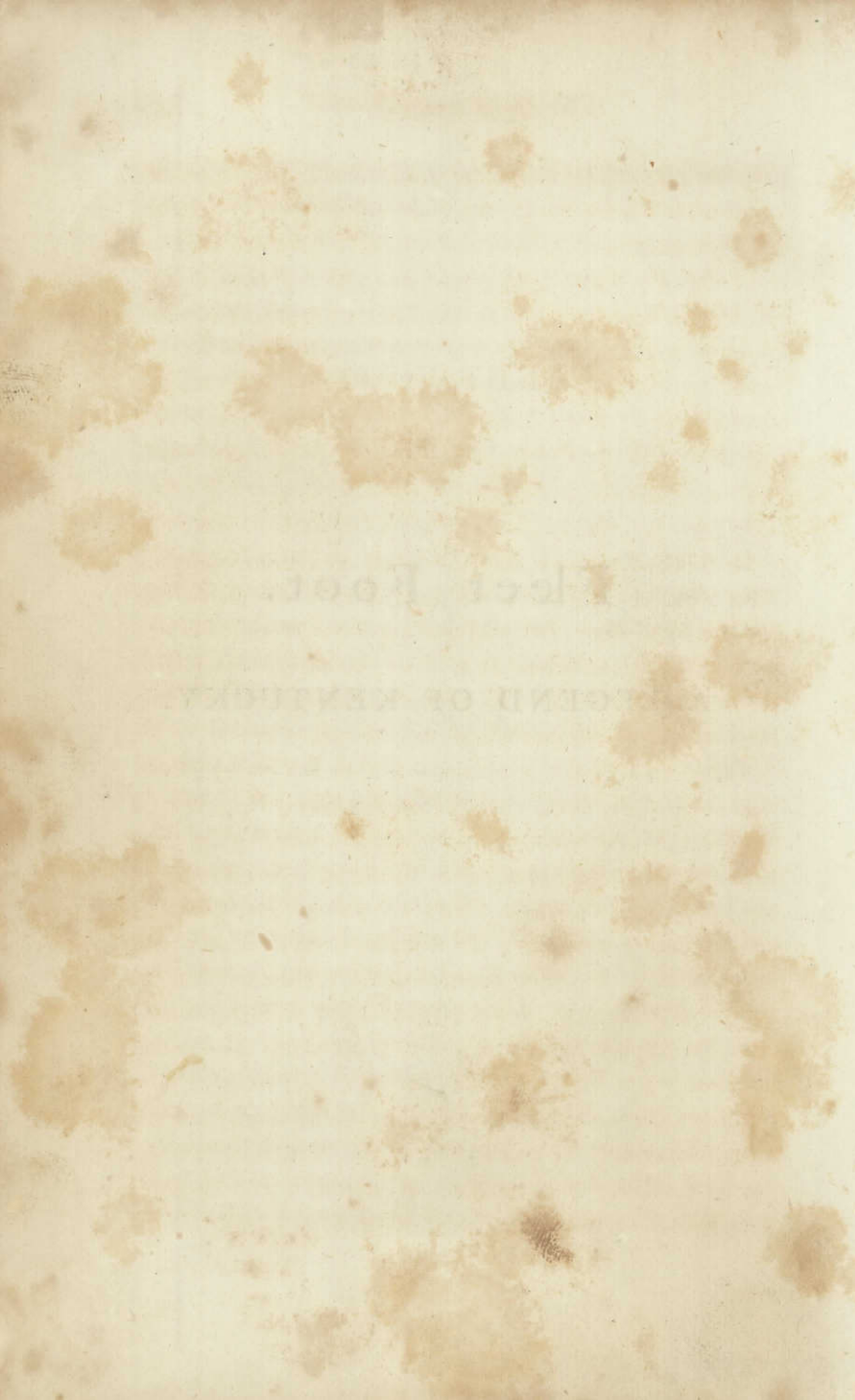


Fleet Foot.

A LEGEND OF KENTUCKY.



FLEET FOOT:

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IN 1778 Kentucky was the home of remarkable men. They were men who exceeded the Indian in cunning—who had more enduring powers of resistance to fatigue, and who were as relentless in pursuit of their red foes, as were ever the most savage red men in pursuit of white intruders upon the ancient hunting grounds of their tribes.

There are Indian wigwams now toward the Rocky Mountains, and on the plains sloping from the Sierra Nevada, and there are white men, who dare wrap themselves in their blankets and go to sleep alone in the forest—who are brave and hardy, and who know, from severe experience, the trials and fatigues of a hunter's life, but there are none who may be selected as fair representatives of the Hunters of Kentucky. The fatigues, the dangers and perils of Rocky Mountain life, now-a-days, do not equal those which surrounded the pioneer from Virginia, in 1778.

Among the most exciting traditions of the times of trials to the pioneers in the great valley of the West, those belonging to Kentucky have preëminent interest. Her pioneers were compelled to teach a horde of desperate Indians (not

before disturbed) that they must retreat from the valley or the hill-side where the white man chose to build his cabin.

Bold and brave, stout and determined men alone, were fitted to carry the rifle and swing the axe in the forests to be felled, for the cabin and the corn field in "old Kaintuck."

Our legend is about such men. Two of them were in the depths of a dense forest on an autumn morning, when, though the earlier harbingers of dawn had given place to roseate tints, which glowed upon hill-tops touching the eastern horizon, it was so dark in the wooded valleys that the hunters with difficulty groped their way. They had not traveled all night, but they had gathered up their blankets, when it was yet an hour before day-break, and were picking their way along slowly — knowing that soon the morning light would break through the thick foliage over them. They had been absent from the Fort, at Harrodsburg, several days; they knew there was anxiety about their fate and they were impatient to relieve it.

It was not light enough for them to see distinctly, when their quick ears detected a footstep stealthily approaching. In an instant each had chosen his ambush and was keenly watchful.

"By powder, its old Martin," cried one of the hunters, and springing from his ambush, he drew his rifle to his shoulder and leveled it at the person thus indicated, who gave a sudden yell, and then in a rough tone said:

"Put down your shootin' iron. I aint fond of such motions, ef they are in fun. Whar's Mac?"

"Ready to pop you ef you'd ben a red skin," answered the individual inquired for, showing himself.

"Well I've got a leetle news for you in partic'lar, but may

be Fleet Foot'll take a sort 'o notion to it too. Sit down on this 'ere log till I tell you, for its a leetle serious, and I'm kinder worked up about it."

The three hunters sat together in earnest conversation until the sun shone broadly on the tree tops, and checkered shadows lay all around them on the fallen leaves.

Old Martin, after reminding the others that he had gone away from the fort at Harrodsburg the day before they left, informed them that he had been working about ten miles distant, where some friends were making a settlement. Mac's sister had gone with him as company for his wife. Four men were at work in the woods, when they heard screams at the cabin. They rushed toward it. Martin's son, one of the four, was shot by an Indian, whom old Martin saw and attacked, while the others continued toward the cabin.

"I put a ball in that red skin who shot Bob," said old Martin, talking to Mac and Fleet Foot, "and then I run for the cabin too. I didn't hear or see any sign of any more Ingins, and when I got to the cabin I found the other boys a debatin' what was to be done. They hadn't seen a red skin, but both the women were gone. I swore a leetle and cussed the Ingins right smart, but poor Bob was in the woods and we had to look arter him. So we went, sneakin', and found him dead enough and we carried him to the cabin and then held a council. I swore I'd go to the fort and git a party, and follow them red skins till we had our women and their scalps ef it took us till snow come. We discussed awhile, and the other boys agreed to get on the Ingins' trail and make signs, and I started for the fort. It was jist about sundown, and soon it got dark and I was a leetle excited, and I got a leetle wrong, and I've been a wanderin' and was just

beginnin' to get the right bearins' when I saw Fleet Foot a drawin' a sight on me. It was tarnal lucky."

Fleet Foot and his companion had listened attentively while Martin related the particulars of the attack, and when he had concluded, Fleet Foot said:

"Did you notice what sort of a varmint that was you did the bisness for?"

"I couldn't jist exactly tell, 'cause I hadn't time, but I b'lieve he was a Blackfish," answered Martin.

"We can catch 'em then," said Fleet Foot, "I know them varmint. You know what the old chief told Boone — that I beat all his warriors on a fair race last summer, and he was the old 'un who give me my nickname. Ef I could beat his fastest red devils then, and as I did when I had to creep into the fort, when Mac's brother was shot this summer, Mac and I kin overtake the varmint now, *and we will*. We've got a lot of accounts to settle with 'em and now's the time. We'd chase 'em ef they had'nt no women; but, by powder, we'll have them women ef they havn't scalped 'em, and ef they have there shan't be one of old Blackfish's varmint left in old Kaintuck. Now, old man, you go right on straight to the fort and get five or six hunters and send 'em on arter us, and we'll go right off to your cabin, and before night we'll overtake them Ingins, and may-be afore your boys get up with us we'll do the bisness. Tell 'em at the fort that our blood is up, and the sights on our rifles are itchin' to be drawn on them Blackfish."

"That's a fact," cried Mac, "they know us and they can jist calculate that we'll stretch a few of the rascals ef we get a chance, or they'll do our bisness for us right quick. They got one of my folks and that's as many as we mean to

let 'em have — Kate shall be rescued or avenged, anyhow we'll give 'em ten to one for cutting off Harry and Bob."

The hunters separated without formality; old Martin hastening with all his energy to execute his mission, and Mac and Fleet Foot striking a bee-line for the cabin.

Fleet Foot had an interest in the success of the enterprise, about which he did not speak. It was venturesome for two hunters to start from the cabin on the night previous, to follow, they knew not how many Indians, but they went only as spies. It was much more venturesome — heroic if not desperate, for Fleet Foot and his companion to undertake what they threatened. They went not only as spies; unless the party of Indians was very large they determined to rescue the women, if they were alive — if not, to avenge their massacre terribly. Both were daring and experienced hunters. Fleet Foot was one of the bravest and shrewdest of Kentucky pioneers. He was young, but athletic, watchful and quick at expedients, besides he possessed extraordinary fleetness. No Indian could out-run him. He had several opportunities of testing his powers as a runner in saving his own and others' lives. He alluded to some of them in his conversation with old Martin.

On one occasion he was chopping with his brother and another pioneer, about four miles from the fort, when a large party of Indians, led by the renowned chief Blackfish, suddenly attacked them, shot Fleet Foot's brother, and took the other chopper prisoner. Fleet Foot dashed through the woods, at the top of his speed, with half a dozen warriors straining every muscle to overtake him. It was their design to attack the fort. They were earnestly anxious to prevent an alarm being given, but the young hunter was too fleet for

them all. He reached the fort in safety, and the garrison prepared at once to meet the foe. When the Indians made the attack they were repelled with considerable loss.

On another occasion Fleet Foot was shooting at a mark, near the fort, with a brother of his present companion. They were suddenly surrounded by Indians. The other marksman was shot. Balls aimed at Fleet Foot missed him. He ran with all his energy toward the fort, several Indians in full chase after him — others firing at him. He was within seven paces of the fort when he saw that the door was not open. In an instant the thought struck him that it dare not be opened for fear the Indians would rush in. He threw himself flat on the ground between a large stump and the fort. There were numerous guns aimed at the Indians from the fort, and they dare not come within reach of the balls. They amused themselves by firing at Fleet Foot. There he lay, his mother looking down upon him and praying that he might be saved — his friends urging him to lie close and not lose courage — while the balls of the savage warriors, thirsting for his blood, were striking close to him, often throwing upon him the dirt which they plowed up. It was a most perilous and painful position. He conversed with his friends about opening the door of the fort. He said he could rush through it in an instant. They answered him that they dare not risk the lives of the women and children. The Indians might reach the door before it could be securely fastened again. There were not men enough in the fort to fight the large body of Indians in close combat.

The balls from the rifles of the Indians continued to strike around him. A moment the young hunter was engaged in deep thought — then he cried :

“For God’s sake dig a hole under the fort, and I’ll creep through it.”

Immediately his request was complied with, and the brave hunter reached this curious avenue to safety without injury, and was caught in his mother’s arms, and wept over as one rescued who had been given up as lost. The baffled Indians retired with savage yells.

When Fleet Foot and companion reached the cabin, they had no difficulty in finding the “signs” made by the hunters who had followed the Indians as spies. They pushed forward on the trail with a speed which only experienced hunters could attain.

It was yet early in the day when old Martin showed a party of five hunters where he had killed the Indian who shot his son Bob. This party immediately followed in pursuit of Fleet Foot and Mac.

It was between mid-day and sun-down when Fleet Foot declared that the Indians could not be much in advance, and he and Mac began to consider what they should do when the savages were overtaken. They conversed a few minutes when Fleet Foot said:

“It’s no use — we don’t know how we’ll find ’em. It’ll be time to fix how we shall give it to ’em when we’ve got a sight of the varmints.”

Again the hunters pushed forward zealously. They had not yet met the two hunters who left the cabin the night previous. They began to have serious surmises about their fate. As they hastened on they frequently conversed in low tones about their forerunners. Lengthened shadows were creeping in the forest, indicating that soon it would be impossible for the hunters to keep trace of the signs which had led them

on during the day. Fleet Foot observed a small piece of linen on a bush. He grasped it eagerly, and showing it to Mac, said :

“That’s a leetle encouraging. It shows the women are yet alive, anyhow, but its tarnal strange we hav’nt ketched them other boys ; I ’bleeve they’ve been a leetle careless and the Ingins have got ’em.”

He had gone but a few steps, after he made these remarks, when Fleet Foot cried :

“Jist as I expected. Here’s one on ’em anyhow. Them Ingins ’ll roast the other, by powder, if we don’t get him out of their hands.”

“That they will,” answered Mac, who looked upon the dead body of a hunter, with whom he had been well acquainted, lying directly in their path. He had been shot and his scalp taken.

“Last year old Blackfish said he’d roast the first hunter he could get into his camp, and if they’ve got the other fellow a prisoner, I’ll bet they mean to give him a taste of what we give young pigs on Christmas, but we won’t let ’em, by powder, as you say, Fleet Foot.”

“No, by powder, we won’t,” cried Fleet Foot.

The hunters did not stand over the body of their dead friend even long enough for this conversation. Their duties to the living were too pressing. They talked cautiously as they proceeded. Experienced as they were in detecting Indian “signs,” they knew that the savages could not be far in advance, and they hoped to overtake them before it was dark.

While the hunters were hastening in the pursuit under this impression, the Indians were encamped upon a small

stream, in a spot which afforded no particular advantages to them in case of an attack.

It was late in the afternoon when the female prisoners, from over-fatigue, began to grow tardy in their march. Both fell behind the main party of savages and were guarded by a brawny warrior who delighted in torturing them. The spies on their trail came in sight of the women and this warrior, who, except an Indian boy, was, at the moment, the only savage in sight. Supposing this to be the whole of the party, the young men, with a reckless impulse, rushed to the attack. They saw their error too late. The brawny warrior was severely wounded by a ball from the rifle of one of the spies, but no sooner had the report of his gun rang through the woods, than the white men were surrounded. One was shot and scalped; the other taken prisoner.

While Fleet Foot and his companion were groping their way by starlight, the Indians were holding a council upon the fate of their prisoners.

The spies had found much difficulty in tracing the path of the Indians, but they left behind them signs which clearly indicated to their followers the path to be pursued. The savages had pushed forward with much speed and caution till they had been attacked; when, supposing that all danger from immediate watch over their movements had been averted, they relaxed their speed, and soon encamped.

Losing the aid of their forerunners, from the time they left the corpse of their unfortunate friend, Fleet Foot and Mac were obliged to exercise their keenest powers, in order to keep the Indian trail.

Twilight was gone, and though the hunters could clearly see the leaves on the tree tops, it had become quite dark

around their path. They were about to seek a camping place, and give over the pursuit till another day dawned, when Fleet Foot, stooping forward, looked for several moments intently through the thickening gloom, then he whispered to Mac:

“Somebody’s makin’ a little fire out yonder about a mile, and I’ll bet my ammunition it’s them tarnal varmints.”

The fire grew brighter; Mac saw it distinctly. The hunters slowly and stealthily turned their footsteps toward the feeble flame. It became more and more distinct, till at length they could see its smoke curling among the leaves of the trees under which it snapped and glowed. A dark form stood between the fire and the hunters; they recognized the outline to be that of an Indian; creeping onward with cat-like caution, both grasped their rifles closer, and put their left hands on their hunting knives. They were impatient to know where were the prisoners, and what was the strength of the Indian party. Presently the fire blazed so brightly that it illuminated three forms which the hunters, with great joy, recognized as those of the women and the captured spy; but with all their skill and all their caution the hunters could not ascertain the number of savages. An old Indian came to the fire and lit his pipe; another roasted a piece of meat, and both joined a party at such a distance from the fire that Fleet Foot was puzzled to tell how many foes he must fight before the prisoners could be rescued. He longed to shoot the “varmints,” who exposed themselves at the fire, but prudence forbade him. He instructed Mac to keep his place, and watch closely while he went around the camp and reconnoitered.

Watchfully and noiselessly he stole through the woods, till the Indian council was between him and the fire; then he

could count the number of Indians, but he was not satisfied; he desired to communicate to the prisoners the cheering news, that they had friends as well as foes, around them. With this intention, he continued his noiseless course until he stood within a few feet of the prisoners. The young woman was nearest him. He whispered her name. She did not hear him, or if she heard, conceived the voice to be one her active imagination had conjured. Again Fleet Foot whispered that name which was dear to him, and fell sweetly from his lips. The young woman started and looked about her. An Indian on the watch, saw her startled movement, and came near her. The fire shone brightly on him; Fleet Foot was sorely tempted to shoot him, but the risk was too great. The bold hunter's position was one of great trial. Another word from him might alarm the young woman, and her agitation defeat the whole scheme of rescue. Shielded from the view of the Indians by a large tree, Fleet Foot crept nearer the prisoners. He was rejoiced to see the Indian whose suspicions had been excited, return among his companions, and take his seat in the council. Fleet Foot was now within a few feet of the prisoners — he saw them as distinctly as if it were daylight, and he could see, seated upon the ground not many yards beyond the prisoners, a little body of desperate savages, apparently consulting about the fate of three pale-faces, toward whom, the full light of a bright fire blazing on them, more than one Indian eye was continually cast. Again Fleet Foot whispered. To his great joy he saw that the young woman heard and recognized a friendly voice, but having been warned by the conduct of the savage watching her, was shrewd enough to make no movement that would again rouse his suspicions. She dare not answer the voice, and Fleet Foot was

left to conjecture whether she knew it was he so near her. He would have run many risks to have known how wildly her heart beat, for it told her that he who was risking so much for her sake could be none other than Fleet Foot.

The hunter was determined not to be in doubt as to whether she knew him, and he whispered :

“ I'm Fleet Foot, and Mac's not far off ; and old Martin's a comin' with a party of sharp shooters, and afore morning we'll give them varmints what'll keep 'em from killin' any more white folks, or stealin' any more wimen. When you git a chance, whisper to the old woman, and tell her not to go to sleep, and to tell that chap tied up near her to be on the look-out for a fight.”

The young woman dropped her head as if it had fallen upon her breast with a nod in sleep, and Fleet Foot understood that his message and warning were distinctly known.

A considerable length of time had elapsed while the hunter was engaged in his dangerous enterprise of reconnoitering, and of communicating glad tidings to the prisoners, and the night was far advanced. He had for more than an hour expected that the Indians would appoint a watch for the prisoners, and break up their council. It must have been near midnight when he was gratified with a sight of preparations on the part of the savages, for a couple of hour's repose before they started on the march of the coming day. The hunter cautiously retreated from his proximity to the camp. Two savages left the main body, and approached their prisoners — the others wrapped themselves in their blankets, and stretched themselves upon the ground to sleep. The savages had secured their prisoners by tying their hands tightly behind large trees. They stood in this painful position several

yards distant from each other. The two warriors left to guard them, manifested no disposition to allow them any position more favorable to rest or repose. Fleet Foot was a thoughtful observer of this neglect, and it did not auger well in his mind for the safety of the prisoners on the morrow. He was impressed that the council which had just broken up, had decided on bloody deeds. He dare not act alone under such trying circumstances, and he determined to see Mac. It would have been no easy task for an inexperienced woodsman to find his companion under such circumstances, but Fleet Foot had calculated well what were his chances of return to his friend, and he found but little difficulty in tracing his way to the vicinity where he left Mac. A signal, well understood between the hunters, and not calculated to alarm the savages, had they heard it, was given and answered, and in a few moments the brother and lover were earnestly consulting what was to be done to rescue Kate and her fellow prisoners.

“There are ten or a dozen of 'em,” said Fleet Foot, “I can't exactly tell which, but any how, there's too many of 'em for us to fight; but, by powder, Ingins or no Ingins, them wimen shall be out of their clutches afore the varmints leave this camp, or I'm a dead hunter.”

“That's my mind to a har,” answered Mac, grasping Fleet Foot's hand.

“It's tarnal queer old Martin haint come up, but may be he has seen this fire, jist as we did, and there's half a dozen other fellows sneakin' about here now.”

“May be,” said Mac, “but we can't find 'em, and daresn't make any signal or we'll have all them Ingins up in a minit, and no tellin' what might happen. We must calculate with-

out 'em, and ef we git into a fight and old Martin's about here, we'll have him on our side quick enough."

"Well," returned Fleet Foot, "there's only one way to do it — that fire's gittin' low — it wouldn't be queer if them Ingins on the watch went to sleep, 'cause they know the prisoners can't get away; and I'm certain they don't suspect any body's on the track of 'em. Ef they did they wouldn't a kept up sich a fire. Now, you follow me, and we'll go over there and watch the varmints, and whenever they shut their eyes, you take one and I'll take the other so quick he shant give even an Ingin grunt, and then it'll be an easy matter to cut the prisoners loose."

Mac agreed to this arrangement. Daylight was now drawing near. Whatever plans were calculated on, must be executed without delay. The hunters knew that if they succeeded in releasing the prisoners, as soon as the Indians discovered their loss, they would put forth every exertion, and exercise all their cunning to retake them; but with all this hazard before them, they were resolved to release them if it was in their power, and trust to luck, shrewdness, and the probability of assistance from Martin's party. They were convinced that one or more of the prisoners would be killed on the morrow, and bravely and generously they thought it was worth while to risk their two lives to save three, one of which was particularly valuable to both hunters, but peculiarly so to one.

While the two Indian guards were growing weary and sleepy, they had no suspicion that two hunters, with drawn knives, were ready, if they slumbered, to make that their last sleep.

Fleet Foot began to fear that daylight would dawn before

the savages nodded, and that the others would awaken and all would be lost. Every moment increased the danger and narrowed the probabilities of rescue and escape. At length he brought himself to believe that the moment for action had arrived. He gave the concerted signal, and approached his victim, who stood erect against a tree. He was successful, and drove his knife to the heart of the savage, who may have been dreaming, perhaps, of a wigwam far away, where children, of whom he was proud, awaited his return. The savage fell in his last sleep, heavily to the ground. That one which Mac was to have attacked, was startled by the fall. He was sitting upon the ground, nodding, but was not sound asleep. He sprang to his feet when Mac was not yet near enough to strike him. In an instant he would have been away from the dim light of the fire and out of sight of the hunter, but Mac rushed upon and grappled with him. Fleet Foot sprang to cut the bands which confined the prisoners. Meantime Mac struggled with the savage; both were powerful men—for a moment the savage was confused, and did not employ his strength and agility as he might have done under ordinary circumstances—of this confusion, the hunter took advantage, and was quick enough to plunge his knife into the red man's breast—he fell with a cry which aroused his fellow-warriors, who had slumbered in confidence that his watchfulness protected them.

Ten Indians were on their feet, with their rifles in their hands, before the death cry of their guard had died in the woods. The fire, which they had left brightly burning, had nearly gone out. The brands were scattered. They could neither see their prisoners nor any foes. They did not rush forward to ascertain the fate of their sentinels, nor did they

flee hastily from the spot where they had been sleeping. Each individual quietly skulked around a tree. No foe could see them. Not one of them could either see or hear a foe, but nevertheless there were very dangerous foes quite near them.

When Fleet Foot rushed to release the prisoners, he found the good work accomplished. A rough hand grasped his arm, and a voice which he knew well, said :

“ We’ve been watchin’ the varmints most all night. They’re skeered now, but they won’t run nor show themselves yet awhile ; our boys understand. We must lay low with our guns cocked till it’s day, and we’ll all git a blaze at ’em. How many ? ”

“ Ten, I guess,” said Fleet Foot.

“ Take care o’ this woman,” said old Martin.

It was Kate. Fleet Foot said not a word, but put his arm around the girl as if he had a special right to protect her.

There was no wind stirring. It was as quiet in the deep woods, as if there had been no Indian camp — no desperate adventure — no struggle — no scene of death. Softly the morning light began to steal through the dense foliage — it searched its way among the green leaves, and slowly dissipated the gloom which hung tenaciously around the trunks of the trees—among the low bushes, and in the wooded ravines. The fox went snuffing to his hole—the rabbit hopped timidly from one moss bed or grass tuft to another — the birds left their nests and sang sweetly on twigs, which overhung fallen leaves stained with blood — the squirrel left its nest, and sat securely chirping on boughs that bent toward ashes, which were the result of a flame that had given light for the planning and executing of bold and daring designs.

Many an animal was, no doubt, watching in that fresh light of morning for an opportunity to secure such prey as he was wont to satisfy his hunger upon; and there were other eyes watching an opportunity to satisfy a passion which will lead men often to more desperate deeds than ordinary hunger suggests. The quiet, beautiful scene, a lover of nature would have rejoiced in, was to be disturbed by other conflicts than those between cruel animals and their victims.

It was scarcely broad day light, when one of the Indian warriors thought he saw a movement in a clump of bushes, a dozen rods or more distant from him. He watched intently. He was not mistaken; other Indians had their suspicions excited; knowing glances were exchanged. The suspicious bush became more attractive to the savages. Presently, what was apparently a woman's bonnet, was to be seen cautiously elevated nearly to the top of the bushes; slowly it turned around as if there were eyes within, sharply looking out to ascertain if there were foes, or suspicious signs of foes, in view. A rifle report rang through the forest, and the exposed bonnet disappeared. Again the forest was free from unusual sounds. It was not long before Indians skulked from one tree to another. They were at first very cautious, but they saw nothing to awaken suspicion, and they became more bold. Now, one left his ambuscade, then another. It was not long before eight warriors stood near the spot where the fire of the night previous had gleamed on both exulting and hopeless faces. They talked rapidly, and seemed deciding upon the course they should pursue; suddenly their council was brought to a violent conclusion, by the unerring aim of half a dozen invisible rifles, and as many

savages springing into the air, fell dead; four others — two of them from the council, and two others from an ambush, they were about leaving to join the council — bounded away through the woods with an energy which indicated that each knew he who was the fleetest, stood the first chance of escape. The hindmost Indian had not gone many rods before a ball arrested his career.

Fleet Foot had his eye upon one who distanced all the others. He recognized him by peculiar marks as the savage who had well nigh overtaken him on the two trying occasions previously mentioned, when his fleetness saved his life. The Indian had no weapon but his hunting-knife. Fleet Foot dropped his unloaded rifle, and bounded swiftly in pursuit. Shouts rang after him as he sped on his way. The Indian, glancing behind him, saw what danger threatened. He redoubled his energies, yet Fleet Foot gained on him, cheered as he was in the daring race by Mac, who followed with all his speed, but was barely able to keep in sight.

Away went the savage, bounding over logs, leaping ravines, and climbing steep banks; and after him came Fleet Foot, straining every muscle to its utmost tension. The hunters were all excited about the chase, and several were endeavoring to keep in sight of those who had already lost sight of Fleet Foot. There was one person who could not join in the chase, who had deeper interest in his fate than all the hunters—an interest which was confessed in soft whispers, when Fleet Foot was taking care of her, as old Martin had directed him, in that hour of great suspense both to the hunters and to the Indians, which they had passed before daylight. She would have endeavored to restrain Fleet Foot from his mad

chase, but she did not know that such a race was to be run, until her lover was nearly out of her sight.

Fleet Foot was gaining faster and faster on the savage, who redoubled his energies; he took wild leaps and sudden turns, but the white man was equal to him in agility, and, at length, when there was a clear piece of woods before him, the savage found that he must soon be overtaken. Too brave to allow himself to be struck or taken prisoner when in flight, he turned and awaited his pursuer. Nothing daunted, Fleet Foot pressed forward. The Indian had the advantage, should he rush upon him, and the hunter checked his career when within a few paces of the savage. A moment the foes glanced at each other. Three times had Fleet Foot distanced this Indian: thrice to save his own life—the last time—the present one, to take the life of the red man. Each knew the other. Now was to come a struggle severer than any previously decided between them. The Indian was the larger man, and he was, perhaps, better skilled in the use of the knife.

The savage did not wait for his foe to recover from his long chase, but when his eye had run over the frame of his antagonist and taken in the distance between them, he sprang toward him fiercely, aiming a violent blow with his knife. Fleet Foot dexterously parried it, almost at the same moment giving the savage a left-handed blow which staggered him. Following up his advantage, Fleet Foot made a thrust at the Indian's breast; the red man caught the arm which bore a knife swiftly toward his heart, and then followed a tight wrestle—a moment, two knives gleamed in the air—then both fell upon the ground, and the Indian and the hunter were each struggling to escape the other's grasp.

Fleet Foot was borne to the earth, and the Indian, striving to keep him there, exerted himself also to the utmost to reach one of the knives. He was a stronger man than the hunter — he had a great advantage over him, yet the hunter held him so firmly, he could not reach a knife. He dare not release his hold the slightest, lest the hunter should spring to his feet.

His powerful knees were crushing the hunter's breast — his brawny hands were clenched around Fleet Foot's neck — a gleam of triumph danced in his savage eyes, which glared upon Fleet Foot's blackening face. The savage felt sure of his victim — his fleet and daring foe : this wicked joy expressed itself in every feature of his tawny countenance, and broke upon the air in a wild, fiendish laugh. That laugh was meant to be a knell for the hunter, but it nerved him to one great struggle — a struggle in which all his energy was concentrated — in which every muscle was strained — every nerve stretched ; he rose partly from the ground, bearing up the athletic savage, who lost the dangerous grasp by which he had for a few moments been almost forcing the hunter's eyes from their sockets ; but Fleet Foot only wasted his strength in that struggle — he fell back upon the earth completely in the power of the infuriated savage, who was swift to perceive the surest and quickest mode of wreaking his passion. He clenched in his right hand one of the knives which had fallen in the early part of the affray — he brandished it over his head — and from its polished blade bright reflections were a moment cast, as it hung in the air.

A low, shrill whistle might have been heard near the savage ; the gleaming knife fell, but the savage fell with it, his

features fixed in death, with that fiendish exultation stamped upon them, which had nerved Fleet Foot to his last effort. That whistle was from the swift passage of a rifle ball that lodged in the Indian's breast. With the report which rang after the ball, there came a shout that lifted Fleet Foot from his prostrated position.

Mac had come within rifle shot, just in time to save his friend's life.

Fleet Foot had been nearly strangled, and was much exhausted; but he soon rallied, and looking at the form of his foe, which was lying beside him, he said:

"It was a tight scuffle, Mac, by powder, and I'd been in kingdom come now, ef it hadn't been for you."

"That's oncomfortable true," answered Mac. "You brag about runnin', but it liked to lost your scalp for you this time. That fellow was enough for you on a race, and a leetle too much in a fight."

Fleet Foot and Mac, on retracing their steps, were met by the other hunters; then were joyful meetings which need not be described—nor scarcely need it be told, that when the party reached the fort (which it did early the following day), there were immediate preparations for a backwoods wedding, which was not long afterward celebrated in a rude, but for the period, distinguished style.

Fleet Foot figured prominently in the later annals of Kentucky, and was subsequently known as General ———. He left a posterity which has been engaged in modern politics as warmly as was ever their brave ancestor in pioneer enterprise.

