they sent the boat swiftly with the silver current of the Susquehanna.

Mary Newton still lay on the bottom of the boat. The children had cried out in fright once or twice at the sound of the firing, but she and Paul bad soothed them and kept them down. Somehow Mary Newton had become possessed of a great faith. She noticed the skill, speed, and success with which the five always worked, and, so long given up to despair, she now went to the other extreme. With such friends as these coming suddenly out of the void, everything must succeed. She had no doubt of it, but lay peacefully on the bottom of the boat, not at all disturbed by the sound of the shots.

Paul and Sol after a while relieved Long Jim and Tom at the oars. The Iroquois thought it a chance to creep up again, but they were driven back by a

third bullet, and once more kept their distance. Shif'less Sol, while he pulled as powerfully as Tom Ross, whose place he had taken, nevertheless was not silent.

“I'd like to know the feelin's o' Braxton Wyatt an' that feller Butler,” he said. “Must be powerful tantalizin' to them to see us here, almost where they could stretch out their hands an' put 'em on us. Like reachn' fur ripe, rich fruit, an' failin' to git it by half a finger's length.”

“They are certainly not pleased,” said Henry, “but this must end some way or other, you know.”

“I say so, too, now that I'm a-rowin',” rejoined the shiftless one, “but when my turn at the oars is finished I wouldn't care. Ez I've said more'n once before, floatin' down a river with somebody else pullin' at the oars is the life jest suited to me.”

Henry looked up. “A summer thunderstorm is coming,” he said, “and from the look of things it's going to be pretty black. Then's when we must dodge 'em.”

He was a good weather prophet. In a half hour the sky began to darken rapidly. There was a great deal of thunder and lightning, but when the rain came the air was almost as dark as night. Mary Newton and her children were covered as much as possible with the blankets, and then they swung the boat rapidly toward the eastern shore. They had already lost sight of their pursuers in the darkness, and as they coasted along the shore they found a large creek flowing into the river from the east.

They ran up the creek, and were a full mile from its mouth when the rain ceased. Then the sun came out bright and warm, quickly drying everything.

They pulled about ten miles farther, until the creek grew too shallow for them, when they hid the boat among bushes and took to the land. Two days later they arrived at a strong fort and settlement, where Mary Newton and her four children, safe and well, were welcomed by relatives who had mourned them as dead.

CHAPTER XV. “THE ALCOVE”

They arrived at the fort as evening was coming on, and as soon as food was served to them the five sought sleep. The frontiersmen usually slept soundly and for a long time after prodigious exertions, and Henry and his comrades were too wise to make an exception. They secured a single room inside the fort, one given to them gladly, because Mary Newton had already spread the fame of their exploits, and, laying aside their hunting shirts and leggins, prepared for rest.

“Jim,” said Shif'less Sol, pointing to a low piece of furniture, flat and broad, in one corner of the room, “that's a bed. Mebbe you don't think it, but people lay on top o' that an' sleep thar.”

Long Jim grinned.

“Mebbe you're right, Sol,” he said. “I hev seen sech things ez that, an' mebbe I've slep' on 'em, but in all them gran' old tales Paul tells us about I never heard uv no big heroes sleepin' in beds. I guess the ground wuz good 'nough for A-killus, Hector, Richard-Kur-de-Leong, an' all the rest uv that fightin' crowd, an' ez I'm that sort uv a man myself I'll jest roll down here on the floor. Bein' as you're tender, Sol Hyde, an' not used to hard life in the woods, you kin take that bed yourself, an' in the mornin' your wally will be here with hot water in a silver mug an' a razor to shave you, an' he'll dress you in a ruffled red silk shirt an' a blue satin waistcoat, an' green satin breeches jest comin' to the knee, where they meet yellow silk stockin's risin' out uv purple satin slippers, an' then he'll clap on your head a big wig uv snow-white hair, fallin' all about your shoulders an' he'll buckle a silver sword to your side, an' he'll say: 'Gentlemen, him that hez long been known ez Shif'less Sol, an' desarvin' the name, but who in reality is the King o' France, is now before you. Down on your knees an' say your prayers!'”

Shif'less Sol stared in astonishment.

“You say a wally will do all that fur me, Jim? Now, what under the sun is a wally?”

“I heard all about 'em from Paul,” replied Long Jim in a tone of intense satisfaction. “A wally is a man what does fur you what you ought to do fur yourself.”

“Then I want one,” said Shif'less Sol emphatically. “He'd jest suit a lazy man like me. An' ez fur your makin' me the King o' France, mebbe you're more'n half

right about that without knowin' it. I hev all the instincts uv a king. I like to be waited on, I like to eat when I'm hungry, I like to drink when I'm thirsty, I like to rest when I'm tired, an' I like to sleep when I'm sleepy. You've heard o' children changed at birth by fairies an' sech like. Mebbe I'm the real King o' France, after all, an' my instincts are handed down to me from a thousand royal ancestors."

"Mebbe it's so," rejoined Long Jim. "I've heard that thar hev been a pow'ful lot uv foolish kings."

With that he put his two blankets upon the floor, lay down upon them, and was sound asleep in five minutes. But Shif'less Sol beat him to slumberland by at least a minute, and the others were not more than two minutes behind Sol.

Henry was the first up the next morning. A strong voice shouted in his ear: "Henry Ware, by all that's glorious," and a hand pressed his fingers together in an iron grasp. Henry beheld the tall, thin figure and smiling brown face of Adam Colfax, with whom he had made that adventurous journey up the Mississippi and Ohio.

"And the others?" was the first question of Adam Colfax.

"They're all here asleep inside. We've been through a lot of things, but we're as sound as ever."

"That's always a safe prediction to make," said Adam Colfax, smiling. "I never saw five other human beings with such a capacity for getting out of danger."

"We were all at Wyoming, and we all still live."

The face of the New Englander darkened.

"Wyoming!" he exclaimed. "I cannot hear of it without every vein growing hot within me."

"We saw things done there," said Henry gravely, "the telling of which few men can bear to hear."

"I know! I know!" exclaimed Adam Colfax. "The news of it has spread everywhere!"

"What we want," said Henry, "is revenge. It is a case in which we must strike back, and strike hard. If this thing goes on, not a white life will be safe on the whole border from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi."

"It is true," said Adam Colfax, "and we would send an army now against the Iroquois and their allies, but, Henry, my lad, our fortunes are at their lowest there in the East, where the big armies are fighting. That is the reason why nobody has been sent to protect our rear guard, which has suffered so terribly. You may be

sure, too, that the Iroquois will strike in this region again as often and as hard as they can. I make more than half a guess that you and your comrades are here because you know this."

He looked shrewdly at the boy.

"Yes," said Henry, "that is so. Somehow we were drawn into it, but being here we are glad to stay. Timmendiquas, the great chief who fought us so fiercely on the Ohio, is with the Iroquois, with a detachment of his Wyandots, and while he, as I know, frowns on the Wyoming massacre, he means to help Thayendanegea to the end."

Adam Colfax looked graver than ever.

"That is bad," he said. "Timmendiquas is a mighty warrior and leader, but there is also another way of looking at it. His presence here will relieve somewhat the pressure on Kentucky. I ought to tell you, Henry, that we got through safely with our supplies to the Continental army, and they could not possibly have been more welcome. They arrived just in time."

The others came forth presently and were greeted with the same warmth by Adam Colfax.

"It is shore mighty good for the eyes to see you, Mr. Colfax," said Shif'less Sol, "an' it's a good sign. Our people won when you were on the Mississippi an' the Ohio'—an' now that you're here, they're goin' to win again."

"I think we are going to win here and everywhere," said Adam Colfax, "but it is not because there is any omen in my presence. It is because our people will not give up, and because our quarrel is just."

The stanch New Englander left on the following day for points farther east, planning and carrying out some new scheme to aid the patriot cause, and the five, on the day after that, received a message written on a piece of paper which was found fastened to a tree on the outskirts of the settlement. It was addressed to "Henry Ware and Those with Him," and it read:

"You need not think because you escaped us at Wyoming and on the Susquehanna that you will ever get back to Kentucky. There is amighty league now on the whole border between the Indians and the soldiers of the king. You have seen at Wyoming what we can do, and you will see at other places and on a greater scale what we will do.

"I find my own position perfect. It is true that Timmendiquas does not like me, but he is not king here. I am the friend of the great Brant; and Hiokatoo, Sangerachte, Hahiron, and the other chiefs esteem me. I am thick with Colonel John Butler, the victor of Wyoming; his son, the valiant and worthy Walter Butler; Sir John Johnson, Colonel Guy Johnson, Colonel Daniel Claus, and many other eminent men and brave soldiers.

“I write these words, Henry Ware, both to you and your comrades, to tell you that our cause will prevail over yours. I do not doubt that when you read this you will try to escape to Kentucky, but when we have destroyed everything along the eastern border, as we have at Wyoming, we shall come to Kentucky, and not a rebel face will be left there.

“I am sending this to tell you that there is no hole in which you can hide where we cannot reach you. With my respects, BRAXTON WYATT.”

Henry regarded the letter with contempt.

“A renegade catches something of the Indian nature,” he said, “and always likes to threaten and boast.”

But Shif'less Sol was highly indignant.

“Sometimes I think,” he said, “that the invention o' writin' wuz a mistake. You kin send a man a letter an' call him names an' talk mighty big when he's a hundred miles away, but when you've got to stan' up to him face to face an' say it, wa'al, you change your tune an' sing a pow'ful sight milder. You ain't gen'ally any roarin' lion then.”

“I think I'll keep this letter,” said Henry, “an' we five will give an answer to it later on.”

He tapped the muzzle of his rifle, and every one of the four gravely tapped the muzzle of his own rifle after him. It was a significant action. Nothing more was needed.

The next morning they bade farewell to the grateful Mary Newton and her children, and with fresh supplies of food and ammunition, chiefly ammunition, left the fort, plunging once more into the deep forest. It was their intention to do as much damage as they could to the Iroquois, until some great force, capable of dealing with the whole Six Nations, was assembled. Meanwhile, five redoubtable and determined borderers could achieve something.

It was about the first of August, and they were in the midst of the great heats. But it was a period favoring Indian activity, which was now at its highest pitch. Since Wyoming, loaded with scalps, flushed with victory, and aided by the king's men, they felt equal to anything. Only the strongest of the border settlements could hold them back. The colonists here were so much reduced, and so little help could be sent them from the East, that the Iroquois were able to divide into innumerable small parties and rake the country as with a fine tooth comb. They never missed a lone farmhouse, and rarely was any fugitive in the woods able to evade them. And they were constantly fed from the North with arms, ammunition, rewards for scalps, bounties, and great promises.

But toward the close of August the Iroquois began to hear of a silent and invisible foe, an evil spirit that struck them, and that struck hard. There were battles of small forces in which sometimes not a single Iroquois escaped. Captives were retaken in a half-dozen instances, and the warriors who escaped reported that their assailants were of uncommon size and power. They had all the cunning of the Indian and more, and they carried rifles that slew at a range double that of those served to them at the British posts. It was a certainty that they were guided by the evil spirit, because every attempt to capture them failed miserably. No one could find where they slept, unless it was those who never came back again.

The Iroquois raged, and so did the Butlers and the Johnsons and Braxton Wyatt. This was a flaw in their triumph, and the British and Tories saw, also, that it was beginning to affect the superstitions of their red allies. Braxton Wyatt made a shrewd guess as to the identity of the raiders, but he kept quiet. It is likely, also, that Timmendiquas knew, but be, too, said nothing. So the influence of the raiders grew. While their acts were great, superstition exaggerated them and their powers manifold. And it is true that their deeds were extraordinary. They were heard of on the Susquehanna, then on the Delaware and its branches, on the Chemung and the Chenango, as far south as Lackawaxen Creek, and as far north as Oneida Lake. It is likely that nobody ever accomplished more for a defense than did those five in the waning months of the summer. Late in September the most significant of all these events occurred. A party of eight Tories, who had borne a terrible part in the Wyoming affair, was attacked on the shores of Otsego Lake with such deadly fierceness that only two escaped alive to the camp of Sir John Johnson. Brant sent out six war parties, composed of not less than twenty warriors apiece, to seek revenge, but they found nothing.

Henry and his comrades had found a remarkable camp at the edge of one of the beautiful small lakes in which the region abounds. The cliff at that point was high, but a creek entered into it through a ravine. At the entrance of the creek into the river they found a deep alcove, or, rather, cave in the rock. It ran so far back that it afforded ample shelter from the rain, and that was all they wanted. It was about halfway between the top and bottom of the cliff, and was difficult of approach both from below and above. Unless completely surprised-a very unlikely thing with them-the five could hold it against any force as long as their provisions lasted. They also built a boat large enough for five, which they hid among the bushes at the lake's edge. They were thus provided with a possible means of escape across the water in case of the last emergency.

Jim and Paul, who, as usual, filled the role of housekeepers, took great delight

in fitting up this forest home, which the fittingly called “The Alcove.” The floor of solid stone was almost smooth, and with the aid of other heavy stones they broke off all projections, until one could walk over it in the dark in perfect comfort. They hung the walls with skins of deer which they killed in the adjacent woods, and these walls furnished many nooks and crannies for the storing of necessities. They also, with much hard effort, brought many loads of firewood, which Long Jim was to use for his cooking. He built his little fireplace of stones so near the mouth of “The Alcove” that the smoke would pass out and be lost in the thick forest all about. If the wind happened to be blowing toward the inside of the cave, the smoke, of course, would come in on them all, but Jim would not be cooking then.

Nor did their operations cease until they had supplied “The Alcove” plentifully with food, chiefly jerked deer meat, although there was no way in which they could store water, and for that they had to take their chances. But their success, the product of skill and everlasting caution, was really remarkable. Three times they were trapped within a few miles of “The Alcove,” but the pursuers invariably went astray on the hard, rocky ground, and the pursued would also take the precaution to swim down the creek before climbing up to “The Alcove.” Nobody could follow a trail in the face of such difficulties.

It was Henry and Shif'less Sol who were followed the second time, but they easily shook off their pursuers as the twilight was coming, half waded, half swam down the creek, and climbed up to “The Alcove,” where the others were waiting for them with cooked food and clear cold water. When they had eaten and were refreshed, Shif'less Sol sat at the mouth of “The Alcove,” where a pleasant breeze entered, despite the foliage that hid the entrance. The shiftless one was in an especially happy mood.

“It's a pow'ful comf'table feelin',” he said, “to set up in a nice safe place like this, an' feel that the woods is full o' ragin' heathen, seekin' to devour you, and wonderin' whar you've gone to. Thar's a heap in knowin' how to pick your home. I've thought more than once 'bout that old town, Troy, that Paul tells us 'bout, an' I've 'bout made up my mind that it wuzn't destroyed 'cause Helen eat too many golden apples, but 'cause old King Prime, or whoever built the place, put it down in a plain. That wuz shore a pow'ful foolish thing. Now, ef he'd built it on a mountain, with a steep fall-off on every side, thar wouldn't hev been enough Greeks in all the earth to take it, considerin' the miserable weepins they used in them times. Why, Hector could hev set tight on the walls, laughin' at 'em, 'stead o' goin' out in the plain an' gittin' killed by A-killus, fur which I've always been sorry.”

“It's 'cause people nowadays have more sense than they did in them ancient times that Paul tells about,” said Long Jim. “Now, thar wuz 'Lyssus, ten or twelve years gittin' home from Troy. Allus runnin' his ship on the rocks, hoppin' into trouble with four-legged giants, one-eyed women, an' sech like. Why didn't he walk home through the woods, killin' game on the way, an' hevin' the best time he ever knowed? Then thar wuz the keerlessness of A-killus' ma, dippin' him in that river so no arrow could enter him, but holdin' him by the heel an' keepin' it out o' the water, which caused his death the very first time Paris shot it off with his little bow an' arrer. Why didn't she hev sense enough to let the heel go under, too. She could hev dragged it out in two seconds an' no harm done 'ceptin', perhaps, a little more yellin' on the part of A-killus.”

“I've always thought Paul hez got mixed 'bout that Paris story,” said Tom Ross. “I used to think Paris was the name uv a town, not a man, an' I'm beginnin' to think so ag'in, sence I've been in the East, 'cause I know now that's whar the French come from.”

“But Paris was the name of a man,” persisted Paul. “Maybe the French named their capital after the Paris of the Trojan wars.”

“Then they showed mighty poor jedgment,” said Shif'less Sol. “Ef I'd named my capital after any them old fellers, I'd have called it Hector.”

“You can have danger enough when you're on the tops of hills,” said Henry, who was sitting near the mouth of the cave. “Come here, you fellows, and see what's passing down the lake.”

They looked out, and in the moonlight saw six large war canoes being rowed slowly down the lake, which, though narrow, was quite long. Each canoe held about a dozen warriors, and Henry believed that one of them contained two white faces, evidently those of Braxton Wyatt and Walter Butler.

“Like ez not they've been lookin' fur us,” said Tom Ross.

“Quite likely,” said Henry, “and at the same time they may be engaged in some general movement. See, they will pass within fifty feet of the base of the cliff.”

The five lay on the cave floor, looking through the vines and foliage, and they felt quite sure that they were in absolute security. The six long war canoes moved slowly. The moonlight came out more brightly, and flooded all the bronze faces of the Iroquois. Henry now saw that he was not mistaken, and that Braxton Wyatt and Walter Butler were really in the first boat. From the cover of the cliff he could have picked off either with a rifle bullet, and the temptation was powerful. But he knew that it would lead to an immediate siege, from which they

might not escape, and which at least would check their activities and plans for a long time. Similar impulses flitted through the minds of the other four, but all kept still, although fingers flitted noiselessly along rifle stocks until they touched triggers.

The Iroquois war fleet moved slowly on, the two renegades never dreaming of the danger that had threatened them. An unusually bright ray of moonshine fell full upon Braxton Wyatt's face as he paused, and Henry's finger played with the trigger of his rifle. It was hard, very hard, to let such an opportunity go by, but it must be done.

The fleet moved steadily down the lake, the canoes keeping close together. They turned into mere dots upon the water, became smaller and smaller still, until they vanished in the darkness.

“I'm thinkin',” said Shif'less Sol, “that thar's some kind uv a movement on foot. While they may hev been lookin' fur us, it ain't likely that they'd send sixty warriors or so fur sech a purpose. I heard something three or four days ago from a hunter about an attack upon the Iroquois town of Oghwaga.”

“It's most likely true,” said Henry, “and it seems to me that it's our business to join that expedition. What do you fellows think?”

“Just as you do,” they replied with unanimity.

“Then we leave this place and start in the morning,” said Henry.

CHAPTER XVI. THE FIRST BLOW

Summer was now waning, the foliage was taking on its autumn hues, and Indian war parties still surged over the hills and mountains, but the five avoided them all. On one or two occasions they would have been willing to stop and fight, but they had bigger work on hand. They had received from others confirmation of the report that Long Jim had heard from the hunters, and they were quite sure that a strong force was advancing to strike the first blow in revenge for Wyoming. Curiously enough, this body was commanded by a fourth Butler, Colonel William Butler, and according to report it was large and its leaders capable.

When the avenging force lay at the Johnstown settlement on the Delaware, it was joined by the five. They were introduced to the colonel by the celebrated scout and hunter, Tini Murphy, whom they had met several times in the woods, and they were received warmly.

“I've heard of you,” said Colonel Butler with much warmth, “both from hunters and scouts, and also from Adam Colfax. Two of you were to have been tomahawked by Queen Esther at Wyoming.”

Henry indicated the two.

“What you saw at Wyoming is not likely to decrease your zeal against the Indians and their white allies,” continued Colonel Butler.

“Anyone who was there,” said Henry, “would feel all his life, the desire to punish those who did it.”

“I think so, too, from all that I have heard,” continued Colonel Butler. “It is the business of you young men to keep ahead of our column and warn us of what lies before us. I believe you have volunteered for that duty.”

The five looked over Colonel Butler's little army, which numbered only two hundred and fifty men, but they were all strong and brave, and it was the best force that could yet be sent to the harassed border. It might, after all, strike a blow for Wyoming if it marched into no ambush, and Henry and his comrades were resolved to guard it from that greatest of all dangers.

When the little column moved from the Johnstown settlement, the five were far ahead, passing through the woods, up the Susquehanna, toward the Indian villages that lay on its banks, though a great distance above Wyoming. The chief

of these was Oghwaga, and, knowing that it was the destination of the little army, they were resolved to visit it, or at least come so near it that they could see what manner of place it was.

“If it's a big village,” said Colonel Butler, “it will be too strong to attack, but it may be that most of the warriors are absent on expeditions.”

They had obtained before starting very careful descriptions of the approaches to the village, and toward the close of an October evening they knew that they were near Oghwaga, the great base of the Iroquois supplies. They considered it very risky and unwise to approach in the daytime, and accordingly they lay in the woods until the dark should come.

The appearance of the wilderness had changed greatly in the three months since Wyoming. All the green was now gone, and it was tinted red and yellow and brown. The skies were a mellow blue, and there was a slight haze over the forest, but the air had the wonderful crispness and freshness of the American autumn. It inspired every one of the five with fresh zeal and energy, because they believed the first blow was about to be struck.

About ten o'clock at night they approached Oghwaga, and the reports of its importance were confirmed. They had not before seen an Indian village with so many signs of permanence. They passed two or three orchards of apple and peach trees, and they saw other indications of cultivation like that of the white farmer.

“It ain't a bad-lookin' town,” said Long Jim Hart. “But it'll look wuss,” said Shif'less Sol, “onless they've laid an ambush somewhar. I don't like to see houses an' sech like go up in fire an' smoke, but after what wuz done at Wyomin' an' all through that valley, burnin' is a light thing.”

“We're bound to strike back with all our might,” said Paul, who had the softest heart of them all.

“Now, I wonder who's in this here town,” said Tom Ross. “Mebbe Timmendiquas an' Brant an' all them renegades.”

“It may be so,” said Henry. “This is their base and store of supplies. Oh, if Colonel Butler were only here with all his men, what a rush we could make!”

So great was their eagerness that they crept closer to the village, passing among some thick clusters of grapevines. Henry was in the lead, and he heard a sudden snarl. A large cur of the kind that infest Indian villages leaped straight at him.

The very suddenness of the attack saved Henry and his comrades from the

consequences of an alarm. He dropped his rifle instinctively, and seized the dog by the throat with both hands. A bark following the snarl had risen to the animal's throat, but it was cut short there. The hands of the great youth pressed tighter and tighter, and the dog was lifted from the earth. The four stood quietly beside their comrade, knowing that no alarm would be made now.

The dog kicked convulsively, then hung without motion or noise. Henry cast the dead body aside, picked up his rifle, and then all five of them sank softly down in the shelter of the grapevines. About fifteen yards away an Indian warrior was walking cautiously along and looking among the vines. Evidently he had heard the snarl of the dog, and was seeking the cause. But it had been only a single sound, and he would not look far. Yet the hearts of the five beat a little faster as he prowled among the vines, and their nerves were tense for action should the need for it come.

The Indian, a Mohawk, came within ten yards of them, but he did not see the five figures among the vines, blending darkly with the dark growth, and presently, satisfied that the sound he had heard was of no importance, he walked in another direction, and passed out of sight.

The five, not daunted at all by this living proof of risk, crept to the very edge of the clusters of grapevines, and looked upon an open space, beyond which stood some houses made of wood; but their attention was centered upon a figure that stood in the open.

Although the distance was too great and the light too poor to disclose the features, every one of the scouts recognized the figure. It could be none other than that of Timmendiquas, the great White Lightning of the Wyandots. He was pacing back and forth, somewhat in the fashion of the white man, and his manner implied thought.

“I could bring him down from here with a bullet,” said Shif'less Sol, “but I ain't ever goin' to shoot at the chief, Henry.”

“No,” said Henry, “nor will I. But look, there's another.”

A second figure came out of the dark and joined the first. It was also that of a chief, powerful and tall, though not as tall as Timmendiquas. It was Thayendanegea. Then three white figures appeared. One was that of Braxton Wyatt, and the others they took to be those of “Indian” Butler and his son, Walter Butler. After a talk of a minute or two they entered one of the wooden houses.

“It's to be a conference of some kind,” whispered Henry. “I wish I could look in on it.”

“And I,” said the others together.

“Well, we know this much,” continued Henry. “No great force of the Iroquois is present, and if Colonel Butler's men come up quickly, we can take the town.”

“It's a chance not to be lost,” said Paul.

They crept slowly away from the village, not stopping until they reached the crest of a hill, from which they could see the roofs of two or three of the Indian houses.

“I've a feeling in me,” said Paul, “that the place is doomed. We'll strike the first blow for Wyoming.”

They neither slept nor rested that night, but retraced their trail with the utmost speed toward the marching American force, going in Indian file through the wilderness. Henry, as usual, led; Shif'less Sol followed, then came Paul, and then Long Jim, while Silent Tom was the rear guard. They traveled at great speed, and, some time after daylight, met the advance of the colonial force under Captain William Gray.

William Gray was a gallant young officer, but he was startled a little when five figures as silent as phantoms appeared. But he uttered an exclamation of delight when he recognized the leader, Henry.

“What have you found?” he asked eagerly.

“We've been to Oghwaga,” replied the youth, “and we went all about the town. They do not suspect our coming. At least, they did not know when we left. We saw Brant, Timmendiquas, the Butlers, and Wyatt enter the house for a conference.”

“And now is our chance,” said eager young William Gray. “What if we should take the town, and with it these men, at one blow.”

“We can scarcely hope for as much as that,” said Henry, who knew that men like Timmendiquas and Thayendanegea were not likely to allow themselves to be seized by so small a force, “but we can hope for a good victory.”

The young captain rode quickly back to his comrades with the news, and, led by the five, the whole force pushed forward with all possible haste. William Gray was still sanguine of a surprise, but the young riflemen did not expect it. Indian sentinels were sure to be in the forest between them and Oghwaga. Yet they said nothing to dash this hope. Henry had already seen enough to know the immense value of enthusiasm, and the little army full of zeal would accomplish much if the chance came. Besides the young captain, William Gray, there was a lieutenant named Taylor, who had been in the battle at Wyoming, but who had escaped the massacre. The five had not met him there, but the common share in

so great a tragedy proved a tie between them. Taylor's name was Robert, but all the other officers, and some of the men for that matter, who had known him in childhood called him Bob. He was but little older than Henry, and his earlier youth, before removal to Wyoming, had been passed in Connecticut, a country that was to the colonials thickly populated and containing great towns, such as Hartford and New Haven.

A third close friend whom they soon found was a man unlike any other that they had ever seen. His name was Cornelius Heemskerk. Holland was his birthplace, but America was his nation. He was short and extremely fat, but he had an agility that amazed the five when they first saw it displayed. He talked much, and his words sounded like grumbles, but the unctuous tone and the smile that accompanied them indicated to the contrary. He formed for Shif'less Sol an inexhaustible and entertaining study in character.

“I ain't quite seen his like afore,” said the shiftless one to Paul. “First time I run acrost him I thought he would tumble down among the first bushes he met. 'Stead o' that, he sailed right through 'em, makin' never a trip an' no noise at all, same ez Long Jim's teeth sinkin' into a juicy venison steak.”

“I've heard tell,” said Long Jim, who also contemplated the prodigy, “that big, chunky, awkward-lookin' things are sometimes ez spry ez you. They say that the Hipperpotamus kin outrun the giraffe across the sands uv Afriky, an' I know from pussonal experience that the bigger an' clumsier a b'ar is the faster he kin make you scoot fur your life. But he's the real Dutch, ain't he, Paul, one uv them fellers that licked the Spanish under the Duke uv Alivy an' Belisarry?”

“Undoubtedly,” replied Paul, who did not consider it necessary to correct Long Jim's history, “and I'm willing to predict to you, Jim Hart, that Heemskerk will be a mighty good man in any fight that we may have.”

Heemskerk rolled up to them. He seemed to have a sort of circular motion like that of a revolving tube, but he kept pace with the others, nevertheless, and he showed no signs of exertion.

“Don't you think it a funny thing that I, Cornelius Heemskerk, am here?” he said to Paul.

“Why so, Mr. Heemskerk?” replied Paul politely. “Because I am a Dutchman. I have the soul of an artist and the gentleness of a baby. I, Cornelius Heemskerk, should be in the goot leetle country of Holland in a goot leetle house, by the side of a goot leetle canal, painting beautiful blue china, dishes, plates, cups, saucers, all most beautiful, and here I am running through the woods of this vast America, carrying on my shoulder a rifle that is longer than I am, hunting the red

Indian and hunted by him. Is it not most rediculous, Mynheer Paul?”

“I think you are here because you are a brave man, Mr. Heemskerk,” replied Paul, “and wish to see punishment inflicted upon those who have committed great crimes.”

“Not so! Not so!” replied the Dutchman with energy. “It is because I am one big fool. I am not really a big enough man to be as big a fool as I am, but so it is! so it is!” Shif'less Sol regarded him critically, and then spoke gravely and with deliberation: “It ain't that, Mr. Heemskerk, an' Paul ain't told quite all the truth, either. I've heard that the Dutch was the most powerfullest fightin' leetle nation on the globe; that all you had to do wuz to step on the toe uv a Dutchman's wooden shoe, an' all the men, women, an' children in Holland would jump right on top o' you all at once. Lookin' you up an' lookin' you down, an' sizin' you up, an' sizin you down, all purty careful, an' examinin' the corners O' your eyes oncommon close, an' also lookin' at the way you set your feet when you walk, I'm concludin' that you just natcherally love a fight, an' that you are lookin' fur one.”

But Cornelius Heemskerk sighed, and shook his head.

“It is flattery that you give me, and you are trying to make me brave when I am not,” he said. “I only say once more that I ought to be in Holland painting blue plates, and not here in the great woods holding on to my scalp, first with one hand and then with the other.”

He sighed deeply, but Solomon Hyde, reader of the hearts of men, only laughed.

Colonel Butler's force stopped about three o'clock for food and a little rest, and the five, who had not slept since the night before, caught a few winks. But in less than an hour they were up and away again. The five riflemen were once more well in advance, and with them were Taylor and Heemskerk, the Dutchman, grumbling over their speed, but revolving along, nevertheless, with astonishing ease and without any sign of fatigue. They discovered no indications of Indian scouts or trails, and as the village now was not many miles away, it confirmed Henry in his belief that the Iroquois, with their friends, the Wyandots, would not stay to give battle. If Thayendanegea and Timmendiquas were prepared for a strong resistance, the bullets of the skirmishers would already be whistling through the woods.

The waning evening grew colder, twilight came, and the autumn leaves fell fast before the rising wind. The promise of the night was dark, which was not bad for their design, and once more the five-now the seven approached

Oghwaga. From the crest of the very same hill they looked down once more upon the Indian houses.

“It is a great base for the Iroquois,” said Henry to Heemskerk, “and whether the Indians have laid an ambush or not, Colonel Butler must attack.”

“Ah,” said Heemskerk, silently moving his round body to a little higher point for a better view, “now I feel in all its fullness the truth that I should be back in Holland, painting blue plates.”

Nevertheless, Cornelius Heemskerk made a very accurate survey of the Iroquois village, considering the distance and the brevity of the time, and when the party went back to Colonel Butler to tell him the way was open, he revolved along as swiftly as any of them. There were also many serious thoughts in the back of his head.

At nine o'clock the little colonial force was within half a mile of Oghwaga, and nothing had yet occurred to disclose whether the Iroquois knew of their advance. Henry and his comrades, well in front, looked down upon the town, but saw nothing. No light came from an Indian chimney, nor did any dog howl. Just behind them were the troops in loose order, Colonel Butler impatiently striking his booted leg with a switch, and William Gray seeking to restrain his ardor, that he might set a good example to the men.

“What do you think, Mr. Ware?” asked Colonel Butler.

“I think we ought to rush the town at once.”

“It is so!” exclaimed Heemskerk, forgetting all about painting blue plates.

“The signal is the trumpet; you blow it, Captain Gray, and then we'll charge.”

William Gray took the trumpet from one of the men and blew a long, thrilling note. Before its last echo was ended, the little army rushed upon the town. Three or four shots came from the houses, and the soldiers fired a few at random in return, but that was all. Indian scouts had brought warning of the white advance, and the great chiefs, gathering up all the people who were in the village, had fled. A retreating warrior or two had fired the shots, but when the white men entered this important Iroquois stronghold they did not find a single human being. Timmendiquas, the White Lightning of the Wyandots, was gone; Thayendanegea, the real head of the Six Nations, had slipped away; and with them had vanished the renegades. But they had gone in haste. All around them were the evidences. The houses, built of wood, were scores in number, and many of them contained furniture such as a prosperous white man of the border would buy for himself. There were gardens and shade trees about these, and back of them, barns, many of them filled with Indian corn. Farther on were clusters of

bark lodges, which had been inhabited by the less progressive of the Iroquois.

Henry stood in the center of the town and looked at the houses misty in the moonlight. The army had not yet made much noise, but he was beginning to hear behind him the ominous word, “Wyoming,” repeated more than once. Cornelius Heemskerk had stopped revolving, and, standing beside Henry, wiped his perspiring, red face.

“Now that I am here, I think again of the blue plates of Holland, Mr. Ware,” he said. “It is a dark and sanguinary time. The men whose brethren were scalped or burned alive at Wyoming will not now spare the town of those who did it. In this wilderness they give blow for blow, or perish.”

Henry knew that it was true, but he felt a certain sadness. His heart had been inflamed against the Iroquois, he could never forget Wyoming or its horrors; but in the destruction of an ancient town the long labor of man perished, and it seemed waste. Doubtless a dozen generations of Iroquois children had played here on the grass. He walked toward the northern end of the village, and saw fields there from which recent corn had been taken, but behind him the cry, “Wyoming!” was repeated louder and oftener now. Then he saw men running here and there with torches, and presently smoke and flame burst from the houses. He examined the fields and forest for a little distance to see if any ambushed foe might still lie among them, but all the while the flame and smoke behind him were rising higher.

Henry turned back and joined his comrades. Oghwaga was perishing. The flames leaped from house to house, and then from lodge to lodge. There was no need to use torches any more. The whole village was wrapped in a mass of fire that grew and swelled until the flames rose above the forest, and were visible in the clear night miles away.

So great was the heat that Colonel Butler and the soldiers and scouts were compelled to withdraw to the edge of the forest. The wind rose and the flames soared. Sparks flew in myriads, and ashes fell dustily on the dry leaves of the trees. Bob Taylor, with his hands clenched tightly, muttered under his breath, “Wyoming! Wyoming!”

“It is the Iroquois who suffer now,” said Heemskerk, as he revolved slowly away from a heated point.

Crashes came presently as the houses fell in, and then the sparks would leap higher and the flames roar louder. The barns, too, were falling down, and the grain was destroyed. The grapevines were trampled under foot, and the gardens were ruined. Oghwaga, a great central base of the Six Nations, was vanishing

forever. For four hundred years, ever since the days of Hiawatha, the Iroquois had waxed in power. They had ruled over lands larger than great empires. They had built up political and social systems that are the wonder of students. They were invincible in war, because every man had been trained from birth to be a warrior, and now they were receiving their first great blow.

From a point far in the forest, miles away, Thayendanegea, Timmendiquas, Hiokatoo, Sangerachte, “Indian” Butler, Walter Butler, Braxton Wyatt, a low, heavybrowed Tory named Coleman, with whom Wyatt had become very friendly, and about sixty Iroquois and twenty Tories were watching a tower of light to the south that had just appeared above the trees. It was of an intense, fiery color, and every Indian in that gloomy band knew that it was Oghwaga, the great, the inviolate, the sacred, that was burning, and that the men who were doing it were the white frontiersmen, who, his red-coated allies had told him, would soon be swept forever from these woods. And they were forced to stand and see it, not daring to attack so strong and alert a force.

They sat there in the darkness among the trees, and watched the column of fire grow and grow until it seemed to pierce the skies. Timmendiquas never said a word. In his heart, Indian though he was, he felt that the Iroquois had gone too far. In him was the spirit of the farseeing Hiawatha. He could perceive that great cruelty always brought retaliation; but it was not for him, almost an alien, to say these things to Thayendanegea, the mighty war chief of the Mohawks and the living spirit of the Iroquois nation.

Thayendanegea sat on the stump of a tree blown down by winter storms. His arms were folded across his breast, and he looked steadily toward that red threatening light off there in the south. Some such idea as that in the mind of Timmendiquas may have been passing in his own. He was an uncommon Indian, and he had had uncommon advantages. He had not believed that the colonists could make head against so great a kingdom as England, aided by the allied tribes, the Canadians, and the large body of Tories among their own people. But he saw with his own eyes the famous Oghwaga of the Iroquois going down under their torch.

“Tell me, Colonel John Butler,” he said bitterly, “where is your great king now? Is his arm long enough to reach from London to save our town of Oghwaga, which is perhaps as much to us as his great city of London is to him?”

The thickset figure of “Indian” Butler moved, and his swart face flushed as much as it could.

“You know as much about the king as I do, Joe Brant,” he replied. “We are

fighting here for your country as well as his, and you cannot say that Johnson's Greens and Butler's Rangers and the British and Canadians have not done their part.”

“It is true,” said Thayendanegea, “but it is true, also, that one must fight with wisdom. Perhaps there was too much burning of living men at Wyoming. The pain of the wounded bear makes him fight the harder, and it, is because of Wyoming that Oghwaga yonder burns. Say, is it not so, Colonel John Butler?”

“Indian” Butler made no reply, but sat, sullen and lowering. The Tory, Coleman, whispered to Braxton Wyatt, but Timmendiquas was the only one who spoke aloud.

“Thayendanegea,” he said, “I, and the Wyandots who are with me, have come far. We expected to return long ago to the lands on the Ohio, but we were with you in your village, and now, when Manitou has turned his face from you for the time, we will not leave you. We stay and fight by your side.”

Thayendanegea stood up, and Timmendiquas stood up, also.

“You are a great chief, White Lightning of the Wyandots,” he said, “and you and I are brothers. I shall be proud and happy to have such a mighty leader fighting with me. We will have vengeance for this. The power of the Iroquois is as great as ever.”

He raised himself to his full height, pointing to the fire, and the flames of hate and resolve burned in his eyes. Old Hiokatoo, the most savage of all the chiefs, shook his tomahawk, and a murmur passed through the group of Indians.

Braxton Wyatt still talked in whispers to his new friend, Coleman, the Tory, who was more to his liking than the morose and savage Walter Butler, whom he somewhat feared. Wyatt was perhaps the least troubled of all those present. Caring for himself only, the burning of Oghwaga caused him no grief. He suffered neither from the misfortune of friend nor foe. He was able to contemplate the glowing tower of light with curiosity only. Braxton Wyatt knew that the Iroquois and their allies would attempt revenge for the burning of Oghwaga, and he saw profit for himself in such adventures. His horizon had broadened somewhat of late. The renegade, Blackstaffe, had returned to rejoin Simon Girty, but he had found a new friend in Coleman. He was coming now more into touch with the larger forces in the East, nearer to the seat of the great war, and he hoped to profit by it.

“This is a terrible blow to Brant,” Coleman whispered to him. “The Iroquois have been able to ravage the whole frontier, while the rebels, occupied with the king's troops, have not been able to send help to their own. But they have

managed to strike at last, as you see."

"I do see," said Wyatt, "and on the whole, Coleman, I'm not sorry. Perhaps these chiefs won't be so haughty now, and they'll soon realize that they need likely chaps such as you and me, eh, Coleman."

"You're not far from the truth," said Coleman, laughing a little, and pleased at the penetration of his new friend. They did not talk further, although the agreement between them was well established. Neither did the Indian chiefs or the Tory leaders say any more. They watched the tower of fire a long time, past midnight, until it reached its zenith and then began to sink. They saw its crest go down behind the trees, and they saw the luminous cloud in the south fade and go out entirely, leaving there only the darkness that reined everywhere else.

Then the Indian and Tory leaders rose and silently marched northward. It was nearly dawn when Henry and his comrades lay down for the rest that they needed badly. They spread their blankets at the edge of the open, but well back from the burned area, which was now one great mass of coals and charred timbers, sending up little flame but much smoke. Many of the troops were already asleep, but Henry, before lying down, begged William Gray to keep a strict watch lest the Iroquois attack from ambush. He knew that the rashness and confidence of the borderers, especially when drawn together in masses, had often caused them great losses, and he was resolved to prevent a recurrence at the present time if he could. He had made these urgent requests of Gray, instead of Colonel Butler, because of the latter's youth and willingness to take advice.

"I'll have the forest beat up continually all about the town," he said. "We must not have our triumph spoiled by any afterclap."

Henry and his comrades, wrapped in their blankets, lay in a row almost at the edge of the forest. The heat from the fire was still great, but it would die down after a while, and the October air was nipping. Henry usually fell asleep in a very few minutes, but this time, despite his long exertions and lack of rest, he remained awake when his comrades were sound asleep. Then he fell into a drowsy state, in which he saw the fire rising in great black coils that united far above. It seemed to Henry, half dreaming and forecasting the future, that the Indian spirit was passing in the smoke.

When he fell asleep it was nearly daylight, and in three or four hours he was up again, as the little army intended to march at once upon another Indian town. The hours while he slept had passed in silence, and no Indians had come near. William Gray had seen to that, and his best scout had been one Cornelius Heemskerk, a short, stout man of Dutch birth.

“It was one long, long tramp for me, Mynheer Henry,” said Heemskerk, as he revolved slowly up to the camp fire where Henry was eating his breakfast, “and I am now very tired. It was like walking four or five times around Holland, which is such a fine little country, with the canals and the flowers along them, and no great, dark woods filled with the fierce Iroquois.”

“Still, I've a notion, Mynheer Heemskerk, that you'd rather be here, and perhaps before the day is over you will get some fighting hot enough to please even you.”

Mynheer Heemskerk threw up his hands in dismay, but a half hour later he was eagerly discussing with Henry the possibility of overtaking some large band of retreating Iroquois.

Urged on by all the scouts and by those who had suffered at Wyoming, Colonel Butler gathered his forces and marched swiftly that very morning up the river against another Indian town, Cunahunta. Fortunately for him, a band of riflemen and scouts unsurpassed in skill led the way, and saw to it that the road was safe. In this band were the five, of course, and after them Heemskerk, young Taylor, and several others.

“If the Iroquois do not get in our way, we'll strike Cunahunta before night,” said Heemskerk, who knew the way.

“It seems to me that they will certainly try to save their towns,” said Henry. “Surely Brant and the Tories will not let us strike so great a blow without a fight.”

“Most of their warriors are elsewhere, Mynheer Henry,” said Heemskerk, “or they would certainly give us a big battle. We've been lucky in the time of our advance. As it is, I think we'll have something to do.”

It was now about noon, the noon of a beautiful October day of the North, the air like life itself, the foliage burning red on the hills, the leaves falling softly from the trees as the wind blew, but bringing with them no hint of decay. None of the vanguard felt fatigue, but when they crossed a low range of hills and saw before them a creek flowing down to the Susquehanna, Henry, who was in the lead, stopped suddenly and dropped down in the grass. The others, knowing without question the significance of the action, also sank down.

“What is it, Henry?” asked Shif'less Sol.

“You see how thick the trees are on the other side of that bank. Look a little to the left of a big oak, and you will see the feathers in the headdress of an Iroquois. Farther on I think I can catch a glimpse of a green coat, and if I am right that coat is worn by one of Johnson's Royal Greens. It's an ambush, Sol, an

ambush meant for us.”

“But it's not an ambush intended for our main force, Mynheer Henry,” said Heemskerk, whose red face began to grow redder with the desire for action. “I, too, see the feather of the Iroquois.”

“As good scouts and skirmishers it's our duty, then, to clear this force out of the way, and not wait for the main body to come up, is it not?” asked Henry, with a suggestive look at the Dutchman.

“What a goot head you have, Mynheer Henry!” exclaimed Heemskerk. “Of course we will fight, and fight now!”

“How about them blue plates?” said Shif'less Sol softly. But Heemskerk did not hear him.

They swiftly developed their plan of action. There could be no earthly doubt of the fact that the Iroquois and some Tories were ambushed on the far side of the creek. Possibly Thayendanegea himself, stung by the burning of Oghwaga and the advance on Cunahunta, was there. But they were sure that it was not a large band.

The party of Henry and Heemskerk numbered fourteen, but every one was a veteran, full of courage, tenacity, and all the skill of the woods. They had supreme confidence in their ability to beat the best of the Iroquois, man for man, and they carried the very finest arms known to the time.

It was decided that four of the men should remain on the hill. The others, including the five, Heemskerk, and Taylor, would make a circuit, cross the creek a full mile above, and come down on the flank of the ambushing party. Theirs would be the main attack, but it would be preceded by sharpshooting from the four, intended to absorb the attention of the Iroquois. The chosen ten slipped back down the hill, and as soon as they were sheltered from any possible glimpse by the warriors, they rose and ran rapidly westward. Before they had gone far they heard the crack of a rifle shot, then another, then several from another point, as if in reply.

“It's our sharpshooters,” said Henry. “They've begun to disturb the Iroquois, and they'll keep them busy.”

“Until we break in on their sport and keep them still busier,” exclaimed Heemskerk, revolving swiftly through the bushes, his face blazing red.

It did not take long for such as they to go the mile or so that they intended, and then they crossed the creek, wading in the water breast high, but careful to keep their ammunition dry. Then they turned and rapidly descended the stream

on its northern bank. In a few minutes they heard the sound of a rifle shot, and then of another as if replying.

“The Iroquois have been fooled,” exclaimed Heemskerk. “Our four good riflemen have made them think that a great force is there, and they have not dared to cross the creek themselves and make an attack.”

In a few minutes more, as they ran noiselessly through the forest, they saw a little drifting smoke, and now and then the faint flash of rifles. They were coming somewhere near to the Iroquois band, and they practiced exceeding caution. Presently they caught sight of Indian faces, and now and then one of Johnson's Greens or Butler's Rangers. They stopped and held a council that lasted scarcely more than half a minute. They all agreed there was but one thing to do, and that was to attack in the Indian's own way-that is, by ambush and sharpshooting.

Henry fired the first shot, and an Iroquois, aiming at a foe on the other side of the creek, fell. Heemskerk quickly followed with a shot as good, and the surprised Iroquois turned to face this new foe. But they and the Tories were a strong band, and they retreated only a little. Then they stood firm, and the forest battle began. The Indians numbered not less than thirty, and both Braxton Wyatt and Coleman were with them, but the value of skill was here shown by the smaller party, the one that attacked. The frontiersmen, trained to every trick and wile of the forest, and marksmen such as the Indians were never able to become, continually pressed in and drove the Iroquois from tree to tree. Once or twice the warriors started a rush, but they were quickly driven back by sharpshooting such as they had never faced before. They soon realized that this was no band of border farmers, armed hastily for an emergency, but a foe who knew everything that they knew, and more.

Braxton Wyatt and his friend Coleman fought with the Iroquois, and Wyatt in particular was hot with rage. He suspected that the five who had defeated him so often were among these marksmen, and there might be a chance now to destroy them all. He crept to the side of the fierce old Seneca chief, Hiokatoo, and suggested that a part of their band slip around and enfold the enemy.

Old Hiokatoo, in the thick of battle now, presented his most terrifying aspect. He was naked save the waist cloth, his great body was covered with scars, and, as he bent a little forward, he held cocked and ready in his hands a fine rifle that had been presented to him by his good friend, the king. The Senecas, it may be repeated, had suffered terribly at the Battle of the Oriskany in the preceding year, and throughout these years of border were the most cruel of all the Iroquois. In this respect Hiokatoo led all the Senecas, and now Braxton Wyatt used as he was

to savage scenes, was compelled to admit to himself that this was the most terrifying human being whom he had ever beheld. He was old, but age in him seemed merely to add to his strength and ferocity. The path of a deep cut, healed long since, but which the paint even did not hide, lay across his forehead. Others almost as deep adorned his right cheek, his chin, and his neck. He was crouched much like a panther, with his rifle in his hands and the ready tomahawk at his belt. But it was the extraordinary expression of his eyes that made Braxton Wyatt shudder. He read there no mercy for anything, not even for himself, Braxton Wyatt, if he should stand in the way, and it was this last fact that brought the shudder.

Hiokatoo thought it a good plan. Twenty warriors, mostly Senecas and Cayugas, were detailed to execute it at once, and they stole off toward the right. Henry had suspected some such diversion, and, as he had been joined now by the four men from the other side of the creek, he disposed his little force to meet it. Both Shif'less Sol and Heemskerk had caught sight of figures slipping away among the trees, and Henry craftily drew back a little. While two or three men maintained the sharpshooting in the front, he waited for the attack. It came in half an hour, the flanking force making a savage and open rush, but the fire of the white riflemen was so swift and deadly that they were driven back again. But they had come very near, and a Tory rushed directly at young Taylor. The Tory, like Taylor, had come from Wyoming, and he had been one of the most ruthless on that terrible day. When they were less than a dozen feet apart they recognized each other. Henry saw the look that passed between them, and, although he held a loaded rifle in his hand, for some reason he did not use it. The Tory fired a pistol at Taylor, but the bullet missed, and the Wyoming youth, leaping forth, swung his unloaded rifle and brought the stock down with all his force upon the head of his enemy. The man, uttering a single sound, a sort of gasp, fell dead, and Taylor stood over him, still trembling with rage. In an instant Henry seized him and dragged him down, and then a Seneca bullet whistled where he had been.

“He was one of the worst at Wyoming-I saw him!” exclaimed young Taylor, still trembling all over with passion.

“He'll never massacre anybody else. You've seen to that,” said Henry, and in a minute or two Taylor was quiet. The sharpshooting continued, but here as elsewhere, the Iroquois had the worst of it. Despite their numbers, they could not pass nor flank that line of deadly marksmen who lay behind trees almost in security, and who never missed. Another Tory and a chief, also, were killed, and Braxton Wyatt was daunted. Nor did he feel any better when old Hiokatoo crept

to his side.

“We have failed here,” he said. “They shoot too well for us to rush them. We have lost good men.” Hiokatoo frowned, and the scars on his face stood out in livid red lines.

“It is so,” he said. “These who fight us now are of their best, and while we fight, the army that destroyed Oghwaga is coming up. Come, we will go.”

The little white band soon saw that the Indians were gone from their front. They scouted some distance, and, finding no enemy, hurried back to Colonel Butler. The troops were pushed forward, and before night they reached Cunahunta, which they burned also. Some farther advance was made into the Indian country, and more destruction was done, but now the winter was approaching, and many of the men insisted upon returning home to protect their families. Others were to rejoin the main Revolutionary army, and the Iroquois campaign was to stop for the time. The first blow had been struck, and it was a hard one, but the second blow and third and fourth and more, which the five knew were so badly needed, must wait.

Henry and his comrades were deeply disappointed. They had hoped to go far into the Iroquois country, to break the power of the Six Nations, to hunt down the Butlers and the Johnsons and Brant himself, but they could not wholly blame their commander. The rear guard, or, rather, the forest guard of the Revolution, was a slender and small force indeed.

Henry and his comrades said farewell to Colonel Butler with much personal regret, and also to the gallant troops, some of whom were Morgan's riflemen from Virginia. The farewells to William Gray, Bob Taylor, and Cornelius Heemskerk were more intimate.

“I think we'll see more of one another in other campaigns,” said Gray.

“We'll be on the battle line, side by side, once more,” said Taylor, “and we'll strike another blow for Wyoming.”

“I foresee,” said Cornelius Heemskerk, “that I, a peaceful man, who ought to be painting blue plates in Holland, will be drawn into danger in the great, dark wilderness again, and that you will be there with me, Mynheer Henry, Mynheer Paul, Mynheer the Wise Solomon, Mynheer the Silent Tom, and Mynheer the Very Long James. I see it clearly. I, a man of peace, am always being pushed in to war.”

“We hope it will come true,” said the five together.

“Do you go back to Kentucky?” asked William Gray.

“No,” replied Henry, speaking for them all, “we have entered upon this task here, and we are going to stay in it until it is finished.”

“It is dangerous, the most dangerous thing in the world,” said Heemskerk. “I still have my foreknowledge that I shall stand by your side in some great battle to come, but the first thing I shall do when I see you again, my friends, is to look around at you, one, two, three, four, five, and see if you have upon your heads the hair which is now so rich, thick, and flowing.”

“Never fear, my friend,” said Henry, “we have fought with the warriors all the way from the Susquehanna to New Orleans and not one of us has lost a single lock of hair.”

“It is one Dutchman's hope that it will always be so,” said Heemskerk, and then he revolved rapidly away lest they see his face express emotion.

The five received great supplies of powder and bullets from Colonel Butler, and then they parted in the forest. Many of the soldiers looked back and saw the five tall figures in a line, leaning upon the muzzles of their long-barreled Kentucky rifles, and regarding them in silence. It seemed to the soldiers that they had left behind them the true sons of the wilderness, who, in spite of all dangers, would be there to welcome them when they returned.

CHAPTER XVII. THE DESERTED CABIN

When the last soldier had disappeared among the trees, Henry turned to the others. “Well, boys,” he asked, “what are you thinking about?”

“I?” asked Paul. “I'm thinking about a certain place I know, a sort of alcove or hole in a cliff above a lake.”

“An' me?” said Shif'less Sol. “I'm thinkin' how fur that alcove runs back, an' how it could be fitted up with furs an' made warm fur the winter.”

“Me?” said Tom Ross. “I'm thinkin' what a snug place that alcove would be when the snow an' hail were drivin' down the creek in front of you.”

“An' ez fur me,” said Long Jim Hart, “I wuz thinkin' I could run a sort uv flue from the back part uv that alcove out through the front an' let the smoke pass out. I could cook all right. It wouldn't be ez good a place fur cookin' ez the one we hed that time we spent the winter on the island in the lake, but 'twould serve.”

“It's strange,” said Henry, “but I've been thinking of all the things that all four of you have been thinking about, and, since we are agreed, we are bound to go straight to 'The Alcove' and pass the winter there.”

Without another word he led the way, and the others followed. It was apparent to everyone that they must soon find a winter base, because the cold had increased greatly in the last few days. The last leaves had fallen from the trees, and a searching wind howled among the bare branches. Better shelter than blankets would soon be needed.

On their way they passed Oghwaga, a mass of blackened ruins, among which wolves howled, the same spectacle that Wyoming now afforded, although Oghwaga had not been stained by blood.

It was a long journey to “The Alcove,” but they did not hurry, seeing no need of it, although they were warned of the wisdom of their decision by the fact that the cold was increasing. The country in which the lake was situated lay high, and, as all of them were quite sure that the cold was going to be great there, they thought it wise to make preparations against it, which they discussed as they walked in, leisurely fashion through the woods. They spoke, also, of greater things. All felt that they had been drawn into a mightier current than any in which they had swam before. They fully appreciated the importance to the Revolution of this great rearguard struggle, and at present they did not have the

remotest idea of returning to Kentucky under any circumstances.

“We've got to fight it out with Braxton Wyatt and the Iroquois,” said Henry. “I've heard that Braxton is organizing a band of Tories of his own, and that he is likely to be as dangerous as either of the Butlers.”

“Some day we'll end him for good an' all,” said Shif'less Sol.

It was four or five days before they reached their alcove, and now all the forest was bare and apparently lifeless. They came down the creek, and found their boat unharmed and untouched still among the foliage at the base of the cliff.

“That's one thing safe,” said Long Jim, “an' I guess we'll find 'The Alcove' all right, too.”

“Unless a wild animal has taken up its abode there,” said Paul.

“'Tain't likely,” replied Long Jim. “We've left the human smell thar, an' even after all this time it's likely to drive away any prowlin' bear or panther that pokes his nose in.”

Long Jim was quite right. Their snug nest, like that of a squirrel in the side of a tree, had not been disturbed. The skins which they had rolled up tightly and placed on the higher shelves of stone were untouched, and several days' hunting increased the supply. The hunting was singularly easy, and, although the five did not know it, the quantity of game was much greater in that region than it had been for years. It had been swept of human beings by the Iroquois and Tory hordes, and deer, bear, and panther seemed to know instinctively that the woods were once more safe for them.

In their hunting they came upon the ruins of charred houses, and more than once they saw something among the coals that caused them to turn away with a shudder. At every place where man had made a little opening the wilderness was quickly reclaiming its own again. Next year the grass and the foliage would cover up the coals and the hideous relics that lay among them.

They jerked great quantities of venison on the trees on the cliff side, and stored it in “The Alcove.” They also cured some bear meat, and, having added a further lining of skins, they felt prepared for winter. They had also added to the comfort of the place. They had taken the precaution of bringing with them two axes, and with the heads of these they smoothed out more of the rough places on the floor and sides of “The Alcove.” They thought it likely, too, that they would need the axes in other ways later on.

Only once during these arrangements did they pass the trail of Indians, and

that was made by a party of about twenty, at least ten miles from “The Alcove.” They seemed to be traveling north, and the five made no investigations. Somewhat later they met a white runner in the forest, and he told them of the terrible massacre of Cherry Valley. Walter Butler, emulating his father's exploit at Wyoming, had come down with a mixed horde of Iroquois, Tories, British, and Canadians. He had not been wholly successful, but he had slaughtered half a hundred women and children, and was now returning northward with prisoners. Some said, according to the runner, that Thayendanegea had led the Indians on this occasion, but, as the five learned later, he had not come up until the massacre was over. The runner added another piece of information that interested them deeply. Butler had been accompanied to Cherry Valley by a young Tory or renegade named Wyatt, who had distinguished himself by cunning and cruelty. It was said that Wyatt had built up for himself a semi-independent command, and was becoming a great scourge.

“That's our Braxton,” said Henry. “He is rising to his opportunities. He is likely to become fully the equal of Walter Butler.”

But they could do nothing at present to find Wyatt, and they went somewhat sadly back to “The Alcove.” They had learned also from the runner that Wyatt had a lieutenant, a Tory named Coleman, and this fact increased their belief that Wyatt was undertaking to operate on a large scale.

“We may get a chance at him anyhow,” said Henry. “He and his band may go too far away from the main body of the Indians and Tories, and in that case we can strike a blow if we are watchful.”

Every one of the five, although none of them knew it, received an additional impulse from this news about Braxton Wyatt. He had grown up with them. Loyalty to the king had nothing to do with his becoming a renegade or a Tory; he could not plead lost lands or exile for taking part in such massacres as Wyoming or Cherry Valley, but, long since an ally of the Indians, he was now at the head of a Tory band that murdered and burned from sheer pleasure.

“Some day we'll get him, as shore as the sun rises an' sets,” said Shif'less Sol, repeating Henry's prediction.

But for the present they “holed up,” and now their foresight was justified. To such as they, used to the hardships of forest life, “The Alcove” was a cheery nest. From its door they watched the wild fowl streaming south, pigeons, ducks, and others outlined against the dark, wintry skies. So numerous were these flocks that there was scarcely a time when they did not see one passing toward the warm South.

Shif'less Sol and Paul sat together watching a great flock of wild geese, arrow shaped, and flying at almost incredible speed. A few faint honks came to them, and then the geese grew misty on the horizon. Shif'less Sol followed them with serious eyes.

“Do you ever think, Paul,” he said, “that we human bein's ain't so mighty pow'ful ez we think we are. We kin walk on the groun', an' by hard learnin' an' hard work we kin paddle through the water a little. But jest look at them geese flyin' a mile high, right over everything, rivers, forests any mountains, makin' a hundred miles an hour, almost without flappin' a wing. Then they kin come down on the water an' float fur hours without bein' tired, an' they kin waddle along on the groun', too. Did you ever hear of any men who had so many 'complishments? Why, Paul, s'pose you an' me could grow wings all at once, an' go through the air a mile a minute fur a month an' never git tired.”

“We'd certainly see some great sights,” said Paul, “but do you know, Sol, what would be the first thing I'd do if I had the gift of tireless wings?”

“Fly off to them other continents I've heard you tell about.”

“No, I'd swoop along over the forests up here until I picked out all the camps of the Indians and Tories. I'd pick out the Butlers and Braxton Wyatt and Coleman, and see what mischief they were planning. Then I'd fly away to the East and look down at all the armies, ours in buff and blue, and the British redcoats. I'd look into the face of our great commander-in-chief. Then I'd fly away back into the West and South, and I'd hover over Wareville. I'd see our own people, every last little one of them. They might take a shot at me, not knowing who I was, but I'd be so high up in the air no bullet could reach me. Then I'd come soaring back here to you fellows.”

“That would shorely be a grand trip, Paul,” said Shif'less Sol, “an' I wouldn't mind takin' it in myself. But fur the present we'd better busy our minds with the warnin's the wild fowl are givin' us, though we're well fixed fur a house already. It's cu'rus what good homes a handy man kin find in the wilderness.”

The predictions of the wild fowl were true. A few days later heavy clouds rolled up in the southwest, and the five watched them, knowing what they would bring them. They spread to the zenith and then to the other horizon, clothing the whole circle of the earth. The great flakes began to drop down, slowly at first, then faster. Soon all the trees were covered with white, and everything else, too, except the dark surface of the lake, which received the flakes into its bosom as they fell.

It snowed all that day and most of the next, until it lay about two feet on the

ground. After that it turned intensely cold, the surface of the snow froze, and ice, nearly a foot thick, covered the lake. It was not possible to travel under such circumstances without artificial help, and now Tom Ross, who had once hunted in the far North, came to their help. He showed them how to make snowshoes, and, although all learned to use them, Henry, with his great strength and peculiar skill, became by far the most expert.

As the snow with its frozen surface lay on the ground for weeks, Henry took many long journeys on the snowshoes. Sometimes be hunted, but oftener his role was that of scout. He cautioned his friends that he might be out-three or four days at a time, and that they need take no alarm about him unless his absence became extremely long. The winter deepened, the snow melted, and another and greater storm came, freezing the surface, again making the snowshoes necessary. Henry decided now to take a scout alone to the northward, and, as the others bad long since grown into the habit of accepting his decisions almost without question, he started at once. He was well equipped with his rifle, double barreled pistol, hatchet, and knife, and he carried in addition a heavy blanket and some jerked venison. He put on his snowshoes at the foot of the cliff, waved a farewell to the four heads thrust from “The Alcove” above, and struck out on the smooth, icy surface of the creek. From this he presently passed into the woods, and for a long time pursued a course almost due north.

It was no vague theory that had drawn Henry forth. In one of his journeyings be had met a hunter who told him of a band of Tories and Indians encamped toward the north, and he had an idea that it was the party led by Braxton Wyatt. Now he meant to see.

His information was very indefinite, and he began to discover signs much earlier than he had expected. Before the end of the first day he saw the traces of other snowshoe runners on the icy snow, and once he came to a place where a deer had been slain and dressed. Then he came to another where the snow had been hollowed out under some pines to make a sleeping place for several men. Clearly he was in the land of the enemy again, and a large and hostile camp might be somewhere near.

Henry felt a thrill of joy when he saw these indications. All the primitive instincts leaped up within him. A child of the forest and of elemental conditions, the warlike instinct was strong within him. He was tired of hunting wild animals, and now there was promise of a' more dangerous foe. For the purposes that he had in view he was glad that he was alone. The wintry forest, with its two feet of snow covered with ice, contained no terrors for him. He moved on his snowshoes almost like a skater, and with all the dexterity of an Indian of the far

North, who is practically born on such shoes.

As he stood upon the brow of a little hill, elevated upon his snowshoes, he was, indeed, a wonderful figure. The added height and the white glare from the ice made him tower like a great giant. He was clad completely in soft, warm deerskin, his hands were gloved in the same material, and the fur cap was drawn tightly about his head and ears. The slender-barreled rifle lay across his shoulder, and the blanket and deer meat made a light package on his back. Only his face was uncovered, and that was rosy with the sharp but bracing cold. But the resolute blue eyes seemed to have grown more resolute in the last six months, and the firm jaw was firmer than ever.

It was a steely blue sky, clear, hard, and cold, fitted to the earth of snow and ice that it inclosed. His eyes traveled the circle of the horizon three times, and at the end of the third circle he made out a dim, dark thread against that sheet of blue steel. It was the light of a camp fire, and that camp fire must belong to an enemy. It was not likely that anybody else would be sending forth such a signal in this wintry wilderness.

Henry judged that the fire was several miles away, and apparently in a small valley hemmed in by hills of moderate height. He made up his mind that the band of Braxton Wyatt was there, and he intended to make a thorough scout about it. He advanced until the smoke line became much thicker and broader, and then he stopped in the densest clump of bushes that he could find. He meant to remain there until darkness came, because, with all foliage gone from the forest, it would be impossible to examine the hostile camp by day. The bushes, despite the lack of leaves, were so dense that they hid him well, and, breaking through the crust of ice, he dug a hole. Then, having taken off his snowshoes and wrapped his blanket about his body, he thrust himself into the hole exactly like a rabbit in its burrow. He laid his shoes on the crust of ice beside him. Of course, if found there by a large party of warriors on snowshoes he would have no chance to flee, but he was willing to take what seemed to him a small risk. The dark would not be long in coming, and it was snug and warm in the hole. As he sat, his head rose just above the surrounding ice, but his rifle barrel rose much higher. He ate a little venison for supper, and the weariness in the ankles that comes from long traveling on snowshoes disappeared.

He could not see outside the bushes, but he listened with those uncommonly keen ears of his. No sound at all came. There was not even a wind to rustle the bare boughs. The sun hung a huge red globe in the west, and all that side of the earth was tinged with a red glare, wintry and cold despite its redness. Then, as the earth turned, the sun was lost behind it, and the cold dark came.

Henry found it so comfortable in his burrow that all his muscles were soothed, and he grew sleepy. It would have been very pleasant to doze there, but he brought himself round with an effort of the will, and became as wide awake as ever. He was eager to be off on his expedition, but he knew how much depended on waiting, and he waited. One hour, two hours, three hours, four hours, still and dark, passed in the forest before he roused himself from his covert. Then, warm, strong, and tempered like steel for his purpose, he put on his snowshoes, and advanced toward the point from which the column of smoke had risen.

He had never been more cautious and wary than he was now. He was a formidable figure in the darkness, crouched forward, and moving like some spirit of the wilderness, half walking, half gliding.

Although the night had come out rather clear, with many cold stars twinkling in the blue, the line of smoke was no longer visible. But Henry did not expect it to be, nor did he need it. He had marked its base too clearly in his mind to make any mistake, and he advanced with certainty. He came presently into an open space, and he stopped with amazement. Around him were the stumps of a clearing made recently, and near him were some yards of rough rail fence.

He crouched against the fence, and saw on the far side of the clearing the dim outlines of several buildings, from the chimneys of two of which smoke was rising. It was his first thought that he had come upon a little settlement still held by daring borderers, but second thought told him that it was impossible. Another and more comprehensive look showed many signs of ruin. He saw remains of several burned houses, but clothing all was the atmosphere of desolation and decay that tells when a place is abandoned. The two threads of smoke did not alter this impression.

Henry divined it all. The builders of this tiny village in the wilderness bad been massacred or driven away. A part of the houses had been destroyed, some were left standing, and now there were visitors. He advanced without noise, keeping behind the rail fence, and approaching one of the houses from the chimneys of which the smoke came. Here be crouched a long time, looking and listening attentively; but it seemed that the visitors had no fears. Why should they, when there was nothing that they need fear in this frozen wilderness?

Henry stole a little nearer. It had been a snug, trim little settlement. Perhaps twenty-five or thirty people had lived there, literally hewing a home out of the forest. His heart throbbed with a fierce hatred and, anger against those who had spoiled all this, and his gloved finger crept to the hammer of his rifle.

The night was intensely cold. The mercury was far below zero, and a wind

that had begun to rise cut like the edge of a knife. Even the wariest of Indians in such desolate weather might fail to keep a watch. But Henry did not suffer. The fur cap was drawn farther over chin and ears, and the buckskin gloves kept his fingers warm and flexible. Besides, his blood was uncommonly hot in his veins.

His comprehensive eye told him that, while some of the buildings had not been destroyed, they were so ravaged and damaged that they could never be used again, save as a passing shelter, just as they were being used now. He slid cautiously about the desolate place. He crossed a brook, frozen almost solidly in its bed, and he saw two or three large mounds that had been haystacks, now covered with snow.

Then he slid without noise back to the nearest of the houses from which the smoke came. It was rather more pretentious than the others, built of planks instead of logs, and with shingles for a roof. The remains of a small portico formed the approach to the front door. Henry supposed that the house had been set on fire and that perhaps a heavy rain had saved a part of it.

A bar of light falling across the snow attracted his attention. He knew that it was the glow of a fire within coming through a window. A faint sound of voices reached his ears, and he moved forward slowly to the window. It was an oaken shutter originally fastened with a leather strap, but the strap was gone, and now some one had tied it, though not tightly, with a deer tendon. The crack between shutter and wall was at least three inches, and Henry could see within very well.

He pressed his side tightly to the wall and put his eyes to the crevice. What he saw within did not still any of those primitive feelings that had risen so strongly in his breast.

A great fire had been built in the log fireplace, but it was burning somewhat low now, having reached that mellow period of least crackling and greatest heat. The huge bed of coals threw a mass of varied and glowing colors across the floor. Large holes had been burned in the side of the room by the original fire, but Indian blankets had been fastened tightly over them.

In front of the fire sat Braxton Wyatt in a Loyalist uniform, a three-cornered hat cocked proudly on his head, and a small sword by his side. He had grown heavier, and Henry saw that the face had increased much in coarseness and cruelty. It had also increased in satisfaction. He was a great man now, as he saw great men, and both face and figure radiated gratification and pride as he lolled before the fire. At the other corner, sitting upon the floor and also in a Loyalist uniform, was his lieutenant, Levi Coleman, older, heavier, and with a short, uncommonly muscular figure. His face was dark and cruel, with small eyes set

close together. A half dozen other white men and more than a dozen Indians were in the room. All these lay upon their blankets on the floor, because all the furniture had been destroyed. Yet they had eaten, and they lay there content in the soothing glow of the fire, like animals that had fed well. Henry was so near that he could hear every word anyone spoke.

“It was well that the Indians led us to this place, eh, Levi?” said Wyatt.

“I'm glad the fire spared a part of it,” said Coleman. “Looks as if it was done just for us, to give us a shelter some cold winter night when we come along. I guess the Iroquois Aieroski is watching over us.”

Wyatt laughed.

“You're a man that I like, Levi,” he said. “You can see to the inside of things. It would be a good idea to use this place as a base and shelter, and make a raid on some of the settlements east of the hills, eh, Levi?”

“It could be done,” said Coleman. “But just listen to that wind, will you! On a night like this it must cut like a saber's edge. Even our Iroquois are glad to be under a roof.”

Henry still gazed in at the crack with eyes that were lighted up by an angry fire. So here was more talk of destruction and slaughter! His gaze alighted upon an Indian who sat in a corner engaged upon a task. Henry looked more closely, and saw that he was stretching a blonde-haired scalp over a small hoop. A shudder shook his whole frame. Only those who lived amid such scenes could understand the intensity of his feelings. He felt, too, a bitter sense of injustice. The doers of these deeds were here in warmth and comfort, while the innocent were dead or fugitives. He turned away from the window, stepping gently upon the snowshoes. He inferred that the remainder of Wyatt's band were quartered in the other house from which he had seen the smoke rising. It was about twenty rods away, but he did not examine it, because a great idea had been born suddenly in his brain. The attempt to fulfill the idea would be accompanied by extreme danger, but he did not hesitate a moment. He stole gently to one of the half-fallen outhouses and went inside. Here he found what he wanted, a large pine shelf that had been sheltered from rain and that was perfectly dry. He scraped off a large quantity of the dry pine until it formed almost a dust, and he did not cease until he had filled his cap with it. Then he cut off large splinters, until he had accumulated a great number, and after that he gathered smaller pieces of half-burned pine.

He was fully two hours doing this work, and the night advanced far, but he never faltered. His head was bare, but he was protected from the wind by a

fragment of the outhouse wall. Every two or three minutes he stopped and listened for the sound of a creaking, sliding footstep on the snow, but, never hearing any, he always resumed his work with the same concentration. All the while the wind rose and moaned through the ruins of the little village. When Henry chanced to raise his head above the sheltering wall, it was like the slash of a knife across his cheek.

Finally he took half of the pine dust in his cap and a lot of the splinters under his arm, and stole back to the house from which the light had shone. He looked again through the crevice at the window. The light had died down much more, and both Wyatt and Coleman were asleep on the floor. But several of the Iroquois were awake, although they sat as silent and motionless as stones against the wall.

Henry moved from the window and selected a sheltered spot beside the plank wall. There he put the pine dust in a little heap on the snow and covered it over with pine splinters, on top of which he put larger pieces of pine. Then he went back for the remainder of the pine dust, and built a similar pyramid against a sheltered side of the second house.

The most delicate part of his task had now come, one that good fortune only could aid him in achieving, but the brave youth, his heart aflame with righteous anger against those inside, still pursued the work. His heart throbbed, but hand and eye were steady.

Now came the kindly stroke of fortune for which he had hoped. The wind rose much higher and roared harder against the house. It would prevent the Iroquois within, keen of ear as they were, from hearing a light sound without. Then he drew forth his flint and steel and struck them together with a hand so strong and swift that sparks quickly leaped forth and set fire to the pine tinder. Henry paused only long enough to see the flame spread to the splinters, and then he ran rapidly to the other house, where the task was repeated-he intended that his job should be thorough.

Pursuing this resolve to make his task complete, he came back to the first house and looked at his fire. It had already spread to the larger pieces of pine, and it could not go out now. The sound made by the flames blended exactly with the roaring of the wind, and another minute or two might pass before the Iroquois detected it.

Now his heart throbbed again, and exultation was mingled with his anger. By the time the Iroquois were aroused to the danger the flames would be so high that the wind would reach them. Then no one could put them out.

It might have been safer for him to flee deep into the forest at once, but that lingering desire to make his task complete and, also, the wish to see the result kept him from doing it. He merely walked across the open space and stood behind a tree at the edge of the forest.

Braxton Wyatt and his Tories and Iroquois were very warm, very snug, in the shelter of the old house with the great bed of coals before them. They may even have been dreaming peaceful and beautiful dreams, when suddenly an Iroquois sprang to his feet and uttered a cry that awoke all the rest.

“I smell smoke!” he exclaimed in his tongue, “and there is fire, too! I hear it crackle outside!”

Braxton Wyatt ran to the window and jerked it open. Flame and smoke blew in his face. He uttered an angry cry, and snatched at the pistol in his belt.

“The whole side of the house is on fire!” he exclaimed. “Whose neglect has done this?”

Coleman, shrewd and observing, was at his elbow.

“The fire was set on the outside,” he said. “It was no carelessness of our men. Some enemy has done this!”

“It is true!” exclaimed Wyatt furiously. “Out, everybody! The house burns fast!”

There was a rush for the door. Already ashes and cinders were falling about their heads. Flames leaped high, were caught by the roaring winds, and roared with them. The shell of the house would soon be gone, and when Tories and Iroquois were outside they saw the remainder of their band pouring forth from the other house, which was also in flames.

No means of theirs could stop so great a fire, and they stood in a sort of stupefaction, watching it as it was fanned to greatest heights by the wind.

All the remaining outbuildings caught, also, and in a few moments nothing whatever would be left of the tiny village. Braxton Wyatt and his band must lie in the icy wilderness, and they could never use this place as a basis for attack upon settlements.

“How under the sun could it have happened?” exclaimed Wyatt.

“It didn't happen. It was done,” said Coleman. “Somebody set these houses on fire while we slept within. Hark to that!”

An Iroquois some distance from the houses was bending over the snow where it was not yet melted by the heat. He saw there the track of snowshoes, and suddenly, looking toward the forest, whither they led, he saw a dark figure flit

away among the trees.

CHAPTER XVIII. HENRY'S SLIDE

Henry Ware, lingering at the edge of the clearing, his body hidden behind one of the great tree trunks, had been watching the scene with a fascinated interest that would not let him go. He knew that his work there was done already. Everything would be utterly destroyed by the flames which, driven by the wind, leaped from one half-ruined building to another. Braxton Wyatt and his band would have enough to do sheltering themselves from the fierce winter, and the settlements could rest for a while at least. Undeniably he felt exultation as he witnessed the destructive work of his hand. The border, with its constant struggle for-life and terrible deeds, bred fierce passions.

In truth, although he did not know it himself, he stayed there to please his eye and heart. A new pulse beat triumphantly every time a timber, burned through, fell in, or a crash came from a falling roof. He laughed inwardly as the flames disclosed the dismay on the faces of the Iroquois and Tories, and it gave him deep satisfaction to see Braxton Wyatt, his gaudy little sword at his thigh, stalking about helpless. It was while he was looking, absorbed in such feelings, that the warrior of the alert eye saw him and gave the warning shout.

Henry turned in an instant, and darted away among the trees, half running, half sliding over the smooth, icy covering of the snow. After him came warriors and some Tories who had put on their snowshoes preparatory to the search through the forest for shelter. Several bullets were fired, but he was too far away for a good aim. He heard one go zip against a tree, and another cut the surface of the ice near him, but none touched him, and he sped easily on his snowshoes through the frozen forest. But Henry was fully aware of one thing that constituted his greatest danger. Many of these Iroquois had been trained all their lives to snowshoes, while he, however powerful and agile, was comparatively a beginner. He glanced back again and saw their dusky figures running among the trees, but they did not seem to be gaining. If one should draw too near, there was his rifle, and no man, white or red, in the northern or southern forests, could use it better. But for the present it was not needed. He pressed it closely, almost lovingly, to his side, this best friend of the scout and frontiersman.

He had chosen his course at the first leap. It was southward, toward the lake, and he did not make the mistake of diverging from his line, knowing that some part of the wide half circle of his pursuers would profit by it.

Henry felt a great upward surge. He had been the victor in what he meant to achieve, and he was sure that he would escape. The cold wind, whistling by, whipped his blood and added new strength to his great muscles. His ankles were not chafed or sore, and he sped forward on the snowshoes, straight and true. Whenever he came to a hill the pursuers would gain as he went up it, but when he went down the other side it was he who gained. He passed brooks, creeks, and once a small river, but they were frozen over, many inches deep, and he did not notice them. Again it was a lake a mile wide, but the smooth surface there merely increased his speed. Always he kept a wary look ahead for thickets through which he could not pass easily, and once he sent back a shout of defiance, which the Iroquois answered with a yell of anger.

He was fully aware that any accident to his snowshoes would prove fatal, the slipping of the thongs on his ankles or the breaking of a runner would end his flight, and in a long chase such an accident might happen. It might happen, too, to one or more of the Iroquois, but plenty of them would be left. Yet Henry had supreme confidence in his snowshoes. He had made them himself, he had seen that every part was good, and every thong had been fastened with care.

The wind which bad been roaring so loudly at the time of the fire sank to nothing. The leafless trees stood up, the branches unmoving. The forest was bare and deserted. All the animals, big and little, had gone into their lairs. Nobody witnessed the great pursuit save pursuers and pursued. Henry kept his direction clear in his mind, and allowed the Iroquois to take no advantage of a curve save once. Then he came to a thicket so large that he was compelled to make a considerable circle to pass it. He turned to the right, hence the Indians on the right gained, and they sent up a yell of delight. He replied defiantly and increased his speed.

But one of the Indians, a flying Mohawk, had come dangerously near-near enough, in fact, to fire a bullet that did not miss the fugitive much. It aroused Henry's anger. He took it as an indignity rather than a danger, and he resolved to avenge it. So far as firing was concerned, he was at a disadvantage. He must stop and turn around for his shot, while the Iroquois, without even checking speed, could fire straight at the flying target, ahead.

Nevertheless, he took the chance. He turned deftly on the snowshoes, fired as quick as lightning at the swift Mohawk, saw him fall, then Whirled and resumed his flight. He had lost ground, but he had inspired respect. A single man could not afford to come too near to a marksman so deadly, and the three or four who led dropped back with the main body.

Now Henry made his greatest effort. He wished to leave the foe far behind, to

shake off his pursuit entirely. He bounded over the ice and snow with great leaps, and began to gain. Yet he felt at last the effects of so strenuous a flight. His breath became shorter; despite the intense cold, perspiration stood upon his face, and the straps that fastened the snowshoes were chafing his ankles. An end must come even to such strength as his. Another backward look, and he saw that the foe was sinking into the darkness. If he could only increase his speed again, he might leave the Iroquois now. He made a new call upon the will, and the body responded. For a few minutes his speed became greater. A disappointed shout arose behind him, and several shots were fired. But the bullets fell a hundred yards short, and then, as he passed over a little hill and into a wood beyond, he was hidden from the sight of his pursuers.

Henry knew that the Iroquois could trail him over the snow, but they could not do it at full speed, and he turned sharply off at an angle. Pausing a second or two for fresh breath, he continued on his new course, although not so fast as before. He knew that the Iroquois would rush straight ahead, and would not discover for two or three minutes that they were off the trail. It would take them another two or three minutes to recover, and he would make a gain of at least five minutes. Five minutes had saved the life of many a man on the border.

How precious those five minutes were! He would take them all. He ran forward some distance, stopped where the trees grew thick, and then enjoyed the golden five, minute by minute. He had felt that he was pumping the very lifeblood from his heart. His breath had come painfully, and the thongs of the snowshoes were chafing his ankles terribly. But those minutes were worth a year. Fresh air poured into his lungs, and the muscles became elastic once more. In so brief a space he had recreated himself.

Resuming his flight, he went at a steady pace, resolved not to do his utmost unless the enemy came in sight. About ten minutes later he heard a cry far behind him, and he believed it to be a signal from some Indian to the others that the trail was found again. But with so much advantage he felt sure that he was now quite safe. He ran, although at decreased speed, for about two hours more, and then he sat down on the upthrust root of a great oak. Here he depended most upon his ears. The forest was so silent that he could hear any noise at a great distance, but there was none. Trusting to his ears to warn him, he would remain there a long time for a thorough rest. He even dared to take off his snowshoes that he might rub his sore ankles, but he wrapped his heavy blanket about his body, lest he take deep cold in cooling off in such a temperature after so long a flight.

He sat enjoying a half hour, golden like the five minutes, and then he saw,

outlined against the bright, moonlit sky, something that told him he must be on the alert again. It was a single ring of smoke, like that from a cigar, only far greater. It rose steadily, untroubled by wind until it was dissipated. It meant “attention!” and presently it was followed by a column of such rings, one following another beautifully. The column said: “The foe is near.” Henry read the Indian signs perfectly. The rings were made by covering a little fire with a blanket for a moment and then allowing the smoke to ascend. On clear days such signals could be seen a distance of thirty miles or more, and he knew that they were full of significance.

Evidently the Iroquois party had divided into two or more bands. One had found his trail, and was signaling to the other. The party sending up the smoke might be a half mile away, but the others, although his trail was yet hidden from them, might be nearer. It was again time for flight.

He swiftly put on the snowshoes, neglecting no thong or lace, folded the blanket on his back again, and, leaving the friendly root, started once more. He ran forward at moderate speed for perhaps a mile, when he suddenly heard triumphant yells on both right and left. A strong party of Iroquois were coming up on either side, and luck had enabled them to catch him in a trap.

They were so near that they fired upon him, and one bullet nicked his glove, but he was hopeful that after his long rest he might again stave them off. He sent back no defiant cry, but, settling into determined silence, ran at his utmost speed. The forest here was of large trees, with no undergrowth, and he noticed that the two parties did not join, but kept on as they had come, one on the right and the other on the left. This fact must have some significance, but he could not fathom it. Neither could he guess whether the Indians were fresh or tired, but apparently they made no effort to come within range of his rifle.

Presently he made a fresh spurt of speed, the forest opened out, and then both bands uttered a yell full of ferocity and joy, the kind that savages utter only when they see their triumph complete.

Before, and far below Henry, stretched a vast, white expanse. He had come to the lake, but at a point where the cliff rose high like a mountain, and steep like a wall. The surface of the lake was so far down that it was misty white like a cloud. Now he understood the policy of the Indian bands in not uniting. They knew that they would soon reach the lofty cliffs of the lake, and if he turned to either right or left there was a band ready to seize him.

Henry's heart leaped up and then sank lower than ever before in his life. It seemed that he could not escape from so complete a trap, and Braxton Wyatt was

not one who would spare a prisoner. That was perhaps the bitterest thing of all, to be taken and tortured by Braxton Wyatt. He was there. He could hear his voice in one of the bands, and then the courage that never failed him burst into fire again.

The Iroquois were coming toward him, shutting him out from retreat to either right or left, but not yet closing in because of his deadly rifle. He gave them a single look, put forth his voice in one great cry of defiance, and, rushing toward the edge of the mighty cliff, sprang boldly over.

As Henry plunged downward he heard behind him a shout of amazement and chagrin poured forth from many Iroquois throats, and, taking a single glance backward, he caught a glimpse of dusky faces stamped with awe. But the bold youth had not made a leap to destruction. In the passage of a second he had calculated rapidly and well. While the cliff at first glance seemed perpendicular, it could not be so. There was a slope coated with two feet of snow, and swinging far back on the heels of his snowshoes, he shot downward like one taking a tremendous slide on a toboggan. Faster and faster he went, but deeper and deeper he dug his shoes into the snow, until he lay back almost flat against its surface. This checked his speed somewhat, but it was still very great, and, preserving his self-control perfectly, he prayed aloud to kindly Providence to save him from some great boulder or abrupt drop.

The snow from his runners flew in a continuous shower behind him as he descended. Yet he drew himself compactly together, and held his rifle parallel with his body. Once or twice, as he went over a little ridge, he shot clear of the snow, but he held his body rigid, and the snow beyond saved him from a severe bruise. Then his speed was increased again, and all the time the white surface of the lake below, seen dimly through the night and his flight, seemed miles away.

He might never reach that surface alive, but of one thing lie was sure. None of the Iroquois or Tories had dared to follow. Braxton Wyatt could have no triumph over him. He was alone in his great flight. Once a projection caused him to turn a little to one side. He was in momentary danger of turning entirely, and then of rolling head over heels like a huge snowball, but with a mighty effort he righted himself, and continued the descent on the runners, with the heels plowing into the ice and the snow.

Now that white expanse which had seemed so far away came miles nearer. Presently he would be there. The impossible had become possible, the unattainable was about to be attained. He gave another mighty dig with his shoes, the last reach of the slope passed behind him, and he shot out on the frozen surface of the lake, bruised and breathless, but without a single broken

bone.

The lake was covered with ice a foot thick, and over this lay frozen snow, which stopped Henry forty or fifty yards from the cliff. There he lost his balance at last, and fell on his side, where he lay for a few moments, weak, panting, but triumphant.

When he stood upright again he felt his body, but he had suffered nothing save some bruises, that would heal in their own good time. His deerskin clothing was much torn, particularly on the back, where he had leaned upon the ice and snow, but the folded blanket had saved him to a considerable extent. One of his shoes was pulled loose, and presently he discovered that his left ankle was smarting and burning at a great rate. But he did not mind these things at all, so complete was his sense of victory. He looked up at the mighty white wall that stretched above him fifteen hundred feet, and he wondered at his own tremendous exploit. The wall ran away for miles, and the Iroquois could not reach him by any easier path. He tried to make out figures on the brink looking down at him, but it was too far away, and he saw only a black line.

He tightened the loose shoe and struck out across the lake. He was far away from “The Alcove,” and he did not intend to go there, lest the Iroquois, by chance, come upon his trail and follow it to the refuge. But as it was no more than two miles across the lake at that point, and the Iroquois would have to make a great curve to reach the other side, he felt perfectly safe. He walked slowly across, conscious all the time of an increasing pain in his left ankle, which must now be badly swollen, and he did not stop until he penetrated some distance among low bills. Here, under an overhanging cliff with thick bushes in front, he found a partial shelter, which he cleared out yet further. Then with infinite patience he built a fire with splinters that he cut from dead boughs, hung his blanket in front of it on two sticks that the flame might not be seen, took off his snowshoes, leggins, and socks, and bared his ankles. Both were swollen, but the left much more badly than the other. He doubted whether he would be able to walk on the following day, but he rubbed them a long time, both with the palms of his hands and with snow, until they felt better. Then he replaced his clothing, leaned back against the faithful snowshoes which had saved his life, however much they had hurt his ankles, and gave himself up to the warmth of the fire.

It was very luxurious, this warmth and this rest, after so long and terrible a flight, and he was conscious of a great relaxation, one which, if he yielded to it completely, would make his muscles so stiff and painful that he could not use them. Hence he stretched his arms and legs many times, rubbed his ankles again, and then, remembering that he had venison, ate several strips.

He knew that he had taken a little risk with the fire, but a fire he was bound to have, and he fed it again until he had a great mass of glowing coals, although there was no blaze. Then he took down the blanket, wrapped himself in it, and was soon asleep before the fire. He slept long and deeply, and although, when he awoke, the day had fully come, the coals were not yet out entirely. He arose, but such a violent pain from his left ankle shot through him that he abruptly sat down again. As he bad feared, it had swollen badly during the night, and he could not walk.

In this emergency Henry displayed no petulance, no striving against unchangeable circumstance. He drew up more wood, which he had stacked against the cliff, and put it on the coals. He hung up the blanket once more in order that it might hide the fire, stretched out his lame leg, and calmly made a breakfast off the last of his venison. He knew he was in a plight that might appall the bravest, but he kept himself in hand. It was likely that the Iroquois thought him dead, crushed into a shapeless mass by his frightful slide of fifteen hundred feet, and he had little fear of them, but to be unable to walk and alone in an icy wilderness without food was sufficient in itself. He calculated that it was at least a dozen miles to “The Alcove,” and the chances were a hundred to one against any of his comrades wandering his way. He looked once more at his swollen left ankle, and he made a close calculation. It would be three days, more likely four, before he could walk upon it. Could he endure hunger that long? He could. He would! Crouched in his nest with his back to the cliff, he had defense against any enemy in his rifle and pistol. By faithful watching he might catch sight of some wandering animal, a target for his rifle and then food for his stomach. His wilderness wisdom warned him that there was nothing to do but sit quiet and wait.

He scarcely moved for hours. As long as he was still his ankle troubled him but little. The sun came out, silver bright, but it had no warmth. The surface of the lake was shown only by the smoothness of its expanse; the icy covering was the same everywhere over hills and valleys. Across the lake he saw the steep down which he had slid, looming white and lofty. In the distance it looked perpendicular, and, whatever its terrors, it had, beyond a doubt, saved his life. He glanced down at his swollen ankle, and, despite his helpless situation, he was thankful that he had escaped so well.

About noon he moved enough to throw up the snowbanks higher all around himself in the fashion of an Eskimos house. Then he let the fire die except some coals that gave forth no smoke, stretched the blanket over his head in the manner of a roof, and once more resumed his quiet and stillness. He was now like a

crippled animal in its lair, but he was warm, and his wound did not hurt him. But hunger began to trouble him. He was young and so powerful that his frame demanded much sustenance. Now it cried aloud its need! He ate two or three handfuls of snow, and for a few moments it seemed to help him a little, but his hunger soon came back as strong as ever. Then he tightened his belt and sat in grim silence, trying to forget that there was any such thing as food.

The effort of the will was almost a success throughout the afternoon, but before night it failed. He began to have roseate visions of Long Jim trying venison, wild duck, bear, and buffalo steaks over the coals. He could sniff the aroma, so powerful had his imagination become, and, in fancy, his month watered, while its roof was really dry. They were daylight visions, and he knew it well, but they taunted him and made his pain fiercer. He slid forward a little to the mouth of his shelter, and thrust out his rifle in the hope that he would see some wild creature, no matter what; he felt that he could shoot it at any distance, and then he would feast!

He saw nothing living, either on earth or in the air, only motionless white, and beyond, showing but faintly now through the coming twilight, the lofty cliff that had saved him.

He drew back into his lair, and the darkness came down. Despite his hunger, he slept fairly well. In the night a little snow fell at times, but his blanket roof protected him, and he remained dry and warm. The new snow was, in a way, a satisfaction, as it completely hid his trail from the glance of any wandering Indian. He awoke the next morning to a gray, somber day, with piercing winds from the northwest. He did not feel the pangs of hunger until he had been awake about a half hour, and then they came with redoubled force. Moreover, he had become weaker in the night, and, added to the loss of muscular strength, was a decrease in the power of the will. Hunger was eating away his mental as well as his physical fiber. He did not face the situation with quite the same confidence that he felt the day before. The wilderness looked a little more threatening.

His lips felt as if he were suffering from fever, and his shoulders and back were stiff. But he drew his belt tighter again, and then uncovered his left ankle. The swelling had gone down a little, and he could move it with more freedom than on the day before, but he could not yet walk. Once more he made his grim calculation. In two days he could certainly walk and hunt game or make a try for “The Alcove,” so far as his ankle was concerned, but would hunger overpower him before that time? Gaining strength in one direction, he was losing it in another.

Now he began to grow angry with himself. The light inroad that famine made

upon his will was telling. It seemed incredible that he, so powerful, so skillful, so self reliant, so long used to the wilderness and to every manner of hardship, should be held there in a snowbank by a bruised ankle to die like a crippled rabbit. His comrades could not be more than ten miles away. He could walk. He would walk! He stood upright and stepped out into the snow, but pain, so agonizing that he could scarcely keep from crying out, shot through his whole body, and he sank back into the shelter, sure not to make such an experiment again for another full day.

The day passed much like its predecessor, except that he took down the blanket cover of his snow hut and kindled up his fire again, more for the sake of cheerfulness than for warmth, because he was not suffering from cold. There was a certain life and light about the coals and the bright flame, but the relief did not last long, and by and by he let it go out. Then be devoted himself to watching the heavens and the surface of the snow. Some winter bird, duck or goose, might be flying by, or a wandering deer might be passing. He must not lose any such chance. He was more than ever a fierce creature of prey, sitting at the mouth of his den, the rifle across his knee, his tanned face so thin that the cheek bones showed high and sharp, his eyes bright with fever and the fierce desire for prey, and the long, lean body drawn forward as if it were about to leap.

He thought often of dragging himself down to the lake, breaking a hole in the ice, and trying to fish, but the idea invariably came only to be abandoned. He had neither hook nor bait. In the afternoon he chewed the edge of his buckskin hunting shirt, but it was too thoroughly tanned and dry. It gave back no sustenance. He abandoned the experiment and lay still for a long time.

That night he had a slight touch of frenzy, and began to laugh at himself. It was a huge joke! What would Timmendiquas or Thayendanegea think of him if they knew how he came to his end? They would put him with old squaws or little children. And how Braxton Wyatt and his lieutenant, the squat Tory, would laugh! That was the bitterest thought of all. But the frenzy passed, and he fell into a sleep which was only a succession of bad dreams. He was running the gauntlet again among the Shawnees. Again, kneeling to drink at the clear pool, he saw in the water the shadow of the triumphant warrior holding the tomahawk above him. One after another the most critical periods of his life were lived over again, and then he sank into a deep torpor, from which he did not rouse himself until far into the next day.

Henry was conscious that he was very weak, but he seemed to have regained much of his lost will. He looked once more at the fatal left ankle. It had improved greatly. He could even stand upon it, but when he rose to his feet he

felt a singular dizziness. Again, what he had gained in one way he had lost in another. The earth wavered. The smooth surface of the lake seemed to rise swiftly, and then to sink as swiftly. The far slope down which he had shot rose to the height of miles. There was a pale tinge, too, over the world. He sank down, not because of his ankle, but because he was afraid his dizzy head would make him fall.

The power of will slipped away again for a minute or two. He was ashamed of such extraordinary weakness. He looked at one of his hands. It was thin, like the band of a man wasted with fever, and the blue veins stood out on the back of it. He could scarcely believe that the hand was his own. But after the first spasm of weakness was over, the precious will returned. He could walk. Strength enough to permit him to hobble along had returned to the ankle at last, and mind must control the rest of his nervous system, however weakened it might be. He must seek food.

He withdrew into the farthest recess of his covert, wrapped the blanket tightly about his body, and lay still for a long time. He was preparing both mind and body for the supreme effort. He knew that everything hung now on the surviving remnants of his skill and courage.

Weakened by shock and several days of fasting, he had no great reserve now except the mental, and he used that to the utmost. It was proof of his youthful greatness that it stood the last test. As he lay there, the final ounce of will and courage came. Strength which was of the mind rather than of the body flowed back into his veins; he felt able to dare and to do; the pale aspect of the world went away, and once more he was Henry Ware, alert, skillful, and always triumphant.

Then he rose again, folded the blanket, and fastened it on his shoulders. He looked at the snowshoes, but decided that his left ankle, despite its great improvement, would not stand the strain. He must break his way through the snow, which was a full three feet in depth. Fortunately the crust had softened somewhat in the last two or three days, and he did not have a covering of ice to meet.

He pushed his way for the first time from the lair under the cliff, his rifle held in his ready hands, in order that he might miss no chance at game. To an ordinary observer there would have been no such chance at all. It was merely a grim white wilderness that might have been without anything living from the beginning. But Henry, the forest runner, knew better. Somewhere in the snow were lairs much like the one that he had left, and in these lairs were wild animals. To any such wild animal, whether panther or bear, the hunter would

now have been a fearsome object, with his hollow cheeks, his sunken fiery eyes, and his thin lips opening now and then, and disclosing the two rows of strong white teeth.

Henry advanced about a rod, and then he stopped, breathing hard, because it was desperate work for one in his condition to break his way through snow so deep. But his ankle stood the strain well, and his courage increased rather than diminished. He was no longer a cripple confined to one spot. While he stood resting, he noticed a clump of bushes about half a rod to his left, and a hopeful idea came to him.

He broke his way slowly to the bushes, and then he searched carefully among them. The snow was not nearly so thick there, and under the thickest clump, where the shelter was best, he saw a small round opening. In an instant all his old vigorous life, all the abounding hope which was such a strong characteristic of his nature, came back to him. Already he had triumphed over Indians, Tories, the mighty slope, snow, ice, crippling, and starvation.

He laid the rifle on the snow and took the ramrod in his right hand. He thrust his left hand into the hole, and when the rabbit leaped for life from his warm nest a smart blow of the ramrod stretched him dead at the feet of the hunter. Henry picked up the rabbit. It was large and yet fat. Here was food for two meals. In the race between the ankle and starvation, the ankle had won.

He did not give way to any unseemly elation. He even felt a momentary sorrow that a life must perish to save his own, because all these wild things were his kindred now. He returned by the path that he had broken, kindled his fire anew, dexterously skinned and cleaned his rabbit, then cooked it and ate half, although he ate slowly and with intervals between each piece. How delicious it tasted, and how his physical being longed to leap upon it and devour it, but the power of the mind was still supreme. He knew what was good for himself, and he did it. Everything was done in order and with sobriety. Then he put the rest of the rabbit carefully in his food pouch, wrapped the blanket about his body, leaned back, and stretched his feet to the coals.

What an extraordinary change had come over the world in an hour! He had not noticed before the great beauty of the lake, the lofty cliffs on the farther shore, and the forest clothed in white and hanging with icicles.

The winter sunshine was molten silver, pouring down in a flood.

It was not will now, but actuality, that made him feel the strength returning to his frame. He knew that the blood in his veins had begun to sparkle, and that his vitality was rising fast. He could have gone to sleep peacefully, but instead he

went forth and hunted again. He knew that where the rabbit had been, others were likely to be near, and before he returned he had secured two more. Both of these he cleaned and cooked at once. When this was done night had come, but he ate again, and then, securing all his treasures about him, fell into the best sleep that he had enjoyed since his flight.

He felt very strong the next morning, and he might have started then, but he was prudent. There was still a chance of meeting the Iroquois, and the ankle might not stand so severe a test. He would rest in his nest for another day, and then he would be equal to anything. Few could lie a whole day in one place with but little to do and with nothing passing before the eyes, but it was a part of Henry's wilderness training, and he showed all the patience of the forester. He knew, too, as the hours went by, that his strength was rising all the while. To-morrow almost the last soreness would be gone from his ankle and then he could glide swiftly over the snow, back to his comrades. He was content. He had, in fact, a sense of great triumph because he had overcome so much, and here was new food in this example for future efforts of the mind, for future victories of the will over the body. The wintry sun came to the zenith, then passed slowly down the curve, but all the time the boy scarcely stirred. Once there was a flight of small birds across the heavens, and he watched them vaguely, but apparently he took no interest. Toward night he stood up in his recess and flexed and tuned his muscles for a long time, driving out any stiffness that might come through long lack of motion. Then he ate and lay down, but he did not yet sleep.

The night was clear, and he looked away toward the point where he knew “The Alcove” lay. A good moon was now shining, and stars by the score were springing out. Suddenly at a point on that far shore a spark of red light appeared and twinkled. Most persons would have taken it for some low star, but Henry knew better. It was fire put there by human hand for a purpose, doubtless a signal, and as he looked a second spark appeared by the first, then a third, then a fourth. He uttered a great sigh of pleasure. It was his four friends signaling to him somewhere in the vast unknown that they were alive and well, and beckoning him to come. The lights burned for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then all went out together. Henry turned over on his side and fell sound asleep. In the morning he put on his snowshoes and started.

CHAPTER XIX. THE SAFE RETURN

The surface of the snow had frozen again in the night, and Henry found good footing for his shoes. For a while he leaned most on the right ankle, but, as his left developed no signs of soreness, he used them equally, and sped forward, his spirits rising at every step. The air was cold, and there was but little breeze, but his own motion made a wind that whipped his face. The hollows were mostly gone from his cheeks, and his eyes no longer had the fierce, questing look of the famishing wild animal in search of prey. A fine red color was suffused through the brown of his face. He had chosen his course with due precaution. The broad surface, smooth, white, and glittering, tempted, but he put the temptation away. He did not wish to run any chance whatever of another Iroquois pursuit, and he kept in the forest that ran down close to the water's edge. It was tougher traveling there, but he persisted.

But all thought of weariness and trouble was lost in his glorious freedom. With his crippled ankle he had been really like a prisoner in his cell, with a ball and chain to his foot. Now he flew along, while the cold wind whipped his blood, and felt what a delight it was merely to live. He went on thus for hours, skirting down toward the cliffs that contained “The Alcove.” He rested a while in the afternoon and ate the last of his rabbit, but before twilight he reached the creek, and stood at the hidden path that led up to their home.

Henry sat down behind thick bushes and took off his snowshoes. To one who had never come before, the whole place would have seemed absolutely desolate, and even to one not a stranger no sign of life would have been visible had he not possessed uncommonly keen eyes. But Henry had such eyes. He saw the faintest wisp of smoke stealing away against the surface of the cliff, and he felt confident that all four were there. He resolved to surprise them.

Laying the shoes aside, he crept so carefully up the path that he dislodged no snow and made no noise of any kind. As he gradually approached “The Alcove” he beard the murmur of voices, and presently, as he turned an angle in the path, he saw a beam of glorious mellow light falling on the snow.

But the murmur of the voices sent a great thrill of delight through him. Low and indistinct as they were, they had a familiar sound. He knew all those tones. They were the voices of his faithful comrades, the four who had gone with him through so many perils and hardships, the little band who with himself were

ready to die at any time, one for another.

He crept a little closer, and then a little closer still. Lying almost flat on the steep path, and drawing himself forward, he looked into “The Alcove.” A fire of deep, red coals glowed in one corner, and disposed about it were the four. Paul lay on his elbow on a deerskin, and was gazing into the coals. Tom Ross was working on a pair of moccasins, Long Jim was making some kind of kitchen implement, and Shif'less Sol was talking. Henry could hear the words distinctly, and they were about himself.

“Henry will turn up all right,” he was saying. “Hasn't he always done it afore? Then ef he's always done it afore he's shorely not goin' to break his rule now. I tell you, boys, thar ain't enough Injuns an' Tories between Canady an' New Orleans, an' the Mississippi an' the Atlantic, to ketch Henry. I bet I could guess what he's doin' right at this moment.”

“What is he doing, Sol?” asked Paul.

“When I shet my eyes ez I'm doin' now I kin see him,” said the shiftless one. “He's away off thar toward the north, skirtin' around an Injun village, Mohawk most likely, lookin' an' listenin' an' gatherin' talk about their plans.”

“He ain't doin' any sech thing,” broke in Long Jim.

“I've sleet my eyes, too, Sol Hyde, jest ez tight ez you've shet yours, an' I see him, too, but he ain't doin' any uv the things that you're talkin' about.”

“What is he doing, Jim?” asked Paul.

“Henry's away off to the south, not to the north,” replied the long one, “an' he's in the Iroquois village that we burned. One house has been left standin', an' he's been occupyin' it while the big snow's on the groun'. A whole deer is hangin' from the wall, an' he's been settin' thar fur days, eatin' so much an' hevin' such a good time that the fat's hangin' down over his cheeks, an' his whole body is threatenin' to bust right out uv his huntin' shirt.”

Paul moved a little on his elbow and turned the other side of his face to the fire. Then he glanced at the silent worker with the moccasins.

“Sol and Jim don't seem to agree much in their second sight,” he said. “Can you have any vision, too, Tom?”

“Yes,” replied Tom Ross, “I kin. I shet my eyes, but I don't see like either Sol or Jim, 'cause both uv 'em see wrong. I see Henry, an' I see him plain. He's had a pow'ful tough time. He ain't threatenin' to bust with fat out uv no huntin' shirt, his cheeks ain't so full that they are fallin' down over his jaws. It's t'other way roun'; them cheeks are sunk a mite, he don't fill out his clothes, an' when he

crawls along he drags his left leg a leetle, though he hides it from hisself. He ain't spyin' on no Injun village, an' he ain't in no snug camp with a dressed deer hangin' by the side uv him. It's t'other way 'roan'. He's layin' almost flat on his face not twenty feet from us, lookin' right in at us, an' I wuz the first to see him."

All the others sprang to their feet in astonishment, and Henry likewise sprang to his feet. Three leaps, and he was in the mellow glow.

"And so you saw me, Tom," he exclaimed, as he joyously grasped one hand after another. "I might have known that, while I could stalk some of you, I could not stalk all of you."

"I caught the glimpse uv you," said Silent Tom, "while Sol an' Jim wuz talkin' the foolish talk that they most always talk, an' when Paul called on me, I thought I would give 'em a dream that 'wuz true, an' worth tellin'."

"You're right," said Henry. "I've not been having any easy time, and for a while, boys, it looked as if I never would come back. Sit down, and I will tell you all about it."

They gave him the warmest place by the fire, brought him the tenderest food, and he told the long and thrilling tale.

"I don't believe anybody else but you would have tried it, Henry," said Paul, when they heard of the fearful slide.

"Any one of you would have done it," said Henry, modestly.

"I'm pow'ful glad that you done it for two reasons," said Shif'less Sol. "One, 'cause it helped you to git away, an' the other, 'cause that scoundrel, Braxton Wyatt, didn't take you. 'Twould hurt my pride tre-men-jeous for any uv us to be took by Braxton Wyatt."

"You speak for us all there, Sol," said Paul.

"What have all of you been doing?" asked Henry.

"Not much of anything," replied Shif'less Sol. "We've been scoutin' several times, lookin' fur you, though we knowed you'd come in some time or other, but mostly we've been workin' 'roun' the place here, fixin' it up warmer an' storin' away food."

"We'll have to continue at that for some time, I'm afraid," said Henry, "unless this snow breaks up. Have any of you heard if any movement is yet on foot against the Iroquois?"

"Tom ran across some scouts from the militia," replied Paul, "and they said nothing could be done until warm weather came. Then a real army would march."

“I hope so,” said Henry earnestly.

But for the present the five could achieve little. The snow lasted a long time, but it was finally swept away by big rains. It poured for two days and nights, and even when the rain ceased the snow continued to melt under the warmer air. The water rushed in great torrents down the cliffs, and would have entered “The Alcove” had not the five made provision to turn it away. As it was, they sat snug and dry, listening to the gush of the water, the sign of falling snow, and the talk of one another. Yet the time dragged.

“Man wuz never made to be a caged animile,” said Shif'less Sol. “The longer I stay shet up in one place, the weaker I become. My temper don't improve, neither, an' I ain't happy.”

“Guess it's the same with all uv us,” said Tom Ross.

But when the earth came from beneath the snow, although it was still cold weather, they began again to range the forest far in every direction, and they found that the Indians, and the Tories also, were becoming active. There were more burnings, more slaughters, and more scalpings. The whole border was still appalled at the massacres of Wyoming and Cherry Valley, and the savages were continually spreading over a wider area. Braxton Wyatt at the head of his band, and with the aid of his Tory lieutenant, Levi Coleman, had made for himself a name equal to that of Walter Butler. As for “Indian” Butler and his men, no men were hated more thoroughly than they.

The five continued to do the best they could, which was much, carrying many a warning, and saving some who would otherwise have been victims. While they devoted themselves to their strenuous task, great events in which they were to take a part were preparing. The rear guard of the Revolution was about to become for the time the main guard. A great eye had been turned upon the ravaged and bleeding border, and a great mind, which could bear misfortune-even disaster-without complaint, was preparing to send help to those farther away. So mighty a cry of distress had risen, that the power of the Iroquois must be destroyed. As the warm weather came, the soldiers began to march.

Rumors that a formidable foe was about to advance reached the Iroquois and their allies, the Tories, the English, and the Canadians. There was a great stirring among the leaders, Thayendanegea, Hiokatoo, Sangerachte, the Johnsons, the Butlers, Claus, and the rest. Haldimand, the king's representative in Canada, sent forth an urgent call to all the Iroquois to meet the enemy. The Tories were' extremely active. Promises were made to the tribes that they should have other victories even greater than those of Wyoming and Cherry Valley, and again the

terrible Queen Esther went among them, swinging her great war tomahawk over her head and chanting her song of death. She, more than any other, inflamed the Iroquois, and they were eager for the coming contest.

Timmendiquas had gone back to the Ohio country in the winter, but, faithful to his promise to give Thayendanegea help to the last, he returned in the spring with a hundred chosen warriors of the Wyandot nation, a reenforcement the value of which could not be estimated too highly.

Henry and his comrades felt the stir as they roamed through the forest, and they thrilled at the thought that the crisis was approaching. Then they set out for Lake Otsego, where the army was gathering for the great campaign. They were equipped thoroughly, and they were now so well known in the region that they knew they would be welcome.

They traveled several days, and were preparing to encamp for the last night within about fifteen miles of the lake when Henry, scouting as usual to see if an enemy were near, heard a footstep in the forest. He wheeled instantly to cover behind the body of a great beech tree, and the stranger sought to do likewise, only he had no convenient tree that was so large. It was about the twelfth hour, but Henry could see a portion of a body protruding beyond a slim oak, and he believed that he recognized it. As he held the advantage he would, at any rate, hail the stranger.

“Ho, Cornelius Heemskerk, Dutchman, fat man, great scout and woodsman, what are you doing in my wilderness? Stand forth at once and give an account of yourself, or I will shoot off the part of your body that sticks beyond that oak tree!”

The answer was instantaneous. A round, plump body revolved from the partial shelter of the tree and stood upright in the open, rifle in hand and cap thrown back from a broad ruddy brow.

“Ho, Mynheer Henry Ware,” replied Cornelius Heemskerk in a loud, clear tone, “I am in your woods on perhaps the same errand that you are. Come from behind that beech and let us see which has the stronger grip.”

Henry stood forth, and the two clasped hands in a grip so powerful that both winced. Then they released hands simultaneously, and Heemskerk asked:

“And the other four mynheers? Am I wrong to say that they are near, somewhere?”

“You are not wrong,” replied Henry. “They are alive, well and hungry, not a mile from here. There is one man whom they would be very glad to see, and his name is Cornelius Heemskerk, who is roaming in our woods without a permit.”

The round, ruddy face of the Dutchman glowed. It was obvious that he felt as much delight in seeing Henry as Henry felt in seeing him.

“My heart swells,” he said. “I feared that you might have been killed or scalped, or, at the best, have gone back to that far land of Kentucky.”

“We have wintered well,” said Henry, “in a place of which I shall not tell you now, and we are here to see the campaign through.”

“I come, too, for the same purpose,” said Heemskerk. “We shall be together. It is goot.” “Meanwhile,” said Henry, “our camp fire is lighted. Jim Hart, whom you have known of old, is cooking strips of meat over the coals, and, although it is a mile away, the odor of them is very pleasant in my nostrils. I wish to go back there, and it will be all the more delightful to me, and to those who wait, if I can bring with me such a welcome guest.”

“Lead on, mynheer,” said Cornelius Heemskerk sententiously.

He received an equally emphatic welcome from the others, and then they ate and talked. Heemskerk was sanguine.

“Something will be done this time,” he said. “Word has come from the great commander that the Iroquois must be crushed. The thousands who have fallen must be avenged, and this great fire along our border must be stopped. If it cannot be done, then we perish. We have old tales in my own country of the cruel deeds that the Spaniards did long, long ago, but they were not worse than have been done here.”

The five made no response, but the mind of every one of them traveled back to Wyoming and all that they had seen there, and the scars and traces of many more tragedies.

They reached the camp on Lake Otsego the next day, and Henry saw that all they had heard was true. The most formidable force that they had ever seen was gathering. There were many companies in the Continental buff and blue, epauletted officers, bayonets and cannon. The camp was full of life, energy, and hope, and the five at once felt the influence of it. They found here old friends whom they had known in the march on Oghwaga, William Gray, young Taylor, and others, and they were made very welcome. They were presented to General James Clinton, then in charge, received roving commissions as scouts and hunters, and with Heemskerk and the two celebrated borderers, Timothy Murphy and David Elerson, they roamed the forest in a great circle about the lake, bringing much valuable information about the movements of the enemy, who in their turn were gathering in force, while the royal authorities were dispatching both Indians and white men from Canada to help them.

These great scouting expeditions saved the five from much impatience. It takes a long time for an army to gather and then to equip itself for the march, and they were so used to swift motion that it was now a part of their nature. At last the army was ready, and it left the lake. Then it proceeded in boats down the Tioga flooded to a sufficient depth by an artificial dam built with immense labor, to its confluence with the larger river. Here were more men, and the five saw a new commander, General James Sullivan, take charge of the united force. Then the army, late in August, began its march upon the Iroquois.

The five were now in the van, miles ahead of the main guard. They knew that no important movement of so large a force could escape the notice of the enemy, but they, with other scouts, made it their duty to see that the Americans marched into no trap.

It was now the waning summer. The leaves were lightly touched with brown, and the grass had begun to wither. Berries were ripening on the vines, and the quantity of game had increased, the wild animals returning to the land from which civilized man had disappeared. The desolation seemed even more complete than in the autumn before. In the winter and spring the Iroquois and Tories had destroyed the few remnants of houses that were left. Braxton Wyatt and his band had been particularly active in this work, and many tales had come of his cruelty and that of his swart Tory lieutenant, Coleman. Henry was sure, too, that Wyatt's band, which numbered perhaps fifty Indians and Tories, was now in front of them.

He, his comrades, Heemskerk, Elerson, Murphy, and four others, twelve brave forest runners all told, went into camp one night about ten miles ahead of the army. They lighted no fire, and, even had it been cold, they would not have done so, as the region was far too dangerous for any light. Yet the little band felt no fear. They were only twelve, it is true, but such a twelve! No chance would either Indians or Tories have to surprise them.

They merely lay down in the thick brushwood, three intending to keep watch while the others slept. Henry, Shif'less Sol, and Heemskerk were the sentinels. It was very late, nearly midnight; the sky was clear, and presently they saw smoke rings ascending from high hills to their right, to be answered soon by other rings of smoke to their left. The three watched them with but little comment, and read every signal in turn. They said: “The enemy is still advancing,” “He is too strong for us..... We must retreat and await our brethren.”

“It means that there will be no battle to-morrow, at least,” whispered Heemskerk. “Brant is probably ahead of us in command, and he will avoid us until he receives the fresh forces from Canada.”

“I take it that you're right,” Henry whispered back. “Timmendiquas also is with him, and the two great chiefs are too cunning to fight until they can bring their last man into action.”

“An' then,” said the shiftless one, “we'll see what happens.”

“Yes,” said Henry very gravely, “we'll see what happens. The Iroquois are a powerful confederacy. They've ruled in these woods for hundreds of years. They're led by great chiefs, and they're helped by our white enemies. You can't tell what would happen even to an army like ours in an ambush.”

Shif'less Sol nodded, and they said no more until an hour later, when they heard footsteps. They awakened the others, and the twelve, crawling to the edge of the brushwood, lay almost flat upon their faces, with their hands upon the triggers of their rifles.

Braxton Wyatt and his band of nearly threescore, Indians and Tories in about equal numbers, were passing. Wyatt walked at the head. Despite his youth, he had acquired an air of command, and he seemed a fit leader for such a crew. He wore a faded royal uniform, and, while a small sword hung at his side, he also carried a rifle on his shoulder. Close behind him was the swart and squat Tory, Coleman, and then came Indians and Tories together.

The watchful eyes of Henry saw three fresh scalps hanging from as many belts, and the finger that lay upon the trigger of his rifle fairly ached to press it. What an opportunity this would be if the twelve were only forty, or even thirty! With the advantage of surprise they might hope to annihilate this band which had won such hate for itself on the border. But twelve were not enough and twelve such lives could not be spared at a time when the army needed them most.

Henry pressed his teeth firmly together in order to keep down his disappointment by a mere physical act if possible. He happened to look at Shif'less Sol, and saw that his teeth were pressed together in the same manner. It is probable that like feelings swayed every one of the twelve, but they were so still in the brushwood that no Iroquois heard grass or leaf rustle. Thus the twelve watched the sixty pass, and after they were gone, Henry, Shif'less Sol, and Tim Murphy followed for several miles. They saw Wyatt proceed toward the Chemung River, and as they approached the stream they beheld signs of fortifications. It was now nearly daylight, and, as Indians were everywhere, they turned back. But they were convinced that the enemy meant to fight on the Chemung.

CHAPTER XX. A GLOOMY COUNCIL

The next night after Henry Ware and his comrades lay in the brushwood and saw Braxton Wyatt and his band pass, a number of men, famous or infamous in their day, were gathered around a low camp fire on the crest of a small hill. The most distinguished of them all in looks was a young Indian chief of great height and magnificent build, with a noble and impressive countenance. He wore nothing of civilized attire, the nearest approach to it being the rich dark-blue blanket that was flung gracefully over his right shoulder. It was none other than the great Wyandot chief, Timmendiquas, saying little, and listening without expression to the words of the others.

Near Timmendiquas sat Thayendanegea, dressed as usual in his mixture of savage and civilized costume, and about him were other famous Indian chiefs, The Corn Planter, Red jacket, Hiokatoo, Sangerachte, Little Beard, a young Seneca renowned for ferocity, and others.

On the other side of the fire sat the white men: the young Sir John Johnson, who, a prisoner to the Colonials, had broken his oath of neutrality, the condition of his release, and then, fleeing to Canada, had returned to wage bloody war on the settlements; his brother-in-law, Colonel Guy Johnson; the swart and squat John Butler of Wyoming infamy; his son, Walter Butler, of the pallid face, thin lips, and cruel heart; the Canadian Captain MacDonald; Braxton Wyatt; his lieutenant, the dark Tory, Coleman; and some others who had helped to ravage their former land.

Sir John Johnson, a tall man with blue eyes set close together, wore the handsome uniform of his Royal Greens; he had committed many dark deeds or permitted them to be done by men under his command, and he had secured the opportunity only through his broken oath, but he had lost greatly. The vast estates of his father, Sir William Johnson, were being torn from him, and perhaps he saw, even then, that in return for what he had done he would lose all and become an exile from the country in which he was born.

It was not a cheerful council. There was no exultation as after Wyoming and Cherry Valley and the Minisink and other places. Sir John bit his lip uneasily, and his brother-in-law, resting his hand on his knee, stared gloomily at the fire. The two Butlers were silent, and the dark face of Thayendanegea was overcast.

A little distance before these men was a breastwork about half a mile long,

connecting with a bend of the river in such a manner that an enemy could attack only in front and on one flank, that flank itself being approached only by the ascent of a steep ridge which ran parallel to the river. The ground about the camp was covered with pine and scrub oaks. Many others had been cut down and added to the breastwork. A deep brook ran at the foot of the hill on which the leaders sat. About the slopes of this hill and another, a little distance away, sat hundreds of Indian warriors, all in their war paint, and other hundreds of their white allies, conspicuous among them Johnson's Royal Greens and Butler's Rangers. These men made but little noise now. They were resting and waiting.

Thayendanegea was the first to break the silence in the group at the fire. He turned his dark face to Sir John Johnson and said in his excellent English: “The king promised us that if we would take up arms for him against the Yankees, he would send a great army, many thousands, to help us. We believed him, and we took up the hatchet for him. We fought in the dark and the storm with Herkimer at the Oriskany, and many of our warriors fell. But we did not sulk in our lodges. We have ravaged and driven in the whole American border along a line of hundreds of miles. Now the Congress sends an army to attack us, to avenge what we have done, and the great forces of the king are not here. I have been across the sea; I have seen the mighty city of London and its people as numerous as the blades of grass. Why has not the king kept his promise and sent men enough to save the Iroquois?”

Sir John Johnson and Thayendanegea were good friends, but the soul of the great Mohawk chief was deeply stirred. His penetrating mind saw the uplifted hand about to strike-and the target was his own people. His tone became bitterly sarcastic as he spoke, and when he ceased he looked directly at the baronet in a manner that showed a reply must be given. Sir John moved uneasily, but he spoke at last.

“Much that you say is true, Thayendanegea,” he admitted, “but the king has many things to do. The war is spread over a vast area, and he must keep his largest armies in the East. But the Royal Greens, the Rangers, and all others whom we can raise, even in Canada, are here to help you. In the coming battle your fortunes are our fortunes.”

Thayendanegea nodded, but he was not yet appeased. His glance fell upon the two Butlers, father and son, and he frowned.

“There are many in England itself,” he said, “who wish us harm, and who perhaps have kept us from receiving some of the help that we ought to have. They speak of Wyoming and Cherry Valley, of the torture and of the slaughter of women and children, and they say that war must not be carried on in such a way.

But there are some among us who are more savage than the savages themselves, as they call us. It was you, John Butler, who led at Wyoming, and it was you, Walter Butler, who allowed the women and children to be killed at Cherry Valley, and more would have been slain there had I not, come up in time."

The dark face of "Indian" Butler grew darker, and the pallid face of his son grew more pallid. Both were angry, and at the same time a little afraid.

"We won at Wyoming in fair battle," said the elder Butler.

"But afterwards?" said Thayendanegea.

The man was silent.

"It is these two places that have so aroused the Bostonians against us," continued Thayendanegea. "It is because of them that the commander of the Bostonians has sent a great army, and the Long House is threatened with destruction."

"My son and I have fought for our common cause," said "Indian" Butler, the blood flushing through his swarthy face.

Sir John Johnson interfered.

"We have admitted, Joseph, the danger to the Iroquois," he said, calling the chieftain familiarly by his first Christian name, "but I and my brother-in-law and Colonel Butler and Captain Butler have already lost though we may regain. And with this strong position and the aid of ambush it is likely that we can defeat the rebels."

The eyes of Thayendanegea brightened as he looked at the long embankment, the trees, and the dark forms of the warriors scattered numerously here and there.

"You may be right, Sir John," he said; "yes, I think you are right, and by all the gods, red and white, we shall see. I wish to fight here, because this is the best place in which to meet the Bostonians. What say you, Timmendiquas, sworn brother of mine, great warrior and great chief of the Wyandots, the bravest of all the western nations?"

The eye of Timmendiquas expressed little, but his voice was sonorous, and his words were such as Thayendanegea wished to hear.

"If we fight—and we must fight—this is the place in which to meet the white army," he said. "The Wyandots are here to help the Iroquois, as the Iroquois would go to help them. The Manitou of the Wyandots, the Aieroski of the Iroquois, alone knows the end."

He spoke with the utmost gravity, and after his brief reply he said no more. All regarded him with respect and admiration. Even Braxton Wyatt felt that it was a

noble deed to remain and face destruction for the sake of tribes not his own.

Sir John Johnson turned to Braxton Wyatt, who had sat all the while in silence.

“You have examined the evening's advance, Wyatt,” he said. “What further information can you give us?”

“We shall certainly be attacked to-morrow,” replied Wyatt, “and the American army is advancing cautiously. It has out strong flanking parties, and it is preceded by the scouts, those Kentuckians whom I know and have met often, Murphy, Elerson, Heemskerk, and the others.”

“If we could only lead them into an ambush,” said Sir John. “Any kind of troops, even the best of regulars, will give way before an unseen foe pouring a deadly fire upon them from the deep woods. Then they magnify the enemy tenfold.”

“It is so,” said the fierce old Seneca chief, Hiokatoo. “When we killed Braddock and all his men, they thought that ten warriors stood in the moccasins of only one.”

Sir John frowned. He did not like this allusion to the time when the Iroquois fought against the English, and inflicted on them a great defeat. But he feared to rebuke the old chief. Hiokatoo and the Senecas were too important.

“There ought to be a chance yet for an ambuscade,” he said. “The foliage is still thick and heavy, and Sullivan, their general, is not used to forest warfare. What say you to this, Wyatt?”

Wyatt shook his head. He knew the caliber of the five from Kentucky, and he had little hope of such good fortune.

“They have learned from many lessons,” he replied, “and their scouts are the best. Moreover, they will attempt anything.”

They relapsed into silence again, and the sharp eyes of the renegade roved about the dark circle of trees and warriors that inclosed them. Presently he saw something that caused him to rise and walk a little distance from the fire. Although his eye suspected and his mind confirmed, Braxton Wyatt could not believe that it was true. It was incredible. No one, be he ever so daring, would dare such a thing. But the figure down there among the trees, passing about among the warriors, many of whom did not know one another, certainly looked familiar, despite the Indian paint and garb. Only that of Timmendiquas could rival it in height and nobility. These were facts that could not be hidden by any disguise.

“What is it, Wyatt?” asked Sir John. “What do you see? Why do you look so startled?”

Wyatt sought to reply calmly.

“There is a warrior among those trees over there whom I have not seen here before,” he replied, “he is as tall and as powerful as Timmendiquas, and there is only one such. There is a spy among us, and it is Henry Ware.”

He snatched a pistol from his belt, ran forward, and fired at the flitting figure, which was gone in an instant among the trees and the warriors.

“What do you say?” exclaimed Thayendanegea, as he ran forward, “a spy, and you know him to be such!”

“Yes, he is the worst of them all,” replied Wyatt. “I know him. I could not mistake him. But he has dared too much. He cannot get away.”

The great camp was now in an uproar. The tall figure was seen here and there, always to vanish quickly. Twenty shots were fired at it. None hit. Many more would have been fired, but the camp was too much crowded to take such a risk. Every moment the tumult and confusion increased, but Thayendanegea quickly posted warriors on the embankment and the flanks, to prevent the escape of the fugitive in any of those directions.

But the tall figure did not appear at either embankment or flank. It was next seen near the river, when a young warrior, striving to strike with a tomahawk, was dashed to the earth with great force. The next instant the figure leaped far out into the stream. The moonlight glimmered an instant on the bare head, while bullets the next moment pattered on the water where it had been. Then, with a few powerful strokes, the stranger reclaimed the land, sprang upon the shore, and darted into the woods with more vain bullets flying about him. But he sent back a shout of irony and triumph that made the chiefs and Tories standing on the bank bite their lips in anger.

CHAPTER XXI. BATTLE OF THE CHEMUNG

Paul had been sleeping heavily, and the sharp, pealing notes of a trumpet awoke him at the sunburst of a brilliant morning. Henry was standing beside him, showing no fatigue from the night's excitement, danger, and escape, but his face was flushed and his eyes sparkled.

“Up, Paul! Up!” he cried. “We know the enemy's position, and we will be in battle before another sun sets.”

Paul was awake in an instant, and the second instant he was on his feet, rifle in hand, and heart thrilling for the great attack. He, like all the others, had slept on such a night fully dressed. Shif'less Sol, Long Jim, Silent Tom, Heemskerk, and the rest were by the side of him, and all about them rose the sounds of an army going into battle, commands sharp and short, the rolling of cannon wheels, the metallic rattle of bayonets, the clink of bullets poured into the pouches, and the hum of men talking in half-finished sentences.

It was to all the five a vast and stirring scene. It was the first time that they had ever beheld a large and regular army going into action, and they were a part of it, a part by no means unimportant. It was Henry, with his consummate skill and daring, who had uncovered the position of the enemy, and now, without snatching a moment's sleep, he was ready to lead where the fray might be thickest.

The brief breakfast finished, the trumpet pealed forth again, and the army began to move through the thick forest. A light wind, crisp with the air of early autumn, blew, and the leaves rustled. The sun, swinging upward in the east, poured down a flood of brilliant rays that lighted up everything, the buff and blue uniforms, the cannon, the rifles, the bayonets, and the forest, still heavy with foliage.

“Now! now!” thought every one of the five, “we begin the vengeance for Wyoming!”

The scouts were well in front, searching everywhere among the thickets for the Indian sharpshooters, who could scorch so terribly. As Braxton Wyatt had truly said, these scouts were the best in the world. Nothing could escape the trained eyes of Henry Ware and his comrades, and those of Murphy, Ellerson, and the others, while off on either flank of the army heavy detachments guarded against any surprise or turning movement. They saw no Indian sign in the

woods. There was yet a deep silence in front of them, and the sun, rising higher, poured its golden light down upon the army in such an intense, vivid flood that rifle barrels and bayonets gave back a metallic gleam. All around them the deep woods swayed and rustled before the light breeze, and now and then they caught glimpses of the river, its surface now gold, then silver, under the shining sun.

Henry's heart swelled as he advanced. He was not revengeful, but he had seen so much of savage atrocity in the last year that he could not keep down the desire to see punishment. It is only those in sheltered homes who can forgive the tomahawk and the stake. Now he was the very first of the scouts, although his comrades and a dozen others were close behind him.

The scouts went so far forward that the army was hidden from them by the forest, although they could yet hear the clank of arms and the sound of commands.

Henry knew the ground thoroughly. He knew where the embankment ran, and he knew, too, that the Iroquois had dug pits, marked by timber. They were not far ahead, and the scouts now proceeded very slowly, examining every tree and clump of bushes to see whether a lurking enemy was hidden there. The silence endured longer than he had thought. Nothing could be seen in front save the waving forest.

Henry stopped suddenly. He caught a glimpse of a brown shoulder's edge showing from behind a tree, and at his signal all the scouts sank to the ground.

The savage fired, but the bullet, the first of the battle, whistled over their heads. The sharp crack, sounding triply loud at such a time, came back from the forest in many echoes, and a light puff of smoke arose. Quick as a flash, before the brown shoulder and body exposed to take aim could be withdrawn, Tom Ross fired, and the Mohawk fell, uttering his death yell. The Iroquois in the woods took up the cry, pouring forth a war whoop, fierce, long drawn, the most terrible of human sounds, and before it died, their brethren behind the embankment repeated it in tremendous volume from hundreds of throats. It was a shout that had often appalled the bravest, but the little band of scouts were not afraid. When its last echo died they sent forth a fierce, defiant note of their own, and, crawling forward, began to send in their bullets.

The woods in front of them swarmed with the Indian skirmishers, who replied to the scouts, and the fire ran along a long line through the undergrowth. Flashes of flames appeared, puffs of smoke arose and, uniting, hung over the trees. Bullets hissed. Twigs and bark fell, and now and then a man, as they fought from tree to tree. Henry caught one glimpse of a face that was white, that of Braxton

Wyatt, and he sought a shot at the renegade leader, but he could not get it. But the scouts pushed on, and the Indian and Tory skirmishers dropped back. Then on the flanks they began to hear the rattle of rifle fire. The wings of the army were in action, but the main body still advanced without firing a shot.

The scouts could now see through the trees the embankments and rifle pits, and they could also see the last of the Iroquois and Tory skirmishers leaping over the earthworks and taking refuge with their army. Then they turned back and saw the long line of their own army steadily advancing, while the sounds of heavy firing still continued on both flanks. Henry looked proudly at the unbroken array, the front of steel, and the cannon. He felt prouder still when the general turned to him and said:

“You have done well, Mr. Ware; you have shown us exactly where the enemy lies, and that will save us many men. Now bigger voices than those of the rifles shall talk.”

The army stopped. The Indian position could be plainly seen. The crest of the earthwork was lined with fierce, dark faces, and here and there among the brown Iroquois were the green uniforms of the Royalists.

Henry saw both Thayendanegea and Timmendiquas, the plumes in their hair waving aloft, and he felt sure that wherever they stood the battle would be thickest.

The Americans were now pushing forward their cannon, six three-pounders and two howitzers, the howitzers, firing five-and-a-half-inch shells, new and terrifying missiles to the Indians. The guns were wheeled into position, and the first howitzer was fired. It sent its great shell in a curving line at and over the embankment, where it burst with a crash, followed by a shout of mingled pain and awe. Then the second howitzer, aimed well like the first, sent a shell almost to the same point, and a like cry came back.

Shif'less Sol, watching the shots, jumped up and down in delight.

“That's the medicine!” he cried. “I wonder how you like that, you Butlers an' Johnsons an' Wyatts an' Mohawks an' all the rest o' your scalp-taking crew! Ah, thar goes another! This ain't any Wyomin'!”

The three-pounders also opened fire, and sent their balls squarely into the rifle pits and the Indian camp. The Iroquois replied with a shower of rifle bullets and a defiant war whoop, but the bullets fell short, and the whoop hurt no one.

The artillery, eight pieces, was served with rapidity and precision, while the riflemen, except on their flanks, where they were more closely engaged, were ordered to hold their fire. The spectacle was to Henry and his comrades

panoramic in its effect. They watched the flashes of fire from the mouths of the cannon, the flight of the great shells, and the bank of smoke which soon began to lower like a cloud over the field. They could picture to themselves what was going on beyond the earthwork, the dead falling, the wounded limping away, earth and trees torn by shell and shot. They even fancied that they could hear the voices of the great chiefs, Thayendanegea and Timmendiquas, encouraging their men, and striving to keep them in line against a fire not as deadly as rifle bullets at close quarters, but more terrifying.

Presently a cloud of skirmishers issued once more from the Indian camp, creeping among the trees and bushes, and seeking a chance to shoot down the men at the guns. But sharp eyes were watching them.

“Come, boys,” exclaimed Henry. “Here's work for us now.”

He led the scouts and the best of the riflemen against the skirmishers, who were soon driven in again. The artillery fire had never ceased for a moment, the shells and balls passing over their heads. Their work done, the sharpshooters fell back again, the gunners worked faster for a while, and then at a command they ceased suddenly. Henry, Paul, and all the others knew instinctively what was going to happen. They felt it in every bone of them. The silence so sudden was full of meaning.

“Now!” Henry found himself exclaiming. Even at that moment the order was given, and the whole army rushed forward, the smoke floating away for the moment and the sun flashing off the bayonets. The five sprang up and rushed on ahead. A sheet of flame burst from the embankment, and the rifle pits sprang into fire. The five beard the bullets whizzing past them, and the sudden cries of the wounded behind them, but they never ceased to rush straight for the embankment.

It seemed to Henry that he ran forward through living fire. There was one continuous flash from the earthwork, and a continuous flash replied. The rifles were at work now, thousands of them, and they kept up an incessant crash, while above them rose the unbroken thunder of the cannon. The volume of smoke deepened, and it was shot through with the sharp, pungent odor of burned gunpowder.

Henry fired his rifle and pistol, almost unconsciously reloaded, and fired again, as he ran, and then noticed that the advance had never ceased. It had not been checked even for a moment, and the bayonets of one of the regiments glittered in the sun a straight line of steel.

Henry kept his gaze fixed upon a point where the earthwork was lowest. He

saw there the plumed head of Thayendanegea, and he intended to strike if he could. He saw the Mohawk gesticulating and shouting to his men to stand fast and drive back the charge. He believed even then, and he knew later, that Thayendanegea and Timmendiquas were showing courage superior to that of the Johnsons and Butters or any of their British and Canadian allies. The two great chiefs still held their men in line, and the Iroquois did not cease to send a stream of bullets from the earthwork.

Henry saw the brown faces and the embankment coming closer and closer. He saw the face of Braxton Wyatt appear a moment, and he snapped his empty pistol at it. But it was hidden the next instant behind others, and then they were at the embankment. He saw the glowing faces of his comrades at his side, the singular figure of Heemskerk revolving swiftly, and behind them the line of bayonets closing in with the grimness of fate.

Henry leaped upon the earthwork. An Indian fired at him point blank, and he swung heavily with his clubbed rifle. Then his comrades were by his side, and they leaped down into the Indian camp. After them came the riflemen, and then the line of bayonets. Even then the great Mohawk and the great Wyandot shouted to their men to stand fast, although the Royal Greens and the Rangers had begun to run, and the Johnsons, the Butlers, McDonald, Wyatt, and the other white men were running with them.

Henry, with the memory of Wyoming and all the other dreadful things that had come before his eyes, saw red. He was conscious of a terrible melee, of striking again and again with his clubbed rifle, of fierce brown faces before him, and of Timmendiquas and Thayedanegea rushing here and there, shouting to their warriors, encouraging them, and exclaiming that the battle was not lost. Beyond he saw the vanishing forms of the Royal Greens and the Rangers in full flight. But the Wyandots and the best of the Iroquois still stood fast until the pressure upon them became overwhelming. When the line of bayonets approached their breasts they fell back. Skilled in every detail of ambush, and a wonderful forest fighter, the Indian could never stand the bayonet. Reluctantly Timmendiquas, Thayendanegea and the Mohawks, Senecas, and Wyandots, who were most strenuous in the conflict, gave ground. Yet the battlefield, with its numerous trees, stumps, and inequalities, still favored them. They retreated slowly, firing from every covert, sending a shower of bullets, and now and then tittering the war whoop.

Henry heard a panting breath by his side. He looked around and saw the face of Heemskerk, glowing red with zeal and exertion.

“The victory is won already!” said he. “Now to drive it home!”

“Come on,” cried Henry in return, “and we'll lead!”

A single glance showed him that none of his comrades had fallen. Long Jim and Tom Ross had suffered slight wounds that they scarcely noticed, and they and the whole group of scouts were just behind Henry. But they now took breath, reloaded their rifles, and, throwing themselves down in Indian fashion, opened a deadly fire upon their antagonists. Their bullets searched all the thickets, drove out the Iroquois, and compelled them to retreat anew.

The attack was now pressed with fresh vigor. In truth, with so much that the bravest of the Indians at last yielded to panic. Thayendanegea and Timmendiquas were carried away in the rush, and the white leaders of their allies were already out of sight. On all sides the allied red and white force was dissolving. Precipitate flight was saving the fugitives from a greater loss in killed and wounded-it was usually Indian tactics to flee with great speed when the battle began to go against them-but the people of the Long House had suffered the greatest overthrow in their history, and bitterness and despair were in the hearts of the Iroquois chiefs as they fled.

The American army not only carried the center of the Indian camp, but the heavy flanking parties closed in also, and the whole Indian army was driven in at every point. The retreat was becoming a rout. A great, confused conflict was going on. The rapid crackle of rifles mingled with the shouts and war whoops of the combatants. Smoke floated everywhere. The victorious army, animated by the memory of the countless cruelties that had been practiced on the border, pushed harder and harder. The Iroquois were driven back along the Chemung. It seemed that they might be hemmed in against the river, but in their flight they came to a ford. Uttering their cry of despair, “Oonali! Oonali!” a wail for a battle lost, they sprang into the stream, many of them throwing away their rifles, tomahawks, and blankets, and rushed for the other shore. But the Scouts and a body of riflemen were after them.

Braxton Wyatt and his band appeared in the woods on the far shore, and opened fire on the pursuers now in the stream. He alone among the white men had the courage, or the desperation, to throw himself and his men in the path of the pursuit. The riflemen in the water felt the bullets pattering around them, and some were struck, but they did not stop. They kept on for the bank, and their own men behind them opened a covering fire over their heads.

Henry felt a great pulse leap in his throat at the sight of Braxton Wyatt again. Nothing could have turned him back now. Shouting to the riflemen, he led the charge through the water, and the bank's defenders were driven back. Yet Wyatt, with his usual dexterity and prudence, escaped among the thickets.

The battle now became only a series of detached combats. Little groups seeking to make a stand here and there were soon swept away. Thayendanegea and Timmendiquas raged and sought to gather together enough men for an ambush, for anything that would sting the victors, but they were pushed too hard and fast. A rally was always destroyed in the beginning, and the chiefs themselves at last ran for their lives. The pursuit was continued for a long time, not only by the vanguard, but the army itself moved forward over the battlefield and deep into the forest on the trail of the flying Iroquois.

The scouts continued the pursuit the longest, keeping a close watch, nevertheless, against an ambush. Now and then they exchanged shots with a band, but the Indians always fled quickly, and at last they stopped because they could no longer find any resistance. They had been in action or pursuit for many hours, and they were black with smoke, dust, and sweat, but they were not yet conscious of any weariness. Heemskerk drew a great red silk handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped his glowing face, which was as red as the handkerchief.

“It's the best job that's been done in these parts for many a year,” he said. “The Iroquois have always thought they were invincible, and now the spell's been broke. If we only follow it up.”

“That's sure to be done,” said Henry. “I heard General Sullivan himself say that his orders were to root up the whole Iroquois power.”

They returned slowly toward the main force, retracing their steps over the path of battle. It was easy enough to follow it. They beheld a dead warrior at every step, and at intervals were rifles, tomahawks, scalping knives, blankets, and an occasional shot pouch or powder horn. Presently they reached the main army, which was going into camp for the night. Many camp fires were built, and the soldiers, happy in their victory, were getting ready for supper. But there was no disorder. They had been told already that they were to march again in the morning.

Henry, Paul, Tom, Jim, and Shif'less Sol went back over the field of battle, where many of the dead still lay. Twilight was now coming, and it was a somber sight. The earthwork, the thickets, and the trees were torn by cannon balls. Some tents raised by the Tories lay in ruins, and the earth was stained with many dark splotches. But the army had passed on, and it was silent and desolate where so many men had fought. The twilight drew swiftly on to night, and out of the forest came grewsome sounds. The wolves, thick now in a region which the Iroquois had done so much to turn into a wilderness, were learning welcome news, and they were telling it to one another. By and by, as the night deepened, the five saw fiery eyes in the thickets, and the long howls came again.

“It sounds like the dirge of the people of the Long House,” said Paul, upon whose sensitive mind the scene made a deep impression.

The others nodded. At that moment they did not feel the flush of victory in its full force. It was not in their nature to rejoice over a fallen foe. Yet they knew the full value of the victory, and none of them could wish any part of it undone. They returned slowly to the camp, and once more they heard behind them the howl of the wolves as they invaded the battlefield.

They were glad when they saw the cheerful lights of the camp fires twinkling through the forest, and heard the voices of many men talking. Heemskerk welcomed them there.

“Come, lads,” he said. “You must eat-you won't find out until you begin, how hungry you are-and then you must sleep, because we march early to-morrow, and we march fast.”

The Dutchman's words were true. They had not tasted food since morning; they had never thought of it, but now, with the relaxation from battle, they found themselves voraciously hungry.

“It's mighty good,” said Shif'less Sol, as they sat by a fire and ate bread and meat and drank coffee, “but I'll say this for you, you old ornery, long-legged Jim Hart, it ain't any better than the venison an' bulffaler steaks that you've cooked fur us many a time.”

“An' that I'm likely to cook fur you many a time more,” said Long Jim complacently.

“But it will be months before you have any chance at buffalo again, Jim,” said Henry. “We are going on a long campaign through the Iroquois country.”

“An' it's shore to be a dangerous one,” said Shif'less Sol. “Men like warriors o' the Iroquois ain't goin' to give up with one fight. They'll be hangin' on our flanks like wasps.”

“That's true,” said Henry, “but in my opinion the Iroquois are overthrown forever. One defeat means more to them than a half dozen to us.”

They said little more, but by and by lay down to sleep before the fires. They had toiled so long and so faithfully that the work of watching and scouting that night could be intrusted to others. Yet Henry could not sleep for a long time. The noises of the night interested him. He watched the men going about, and the sentinels pacing back and forth around the camp. The sounds died gradually as the men lay down and sank to sleep. The fires which had formed a great core of light also sank, and the shadows crept toward the camp. The figures of the

pacing sentinels, rifle on shoulder, gradually grew dusky. Henry's nerves, attuned so long to great effort, slowly relaxed. Deep peace came over him, and his eyelids drooped, the sounds in the camp sank to the lowest murmur, but just as he was falling asleep there came from the battlefield behind then the far, faint howl of a wolf, the dirge of the Iroquois.

CHAPTER XXII. LITTLE BEARD'S TOWN

The trumpets called early the next morning, and the five rose, refreshed, ready for new labors. The fires were already lighted, and breakfast was cooking. Savory odors permeated the forest. But as soon as all had eaten, the army marched, going northward and westward, intending to cut through the very center of the Iroquois country. Orders had come from the great commander that the power of the Six Nations, which had been so long such a terrible scourge on the American frontier, must be annihilated. They must be made strangers in their own country. Women and children were not to be molested, but their towns must perish.

As Thayendanegea had said the night before the Battle of the Chemung, the power beyond the seas that had urged the Iroquois to war on the border did not save them. It could not. British and Tories alike had promised them certain victory, and for a while it had seemed that the promises would come true. But the tide had turned, and the Iroquois were fugitives in their own country.

The army continued its march through the wilderness, the scouts in front and heavy parties of riflemen on either flank. There was no chance for a surprise. Henry and his comrades were aware that Indian bands still lurked in the forest, and they had several narrow escapes from the bullets of ambushed foes, but the progress of the army was irresistible. Nothing could check it for a moment, however much the Indian and Tory chiefs might plan.

They camped again that night in the forest, with a thorough ring of sentinels posted against surprise, although there was little danger of the latter, as the enemy could not, for the present at least, bring a sufficient force into the field. But after the moon had risen, the five, with Heemskerk, went ahead through the forest. The Iroquois town of Kanawaholla lay just ahead, and the army would reach it on the morrow. It was the intention of the scouts to see if it was still occupied.

It was near midnight when the little party drew near to Kanawaholla and watched it from the shelter of the forest. Like most other Iroquois towns, it contained wooden houses, and cultivated fields were about it. No smoke rose from any of the chimneys, but the sharp eyes of the scouts saw loaded figures departing through a great field of ripe and waving corn. It was the last of the inhabitants, fleeing with what they could carry. Two or three warriors might have

been in that group of fugitives, but the scouts made no attempt to pursue. They could not restrain a little feeling of sympathy and pity, although a just retribution was coming.

“If the Iroquois had only stood neutral at the beginning of the war, as we asked them,” said Heemskerk, “how much might have been spared to both sides! Look! Those people are stopping for a moment.”

The burdened figures, perhaps a dozen, halted at the far edge of the corn field. Henry and Paul readily imagined that they were taking a last look at their town, and the feeling of pity and sympathy deepened, despite Wyoming, Cherry Valley, and all the rest. But that feeling never extended to the white allies of the Iroquois, whom Thayendanegea characterized in word and in writing as “more savage than the savages themselves.”

The scouts waited an hour, and then entered the town. Not a soul was in Kanawaholla. Some of the lighter things had been taken away, but that was all. Most of the houses were in disorder, showing the signs of hasty flight, but the town lay wholly at the mercy of the advancing army. Henry and his comrades withdrew with the news, and the next day, when the troops advanced, Kanawaholla was put to the torch. In an hour it was smoking ruins, and then the crops and fruit trees were destroyed.

Leaving ruin behind, the army continued its march, treading the Iroquois power under foot and laying waste the country. One after another the Indian towns were destroyed, Catherinetown, Kendaia, Kanadesaga, Shenanwaga, Skoiyase, Kanandaigua, Honeyoye, Kanaghsawa, Gathtsewarohare, and others, forming a long roll, bearing the sounding Iroquois names. Villages around Cayuga and other lakes were burned by detachments. The smoke of perishing towns arose everywhere in the Iroquois country, while the Iroquois themselves fled before the advancing army. They sent appeal after appeal for help from those to whom they had given so much help, but none came.

It was now deep autumn, and the nights grew cold. The forests blazed with brilliant colors. The winds blew, leaves rustled and fell. The winter would soon be at hand, and the Iroquois, so proud of what they had achieved, would have to find what shelter they could in the forests or at the British posts on the Canadian frontier. Thayendanegea was destined to come again with bands of red men and white and inflict great loss, but the power of the Six Nations was overthrown forever, after four centuries of victory and glory. Henry, Paul, and the rest were all the time in the thick of it. The army, as the autumn advanced, marched into the Genesee Valley, destroying everything. Henry and Paul, as they lay on their blankets one night, counted fires in three different directions, and every one of

the three marked a perishing Indian village. It was not a work in which they took any delight; on the contrary, it often saddened them, but they felt that it had to be done, and they could not shirk the task.

In October, Henry, despite his youth, took command of a body of scouts and riflemen which beat up the ways, and skirmished in advance of the army. It was a democratic little band, everyone saying what he pleased, but yielding in the end to the authority of the leader. They were now far up the Genesee toward the Great Lakes, and Henry formed the plan of advancing ahead of the army on the great Seneca village known variously as the Seneca Castle and Little Beard's Town, after its chief, a full match in cruelty for the older Seneca chief, Hiokatoo. Several causes led to this decision. It was reported that Thayendanegea, Timmendiquas, all the Butlers and Johnsons, and Braxton Wyatt were there. While not likely to be true about all, it was probably true about some of them, and a bold stroke might effect much.

It is probable that Henry had Braxton Wyatt most in mind. The renegade was in his element among the Indians and Tories, and he had developed great abilities as a partisan, being skillfully seconded by the squat Tory, Coleman. His reputation now was equal at least to that of Walter Butler, and he had skirmished more than once with the vanguard of the army. Growing in Henry's heart was a strong desire to match forces with him, and it was quite probable that a swift advance might find him at the Seneca Castle.

The riflemen took up their march on a brisk morning in late autumn. The night had been clear and cold, with a touch of winter in it, and the brilliant colors of the foliage had now turned to a solid brown. Whenever the wind blew, the leaves fell in showers. The sky was a fleecy blue, but over hills, valley, and forest hung a fine misty veil that is the mark of Indian summer. The land was nowhere inhabited. They saw the cabin of neither white man nor Indian. A desolation and a silence, brought by the great struggle, hung over everything. Many discerning eyes among the riflemen noted the beauty and fertility of the country, with its noble forests and rich meadows. At times they caught glimpses of the river, a clear stream sparkling under the sun.

“Makes me think o' some o' the country 'way down thar in Kentucky,” said Shif'less Sol, “an' it seems to me I like one about ez well ez t'other. Say, Henry, do you think we'll ever go back home? 'Pears to me that we're always goin' farther an' farther away.”

Henry laughed.

“It's because circumstances have taken us by the hand and led us away, Sol,”

he replied.

“Then,” said the shiftless one with a resigned air, “I hope them same circumstances will take me by both hands, an' lead me gently, but strongly, back to a place whar thar is peace an' rest fur a lazy an' tired man like me.”

“I think you'll have to endure a lot, until next spring at least,” said Henry.

The shiftless one heaved a deep sigh, but his next words were wholly irrelevant.

“S'pose we'll light on that thar Seneca Castle by tomorrow night?” he asked.

“It seems to me that for a lazy and tired man you're extremely anxious for a fight,” Henry replied.

“I try to be resigned,” said Shif'less Sol. But his eyes were sparkling with the light of battle.

They went into camp that night in a dense forest, with the Seneca Castle about ten miles ahead. Henry was quite sure that the Senecas to whom it belonged had not yet abandoned it, and with the aid of the other tribes might make a stand there. It was more than likely, too, that the Senecas had sharpshooters and sentinels well to the south of their town, and it behooved the riflemen to be extremely careful lest they run into a hornet's nest. Hence they lighted no fires, despite a cold night wind that searched them through until they wrapped themselves in their blankets.

The night settled down thick and dark, and the band lay close in the thickets. Shif'less Sol was within a yard of Henry. He had observed his young leader's face closely that day, and he had a mind of uncommon penetration.

“Henry,” he whispered, “you're hopin' that you'll find Braxton Wyatt an' his band at Little Beard's town?”

“That among other things,” replied Henry in a similar whisper.

“That first, and the others afterwards,” persisted the shiftless one.

“It may be so,” admitted Henry.

“I feel the same way you do,” said Shif'less Sol. “You see, we've knowed Braxton Wyatt a long time, an' it seems strange that one who started out a boy with you an' Paul could turn so black. An' think uv all the cruel things that he's done an' helped to do. I ain't hidin' my feelin's. I'm jest itchin' to git at him.”

“Yes,” said Henry, “I'd like for our band to have it out with his.”

Henry and Shif'less Sol, and in fact all of the five, slept that night, because Henry wished to be strong and vigorous for the following night, in view of an

enterprise that he had in mind. The rosy Dutchman, Heemskerk, was in command of the guard, and he revolved continually about the camp with amazing ease, and with a footstep so light that it made no sound whatever. Now and then he came back in the thicket and looked down at the faces of the sleeping five from Kentucky. “Goot boys,” he murmured to himself. “Brave boys, to stay here and help. May they go through all our battles and take no harm. The goot and great God often watches over the brave.”

Mynheer Cornelius Heemskerk, native of Holland, but devoted to the new nation of which he had made himself a part, was a devout man, despite a life of danger and hardship. The people of the woods do not lose faith, and he looked up at the dark skies as if he found encouragement there. Then he resumed his circle about the camp. He heard various noises-the hoot of an owl, the long whine of a wolf, and twice the footsteps of deer going down to the river to drink. But the sounds were all natural, made by the animals to which they belonged, and Heemskerk knew it. Once or twice he went farther into the forest, but he found nothing to indicate the presence of a foe, and while he watched thus, and beat up the woods, the night passed, eventless, away.

They went the next day much nearer to the Seneca Castle, and saw sure indications that it was still inhabited, as the Iroquois evidently were not aware of the swift advance of the riflemen. Henry had learned that this was one of the largest and strongest of all the Iroquois towns, containing between a hundred and two hundred wooden houses, and with a population likely to be swollen greatly by fugitives from the Iroquois towns already destroyed. The need of caution—great caution—was borne in upon him, and he paid good heed.

The riflemen sought another covert in the deep forest, now about three miles from Little Beard's Town, and lay there, while Henry, according to his plan, went forth at night with Shif'less Sol and Tom Ross. He was resolved to find out more about this important town, and his enterprise was in full accord with his duties, chief among which was to save the vanguard of the army from ambush.

When the complete darkness of night had come, the three left the covert, and, after traveling a short distance through the forest, turned in toward the river. As the town lay on or near the river, Henry thought they might see some signs of Indian life on the stream, and from this they could proceed to discoveries.

But when they first saw the river it was desolate. Not a canoe was moving on its surface, and the three, keeping well in the undergrowth, followed the bank toward the town. But the forest soon ceased, and they came upon a great field, where the Senecas had raised corn, and where stalks, stripped of their ears and browned by the autumn cold, were still standing. But all the work of planting,

tending, and reaping this great field, like all the other work in all the Iroquois fields, had been done by the Iroquois women, not by the warriors.

Beyond the field they saw fruit trees, and beyond these, faint lines of smoke, indicating the position of the great Seneca Castle. The dry cornstalks rustled mournfully as the wind blew across the field.

“The stalks will make a little shelter,” said Henry, “and we must cross the field. We want to keep near the river.”

“Lead on,” said Shif'less Sol.

They took a diagonal course, walking swiftly among the stalks and bearing back toward the river. They crossed the field without being observed, and came into a thick fringe of trees and undergrowth along the river. They moved cautiously in this shelter for a rod or two, and then the three, without word from any one of them, stopped simultaneously. They heard in the water the unmistakable ripple made by a paddle, and then the sound of several more. They crept to the edge of the bank and crouched down among the bushes. Then they saw a singular procession.

A half-dozen Iroquois canoes were moving slowly up the stream. They were in single file, and the first canoe was the largest. But the aspect of the little fleet was wholly different from that of an ordinary group of Iroquois war canoes. It was dark, somber, and funereal, and in every canoe, between the feet of the paddlers, lay a figure, stiff and impassive, the body of a chief slain in battle. It had all the appearance of a funeral procession, but the eyes of the three, as they roved over it, fastened on a figure in the first canoe, and, used as they were to the strange and curious, every one of them gave a start.

The figure was that of a woman, a wild and terrible creature, who half sat, half crouched in the canoe, looking steadily downward. Her long black hair fell in disordered masses from her uncovered head. She wore a brilliant red dress with savage adornments, but it was stained and torn. The woman's whole attitude expressed grief, anger, and despair.

“Queen Esther!” whispered Henry. The other two nodded.

So horrifying had been the impression made upon him by this woman at Wyoming that he could not feel any pity for her now. The picture of the great war tomahawk cleaving the heads of bound prisoners was still too vivid. She had several sons, one or two of whom were slain in battle with the colonists, and the body that lay in the boat may have been one of them. Henry always believed that it was-but he still felt no pity.

As the file came nearer they heard her chanting a low song, and now she

raised her face and tore at her black hair.

“They're goin' to land,” whispered Shif'less Sol.

The head of the file was turned toward the shore, and, as it approached, a group of warriors, led by Little Beard, the Seneca chief, appeared among the trees, coming forward to meet them. The three in their covert crouched closer, interested so intensely that they were prepared to brave the danger in order to remain. But the absorption of the Iroquois in what they were about to do favored the three scouts.

As the canoes touched the bank, Catharine Montour rose from her crouching position and uttered a long, piercing wail, so full of grief, rage, and despair that the three in the bushes shuddered. It was fiercer than the cry of a wolf, and it came back from the dark forest in terrifying echoes.

“It's not a woman, but a fiend,” whispered Henry; and, as before, his comrades nodded in assent.

The woman stood erect, a tall and stalwart figure, but the beauty that had once caused her to be received in colonial capitals was long since gone. Her white half of blood had been submerged years ago in her Indian half, and there was nothing now about her to remind one of civilization or of the French Governor General of Canada who was said to have been her father.

The Iroquois stood respectfully before her. It was evident that she had lost none of her power among the Six Nations, a power proceeding partly from her force and partly from superstition. As the bodies were brought ashore, one by one, and laid upon the ground, she uttered the long wailing cry again and again, and the others repeated it in a sort of chorus.

When the bodies-and Henry was sure that they must all be those of chiefs-were laid out, she tore her hair, sank down upon the ground, and began a chant, which Tom Ross was afterwards able to interpret roughly to the others. She sang:

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The white men have come with the cannon and bayonet,
Numerous as forest leaves the army has come.
Our warriors are driven like deer by the hunter,
Fallen is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee!

Our towns are burned and our fields uprooted,
Our people flee through the forest for their lives,
The king who promised to help us comes not.
Fallen is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee!

The great chiefs are slain and their bodies lie here.
No longer will they lead the warriors in battle;
No more will they drive the foe from the thicket.
Fallen is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee!

Scalps we have taken from all who hated us;
None, but feared us in the days of our glory.
But the cannon and bayonet have taken our country;
Fallen is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee!
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She chanted many verses, but these were all that Tom Ross could ever remember or translate. But every verse ended with the melancholy refrain: “Fallen is the League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee!” which the others also repeated in chorus. Then the warriors lifted up the bodies, and they moved in procession toward the town. The three watched them, but they did not rise until the funeral train had reached the fruit trees. Then they stood up, looked at one another, and breathed sighs of relief.

“I don't care ef I never see that woman ag'in,” said Shif'less Sol. “She gives me the creeps. She must be a witch huntin' for blood. She is shore to stir up the Iroquois in this town.”

“That's true,” said Henry, “but I mean to go nearer.”

“Wa'al,” said Tom Ross, “I reckon that if you mean it we mean it, too.”

“There are certainly Tories in the town,” said Henry, “and if we are seen we can probably pass for them. I'm bound to find out what's here.”

“Still huntin' fur Braxton Wyatt,” said Shif'less Sol.

“I mean to know if he's here,” said Henry.

“Lead on,” said the shiftless one.

They followed in the path of the procession, which was now out of sight, and entered the orchard. From that point they saw the houses and great numbers of Indians, including squaws and children, gathered in the open spaces, where the funeral train was passing. Queen Esther still stalked at its head, but her chant was now taken up by many scores of voices, and the volume of sound penetrated far in the night. Henry yet relied upon the absorption of the Iroquois in this ceremonial to give him a chance for a good look through the town, and he and his comrades advanced with boldness.

They passed by many of the houses, all empty, as their occupants had gone to join in the funeral lament, but they soon saw white men-a few of the Royal Greens, and some of the Rangers, and other Tories, who were dressed much like Henry and his comrades. One of them spoke to Shif'less Sol, who nodded carelessly and passed by. The Tory seemed satisfied and went his way.

“Takes us fur some o' the crowd that's come runnin' in here ahead o' the army,” said the shiftless one.

Henry was noting with a careful eye the condition of the town. He saw that no preparations for defense had been made, and there was no evidence that any would be made. All was confusion and despair. Already some of the squaws were fleeing, carrying heavy burdens. The three coupled caution with boldness. If they met a Tory they merely exchanged a word or two, and passed swiftly on. Henry, although he had seen enough to know that the army could advance without hesitation, still pursued the quest. Shif'less Sol was right. At the bottom of Henry's heart was a desire to know whether Braxton Wyatt was in Little Beard's Town, a desire soon satisfied, as they reached the great Council House, turned a corner of it, and met the renegade face to face.

Wyatt was with his lieutenant, the squat Tory, Coleman, and he uttered a cry when he saw the tall figure of the great youth. There was no light but that of the moon, but he knew his foe in an instant.

“Henry Ware!” he cried, and snatched his pistol from his belt.

They were so close together that Henry did not have time to use a weapon. Instinctively he struck out with his fist, catching Wyatt on the jaw, and sending him down as if he had been shot. Shif'less Sol and Tom Ross ran bodily over Coleman, hurling him down, and leaping across his prostrate figure. Then they ran their utmost, knowing that their lives depended on speed and skill.

They quickly put the Council House between them and their pursuers, and darted away among the houses. Braxton Wyatt was stunned, but he speedily regained his wits and his feet.

“It was the fellow Ware, spying among us again!” he cried to his lieutenant, who, half dazed, was also struggling up. “Come, men! After them! After them!”

A dozen men came at his call, and, led by the renegade, they began a search among the houses. But it was hard to find the fugitives. The light was not good, many flitting figures were about, and the frantic search developed confusion. Other Tories were often mistaken for the three scouts, and were overhauled, much to their disgust and that of the overhaulers. Iroquois, drawn from the funeral ceremony, began to join in the hunt, but Wyatt could give them little

information. He had merely seen an enemy, and then the enemy had gone. It was quite certain that this enemy, or, rather, three of them, was still in the town.

Henry and his comrades were crafty. Trained by ambush and escape, flight and pursuit, they practiced many wiles to deceive their pursuers. When Wyatt and Coleman were hurled down they ran around the Council House, a large and solid structure, and, finding a door on the opposite side and no one there or in sight from that point, they entered it, closing the door behind them.

They stood in almost complete darkness, although at length they made out the log wall of the great, single room which constituted the Council House. After that, with more accustomed eyes, they saw on the wall arms, pipes, wampum, and hideous trophies, some with long hair and some with short. The hair was usually blonde, and most of the scalps had been stretched tight over little hoops. Henry clenched his fist in the darkness.

“Mebbe we're walkin' into a trap here,” said Shif'less Sol.

“I don't think so,” said Henry. “At any rate they'd find us if we were rushing about the village. Here we at least have a chance.”

At the far end of the Council House hung mats, woven of rushes, and the three sat down behind them in the very heart of the Iroquois sanctuary. Should anyone casually enter the Council House they would still be hidden. They sat in Turkish fashion on the floor, close together and with their rifles lying across their knees. A thin light filtered through a window and threw pallid streaks on the floor, which they could see when they peeped around the edge of the mats. But outside they heard very clearly the clamor of the hunt as it swung to and fro in the village. Shif'less Sol chuckled. It was very low, but it was a chuckle, nevertheless, and the others heard.

“It's sorter takin' an advantage uv 'em,” said the shiftless one, “layin' here in thar own church, so to speak, while they're ragin' an' tearin' up the earth everywhar else lookin' fur us. Gives me a mighty snug feelin', though, like the one you have when you're safe in a big log house, an' the wind an' the hail an' the snow are beatin' outside.”

“You're shorely right, Sol,” said Tom Ross.

“Seems to me,” continued the irrepressible Sol, “that you did git in a good lick at Braxton Wyatt, after all. Ain't he unhappy now, bitin' his fingers an' pawin' the earth an' findin' nothin'? I feel real sorry, I do, fur Braxton. It's hard fur a nice young feller to have to suffer sech disappointments.”

Shif'less Sol chuckled again, and Henry was forced to smile in the darkness. Shif'less Sol was not wholly wrong. It would be a bitter blow to Braxton Wyatt.

Moreover, it was pleasant where they sat. A hard floor was soft to them, and as they leaned against the wall they could relax and rest.

“What will our fellows out thar in the woods think?” asked Tom Ross.

“They won't have to think,” replied Henry. “They'll sit quiet as we're doing and wait.”

The noise of the hunt went on for a long time outside. War whoops came from different points of the village. There were shrill cries of women and children, and the sound of many running feet. After a while it began to sink, and soon after that they heard no more noises than those of people preparing for flight. Henry felt sure that the town would be abandoned on the morrow, but his desire to come to close quarters with Braxton Wyatt was as strong as ever. It was certain that the army could not overtake Wyatt's band, but he might match his own against it. He was thinking of making the attempt to steal from the place when, to their great amazement, they heard the door of the Council House open and shut, and then footsteps inside.

Henry looked under the edge of the hanging mat and saw two dusky figures near the window.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE FINAL FIGHT

Shif'less Sol and Tom Ross were also looking under the mats, and the three would have recognized those figures anywhere. The taller was Timmendiquas, the other Thayendanegea. The thin light from the window fell upon their faces, and Henry saw that both were sad. Haughty and proud they were still, but each bore the look that comes only from continued defeat and great disappointment. It is truth to say that the concealed three watched them with a curiosity so intense that all thought of their own risk was forgotten. To Henry, as well as his comrades, these two were the greatest of all Indian chiefs.

The White Lightning of the Wyandots and the Joseph Brant of the Mohawks stood for a space side by side, gazing out of the window, taking a last look at the great Seneca Castle. It was Thayendanegea who spoke first, using Wyandot, which Henry understood.

“Farewell, my brother, great chief of the Wyandots,” he said. “You have come far with your warriors, and you have been by our side in battle. The Six Nations owe you much. You have helped us in victory, and you have not deserted us in defeat. You are the greatest of warriors, the boldest in battle, and the most skillful.”

Timmendiquas made a deprecatory gesture, but Thayendanegea went on:

“I speak but the truth, great chief of the Wyandots. We owe you much, and some day we may repay. Here the Bostonians crowd us hard, and the Mohawks may yet fight by your side to save your own hunting grounds.”

“It is true,” said Timmendiquas. “There, too, we' must fight the Americans.”

“Victory was long with us here,” said Thayendanegea, “but the rebels have at last brought an army against us, and the king who persuaded us to make war upon the Americans adds nothing to the help that he has given us already. Our white allies were the first to run at the Chemung, and now the Iroquois country, so large and so beautiful, is at the mercy of the invader. We perish. In all the valleys our towns lie in ashes. The American army will come to-morrow, and this, the great Seneca Castle, the last of our strongholds, will also sink under the flames. I know not how our people will live through the Winter that is yet to come. Aieroski has turned his face from us.”

But Timmendiquas spoke words of courage and hope.

“The Six Nations will regain their country,” he said. “The great League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, which has been victorious for so many generations, cannot be destroyed. All the tribes from here to the Mississippi will help, and will press down upon the settlements. I will return to stir them anew, and the British posts will give us arms and ammunition.”

The light of defiance shone once more in the eyes of Thayendanegea.

“You raise my spirits again,” he said. “We flee now, but we shall come back again. The Ho-de-no-saunee can never submit. We will ravage all their settlements, and burn and destroy. We will make a wilderness where they have been. The king and his men will yet give us more help.”

Part of his words came true, and the name of the raiding Thayendanegea was long a terror, but the Iroquois, who had refused the requested neutrality, had lost their Country forever, save such portions as the victor in the end chose to offer to them.

“And now, as you and your Wyandots depart within the half hour, I give you a last farewell,” said Thayendanegea.

The hands of the two great chiefs met in a clasp like that of the white man, and then Timmendiquas abruptly left the Council House, shutting the door behind him. Thayendanegea lingered a while at the window, and the look of sadness returned to his face. Henry could read many of the thoughts that were passing through the Mohawk's proud mind.

Thayendanegea was thinking of his great journey to London, of the power and magnificence that he had seen, of the pride and glory of the Iroquois, of the strong and numerous Tory faction led by Sir John Johnson, the half brother of the children of Molly Brant, Thayendanegea's own sister, of the Butlers and all the others who had said that the rebels would be easy to conquer. He knew better now, he had long known better, ever since that dreadful battle in the dark defile of the Oriskany, when the Palatine Germans, with old Herkimer at their head, beat the Tories, the English, and the Iroquois, and made the taking of Burgoyne possible. The Indian chieftain was a statesman, and it may be that from this moment he saw that the cause of both the Iroquois and their white allies was doomed. Presently Thayendanegea left the window, walking slowly toward the door. He paused there a moment or two, and then went out, closing it behind him, as Timmendiquas had done. The three did not speak until several minutes after he had gone.

“I don't believe,” said Henry, “that either of them thinks, despite their brave words, that the Iroquois can ever win back again.”

“Serves 'em right,” said Tom Ross. “I remember what I saw at Wyoming.”

“Whether they kin do it or not,” said the practical Sol, “it's time for us to git out o' here, an' go back to our men.”

“True words, Sol,” said Henry, “and we'll go.”

Examining first at the window and then through the door, opened slightly, they saw that the Iroquois village bad become quiet. The preparations for departure had probably ceased until morning. Forth stole the three, passing swiftly among the houses, going, with silent foot toward the orchard. An old squaw, carrying a bundle from a house, saw them, looked sharply into their faces, and knew them to be white. She threw down her bundle with a fierce, shrill scream, and ran, repeating the scream as she ran.

Indians rushed out, and with them Braxton Wyatt and his band. Wyatt caught a glimpse of a tall figure, with two others, one on each side, running toward the orchard, and he knew it. Hate and the hope to capture or kill swelled afresh. He put a whistle to his lip and blew shrilly. It was a signal to his band, and they came from every point, leading the pursuit.

Henry heard the whistle, and he was quite sure that it was Wyatt who had made the sound. A single glance backward confirmed him. He knew Wyatt's figure as well as Wyatt knew his, and the dark mass with him was certainly composed of his own men. The other Indians and Tories, in all likelihood, would turn back soon, and that fact would give him the chance he wished.

They were clear of the town now, running lightly through the orchard, and Shif'less Sol suggested that they enter the woods at once.

“We can soon dodge 'em thar in the dark,” he said.

“We don't want to dodge 'em,” said Henry.

The shiftless one was surprised, but when he glanced at Henry's face he understood.

“You want to lead 'em on an' to a fight?” he said.

Henry nodded.

“Glad you thought uv it,” said Shif'less Sol.

They crossed the very corn field through which they had come, Braxton Wyatt and his band in full cry after them. Several shots were fired, but the three kept too far ahead for any sort of marksmanship, and they were not touched. When they finally entered the woods they curved a little, and then, keeping just far enough ahead to be within sight, but not close enough for the bullets, Henry led them straight toward the camp of the riflemen. As he approached, he fired his

own rifle, and uttered the long shout of the forest runner. He shouted a second time, and now Shif'less Sol and Tom Ross joined in the chorus, their great cry penetrating far through the woods.

Whether Braxton Wyatt or any of his mixed band of Indians and Tories suspected the meaning of those great shouts Henry never knew, but the pursuit came on with undiminished speed. There was a good silver moon now, shedding much light, and he saw Wyatt still in the van, with his Tory lieutenant close behind, and after them red men and white, spreading out like a fan to inclose the fugitives in a trap. The blood leaped in his veins. It was a tide of fierce joy. He had achieved both of the purposes for which he had come. He had thoroughly scouted the Seneca Castle, and he was about to come to close quarters with Braxton Wyatt and the band which he had made such a terror through the valleys.

Shif'less Sol saw the face of his young comrade, and he was startled. He had never before beheld it so stern, so resolute, and so pitiless. He seemed to remember as one single, fearful picture all the ruthless and terrible scenes of the last year. Henry uttered again that cry which was at once a defiance and a signal, and from the forest ahead of him it was answered, signal for signal. The riflemen were coming, Paul, Long Jim, and Heemskerk at their head. They uttered a mighty cheer as they saw the flying three, and their ranks opened to receive them. From the Indians and Tories came the long whoop of challenge, and every one in either band knew that the issue was now about to be settled by battle, and by battle alone. They used all the tactics of the forest. Both sides instantly dropped down among the trees and undergrowth, three or four hundred yards apart, and for a few moments there was no sound save heavy breathing, heard only by those who lay close by. Not a single human being would have been visible to an ordinary eye there in the moonlight, which tipped boughs and bushes with ghostly silver. Yet no area so small ever held a greater store of resolution and deadly animosity. On one side were the riflemen, nearly every one of whom had slaughtered kin to mourn, often wives and little children, and on the other the Tories and Iroquois, about to lose their country, and swayed by the utmost passions of hate and revenge.

“Spread out,” whispered Henry. “Don't give them a chance to flank us. You, Sol, take ten men and go to the right, and you, Heemskerk, take ten and go to the left.”

“It is well,” whispered Heemskerk. “You have a great head, Mynheer Henry.”

Each promptly obeyed, but the larger number of the riflemen remained in the center, where Henry knelt, with Paul and Long Jim on one side of him, and

Silent Tom on the other. When he thought that the two flanking parties had reached the right position, he uttered a low whistle, and back came two low whistles, signals that all was ready. Then the line began its slow advance, creeping forward from tree to tree and from bush to bush. Henry raised himself up a little, but he could not yet see anything where the hostile force lay hidden. They went a little farther, and then all lay down again to look.

Tom Ross had not spoken a word, but none was more eager than he. He was almost flat upon the ground, and he had been pulling himself along by a sort of muscular action of his whole body. Now he was so still that he did not seem to breathe. Yet his eyes, uncommonly eager now, were searching the thickets ahead. They rested at last on a spot of brown showing through some bushes, and, raising his rifle, he fired with sure aim. The Iroquois uttered his death cry, sprang up convulsively, and then fell back prone. Shots were fired in return, and a dozen riflemen replied to them. The battle was joined.

They heard Braxton Wyatt's whistle, the challenging war cry of the Iroquois, and then they fought in silence, save for the crack of the rifles. The riflemen continued to advance in slow, creeping fashion, always pressing the enemy. Every time they caught sight of a hostile face or body they sent a bullet at it, and Wyatt's men did the same. The two lines came closer, and all along each there were many sharp little jets of fire and smoke. Some of the riflemen were wounded, and two were slain, dying quietly and without interrupting their comrades, who continued to press the combat, Henry always leading in the center, and Shif'less Sol and Heemskerk on the flanks.

This battle so strange, in which faces were seen only for a moment, and which was now without the sound of voices, continued without a moment's cessation in the dark forest. The fury of the combatants increased as the time went on, and neither side was yet victorious. Closer and closer came the lines. Meanwhile dark clouds were piling in a bank in the southwest. Slow thunder rumbled far away, and the sky was cut at intervals by lightning. But the combatants did not notice the heralds of storm. Their attention was only for each other.

It seemed to Henry that emotions and impulses in him had culminated. Before him were the worst of all their foes, and his pitiless resolve was not relaxed a particle. The thunder and the lightning, although he did not notice them, seemed to act upon him as an incitement, and with low words he continually urged those about him to push the battle.

Drops of rain fell, showing in the moonshine like beads of silver on boughs and twigs, but by and by the smoke from the rifle fire, pressed down by the heavy atmosphere, gathered among the trees, and the moon was partly hidden.

But file combat did not relax because of the obscurity. Wandering Indians, hearing the firing, came to Wyatt's relief, but, despite their aid, he was compelled to give ground. His were the most desperate and hardened men, red and white, in all the allied forces, but they were faced by sharpshooters better than themselves. Many of them were already killed, others were wounded, and, although Wyatt and Coleman raged and strove to hold them, they began to give back, and so hard pressed were they that the Iroquois could not perform the sacred duty of carrying off their dead. No one sought to carry away the Tories, who lay with the rain, that had now begun to fall, beating upon them.

So much had the riflemen advanced that they came to the point where bodies of their enemies lay. Again that fierce joy surged up in Henry's heart. His friends and he were winning. But he wished to do more than win. This band, if left alone, would merely flee from the Seneca Castle before the advance of the army, and would still exist to ravage and slay elsewhere.

“Keep on, Tom! Keep on!” he cried to Ross and the others. “Never let them rest!”

“We won't! We ain't dreamin' o' doin' sech a thing,” replied the redoubtable one as he loaded and fired. “Thar, I got another!”

The Iroquois, yielding slowly at first, began now to give way faster. Some sought to dart away to right or left, and bury themselves in the forest, but they were caught by the flanking parties of Shif'less Sol and Heemskerk, and driven back on the center. They could not retreat except straight on the town, and the riflemen followed them step for step. The moan of the distant thunder went on, and the soft rain fell, but the deadly crackle of the rifles formed a sharper, insistent note that claimed the whole attention of both combatants.

It was now the turn of the riflemen to receive help. Twenty or more scouts and others abroad in the forest were called by the rifle fire, and went at once into the battle. Then Wyatt was helped a second time by a band of Senecas and Mohawks, but, despite all the aid, they could not withstand the riflemen. Wyatt, black with fury and despair, shouted to them and sometimes cursed or even struck at them, but the retreat could not be stopped. Men fell fast. Every one of the riflemen was a sharpshooter, and few bullets missed.

Wyatt was driven out of the forest and into the very corn field through which Henry had passed. Here the retreat became faster, and, with shouts of triumph, the riflemen followed after. Wyatt lost some men in the flight through the field, but when he came to the orchard, having the advantage of cover, he made another desperate stand.

But Shif'less Sol and Heemskerk took the band on the flanks, pouring in a destructive fire, and Wyatt, Coleman, and a fourth of his band, all that survived, broke into a run for the town.

The riflemen uttered shout after shout of triumph, and it was impossible to restrain their pursuit. Henry would have stopped here, knowing the danger of following into the town, especially when the army was near at band with an irresistible force, but he could not stay them. He decided then that if they would charge it must be done with the utmost fire and spirit.

“On, men! On!” he cried. “Give them no chance to take cover.”

Shif'less Sol and Heemskerk wheeled in with the flanking parties, and the riflemen, a solid mass now, increased the speed of pursuit. Wyatt and his men had no chance to turn and fire, or even to reload. Bullets beat upon them as they fled, and here perished nearly all of that savage band. Wyatt, Coleman, and only a half dozen made good the town, where a portion of the Iroquois who had not yet fled received them. But the exultant riflemen did not stop even there. They were hot on the heels of Wyatt and the fugitives, and attacked at once the Iroquois who came to their relief. So fierce was their rush that these new forces were driven back at once. Braxton Wyatt, Coleman, and a dozen more, seeing no other escape, fled to a large log house used as a granary, threw themselves into it, barred the doors heavily, and began to fire from the upper windows, small openings usually closed with boards. Other Indians from the covert of house, tepee, or tree, fired upon the assailants, and a fresh battle began in the town.

The riflemen, directed by their leaders, met the new situation promptly. Fired upon from all sides, at least twenty rushed into a house some forty yards from that of Braxton Wyatt. Others seized another house, while the rest remained outside, sheltered by little outhouses, trees, or inequalities of the earth, and maintained rapid sharpshooting in reply to the Iroquois in the town or to Braxton Wyatt's men in the house. Now the combat became fiercer than ever. The warriors uttered yells, and Wyatt's men in the house sent forth defiant shouts. From another part of the town came shrill cries of old squaws, urging on their fighting men.

It was now about four o'clock in the morning. The thunder and lightning had ceased, but the soft rain was still falling. The Indians had lighted fires some distance away. Several carried torches. Helped by these, and, used so long to the night, the combatants saw distinctly. The five lay behind a low embankment, and they paid their whole attention to the big house that sheltered Wyatt and his men. On the sides and behind they were protected by Heemskerk and others, who faced a coming swarm.

“Keep low, Paul,” said Henry, restraining his eager comrade. “Those fellows in the house can shoot, and we don't want to lose you. There, didn't I tell you!”

A bullet fired from the window passed through the top of Paul's cap, but clipped only his hair. Before the flash from the window passed, Long Jim fired in return, and something fell back inside. Bullets came from other windows. Shif'less Sol fired, and a Seneca fell forward banging half out of the window, his naked body a glistening brown in the firelight. But he hung only a few seconds. Then he fell to the ground and lay still. The five crouched low again, waiting a new opportunity. Behind them, and on either side, they heard the crash of the new battle and challenging cries.

Braxton Wyatt, Coleman, four more Tories, and six Indians were still alive in the strong log house. Two or three were wounded, but they scarcely noticed it in the passion of conflict. The house was a veritable fortress, and the renegade's hopes rose high as he heard the rifle fire from different parts of the town. His own band had been annihilated by the riflemen, led by Henry Ware, but he had a sanguine hope now that his enemies had rushed into a trap. The Iroquois would turn back and destroy them.

Wyatt and his comrades presented a repellent sight as they crouched in the room and fired from the two little windows. His clothes and those of the white men had been torn by bushes and briars in their flight, and their faces had been raked, too, until they bled, but they had paid no attention to such wounds, and the blood was mingled with sweat and powder smoke. The Indians, naked to the waist, daubed with vermilion, and streaked, too, with blood, crouched upon the floor, with the muz'zles of their rifles at the windows, seeking something human to kill. One and all, red and white, they were now raging savages, There was not one among them who did not have some foul murder of woman or child to his credit.

Wyatt himself was mad for revenge. Every evil passion in him was up and leaping. His eyes, more like those of a wild animal than a human being, blazed out of a face, a mottled red and black. By the side of him the dark Tory, Coleman, was driven by impulses fully as fierce.

“To think of it!” exclaimed Wyatt. “He led us directly into a trap, that Ware! And here our band is destroyed! All the good men that we gathered together, except these few, are killed!”

“But we may pay them back,” said Coleman. “We were in their trap, but now they are in ours! Listen to that firing and the war whoop! There are enough Iroquois yet in the town to kill every one of those rebels!”

“I hope so! I believe so!” exclaimed Wyatt. “Look out, Coleman! Ah, he's pinked you! That's the one they call Shif'less Sol, and he's the best sharpshooter of them all except Ware!”

Coleman had leaned forward a little in his anxiety to secure a good aim at something. He had disclosed only a little of his face, but in an instant a bullet had seared his forehead like the flaming stroke of a sword, passing on and burying itself in the wall. Fresh blood dripped down over his face. He tore a strip from the inside of his coat, bound it about his head, and went on with the defense.

A Mohawk, frightfully painted, fired from the other window. Like a flash came the return shot, and the Indian fell back in the room, stone dead, with a bullet through his bead.

“That was Ware himself,” said Wyatt. “I told you he was the best shot of them all. I give him that credit. But they're all good. Look out! There goes another of our men! It was Ross who did that! I tell you, be careful! Be careful!”

It was an Onondaga who fell this time, and he lay with his head on the window sill until another Indian pulled him inside. A minute later a Tory, who peeped guardedly for a shot, received a bullet through his head, and sank down on the floor. A sort of terror spread among the others. What could they do in the face of such terrible sharpshooting? It was uncanny, almost superhuman, and they looked stupidly at one another. Smoke from their own firing had gathered in the room, and it formed a ghastly veil about their faces. They heard the crash of the rifles outside from every point, but no help came to them.

“We're bound to do something!” exclaimed Wyatt. “Here you, Jones, stick up the edge of your cap, and when they fire at it I'll put a bullet in the man who pulls the trigger.”

Jones thrust up his cap, but they knew too much out there to be taken in by an old trick. The cap remained unhurt, but when Jones in his eagerness thrust it higher until he exposed his arm, his wrist was smashed in an instant by a bullet, and he fell back with a howl of pain. Wyatt swore and bit his lips savagely. He and all of them began to fear that they were in another and tighter trap, one from which there was no escape unless the Iroquois outside drove off the riflemen, and of that they could as yet see no sign. The sharpshooters held their place behind the embankment and the little outhouse, and so little as a finger, even, at the windows became a sure mark for their terrible bullets. A Seneca, seeking a new trial for a shot, received a bullet through the shoulder, and a Tory who followed him in the effort was slain outright.

The light hitherto had been from the fires, but now the dawn was coming. Pale gray beams fell over the town, and then deepened into red and yellow. The beams reached the room where the beleaguered remains of Wyatt's band fought, but, mingling with the smoke, they gave a new and more ghastly tint to the desperate faces.

“We've got to fight!” exclaimed Wyatt. “We can't sit here and be taken like beasts in a trap! Suppose we unbar the doors below and make a rush for it?”

Coleman shook his head. “Every one of us would be killed within twenty yards,” he said.

“Then the Iroquois must come back,” cried Wyatt. “Where is Joe Brant? Where is Timmendiquas, and where is that coward, Sir John Johnson? Will they come?”

“They won't come,” said Coleman.

They lay still awhile, listening to the firing in the town, which swayed hither and thither. The smoke in the room thinned somewhat, and the daylight broadened and deepened. As a desperate resort they resumed fire from the windows, but three more of their number were slain, and, bitter with chagrin, they crouched once more on the floor out of range. Wyatt looked at the figures of the living and the dead. Savage despair tore at his heart again, and his hatred of those who bad done this increased. It was being served out to him and his band as they had served it out to many a defenseless family in the beautiful valleys of the border. Despite the sharpshooters, he took another look at the window, but kept so far back that there was no chance for a shot.

“Two of them are slipping away,” he exclaimed. “They are Ross and the one they call Long Jim! I wish I dared a shot! Now they're gone!”

They lay again in silence for a time. There was still firing in the town, and now and then they heard shouts. Wyatt looked at his lieutenant, and his lieutenant looked at him.

“Yours is the ugliest face I ever saw,” said Wyatt.

“I can say the same of yours-as I can't see mine,” said Coleman.

The two gazed once more at the hideous, streaked, and grimed faces of each other, and then laughed wildly. A wounded Seneca sitting with his back against the wall began to chant a low, wailing death song.

“Shut up! Stop that infernal noise!” exclaimed Wyatt savagely.

The Seneca stared at him with fixed, glassy eyes and continued his chant. Wyatt turned away, but that song was upon his nerves. He knew that everything

was lost. The main force of the Iroquois would not come back to his help, and Henry Ware would triumph. He sat down on the floor, and muttered fierce words under his breath.

“Hark!” suddenly exclaimed Coleman. “What is that?”

A low crackling sound came to their ears, and both recognized it instantly. It was the sound of flames eating rapidly into wood, and of that wood was built the house they now held. Even as they listened they could hear the flames leap and roar into new and larger life.

“This is, what those two, Ross and Hart, were up to!” exclaimed Wyatt. “We're not only trapped, but we're to be burned alive in our trap!”

“Not I,” said Coleman, “I'm goin' to make a rush for it.”

“It's the only thing to be done,” said Wyatt. “Come, all of you that are left!”

The scanty survivors gathered around him, all but the wounded Seneca, who sat unmoved against the wall and continued to chant his death chant. Wyatt glanced at him, but said nothing. Then he and the others rushed down the stairs.

The lower room was filled with smoke, and outside the flames were roaring. They unbarred the door and sprang into the open air. A shower of bullets met them. The Tory, Coleman, uttered a choking cry, threw up his arms, and fell back in the doorway. Braxton Wyatt seized one of the smaller men, and, holding him a moment or two before him to receive the fire of his foe, dashed for the corner of the blazing building. The man whom he held was slain, and his own shoulder was grazed twice, but he made the corner. In an instant he put the burning building between him and his pursuers, and ran as he had never run before in all his life, deadly fear putting wings on his heels. As he ran he heard the dull boom of a cannon, and he knew that the American army was entering the Seneca Castle. Ahead of him he saw the last of the Indians fleeing for the woods, and behind him the burning house crashed and fell in amid leaping flames and sparks in myriads. He alone had escaped from the house.

CHAPTER XXIV. DOWN THE OHIO

“We didn't get Wyatt,” said Henry, “but we did pretty well, nevertheless.”

“That's so,” said Shif'less Sol. “Thar's nothin' left o' his band but hisself, an' I ain't feelin' any sorrow 'cause I helped to do it. I guess we've saved the lives of a good many innocent people with this morning's work.”

“Never a doubt of it,” said Henry, “and here's the army now finishing up the task.”

The soldiers were setting fire to the town in many places, and in two hours the great Seneca Castle was wholly destroyed. The five took no part in this, but rested after their battles and labors. One or two had been grazed by bullets, but the wounds were too trifling to be noticed. As they rested, they watched the fire, which was an immense one, fed by so much material. The blaze could be seen for many miles, and the ashes drifted over all the forest beyond the fields.

All the while the Iroquois were fleeing through the wilderness to the British posts and the country beyond the lakes, whence their allies had already preceded them. The coals of Little Beard's Town smoldered for two or three days, and then the army turned back, retracing its steps down the Genesee.

Henry and his comrades felt that their work in the East was finished. Kentucky was calling to them. They had no doubt that Braxton Wyatt, now that his band was destroyed, would return there, and he would surely be plotting more danger. It was their part to meet and defeat him. They wished, too, to see again the valley, the river, and the village in which their people had made their home, and they wished yet more to look upon the faces of these people.

They left the army, went southward with Heemskerk and some others of the riflemen, but at the Susquehanna parted with the gallant Dutchman and his comrades.

“It is good to me to have known you, my brave friends,” said Heemskerk, “and I say good-by with sorrow to you, Mynheer Henry; to you, Mynheer Paul; to you, Mynheer Sol; to you, Mynheer Tom; and to you, Mynheer Jim.”

He wrung their hands one by one, and then revolved swiftly away to hide his emotion.

The five, rifles on their shoulders, started through the forest. When they looked back they saw Cornelius Heemskerk waving his hand to them. They

waved in return, and then disappeared in the forest. It was a long journey to Pittsburgh, but they found it a pleasant one. It was yet deep autumn on the Pennsylvania hills, and the forest was glowing with scarlet and gold. The air was the very wine of life, and when they needed game it was there to be shot. As the cold weather hung off, they did not hurry, and they enjoyed the peace of the forest. They realized now that after their vast labors, hardships, and dangers, they needed a great rest, and they took it. It was singular, and perhaps not so singular, how their minds turned from battle, pursuit, and escape, to gentle things. A little brook or fountain pleased them. They admired the magnificent colors of the foliage, and lingered over the views from the low mountains. Doe and fawn fled from them, but without cause. At night they built splendid fires, and sat before them, while everyone in his turn told tales according to his nature or experience.

They bought at Pittsburgh a strong boat partly covered, and at the point where the Allegheny and the Monongahela unite they set sail down the Ohio. It was winter now, but in their stout caravel they did not care. They had ample supplies of all kinds, including ammunition, and their hearts were light when they swung into the middle of the Ohio and moved with its current.

“Now for a great voyage,” said Paul, looking at the clear stream with sparkling eyes.

“I wonder what it will bring to us,” said Shif'less Sol.

“We shall see,” said Henry.

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