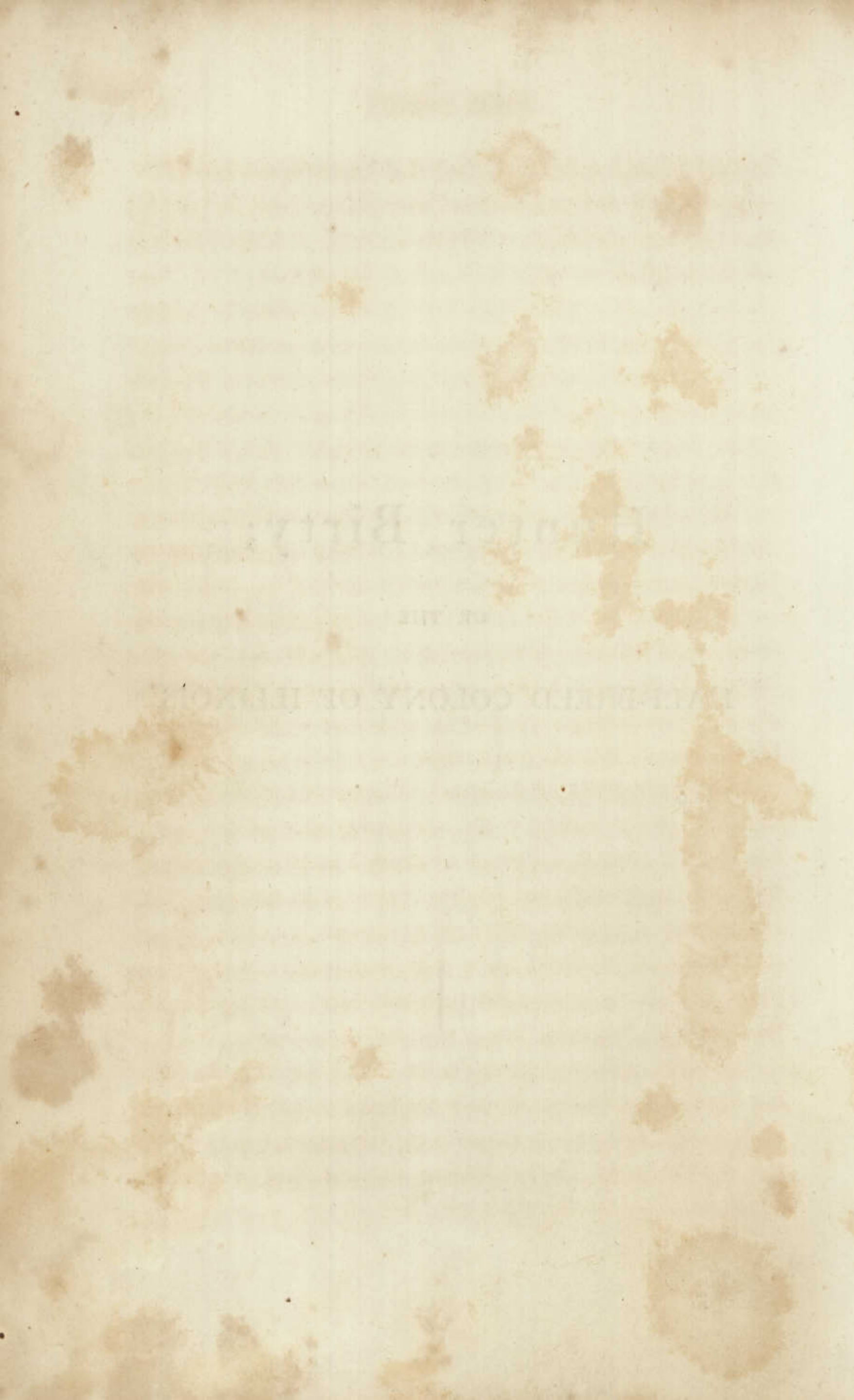
Hunter Birty;

OR THE

HALF-BREED COLONY OF ILLINOIS.

8



CHAPTER I.

THE MOUNTAIN HOME.

FROM the eastern bank of one of those swiftly flowing streams that water the mountains of Western Virginia, there stretched, many years ago, a narrow path, that had once been a highway for the deer, the bear and the Indian, but which, at the time of the opening of our story, was the trail leading to a hunter's cabin, from which, rising with the sun every morning, might be faintly seen, far up on the mountain, a thin column of blue smoke.

I would not assert that neither the moccasin of the Indian, the hoof of the deer, nor the ponderous paw of the bear, tracked this path at the period of which I write; but I record the fact, that upon the haunts, where perhaps they had ranged for centuries, unmolested except by each other, there was now a watchfulness exercised, which led, almost every day, to the thinning of their numbers. To the hunter they were all "varmin."

The cabin was built partly in the rocks, the situation having been selected for its advantages, in the event of an attack upon it by Indians, because there was treasure in it which the hunter knew needed strong defense, and to protect which he would sacrifice his life.

He was a man whose hair had been thinned and whitened by long exposure and severe hardship; and he was a woodsman practiced in all the arts of watchfulness, dexterity and intrigue, by which his forest foes were to be detected, attacked, or retreated from.

His cabin treasure was an Indian wife, whom he had stolen from a powerful tribe that occupied a district of country south-west from his retreat, in what is now geographically defined as the State of Kentucky. For nearly ten years, hunted from fortress to fortress, he eluded the pursuit of his enemies—the relatives of his captive. The love of the hunter and his wild-wood wife was romantic in its origin, but was true, and time only served to increase their mutual trust and confidence.

The hunter, upon an expedition of observation and discovery, had been captured by a party of Indians, after a desperate resistance. He was taken to their camp severely wounded, and placed under the care of the chief's daughter, that he might be restored to health and strength, as a victim of torture at their annual war-dance.

The incantations of the "medicine man" of the tribe served only to annoy the hunter; but the kind attentions of his tawny hostess were not bestowed in vain. He endeavored to learn her language, and soon they were able to converse otherwise than by signs. Then he was informed of his impending fate, and then he learned that the care bestowed upon him by the chief's daughter sprang more from the inclinations of her heart than from the commands of the warriors, who had confided their expected victim of triumph to her skill in the use and knowledge of the virtues of roots and herbs.

The hunter encouraged the Indian maiden's love, and when he was confident that the ties which bound her to him were strong enough, he planned an escape. The plan was successfully executed.

No marriage ceremonies united the hunter and the young squaw. He simply gave her his word that she should dwell in his wigwam; and he would be her protector. She was content, believing herself what civilized society understands by the term wife; and as a wife she should be regarded, for the hunter's promise was to him law.

Three children had been born in the hunter's cabin, yet at the period I have introduced it, it had but two inmates—the father and mother.

The hunter had visited a settlement lying eastward of the retreat he then occupied, about one hundred miles. The mother was, one afternoon during his absence, gathering mountain berries with her children. Two of them happened to stray a short distance from her, when she was startled by violent screams. With a mother's instinct and energy, she rushed in the direction whence proceeded the sounds, and saw her two children—her two youngest children—borne into the dark forest from an opening where they had been gathering fruit. She knew pursuit would be idle, and she employed her knowledge of Indian habits in endeavoring to protect her remaining child, the eldest son, who had observed the stealthy approach of his enemies, and was shrewd enough to elude them.

For many days the disconsolate mother sat trembling in her wigwam, fearing to build a fire, lest the ascending smoke might guide some foe to her retreat, and thus be the means of depriving her of the only solace left her. She had recog-

nized the Indians that had stolen the children for whom she mourned; they belonged to the tribe she had deserted, and she presumed them to be agents of her father, who would not destroy *her* life, but would rob her of her children, in hopes of recalling her to his campfire and wigwam. She had therefore no fears for her own safety, but she had lively fears for the safety of her husband and the child that wept with her in her desolate home. Every unusual sound that reached her in her solitude, she feared might be the stealthy step of some foe, or she hoped might prove the signal of the hunter's near approach. Yet with this hope was mingled chilling fear, for the hunter loved his children, and she knew his burst of passion, at finding two of them gone, would be terrible.

He returned at an hour when the wife least expected him. It was early morn. He had traveled all night, in his eagerness to reach home, as if, by some mysterious agency, he had been informed of the misfortune that had befallen him. But the backwoodsman of that day knew the dangers to which his home was always exposed, and whenever long absent, his heart beat with thrilling emotion on his return, in dread that he should find, where had been his cabin or his wigwam, but smouldering embers, in which whitened the bones of all who were dear to him on earth.

The hunter gave a signal as he approached within a few yards of his cabin. It was unanswered. It had never before failed to bring forth his wife and children to bid him welcome. They could not be in the woods, beyond hearing, at that early hour. His steps quickened and his breath grew shorter; he felt that the fears which almost unmanned him were well grounded. He burst open the cabin door—

there sat his wife—crouching from view, with her child beside her—the very picture of dread and despair. She had not heard the hunter's signal, and little expecting him at that hour, had been surprised; she knew his footstep, but dared not meet his glance.

The hunter seemed to comprehend, from his wife's appearance, that his children had been torn from their home, for well knew he that thus would his Indian foes wreak vengeance upon him at the first opportunity. Demanding, in mingled backwoods English and mongrel Indian, an explanation from the mother, he rushed into the forest, with a terrible oath of vengeance upon his lip. He struck off through the pathless woods, in the direction which he supposed would lead him to the principal camp of the tribe of which his squaw's father was chief. It was distant several day's journey. He took no rest, and partook of no food but some dried meat, which he carried in a pouch by his side.

He reached a camp the second day, near nightfall. An inexperienced woodsman would have supposed it deserted, but the practiced hunter knew better. He discovered evidences of recent occupation, and he believed it to be the rendezvous of a small party of Indians—perhaps the party that had stolen his children. He determined to watch.

When gloom began to gather thickly in the forest, the hunter was secreted where, with his rifle, he commanded a complete view of the Indian camp. The night had advanced several hours, and yet the hunter watched without token of the return of the savages.

The anxious father was about to take up his eager march through the woods, when the snapping of a twig arrested his attention. Presently he discovered objects moving, and in

a few minutes he was satisfied that the camp was that night to be occupied. A fire was built, and by its light he saw four Indians, who belonged to the tribe of which he was in pursuit. He could not restrain manifestations of passion and impatience, but he was too old a hunter to attack four Indians single-handed, let his passion be ever so intense, when there was hope of overcoming them by stratagem.

Nursing his passion for revenge, the hunter waited until the Indians slumbered. When their camp fire burned low, he crept near the Indians, with footsteps as noiseless as those with which the wily panther approaches its destined victim. He was armed in Indian style. With his tomahawk he launched two of his foes into eternity, without waking either from his slumber; the third one made a sudden movement as the hunter aimed a blow at his head, and was only slightly wounded—with a fierce yell he sprang to his feet, but the hunter was prepared for his movement, and dispatched him with his knife before he could discover the number or character of his assailants. The fourth savage, aroused by the yell of his companion, would have fled precipitately, but the hunter confronted him, and a desperate struggle ensued. He was an athletic savage—in ordinary circumstances more than the hunter's equal, but now he was confused and unable to employ his strength to the best advantage, while every nerve and muscle in the hunter's body was at its highest tension, and he hurled his antagonist to the ground as if he had been a child.

The savage knew his fate. He was too proud to plead for mercy, even had he thought such a plea would avail him anything—but the hunter, with his tomahawk suspended over him, offered him his life if he would tell what had become of

the children his tribe had stolen a few days previous. At first the savage denied all knowledge of the children, but, at length, informed the hunter that one of the Indians he had murdered stole them—that they had been taken to the camp of the chief, near the mouth of the Ohio, and that it was the design of the party he had that night vanquished, assisted by his wife's brother and a warrior who had aspired to the possession of her master's wigwam, to watch around his cabin until they had an opportunity to carry away with them the hunter's wife and remaining child; or, if not able to accomplish all this, at least get possession of the boy, and join the main body of the tribe at a southern camp, whence they would cross the great river, beyond the pursuit of the hunter or any party he might rally.

Every threat or process of torture the hunter could devise failed to wrest from the Indian any information in regard to the foes the hunter had not met. Knowing the cunning and desperation of the warriors, he had reason to tremble with fear that, during his absence from home, both his wife and child might be wrested from him. He dare not give the Indian, in his power, his liberty, lest he might be pursued by him and treacherously shot; but he had promised to spare his life, and could not violate his word.

With strips of deer-skin, prepared for thongs—always a part of the hunter's equipment—he bound the "red varmint," as he termed him, hand and foot, and leaving him to his fate, retraced his steps towards his cabin with as much eagerness as he had traveled from it.

When he approached within a few miles of his home, such was the fury which seemed to possess him, that he was reckless of consequences, and rushed madly forward, heedless of

all those nice observations which would have protected him from savage intrigue. Then would he have fallen an easy prey to a wily redskin, but none crossed his path. Once more he stood before his cabin, impressed with a dreadful sense of outrage and misfortune. The door was fastened—his impatience could brook no restraint—he burst it open—he found his cabin uninhabited.

With one mad yell he rushed back into the forest. Whither he would have gone, what fate would have befallen him, the imagination may not conceive, had not a piercing scream arrested his furious career. The mother at least was not a victim or a captive. The father and mother, tender only in their own love and in the love of their children, met, mingling their tears; with the hunter they were tears of agony rather than tears of simple grief—agony that he had not been able to glut his revenge—that he had not met the relentless savages who had desolated his home.

His suspicions had been realized. The mother's savage brother, and more than savage lover, in his absence had dragged away, to their hidden haunts, his eldest born, and would have dragged the mother with them, but they feared pursuit. They did not murder her, for part of their scheme was to glut revenge by inflicting torment. She had endeavored to follow the ruthless invaders, but dreadful agony and thought of the husband who would return—from pursuit of other foes—for ought she knew, with the children first torn from her, and find his home deserted, chained her to the scene of her sufferings.

From that hour the hunter was a man of silence and sorrow. He nursed a revenge that was consuming his vitality, yet he never seemed more capable of the endurance of hard-

ship—more successful in the taking of valuable game. He dare not absent himself a single night from his cabin, for fear the companion of his deep grief would be torn from him, and he resolved to change the location of his retreat.

His intimate acquaintance with the country enabled him to select a spot advantageously. He chose the site I have described in the opening of this chapter. Thither he immediately emigrated, and labored diligently to construct winter quarters out of bark, poles, and the skins of wild beasts.

His cabin stood at the mouth of a shallow cave, into which, when pursuing a bear, the hunter had once been driven by a violent storm—a storm which bowed the ancient trees on the mountain, and filled the air with branches twisted from their massive trunks.

Hidden by thick foliage and overhanging rocks, the hunter's retreat was one not easily discovered, while it commanded a widely extended view of valleys, rivers and mountains.

Here the hunter, with some assurance of safety, could leave his wife, for he never would consent that she should accompany him on any of his lengthy hunting expeditions. He was absent sometimes many weeks, and he did not often return without numerous scalps at his belt, but he never brought to the mother any satisfactory tidings of her lost children.

Several winters had left their snows on the secret path that led to his retreat, and summer had come again, when, one sultry evening, the hunter toiled up the mountain, after an absence from home of more than a month. He was weary of limb and weary of heart. He had wandered farther than usual, in the hope that he might find some Indian or white

man, who could give him tidings of his lost treasure; that hope was not realized, and the wretched man felt that his hold on the things of earth was growing weaker every day—hope alone had thus far sustained him, and hope was dying.

His footsteps that evening were not unobserved. For several days, as he wandered listlessly through the forest, his course had been tracked by a skulking enemy—now the eagle eyes of that enemy were upon his movements.

As the hunter approached his home, his forest instincts became acute again, and he exercised his usual caution in concealing traces of his progress, that no foe might find easy access to his hiding place. The shades of night gathered on the mountain, ere the Indian lost sight of the hunter, but then the gloom gave the hunter opportunities of concealment, which he never failed to embrace when near home; and he was lost to his pursuer.

The hunter reached his cabin, to sit down with a disconsolate companion, and mourn in silence; and the Indian stealthily and swiftly descended the mountain, attended by the doleful howl of numerous wolves, answering each other from thicket to thicket and from rock to rock.

CHAPTER II.

AN EXPECTED ATTACK.

The glories of autumn were on the forest. The valley was in deep shadow, but the rays of the setting sun illuminated the mountain's crest. Light clouds of smoke, which had risen from the hunter's cabin, hung in the tops of the trees, among whose withering foliage the evening wind moved, with a sound like the mournful music of thickly falling rain-drops. The hunter, with his sad wife beside him, looked upon the valley until night stretched her "sable mantle" over it, and far away, where the firmament seemed to hang on a level with his vision, he could see nothing but the bright stars. They led his thoughts to the "hunting grounds" that, according to Indian tradition, are prepared for good Spirits; and there, he knew, if never again on earth, he should surely meet the dear ones that had been so cruelly torn from their home. The father and mother had that night calculated the respective ages of their children. The father said, had the oldest been spared him, he would have been able to chase the bear and the deer; and the mother had dwelt upon the comfort her younger children would have been to her, while assisting her to prepare for winter their clothing of skins and furs. With such thoughts

in their minds, both had seated themselves near the hearthstone, on which were a few fading embers, apparently listening to the pensive wailing that seemed to float among the boughs, which, in summer, drooped with clustering leaves over the front of their cabin.

Suddenly the hunter started to his feet, and all his senses seemed to be absorbed in an effort to hear every sound that might be produced within half a mile.

His wife knew that he suspected his Indian foes had discovered his hiding place, and were about to attack it. Taking his rifle from its accustomed place, and examining the priming, he stepped softly across the cabin, in the direction opposite that whence the sounds that alarmed him had proceeded; then he climbed a rude ladder, which he had constructed in a fissure in the rock behind his cabin, and in a few moments he stood, himself shielded from view, even in daylight, where he could look down upon the path leading to his cabin, and upon the very spot where he imagined his supposed enemy had been. The sky was clear and the stars shone brightly; the hunter discovered an object near the cabin door, but whether it was a savage Indian or a savage beast, he could not decide. Cautiously he crept near the object, and, at length, he satisfied himself that it was a human being. Whether friend or foe it was now his task to ascertain. He presumed it a foe, as a matter of course, and with all his backwoods shrewdness he watched and waited to see whether any signals were conveyed to or from the spy. Several hours elapsed, and the hunter had detected nothing. He dare not explore the woods or rocks around his cabin, for fear he might fall a victim to some foe in ambush; but he determined, at all hazard, to know the character of the indi-

vidual at his door. Returning into the cabin, he described the state of affairs to his wife, armed her with his tomahawk, and taking his unsheathed hunter's knife in his hand, he suddenly drew open the cabin door, grasped the object lying before it, and dragged it within the enclosure, re-fastening the door as he did so. Then arousing his captive from deep slumber, he saw before him, what at first appearance he took for an Indian boy, about twelve years of age; but no sooner did the youth fairly recover from the surprise consequent upon the manner in which he had been treated, than he cried, in the Indian tongue, "You won't kill me, I am not Indian."

The hunter astonished the boy by straining him to his breast, and he cried—

"It is the first one, the biggest boy."

The mother falling upon her knees, beside the father and son, poured forth, in incoherent sentences, a torrent of thanks to the Great Spirit, who had thus mysteriously, and, as she supposed, supernaturally restored her first-born to her.

The first paroxysm of joy over, the hunter's forest instincts became active again, and he demanded the manner in which the youth had reached the cabin. The conversation between father and son was a dramatic one. I cannot give it in the language I write, and must content myself with stating its substance.

The hunter learned that his son, after he was torn from his mother, was dragged many miles south-west, where he was put under the charge of an Indian, whom, by the description, the hunter knew to be the same individual he had left at the camp, where he had killed those who stole his children. The boy roamed with the tribe, but was never

allowed to be out of sight of this Indian and his squaw, until a few weeks previous to the time at which he was restored to his home, when the Indian left the camp and did not return for many days. For the first time he then took the boy on a long hunting excursion. They were absent from the main body of the tribe a number of days. Again the Indian commanded the boy to follow him, and he was brought into the vicinity of the mountain on which he had found his father's retreat. The Indian told him that he brought him to this mountain that he might find his father—that he should leave him, return to the camp and report him dead. He had wandered on the mountain many days, but saw no signs of human life, until on the evening we have described; while seeking a place in which to spend the night safely, he discovered a thin wreath of smoke ascending from the tops of the trees; he traveled towards the point from which he supposed it to proceed, until night overtook him, and without knowing that human beings were so near him, he had lain down in the dark and had fallen into the sleep from which his father aroused him. He had lately heard of the children, who were torn from home before him, but he had not seen them since the first week of his captivity.

A great burden was lifted from the hearts of the hunter and his wife. He believed that the kindness shown him by the Indian who had returned his son, was an example of Indian gratitude for which he should be truly thankful, although he could not regard the debt the Indian owed him as a very heavy one, for he left him but a slim chance for life. He could construe the return of his boy in no other manner, however, and he lived in hope that his other children would

some day be returned, yet he was determined to relax no effort to recover them. Father and son could now hunt together—he had a companion whom he could take with him in his long marches, or leave to guard his cabin.

The hunter thought often of what his boy had said about the smoke that had served as the beacon to direct him, and he never allowed an evening to pass without kindling fire where its smoke might ascend as it did on the night the boy returned. Summer and winter there was always smoke over the hunter's cabin at sunrise and sunset, for he knew that if he had a friend in the Indian camp, who ever came in the vicinity of the mountain, he would observe this peculiarity, and understand it as a land-mark.

The hunter did not know the true character of this Indian. He was not aware of his reputation as a cunning fellow whose delight was intrigue.

Some reader may think, for a man of wandering life in a country infested with treacherous Indians and savage beasts, in whose blood his hands were often imbued, the hunter manifested unusual affection for his offspring. Not greater for them was his tenderness or concern, than the tenderness or concern of the panther for her cubs.

The keen observer of human motive, well knows, that beneath a cold and rough exterior often beats a warm heart, and it is a matter of reliable history, that many of the early Western Pioneers—the men who drove back the wild beast and the skulking Indian, and turned the wilderness into cultivated fields, were men of the kindest nature, and most benevolent impulses.

While they were valiant in defense of their homes and

relentless in their vengeance upon those who injured their families, they were ever ready to succor the needy — assist the unfortunate—and sympathize with the suffering.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOW.

SNOWS that had fallen lightly in the valleys, but were deep enough in the mountain glens to afford the hunter paths by which he tracked to their hiding places the animals necessary to his support, had long since melted, and small streams were rushing in mad currents, roaring among the ravines. Birds, as Lamartine says, "the poetry of song—the hymn of air," were picking soft buds from low bushes, while they looked up to the spreading branches above them, and rejoiced in the promise of green leaves and bright flowers. Throughout all nature there was

> "A sense of renovation
> Of freshness and of health."

The hunter, reviewing a season of comparative quiet, cherished a fierce determination to shrink from neither exposure nor toil in his dreary search for tidings of his lost ones. For the first time since the return of his boy, he went upon an expedition which, if pursued according to his plan, would keep him from home several weeks. He had instructed the youth in the mysteries of forest life, and warning him to be watchful, he felt confident that the boy would not unwarily fall into serious difficulty. It was one of the hunter's most

impressive injunctions, that he should not wander far from the cabin. The boy had his father's restless disposition, and this was the most difficult command for him to obey, yet such was the spirit the father had infused into him toward the Indians, who at the first opportunity would drag his mother back to the wigwam she had deserted for his father's love, that even this command he seldom disobeyed; indeed such was the mother's anxiety in regard to him, that he was seldom allowed to be out of her sight for many hours in succession. One day he detected traces of a bear near the cabin. They led down the mountain—he followed the track, in hopes of overtaking the animal, but more in the hope of meeting his father, whose return was now daily expected. He lost the track which he had followed, and late in the afternoon sat down near a path he supposed his father would travel on his return. He had watched a short time, when his quick ear detected the approach of some being, but not along the path. Seeking a hiding place he looked anxiously for the friend or foe that was drawing near. Presently he was able to discover that it was an Indian, and soon he saw that it was the Indian who had restored him to his parents. With an impulse of gratitude the boy stepped from his hiding place, and boldly advanced to meet the savage, who sprang behind a tree, as the youth came in sight, but, in a moment, recognizing him, gave him apparently an honest, heartfelt welcome.

Night was approaching, and the youth not forgetting his mother's anxiety at his protracted absence, told his savage companion that he must return home, and, as they wished to converse together, the Indian accompanied him. They had proceeded some distance when the Indian refused to go any

farther, for fear they might meet the hunter and a dreadful fray ensue. The boy told the Indian then of his father's absence, and of his feeling toward him, who had been the means of restoring his child. At this information the savage's countenance contracted with a smile which expressed the shrewd deceit of his character, and he walked on without hesitancy until nearly sunset. The boy pointing to a column of smoke rising among the trees around the cabin, related the service it had rendered him in finding home, and told his father's determination in regard to it, on account of that service. The Indian took leave of the boy, assigning as a reason that he had already been too long absent from the party that had accompanied him into the vicinity.

In a few minutes the boy made glad his mother's heart by appearing before her unharmed. While he told his mother about his afternoon adventure, the savage he had met stood in sight of the cabin. He marked well its situation, and not until he felt satisfied that he could approach it in the darkest night, did he retrace his steps. When he had walked half an hour, he stood before a fire, around which, wrapped in their blankets, lay ten others of his tribe. They were immediately aroused. The new comer held an animated conversation with one who was the leader of the band. With the hunter's pretended friend as a guide, in Indian file, the whole party then began to ascend the mountain.

The young hunter slumbered on his rude couch, while the mother waited with sleepless eyes and attentive ears, for the signal which should announce the return of the lord of the cabin. She fancied she heard approaching footsteps, and she arose and went to the door to listen. Immediately she was alarmed by a violent knocking. The young hunter was

aroused, and he demanded who was at the door. He was answered in the Indian tongue:

"The friend you left a little while ago in the forest. I have lost my companions. I am faint and weary. You will not refuse me food and rest—I have been wounded by a fall in the dark, and my strength fails me."

"You are alone," said the boy, "and would not deceive us."

"Have I not too often befriended you to be now suspected? Why did I liberate you from captivity, and restore you to your parents, at the risk of the vengeance of my tribe?"

"Do not trust him," said the mother. "We know not that it is the friendly Indian."

"Yes," answered the boy, "I know it is; I know his voice."

"By the Great Spirit I swear I would not deceive you," replied the Indian, as he heard the conversation of the mother and son. "You will not refuse a cup of water! I will sleep at your door till morning—you can see then I have told you no lie."

The youth had confidence in the Indian, and could not resist the benevolent impulse which dictated compliance with the savage's request; still he was determined to be watchful, and arming himself with a huge knife, he removed a portion of the fastenings of the cabin door; instantly it was burst open, and the treacherous red-skin, with his party, rushed into the cabin.

"We have come," said the leader of the Indians, (who was the brother of the hunter's wife, and now the chief of the tribe, his father being dead,) "to take back the fugitive squaw and her papoose to the wigwam she deserted for our

enemy. He has slain many of her kindred. His blood shall yet stain the leaves of the forest. You must go."

"You are not my kindred. You are my foes. You may take my body—the Great Spirit will take my spirit;" returned the hunter's wife, brandishing a tomahawk in a manner which showed that she did not speak idle words.

"A squaw defies us!" said the brother of the hunter's wife. "We have no time to waste."

The chief rushed towards the hunter's wife, and the false friend grasped the boy. A struggle ensued. The squaw, with uplifted tomahawk, for a moment kept her savage brother at bay, while the other Indian endeavored to wrest from the boy a large knife, with which he was armed. By a glimmering light from the cabin fire, the dusky forms of the leading Indians, with their allies, grouped at the cabin door, were to be seen for an instant, in the position I have described: in a second all was changed.

"Strike," cried a firm voice, in a language all understood; "kill him as quick as you would a wild-cat."

The hunter stood in his cabin. He had impetuously dashed through the guards at the door. He saw the Indian who menaced his wife, and before he had time fairly to recognize the hunter, gave him a blow which caused him to reel and fall helpless upon the ground; but in that fall the Indian expressed the accumulated savageness of his nature and his passion for revenge. His knife drank the blood of his sister. She fell, with a cry for help, upon the body of her brutal relative.

With a full sense of his situation swelling his heart, quickening his pulses, bracing his nerves and contracting his muscles, the hunter met those who rushed upon him to

avenge the death of their chief. He fought for his home, for his children, and for the revenge that had been consuming his life for years, and he fought with remarkable power and desperation. He saw not his boy — he knew not what had been his fate, but he knew that before him lay four Indians whom his powerful arm had slain, and still, though losing blood from a number of severe wounds, he fought on. The Indians, without their leader, without the animating spirit that led them to the hunter's cabin, began to give way. Furiously the hunter pressed upon them, and only two escaped without serious injury. Among the dead were the hunter's chief foes, the false friend and his wife's brother, and among the dead also, as he believed, was that wife, for whom he had fought so valiantly.

The hunter pursued the savages a few steps beyond the cabin door, then staggered back, and, exhausted with the loss of blood, fell across his threshold. He knew that he should die — he had not seen his boy in the fray — how joyful was the hope that he lived and might avenge the wrongs of his father and mother, perhaps be the means of liberating the children so long searched for.

The father, with an effort to collect his failing strength, called his boy. His hopes fell when there was no answer, but again he called, and then his hopes rose again, when there came a firm response. Crawling from a hiding place, where he had lain with a wound on his right arm, which had disabled it, the boy crept towards his father. The dying hunter took the youth's hand, and eloquent, even in the meagre language used between them, told the boy of all the hardships he had suffered on account of his feud with the

tribe of Indians to which his mother had belonged, and then he said to him:

"The pale faces are our friends. Soon the red varmints will be driven from these vallies and mountains — the pale faces will dwell in them. Go among the pale faces — join those who would drive back the red-skins—have no mercy for them—avenge your father's and your mother's death—and by the Great Spirit swear you will seek, and if alive, liberate your kindred in bondage — if dead, exterminate their destroyers. Never forget your father's dying command. Swear!"

The boy took the oath as his father administered it to him —and then the hunter said,

"Let me die in my cabin."

With his last energies, he dragged himself into his cabin, near the spot where lay his wife's body. And there with a convulsive clutch of his boy's hand the brave hunter took his last breath.

Scenting blood, a band of wolves came to the cabin, and dolefully howled while the young hunter watched. They glutted their appetites upon the bodies of the Indians which had fallen at the cabin door, yet the boy heeded them not.

When the grey mist of the morning began to gather upon the mountain's summit, the young hunter had secured the cabin, so that he knew the bodies of his parents were safe from the ravages of the animals that would for many nights howl their requiem, and when the sun began to dispel the mists, with his father's rifle, knife and tomahawk and hunter's coat, the boy wound his way down the mountain, at the foot of which he knew a path that would lead him to a settlement where his father had traded, and which had often been described to him.

One of those whom the young hunter believed to have been killed, arose from among the corpses in the ill-fated cabin and sought anxiously for traces of his footsteps. The youth had feared pursuit, and the "signs" of his progress were ingeniously obliterated, until he felt himself safe.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW FRIENDS.

It was a hazardous undertaking for that youth, then not eighteen years of age, with no companions but his rifle, his tomahawk and his knife, to plunge into the unbroken wilderness threatened at every step with foes seeking human blood; but he had no alternative, and he was accustomed to hazardous enterprises—the dangers of the forest were well understood by him, and he feared not to encounter them.

It has often been said that men's characters never develop till they are thrown upon their own resources. The young hunter has yet to develop his character, and in the pathless woods, with no counsellor, no companion, and a solemn vow to fulfill, he was indeed thrown upon his own resources.

He had often heard his father talk of a settlement of whites northeast of their mountain retreat. Thitherward he bent his steps. He had wandered many days along rushing streams and through dense woods, when he rested one evening near a spring gushing from massive and towering rocks. He prepared to render palatable portions of a deer he had shot, and as he stood holding a piece of the meat, hunter fashion, over a brisk fire, was startled by a slight noise behind him. Before he could turn to ascertain its cause he was

grasped by two powerful arms, and held in such a manner that he was completely at the mercy of his captor. He struggled violently.

"Keep quiet, little red-skin, I ain't a-goin' to hurt you," said a rough voice. Still the boy struggled, and his captor released him saying,

"You've spilt your dinner, but never mind, I've got a plenty. You ain't all Ingin. What you doin' here? Where'd ye come from?"

The boy felt that he would not be injured by the brawny hunter who had surprised him, and employing what few English words he had picked up, he told truthfully how he had lost his father and mother, and then stated his own present purpose.

"You'll go with me," replied the backwoodsman. "We'll take care o' them red varmints. What'd they call you, little Ingin?"

The youth gave the name he had borne among the Indians, and pronounced it several times, but the hunter could not catch the correct sound, and with a gesture of impatience, he cried—

"Taint no odds—call me Clinker, and I'll call you Birty. I know'd a fellow o' that name once, and a tarnal cunnin' creter he was too."

There was a frankness about this backwoodsman which won the boy's confidence. After they had eaten together, and Birty, as we shall hereafter designate him, had related the principal incidents of his history, Clinker said, "You're just the chap I wanted to scar up. Yer haint no body to look after ye, and over these mountains here, I've got a gal 'bout your size as haint got nobody to take care o' her 'ceptin

when she goes to another cabin 'bout ten miles off. Them tarnal red-skins took her mother's scalp one day, when I was a huntin', but I reckon since a few on 'em have paid for that scalp. You an' that gal can look out for the old cabin, an' she needn't trouble her nabors. Agreed, little Ingin ?"

Birty offered no objections, but expressed himself glad of the opportunity; provided it should not interfere with his determination to seek out his brothers who were in Indian bondage.

" Haint I got a spite, too, agin them varmints, and won't we hunt 'em for each other," answered Clinker.

On the second day after this conversation, Birty was shown his new home. Its garden spot broke the wilderness, near a small stream which wound through a thickly timbered valley, but which, from the distance he first viewed it, looked only like a dark line stretched across the tops of the trees.

It was a cabin of more pretensions than his father's. It had a chimney, in the solitary window there were a few panes of glass, and it was surrounded by a small corn field. Here Clinker left his adopted son until he should find the girl who was to be his companion. Birty met her on the following morning. She was a tall, athletic, but well formed maiden, with a countenance frank and intelligent, though bronzed to a shade that Kentucky girls of the present day would think most fatal to matrimonial prospects. Her attire was not very similar to that fashionable in our time. Her hair was confined carelessly by a large thorn — her dress consisted of home-made cloth and skins, which hung about her in a manner innocent of art.

Her name was Martha. Her father called her Mat, and he told her she must consider Birty as a brother. He should

leave them hereafter to take care of his cabin. Between these young persons, thus thrown together, there sprung up naturally a mutual sympathy which ripened into a friendship as pure as the friendship of a brother and a sister. They were as brother and sister.

Birty was naturally a musician, and sitting at the cabin door on a pleasant evening, he would sing the wild songs he had heard his mother sing. Gradually he learned to whistle, in imitation of the birds that built their nests, and swung in the branches overhanging the cabin. He taught Martha to sing his wild Indian songs, and he instructed her to imitate the varying notes of the wild birds. She was a ready pupil, and soon excelled her master. Many a pleasant hour did the two children of the forest spend together thus employed.

Those were rare concerts in the deep woods, by the glad birds and the rude backwoodsman, with his untutored companion. Willful sportsmen did not then frighten the harmless bird from its nest or from its leafy trysting place, and the charmed songsters were not alarmed when Birty and Martha joined them in their hymns of praise.

Would that more of those who now love music had such respect for the wild songs of the wild birds that they dare not level the murderous barrel at the songsters, and that those who must have sport would all find it elsewhere than in shooting the birds that would make their nests in farm yards, or near our village dwellings.

Birty's life in this valley, for the time and circumstances, was a quiet one, too quiet for his restless nature, and for the fierce passion to revenge the grievous wrongs of his family, which burned within him.

He had grown to be a man in strength and stature, and he was eager to travel towards the Indian hunting-grounds where he hoped to gain tidings of the playmates of his early youth. Day after day his eagerness grew more exciting, and when, by a settler, who spent a night at the cabin, he learned that a party of hunters was about to explore the wilds of the then entirely unsettled Kentucky Territory, he resolved to be one of the number. This resolve he communicated to Clinker.

"You don't do that alone," answered Clinker, to Birty's astonishment. "I'll find them chaps myself. There's nothin' here to keep a feller."

"But ye don't consider," answered Birty, "who'll watch the cabin and look arter Mat."

"She'll go to the settlement—we shan't be gone more'n half the winter. We can lick enough o' them red-skins in that time."

So it was fixed—Clinker and Birty joined the hunters, who were to explore the wild lands of Kentucky, and Clinker's daughter took up her abode in one of the cabins of a settlement about ten miles from the spot she had assisted to cultivate in the wilderness. Birty and Martha parted like brother and sister. When they took leave of each other Clinker, in his rough but honest way, said:

"Thar, I'll be licked by a red-skin, if I didn't know a tarnal sight better, I'd think, Birty, as how you and Mat were some kin. It's astonishing how you've tuck to each other."

Clinker knew not the fate in store for his daughter, or he might have manifested something of the feeling for which he ridiculed Birty.

He had not been absent from the settlement ten days, when a large party of Indians attacked it in the night, burned several cabins, and took a number of women and children prisoners, among whom was Martha.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTIVE.

It was late in the month of September, 1775, when Clinker and Birty joined the party that was to explore the Western wilds. The place of rendezvous was Powell's valley. The company consisted, in the language of the times, of "twenty-seven guns," or twenty-seven fighting men. Daniel Boone, the renowned Pioneer, was one of that party, as was also Hugh McGary and several other hardy hunters from the backwoods of North Carolina.

The history of that expedition is a portion of the history of Kentucky; it is known not to have afforded much opportunity for the ambitious to distinguish themselves, but Birty so conducted himself that he elicited the admiration of Boone. That old hunter separated from the rest of the party, at Dick's creek, leaving them to pursue their way to Harrodsburg, then a settlement of four cabins, while he bent his course toward Boonesborough, the site of the first fort erected by the white man in Kentucky. He invited Birty to accompany him. Birty accepted the invitation.

"You're a tarnal fool," said Clinker, when Birty told him of his determination. "Ye better stick to the other chaps."

"We didn't come here to plant corn. I'm for fightin'

Ingins. These fellers aint a goin' to do no fightin'—Boone's the chap what'll make the rascals scarcer."

"Them's facts, Birty—and fightin' Ingins is what we're arter. If you leave this crowd so'll I."

Thus it was agreed upon, and Birty and Clinker, without adventure of note, accompanied Boone and his party to Boonesborough, and took up their abode in the fort. Mann Butler, in his history of Kentucky, says:

"Well might the Indians, could they have anticipated the faintest shadow of the ills in store for them, and their whole race, from this foothold of the white man have contested the fatal lodgement with the last drop of their blood. The genius of their Pontiac, their Turtle and their Tecumseh, did not display itself more gloriously at Detroit against St. Clair, and on the Thames, than it might have done, in preventing the white man from erecting his forts in the great hunting grounds of their tribes.

"A fort in those rude military times, consisted of pieces of timber sharpened at the end, and fairly lodged in the ground; rows of pickets enclosed the desired space, which embraced the cabins of the inhabitants. A block house, of superior care and strength, commanding the sides of the fort, with or without a ditch, completed the fortifications, or stations as they were called; generally the sides of the interior cabins formed the sides of the fort. Slight as this advance was in the art of war, it was more than sufficient against attacks of small arms, in the hands of such desultory warriors, as their irregularities of supplies necessarily rendered the Indians. Such was the nature of the military structures of the Pioneers against their enemies. They were even more formi-

dable in the cane brakes and in the woods than before these imperfect fortifications."

There fairly began young Birty's career as a daring backwoodsman. There he had the first opportunity of associating freely with men and women—joining in their amusements or taking part in their athletic sports.

A certain number of the most active men about the fort, were selected as hunters for the families which there had homes. One of the most fortunate of those hunters was Birty. He was a young man of remarkable muscular development, and his power of endurance was astonishing even to some of the old hunters, whom he met. He was in the habit of making long excursions from the fort, and he would not allow even Clinker to accompany him. On his return from these exhibitions he told often of conflicts with Indians, but he never appeared with a scalp at his belt. Once he related an encounter with a brawny savage, to Clinker, who, as if doubting Birty's word, said:

"Where's your trophy, boy? Show us the critter's har."

"I never scalped an Ingin in my life, and never will. Ye don't 'spose, Clinker, I haint no more respect for myself an' a bear cub, what you couldn't get to touch a dead carcass. Taint in me, Clinker; I hate Ingins, but when they're dead I let 'em alone."

Spring came. Clinker had returned to Virginia, to seek in vain for his cherished Mat. Birty still made the Boonesborough fort his rendezvous, though he was seldom there many days in succession.

Early in the summer of 1776, unmistakable "signs" of Indians, with warlike intentions, were discovered in the neighborhood of the fort. Birty took it upon himself to be

a spy upon their movements. The unbroken forest was now his dwelling place, but he often thought of his Virginia home. Numerous birds sang in the branches of the trees forever overhanging him in his wanderings, and his only recreation was whistling such notes as most nearly imitated their varied warblings.

He discovered one afternoon satisfactory evidences of the close proximity of a considerable body of Indians. All of his forest cunning, and his backwoods instincts were awake. Night approached, and still he met none of the enemy; however, he knew a party of them must that night encamp in the vicinity. He watched eagerly for signs of their camp, believing that they intended to make an unexpected attack upon the fort at Boonesborough or at Harrodsburg, and he was determined to thwart their intentions by giving the inhabitants timely warning.

The full round moon rose behind the trees and shone clearly upon the ancient woods. Birty looked up through the foliage and saw distinctly broken patches of the blue sky, but he could detect no curling smoke for which he watched as a sign of the savage camp.

He prepared to take his evening meal and roll himself in his blanket within the sheltering top of a fallen tree, when he fancied he heard a familiar, but for that place and hour, a very strange sound. It grew louder and appeared to come nearer. Birty left his hiding place and cautiously took a position where, without being observed, he could see any object that might approach in the direction of the sounds.

Presently the hunter answered the sounds; then thinking of the exercises he had had at his Virginia home, he imitated those birdwarblings with which he had been familiar.

To his astonishment they were all answered perfectly. His curiosity was now wrought to a pitch, that would have induced him to brave any danger in its gratification. Again he imitated the song of a familiar bird—again it was answered. Now he examined the priming of his rifle—satisfied himself that his knife and tomahawk were safe, and skulking from tree to tree, approached the spot whence he imagined his notes had been answered. Standing at the foot of a venerable tree, he saw a young squaw, who appeared to be listening eagerly for some sound by which she had been startled.

As the hunter watched her she poured forth a gush of melody that could be likened only to the mocking bird's wild music. Birty, when the squaw's voice ceased, echoed those sounds, and the squaw's attention was fixed upon the hunter, as he stood with his rifle leaning against his arm, and his polished knife gleaming from his belt in the moon-light.

Cries of recognition escaped both the hunter and the squaw—Birty and Martha Clinker had again met. Explanations were mutually demanded, and conversing in the Indian tongue, which Birty learned in his youth, and which Martha had learned in her captivity, Birty told how it happened that he was there, and what had befallen him since they parted. Martha related the circumstances of her captivity, and Birty desired she should that night flee with him to Boonesborough, whence she could return to Virginia in quest of her father. Martha refused. Birty urged her to give the reasons. She answered:

"My heart leaped to see you as does the heart of the doe for a lost fawn, and I would greet my father as the fawn would greet the long absent doe, but I cannot go back with you now. Among the Indians at yonder camp is one Birty,

as much like you as one fawn is like another, and did I not know that you are not an Indian I should think you were brothers. He took me to his wigwam, when the party that captured me joined the rest of the tribe. At first he was repugnant to me—then I received his attentions because he reminded me of you, and he was so different from what I had been told Indian warriors are like, that I began to love him, and I dare not desert him, if for no other reason, for the sake of a pledge of our love which sleeps in our wigwam, and is yet dependent upon its mother for the life it enjoys."

"Is that Indian older than I am?" inquired Birty eagerly, still speaking in the Indian tongue.

"Many moons younger, I should judge," answered Martha.

Then a hope which had long since died, revived in Birty's breast.

"Can you bring this Indian to meet me to-morrow night?" he said.

"I dare trust you, Birty, but I dare not ask him," she replied.

"Tell me then whither the tribe is traveling."

"Toward the great river, to meet friends. They talk of white foes collecting to drive them from their hunting grounds —they are preparing to meet them."

"I am watching their movements, and have been for several days. You will give me your word that they do not design to attack any of the settlements in this neighborhood?"

"I overheard the warriors in the council last night. I know their march will be secretly continued to a point on the Ohio, where they expect to meet other warriors, who are determined to fight for their hunting grounds. I must go back to the camp—farewell, Birty."

"We shall meet again," said the hunter.

"You will tell my father I am not unhappy in my Indian home," answered Martha.

Birty watched her till she disappeared among the trees. She had forbidden him to follow her, and he obeyed. He resolved to be among those whom the Indians, gathering their forces together, had determined to expel from the cane brakes and forests of Kentucky, but he was not satisfied to leave the party so near him, till he knew more of their numbers and character than Martha had communicated.

On the morrow he stood near the Indian camp when preparations were made for marching, and he saw Martha with the squaws, her papoose in Indian fashion fastened upon her back; but he could see no one whom he could identify as her husband. To look at the Indian that, as Martha said, resembled him, was to Birty an enjoyment for which he was ready to brave dangers that would appall hearts unaccustomed to forest life; and he resolved to follow the Indians until he had satisfied his curiosity in this particular.

When the savages gathered around their camp at night, four of their number were missing. They were vainly looked for. Birty could have told where their bodies were lying. Following the Indian trail he had overtaken these stragglers, and when he had satisfied himself that neither was that one for whom he looked, thoughts of the last scene witnessed in his mountain home, nerved his arm, and the savages fell, and neither could have told what manner of foe was near him. Birty had seen others that day who might as easily have been his victims, but he was not satisfied that they did not answer the description that Martha had given; and they joined their companions unharmed.

The Indians had not suspected foes until the absence of their warriors on the night of which we write. While savages smoked their pipes, Martha heard the wild notes of the forest bird far back in the woods ; and then she could have told those around her the fate of the absent, but she dare not; nor dare she go to Birty and warn him of the danger that, on the following day, might threaten him.

Again and again Birty called in bird-like music, that he knew Martha would understand, but he received no answer. Stealthily he crept nearer the camp. He could see the dusky forms of the Indians passing to and fro, but he was not satisfied—with the utmost caution he crept so near that he could almost hear the conversation of a group of warriors in council. He understood their language, and he determined to know the subject of their consultation.

With the shrewdest exercise of his knowledge of Indian habits, he skulked from tree to tree. Moonlight had thus far aided his movements—now it retarded them. Heavy clouds hung in the sky, and he waited for the moon to be obscured by them—then he crept very near the council.

Now he could distinctly hear every word that was uttered, and the report that Martha had given him was confirmed. He suspected that her husband must be one of the warriors in the group before him, and he resolved to run a greater risk in order to satisfy his curiosity. Again he cautiously skulked toward the Indian camp. The risk of detection was great. Birty was full aware of that risk. He had determined to brave it, and he crept on.

There was a deep shadow on the woods, and Birty had reached a clump of bushes so near the council that he was confident, when the moon shown again, he could see the face

of every warrior. He had been so intent on watching the difficulties to be overcome immediately around him, that he had not kept himself correctly informed concerning the period when the cloud which obscured the moon would pass from before it, and while he stood exposed to view, its mellow radiance fell on the thin woods where the Indian council sat.

An Indian on guard caught a glimpse of Birty as he dashed into the bushes. That Indian gave the alarm. Instantly the hunter was surrounded.

He sprang from the bushes into the open woods, and, remarkably fleet on foot, would have escaped comparatively unharmed, but his foes were numerous. His first impulse was to fight, reckless of consequences, but in an instant he saw that it was scarcely possible he could escape with his life—then he thought of Martha—of his curiosity in reference to the Indian Martha had described as her husband, and he surrendered. He was securely bound and carefully watched. When day dawned he saw with bitter disappointment that there was no one among the Indians who bore the slightest resemblance to himself.

CHAPTER VI.

A SKIRMISH.

THE Indians held a council, and Birty, closely guarded, was confined to a tree near the centre of the camp. The Indians had no suspicion that he understood their language, and they talked freely in his hearing. He learned that they had resolved to make him run the gauntlet, and then torture him to death. They believed him to have been the murderer of those who had recently disappeared from their ranks, and they regarded him with true Indian vengeance. All this must be done within two days—at which time it was expected this party would overtake another, that had gone forward early the night previous as a scouting company. The leader of the scouting party was Martha's husband, as Birty judged from the talk in regard to him.

Birty looked upon the Indian warriors as they sat in council or stood near him, keeping watch, and he had ample opportunity to calculate the dangers of his situation and speculate upon the chances of escape. He knew that he should not be harmed, unless some accident occurred, until another night had passed, and he resolved to conduct himself as if he had no anxiety about his fate. He would be watchful, but submissive. He was watched suspiciously by several of the

Indians, as if they half believed him to be a warrior from some other tribe, who had joined the whites. His half Indian extraction and the peculiar associations of his life, had indeed rendered him very much, in many respects, like original sons of the forest, yet in bearing and intelligence, he was very different from those who now had him in their power. He only asked that the watchfulness of his guard would be withdrawn long enough to allow him a few moment's conversation with Martha. He saw her several times, but she had no opportunity to come near him.

Birty rejoiced when the Indians began to make busy preparations for departure. They had smoked their pipes and taken their hasty morning meal, when they held another council within ear-shot of Birty's position. One who seemed to be a man of authority, said to his fellow savages:

"The pale-faces came to drive us from our ancient hunting grounds. We go to join Indians who will drive back the pale-faces. Our captive can tell us whether the pale-faces are like the leaves of the forest in number, in summer or in winter. He can guide us to their wigwams. We shall offer him his liberty if he will tell us their number, and show us their wigwams. The white squaw can talk with the captive."

The warriors agreed to this speech, and Martha was sent for to interrogate Birty.

The prisoner saw her approach him with no slight emotion. She asked him the questions which the warrior who had been spokesman propounded, and he answered:

"Tell 'em to do their ugliest. I shan't show 'em the first pale-face—but let 'em know the whites are mighty plenty over East, and give 'em to understand that I'm a friend of

Dan Boone's, and if they come any of their Ingin sprees over me they'll have the old chap arter 'em. For yourself, now Martha, I'll tell ye that I'm goin' to leave this place afore another day, and you've got to cut me loose to-night if I don't get a chance to kick over some of them red devils to-day."

Martha dare make no reply to Birty for fear of exciting suspicion, but her face assured him that he would have her aid, if she could give it. When she told the warriors how sternly the captive rejected their proposition, and what he threatened them, the big fellow who had spoken, uttered a significant "Ugh!" Several followed his example, and then in a few minutes the order was given for a march. In a short time the whole party was under way. A heavy burden was fastened upon Birty's back, and with his hands tied behind him, he was driven before two stout warriors. Birty's proud heart beat indignantly, as he marched that day, a slave to the "varmints" that had so deeply wronged his family. His vows of revenge were deep and earnest.

Night was coming on, and Birty had seen no opportunity of escape. His hopes of freedom were centred on Martha's aid, and the character of the weather. The day had been lowering, and there were tokens of rain. About noon the clouds broke away and the sky became clear; then Birty's hope of liberty was a feeble one, but as afternoon advanced the sky was again overcast. At sunset it was darker in the forest than it was on the previous night, when Birty stood as a spy upon the Indian camp. Birty watched the gathering gloom with most intense interest—it was to aid him in making the escape he had planned. He had been so obedient to the commands laid upon him by the Indians, that his

guards had relaxed much of the vigilance they had exercised at the commencement of their march; and the prisoner thought this augured well for the future.

The warriors selected a resting place upon the bank of a small stream; Birty saw that there were low bushes along this bank, and thick woods on the opposite side—he was satisfied with the choice his captors had made. An immense fire was built, whose light flashed up among the ancient trees, revealing the Indians seated upon the ground with their prisoner securely bound in their midst. The previous night he had not been permitted to lie down. He was now ingeniously bound to two warriors who lay on either side of him. They were confident he could not stir without awaking them. The captors slept, but the captive did not. Nearly half the night had passed—the fire gave out fitful flashes as a gentle wind swept through the forest, and Birty felt most painfully that his chance of deliverance was every hour growing narrower.

As he speculated upon his gloomy prospects he felt the cords tighten upon his swollen limbs—he began to grow listless from fatigue and despair—he thought he heard a light foot-fall—presently some one bent over him—it was Martha. She cautiously cut the cords which bound Birty to his guards, and he stood upon his feet. In a moment his limbs were free — he stretched them out as if to ascertain whether the muscles would obey his will—then he looked upon his slumbering foes to find where the one was lying who had taken possession of his rifle, tomahawk and knife.

The apparent leader of the party, the spokesman of the previous morning, had Birty's weapons—the knife and tomahawk were in his belt.

Birty would have felt himself unarmed without the knife, tomahawk and rifle of his father—he knew their metal.

He crept stealthily toward the warrior, whom he was to "*rob*." He took the rifle in his hand—slipped the knife safely from the savage's belt, and had his hand upon the tomahawk; the Indian moved as if he would awaken—a mad impulse seized Birty, he hastily tore the weapon from its place and struck the warrior a blow which buried the tomahawk in his head. Fatally wounded, the savage in his dying struggles was convulsively thrown forward and fell back upon the warrior lying next to him, who was aroused instantly. He sprang to his feet before Birty could strike him, and uttered a war-cry with furious energy. It was no time for Birty to fight—his safety lay in dexterous dodging and fleetness of foot. All was confusion around the camp fire. Birty had his presence of mind. Quickly the Indians gathered theirs. Several started in swift pursuit of the fugitive. Two warriors were close upon him, one of them had almost overtaken him, when the sharp report of several rifles rang through the forest, and the foremost Indians fell.

Birty knew that friends had most unexpectedly but most opportunely come; yet he relaxed not a muscle in his flight, and well that he did not, for he had advanced but a few steps when he met Martha, who, expecting that Birty would peacefully escape, had gone outside of the camp to meet him and give him some words to bear her father. She was now frantic with fear that the Indians might find her babe, and for revenge, murder it in her absence. She had discovered that friends had come to Birty's rescue. There were quickly successive shots at the camp, and yells and curses. Fear for the safety of her child nerved her, and into the thickest

of the conflict she would have rushed had not Birty restrained her.

"Where 'd you leave it?" he said. She described to him a spot which he vowed he could instantly find. He bid her not to go nearer the camp till he returned, and then went in quest of the papoose. The conflict did not wage near the spot where its mother had left it, but it had been aroused from slumber and was screaming with fright. The mother who had stealthily followed Birty, fearing that it was wounded, rushed before him and snatched it from the ground. The hunter heard the child greet its mother with a cry of recognition, then without a word he rushed to the battle-ground, and found it occupied with friends. The savages had been routed—leaving several dead, and taking with them a number of wounded.

"Hello!" said a rough voice.

Birty recognized it, and he answered: "Hello! Clinker, where'd you come from?"

"Birty! sure as I ever killed a red devil," replied Clinker, rushing towards the spot where Birty stood.

It was a joyful meeting, but Birty felt that there would soon be a more joyful one.

"You aint the chap what was running from them Ingins, Birty?" said Clinker.

"Are you the chap what cut 'em down?" replied Birty.

"I'm one of 'em," answered Clinker. "There's a dozen of us, all the right grit. How'd you get in that trap?"

"I'll tell you arter a while. How'd you happen here?"

"Why you see, Birty, when I left you at the fort and went home, I found the devil'd been to pay—the tarnal Ingins had been down on the settlement, and they'd carried

off Mat. I owed 'em an old grudge, and I cum back to Kaintuck to fight 'em—some of these boys cum from the settlement and some we picked up. We got on track of the Ingins, at this camp, jist by accident, yesterday, and we followed 'em till last night, and it was dark. We know'd we was close on 'em, and we thought we'd take 'em afore mornin', but it got tarnal dark. I was a watchin' a while ago when them clouds broke away, and I give the boys the word, and we started. We arriv, Birty, jist right, didn't we ?"

"You did that," answered Birty, "to keep the red devils from killing me, and to catch one of their handsomest squaws."

"Where is she, Birty ?"

"I'll fetch her."

Birty went in pursuit of Martha, and Clinker's men sat down around the fire, from which they had driven the savages.

Birty had some difficulty in finding Martha, but at length he succeeded, and returned to the camp with her. Martha was in a most gloomy state of mind in reference to her separation from her husband, for she knew her disappearance would be reported to him in the most unfavorable light—that she would either be considered dead or as a fugitive from his protection. Strange as it may appear, there was something about that Indian which had so endeared him to her, that for his society she willingly relinquished all hope of return to the settlements of the whites, unless peace should be declared between them and the Indians. In condolence to Martha, Birty said to her in his rough language, but in a cheerful tone of voice:

"Don't take on so—you'll feel better arter a while, I'm certain."

When they came near camp, Martha dared not look at those she considered her foes. Clinker heard them approach, and went forward to meet Birty—when he saw what he supposed to be the squaw, he cried:

"She needn't be afeard of us. We aint Ingins what burns women."

Martha recognized the voice. She suddenly raised her head, and cried:

"Father!"

Clinker caught her to his bosom, and exclaimed:

"It's my Mat, sure as I'm a Clinker! I'm cussed if this aint luck! I haint got as big a grudge agin them red devils as I was trying to make out. Whar have you been, Mat? How'd you get here? What on airth is this?"

Clinker had just discovered the papoose Martha bore in her arms. She held it up before him.

"A little Ingin, eh?—Whar'd ye get the critter, Mat?"

She dare not answer, and Birty said:

"It's her'n, old fellow."

"Her'n?" returned Clinker in surprise—"Her'n? how the devil d'ye make that out?"

"One o' them Ingins belongin' to the party you just licked made her his squaw," answered Birty.

"Lightnin', I'd liked to catched him at it—I'd a sent him whar Ingins don't mix with white folks—but 'taint no use makin' a fuss when the game's gone. Them red varmints don't get Mat agin, as long as old Clinker's got a rifle."

These were harsh words to Martha's ear—she had often wondered how her father would receive the intelligence of

her maternal relations among the Indians, and she had always pictured him more disturbed in regard to it than he appeared. In this she had cause for congratulation, yet she could not consider herself in any other light than as a prisoner, and her heart was indeed sad.

The clouds which had overspread the sky had nearly all disappeared, and daylight approached. Birty informed Clinker that he had learned, from the Indians, of another party of warriors, a day's journey in advance, and it was thought politic not to linger around the old camp of the savages longger than was necessary.

When the earliest rays of the sun robed the tops of the trees with dew-drop rain bows, Clinker's men were all under march. Their progress through the woods was rapid but cautious. They did not intend to be surprised by any party of Indians, large or small.

They were all experienced hunters, and they were mostly men from whose families the Indians had taken victims, or whose homes had been destroyed by the torch of the red man.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PURSUIT.

It was late at night when a few straggling Indians entered a camp where all was quiet—where warriors lay slumbering around the camp fire, while the silver moonlight, falling between the leaves of closely-standing trees, faintly revealed their sombre forms. This was a place of appointed rendezvous for two parties of Indians—the advanced party commanded by the husband of Martha; and the party which had been beaten and dispersed by Clinker's men.

Sad was the news which the stragglers brought, and when a wild shout was given, known as a signal of ill fortune, in the camp which had all been repose, commotion was general.

The brave who appeared to command the warriors, was a model of rage and desperation. He cursed those who had brought the sad news, as cowardly squaws, and he ordered immediate preparations for a march. Those preparations were swiftly made. It was but a short time before the savages were all marching with quick step toward the site of the camp where Clinker's men had seen friend meet friend—and where a daughter, mourned as dead, had been restored to a father who fought those among whom she was a voluntary captive, and who, had he met him, would have slain the being

she best loved on earth, with as little compunction as he would have shot a panther crouching to spring upon him.

Meanwhile Clinker and Birty, with the captives they had liberated, were marching through the forest on their way toward Boonesborough. Their march was conducted with extreme caution, because they expected to meet other parties of Indians, and both had dire vengeance to wreak on the red men. There was a great difference between these two men. Clinker was brutal, even savage in his nature—Birty was rough-spoken, and rough-mannered, yet all who knew him acknowledged that he had a kind heart. He would never shoot a wild beast unless he had need of food or clothing, and although he killed every Indian on whom he could surely draw his rifle sights, he was never known to take a scalp. Clinker always had one or more scalps dangling from his belt. Birty often talked with him about this savage propensity, and sometimes Clinker would answer:

"Them red devils shan't git ahead o' old Clinker. Ef they'd catch him his har'd be off quicker an' ye could say Ingin. I want to know how much sarvice I do my country."

"You don't fight Ingins jist because they ain't white?" said Birty in reply one day.

"I'd shoot 'em any how," answered Clinker; "but you know I've got a big spite agin 'em, an' I shan't guv up 'till every moccasin's druv out o' this country."

"I've got a bigger spite agin 'em than you have, Clinker, but ef they'd jist let wimmin and children alone, and let me go among 'em to hunt them little chaps I told you about once, I'd make friends with 'em quicker'n you could shoot your old rifle," said Birty, with deep feeling, as he strode away from his companion, scarcely hearing his taunt.

"Ef ye git a cuttin up sich shines, Birty, you won't be fit to hunt Ingins any more. You'll haf to stay at the settlement and take care o' the wimmin."

The hunters had traveled two days, and were drawing near the settlements. Clinker, who, on account of Martha's sadness at her separation from the father of her papoose, had watched her as if he was afraid she would desert him and return to his enemies, relaxed, in a great degree, his close attention to her, and she was quite at liberty on the third night to roam whither she would.

She secretly left the camp with her papoose, and wandered into the woods in the hope that she might meet some of the Indians among whom she was known, and by them be restored to her husband. She had faint hope that she might meet her husband, for she knew that he would pursue the whites as soon as he heard of her captivity, and it was her determination to keep him from attacking them if she should meet him or any of his followers before the affray began. Her affections were divided between the parties. She would desert her father for her husband, but she must prevent her husband from making war upon her father. In this mood she watched until it was nearly morning. She dared not leave the camp altogether, for fear she might fall into the hands of some band of Indians that would carry her farther from her husband than the whites, and not be so lenient to her as her father and Birty. Her footsteps were heavy when she turned them in disappointment towards her father's camp.

The Indian leader pursued the party that had captured his white squaw in vain. He supposed they would hasten to Boonesborough. He struck across the country to meet them,

and on the third day he would have encountered them; but, meeting a small company of hunters, Clinker was informed that a party of Virginians had recently come into the country, and was then at Harrodsburgh. He determined to visit the Fort. Birty had no objections, and the rest of the band were not particular whither they were led. Their course had therefore been changed. By this maneuver the pursuing Indians were somewhat baffled, but when Martha was going back from her search in the forest, her husband was nearer than she supposed. At the head of a small party of tired warriors he was about to attack the hunters, when he saw Martha as she passed between him and the camp-fire. He gave a signal known only between them, which, though heard by the hunters, caused no alarm. Martha, hoping yet fearing, drew near him—so near that he spoke to her. Her heart bounded as she recognized his voice, and in a moment she was leading him far away from her father's men.

"Stop," he said, "I must lead my men against the pale faces who shot our warriors. They will have revenge—"

"My father is there," answered Martha, "and he whom I have spoken of as a brother. I have deserted them to go back with you. You must not attack them. I love you, but I love them, and I will protect them. They are many —they are brave—they might kill you and all your warriors. If you attack them, kill me, for I will go back to them if I am alive."

The warrior bowed his head, and muttered stern Indian oaths, but Martha was firm, and with a signal he led his warriors away.

They were surprised that he did not attack the hunters,

but had confidence in their leader and dare not question his orders or his motives.

Clinker, who had been wandering about the woods for sometime, called Birty to one side and said:

"Mat's gone as sure as shootin', papoose and all. I've been huntin' her for half an hour, an' I can't git trail of her. There's been red devils, or she's run off expectin' to find that varmint you say's her papoose's daddy. I'm goin' arter her, and you must go along."

"To-night?" said Birty.

"Yes, right off," answered Clinker.

"You're mad," returned Birty. "Somethin's turned your head. What'd you do in the woods now, findin' Ingins, when you could'nt see one two rods off. 'Taint no use, Clinker. Wait for daylight, then we can track the varmints, and we'll git 'em afore night."

Clinker was obliged to yield to Birty, but was restless and impatient.

He was inclined to believe that Martha had voluntarily fled, but Birty said he supposed the White Eagle, as she called her warrior, had overtaken their party and with a signal called her away. If so the hunters might guard for an attack. Birty's advice was acted upon. Clinker was the most watchful of the guards. He started at every sound, and often grasped his rifle tightly, and felt for his knife and tomahawk, as if he had detected foes stealthily approaching, but no cause for real alarm existed. At each of these outbursts the hunter would renew his vows of hostility to the red man with increased bitterness, and when the soft light of morning began to come down on the hills, he was almost in a frenzy of rage and desperation.

It was a misty morning, and as day advanced a gentle rain fell, which early in the forenoon was diversified with brisk showers. The hunters held a council and instituted a shrewd search for Indian "signs" around their camp. They found enough to convince them that Birty's opinion concerning Martha's disappearance was correct, but on account of the rain they could not surely follow the savages.

Clinker was desperate, and urged his companions to a pursuit at all hazards. They were determined to pursue their march to Harrodsburg, unless plain Indian "signs" could be discovered, and Clinker was obliged to relinquish the hope of immediate revenge and rescue. He consoled himself with a promise that after a few days spent at the Fort in preparing ammunition and clothing, Birty would accompany him, with such volunteers as could be raised, on an expedition across the Ohio into the western country, where, as Birty had reported, the Indians were collecting for the purpose of attacking the people of "Kaintuck" in a body.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OFFICIAL EXPEDITION.

THE spring of 1778 had come. In the spring of 1776, George Rogers Clark, (a name ever to be mentioned with honor and respect in the eventful history of Kentucky,) a second time visited those vast and enticing hunting grounds—that "favorite theatre of romantic adventure." By his nobleness and valor he gained the confidence of the people who had settlements in that wild region. He saw, with statesman-like foresight, the value of those lands to Virginia as a frontier, and he assembled the people at Harrodsburg to devise means of public defense. At this meeting, Clark and Gabriel Jones were chosen members of the Assembly of Virginia. This choice could not give the gentlemen elect seats in the Assembly, but they resolved at all events to visit the seat of Government, then at Williamsburg. They found that the Legislature had adjourned; but Clark would not relinquish the object of his mission, and he obtained from the Executive Council an order for five hundred weight of powder, for the defense of the Kentucky stations. This order was received on the 23d of August, 1776. Patrick Henry, then Governor of Virginia, assisted Clark greatly in his efforts for the protection of Kentucky. At the next session

of the Legislature, held in the fall of 1776, a petition from Jones and Clark was received, and the "county of Kentucky," embracing the limits of the present State, was created. Owing mainly to the excellent management and judicious watchfulness of Clark, the powder for which he had received an order, was safely conveyed from Pittsburgh to Harrodsburg. In the spring of 1777, the Kentucky militia was organized, and the whites were then prepared to repel the invasions of the Indians upon their settlements. Hitherto the Indians had only met small bands of the backwoodsmen, fighting generally in their own defense, or in protection of their homes and families.

In the fall of 1777, Clark again left Kentucky for Virginia. He returned as Colonel George Rogers Clark, with two sets of instructions—one public, for the defense of Kentucky; the other secret, ordering an attack upon the British post Kaskaskia. On the 4th of February, 1778, Colonel Clark, as he himself expressed it, "clothed with all the authority he could wish," left Virginia to carry out his secret instructions.

It is not necessary to our story that we should follow Clark's career minutely. It is a part of the History of Kentucky, familiar to her sons and daughters. They know his adventures on the Ohio, from Fort Pitt to the Falls, where he fixed a post by fortifying Corn Island, opposite Louisville. There he disclosed to his troops their real destination, and was assured that he had their confidence. All ardently concurred in the plan, excepting one company, a part of which fled from the post, and many of them succeeded in reaching Harrodsburg, but on account of their dastardly conduct, were refused admittance to the fort.

It was a gloomy day when Colonel Clark's men, in their shallow boats, passed the Falls of the Ohio. The sun was in a total eclipse, and the darkness of night was upon the water. Some of the superstitious thought this an omen of ill-luck, but none dare mention their fears except to a few friends, in their especial confidence. No adventure worthy of record, however, occurred, until the troops were landed on an island near the mouth of the Tennessee river.

There Clark had rested but a few hours, when he was informed that a party of hunters had encamped within a short distance of his troops. He ordered that they be invited to visit him. Several accepted his invitation. They proved to be a company from Kentucky settlements. One of the hunters was acquainted with a number of the men in Clark's command. The Colonel observing this, desired to speak with him. When the individual was brought into his presence he said: "I understand that you are a Virginian."

"Yes, sir, I'm one o' the Big Knifes, but all the chaps whar I've been didn't know it, or 'praps I hadn't been here 'mong friends agin."

"May I inquire your name?" said Clark.

"The people what know me, sir, call me Tom Clinker."

"You say you have recently visited Kaskaskia."

"I went up that way a couple of months or so ago, after a daughter I'm trying to git from the Ingins."

"Can you tell me who is the commander?"

"I've heard the name, but its worse an' Ingin, an' I aint good at twistin' out such fellows. But I can tell you, sir, he aint no fool. He's a wide awake chap, an' he keeps a sharp look out. He tells the Ingins and the hunters that Virginia

boys are worse than savages. They call 'em Big Knife out here, and the're as feared as death on 'em."

"That will not be to our disadvantage," answered Clark. "Now, tell me what you think about the number of men I have being able to take Kaskaskia."

"You could do it jist as easy as I'd take an old bear, but you must do it a leetle in the same style—take the critter when he don't know what's goin' to happen him."

"I understand you" said Clark and am obliged to you for the information you have given."

"Well, look here, Colonel, some of us fellows thought we'd jist like to go back there and help drive them Britishers off our ground. Ef you want any of our help, jist let me know it, an' we're ready to start."

"Where are the men who would join us?" inquired Clark.

"I'll fotch a few of 'em," answered Clinker, as he started in quest of Birty and his companions."

Clark followed him, and soon met the most of the hunters in a body. They composed the party that had gone out according to Birty's promise when Clinker consented to return to Harrodsburg. They were all willing to accompany Clark. The information which Clinker had given him was confirmed. He learned that the name of the commander at Kaskaskia was M. Rocheblane, and hearing more detailed accounts of the dread in which the Virginians were held by the British and their allies, he determined, as Mann Butler says in his History of Kentucky, "to enlist this national apprehension in his service, and employ it as an auxiliary to his diminutive force." As important aids in the furtherance of this plan, Clark gladly accepted the offer of the hunters to join his brave band.

After this accession to his forces, Clark ordered the boats to be prepared, and the whole party dropped down the river a few miles. A short distance above what was then known as Fort Massac, the boats were concealed, and with their commander sharing, as one of them, all the fatigues and privations of a march through the wilderness, the Kentuckians and Virginians traveled across the present State of Illinois toward the ancient French village of Kaskaskia. Clark understood well the manner of conducting a forest expedition, and no adventure of importance happened to his company until the third day. The principal guide then became bewildered.

Suspicion was immediately excited among the wily Kentuckians, and a general cry arose against the unfortunate hunter. Birty knew this man well, and he knew he was no traitor, and when others clamored against him, he said:

"Give the feller a chance. He'll fotch things straight. I'll see the Colonel."

Hastening where Clark was consulting about the guide's conduct, Birty made bold to say,

"Tain't fair to make a fellow out meaner than an Ingin till you've give him a chance. He's only a little stuck just now. He's true as my old rifle, an' when he gets the cobwebs out of his head, he'll tell whar we are just as easy as I can tell whar a red skin is when I get a fair sight on him."

The guide begged that he might have a chance to establish his innocence. Clark was not a man to condemn a fellow soldier without good reason. He said to the guide:

"You have told us that you have often traveled this route, that you know this country well. I will give you a fair opportunity to recover yourself, but then, if you do not conduct

the detachment into the hunter's road leading to Kaskaskia, you shall be hung."

Accompanied by Birty, Clinker and one or two soldiers, the guide went into the prairie in full view, and after about an hour's examination, found a place which he recollected; he then knew his whereabouts precisely, and had no fears that his innocence would not be established. When he had again gained the confidence of his commander and his fellow soldiers, Birty said to some of those who had clamored against him,

"Now you see, don't you, how you'd strung a poor fellow up afore he had a chance to say his prayers—all for nothin', too. I'd think myself tarnal mean, ef I'd treat the ugliest red-skin arter that fashion. Ef the Colonel hadn't know'd more'n you possum heads, we'd all been up a stump now, unless 'praps some o' the rest o' our chaps could 've told whar this trail was."

Such was the rough but noble character of the true Kentucky hunter of those days.

On the evening of the 4th of July, 1778, the soldiers and hunters encamped within a few miles of the town their commander designed to attack.

It was the second anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence, and it was talked of that night as the hunters and soldiers gathered in groups, with a spirit which showed that the men were all ready to sell their lives in its defense. No guns were fired in its honor, but many resolves were formed under its influence.

If the men of our day had the chivalrous respect for that instrument which those rude hunters and soldiers felt, and were ready to manifest it at the cannon's mouth, the observ-

ance of the national holiday would be more general and appropriate. It would not be observed merely by the firing of squibs, in the streets of our villages and cities, and by the booming of cannon, and by rhetorical speeches in our groves, but all the people with thoughtful hearts would remember and do honor to the valiant men who declared our independence —and at each return of its anniversary the bonds of our Union would be strengthened.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE.

The shades of night had fallen upon the forest, when the order to prepare for march was communicated to the different companies of Clark's detachment. The Colonel, recognizing the intelligence and trustworthiness of Birty, had consulted him frequently. The hunter had been a close observer, during his brief visit with Clinker, to Kaskaskia, and he advised extreme caution in approaching the town. He assured Clark that its means of defense were not formidable, but a large body of Indians might lurk in or near it.

The Colonel accordingly arranged his plans for a complete surprise, and for such a display of his forces as would make the "Long Knifes" appear quite as terrible as the Kaskaskians had been led to believe them. In boats which had been secretly procured, the Virginians and Kentuckians were all safely transported across the river Cahokia, which flows past the town. Clark, with the third division of the detachment, proceeded to the fort within point blank shot of the town, while the other divisions prepared to make simultaneous attacks upon different quarters of the village. Clark was successful, and when an appointed signal was given, the inhabitants of Kaskaskia, reposing in fancied security, found

themselves suddenly surrounded by foes they had been taught to dread more than the most wily and cruel Indians.

With mad shouts and terrible yells, in the Indian style, Clark's men rushed through the streets, and those who could speak French cried at the top of their voices that every man of the enemy who entered the street would be instantly shot. The town, consisting of about two hundred and fifty houses, was completely surrounded, and in less than two hours, the inhabitants were disarmed, and without the shedding of a drop of blood, Kaskaskia fell into the hands of the shrewd and valorous Clark.

When the troops first entered the village, Birty led a small party to the Governor's house. Their design was to seize upon the public papers, it being supposed that many of them would be highly important to the Americans. The Governor was taken prisoner without difficulty, but no papers of importance could be found. Every part of the house was diligently searched, except the private apartments of the Governor's wife. When the diligent search had proved fruitless, one soldier proposed that the lady's trunks be broken open. Birty heard this proposition, and with a nobleness which characterized him on all such occasions, he chivalrously stepped forward and cried:

"Thar ain't a Kaintuck here dare do that. None 'o you would insult that lady for all the documents in creation."

Immediately headed by Birty, the men withdrew, and the public property, if any had been secreted by Madame Rocheblane, was saved.

During the whole night Clark's men patrolled the town in true Indian fashion, keeping up the utmost tumult by whooping and yelling as the Kaskaskians never before heard white

men whoop and yell, and the people thought that, indeed, their enemy was as barbarous as had been represented.

On the following day Clark withdrew his troops from the town, and stationed them at various commanding positions in the vicinity. No intercourse with each other or with the sol diers had been allowed the inhabitants, and their anticipa tions were of the most gloomy character; it is therefore not strange that when the troops were removed, and they found themselves free to walk the streets, they gathered together and had animated conversation in regard to the destruction that threatened them. Perceiving these movements, Clark had a number of the prominent citizens arrested. A priest of the village having witnessed Birty's noble conduct at the Governor's house, sought the hunter and desired that he request permission for a deputation of citizens to wait on the American commander. Birty hastened to Clark's quarters, and obtained this permission.

Pitiful indeed was the sight presented to the chief citizens of Kaskaskia, and great was their astonishment when, in their best array, they waited upon their conquerer and his fellow officers. Dirty and ragged, the appearance of the Virginians was indeed frightful to the deputation of refined and delicate Frenchmen. They were unable to tell the commander-in-chief from those around him, and they looked upon the whole band as if convinced by observation that they were as savage as they had been represented.

Clark demanded their business, and when they had learned that he was commander, the priest said,

" You have conquered our village, and our people are to be separated, perhaps never to meet again on earth. We

desire that you will grant us the privilege of assembling in our house of worship, there to take leave of each other."

Clark knew that these people thought their religion obnoxious to the Americans, and like a true American, he replied,

"We leave every man's conscience with his God. We have no quarrel with you because of your religion, and you are at liberty to assemble at the church, but not a single individual must attempt to leave the town."

The gentlemen of Kaskaskia endeavored to prolong the conversation, but Clark dismissed them cavalierly, in order to heighten their alarm. The entire people left their houses and assembled at their church, where the priests celebrated mass. A deputation then waited upon Clark to thank him for his indulgence, and the people returned to their houses, and found them as they were left. No soldier had attempted to rob or pillage.

When the deputation that waited upon Clark had returned thanks to him for the indulgence he had granted, they begged leave, at the request of the inhabitants, to address their conquerer. Clark having signified his willingness to hear the address, one chosen as spokesman said,

"We are prisoners of war, and we submit to the loss of our property, but we pray that we may not be separated from our wives and our children. Our conduct has been influenced by the commandants whom we had. Our position is not favorable to the reception of accurate knowledge, and we do not know the real merits of the war between Great Britain and your people. Many of us have, however, been inclined to favor the Americans, but we ask not our property. We only ask that we may be left free to take care of our wives and children."

Clark now fairly saw the dread in which his little army was held, and he resolved, in a spirit of honorable chivalry, to carry out the lenient views it had from the first been his purpose to make known, when the opportune moment came. He conceived that the period for this stroke of policy had arrived, and turning abruptly toward the speaker who had addressed him, said:

"Do you take us for savages? I am almost certain you do, from your language. Do you think that we intend to strip innocent women and children, or take the bread out of their mouths? My countrymen disdain to make war upon helpless innocence. It is to prevent Indian butcheries that we are here. The King of France has united his arms to those of our people against the British, and the war will soon be over; but you are at liberty to take whatever side you please. We have no disagreement with you on account of your religion. You are at liberty to conduct yourselves as you please, without apprehension from my troops. Your friends in confinement shall be immediately released."

The deputation was more astonished and agitated at this chivalrous speech than they had been in the midst of their greatest terrors. An apology for considering the Virginians and Kentuckians barbarians was offered, but Clark refused to hearken to explanation, and said:

"Relieve the anxieties of your people, and inform them that I only ask of them to comply with the terms of a proclamation which I shall shortly issue."

Birty, with an order from Clark, flew to the relief of the prisoners. In a few moments they were all at their homes, and the sad dejection of the village was changed into most tumultuous joy. All the bells of the town were rung—the

people shouted in the streets—women wept for joy—prayers of thankfulness were offered in the houses, and the church was crowded with rejoicing people, who joined the priests most fervently in offerings of praise and prayer.

Colonel Clark had determined upon the taking of the little town of Cahokia, situated about sixty miles from Kaskaskia. When the people of Kaskaskia heard of this expedition, many desired the privilege of accompanying the Virginians. They said the people of Cahokia were their friends and relatives, and, at their advice, would surrender without bloodshed. Clark allowed such as desired, to accompany his soldiers. Birty and Clinker were among the Americans.

Clinker learned that, about sixty miles up the Mississippi, there was a large body of Indians, and he determined as soon as it was practicable to pursue them, under the belief that his daughter might be among them.

The people of Kaskaskia did not misrepresent those of Cahokia. The town fell into the hands of the Americans without the firing of a gun, or the shedding of a drop of blood—a manner of warfare most exemplary for that day, and even for this.

Clinker and Birty had permission from Clark to scout, with a small party, in the vicinity of Cahokia, and they did not let the opportunity pass unimproved. They reconnoitered the camp of Indians, of which they had word, but failed to discover anything which gave them reason to believe that the object of their search was among the savages. Birty knew the characteristics of the tribe to which Martha's husband, who was called White Eagle, belonged, and he saw none of them there.

The Indians were in too large a body to be attacked by

the scouts, and they dare not harass the small bands that went into the woods, lest the main body be alarmed, pursue them, and make sad havoc in their ranks. The time for which they were empowered to act as scouts having nearly expired, Clinker consented to give up the pursuit of his daughter in that direction. The hunters set their faces toward Kaskaskia. They had traveled about half the distance between Cahokia and Kaskaskia, when they surprised a band of Indians, killed three, and took one prisoner.

That prisoner was a young squaw, and the most beautiful one the hunters had ever seen. They endeavored to learn from her the destination of the Indians, and the tribe to which she belonged. Birty spoke to her in the Indian tongue, but she answered him not. She did not seem to hear him, but stood before him as mute and immovable as a statue. Again and again Birty endeavored to call her attention, but he received no more intimation from her that he was heard than he did from the trunks of the trees around him. Her head was bent forward upon her breast, and her eyes were not lifted from the ground.

"She's a dumb Ingin, I reckon," said Clinker. "Who ever heard of one afore? We'll take her to Kaskaskia as a curiosity."

"Don't be fooled by a possum," said one of the men in answer to Clinker. He replied:

"I reckon if we keep our eyes on her, she can't do much harm if she does play possum—but I don't believe the critter can either hear or talk. She's about han'some enough, though, an' it's a great pity if she don't know it, when sich rough chaps as we are tell her so."

The captive was given into Birty's care. She walked by

his side—made no attempts to escape, and was willing in all respects to be directed by him; but she seldom lifted her dark eyes from the ground, and gave no heed to the words of kindness which he addressed to her.

CHAPTER X.

A TREACHEROUS PLOT.

THE latter part of the month of August had come; the fruits of the glorious summer were passing away before the rapid approach of the sad but beautiful season, when

> "Mid autumn's purple sunsets,
> A dirge note swells the blast,
> And tells that soon the brightness
> Of the year will all be past."

Colonel Clark was shrewdly watching the movements of the Indians, and was about to form treaties with the different tribes. Several bands had assembled at Kaskaskia to smoke the calumet. It was not his policy to invite the red men to a treaty, but to wait a request for peace from them. He understood Indian character, and when he had concluded a treaty, the Indians had confidence that the Virginians, or "Big Knives, had but one heart, and did not speak with forked tongues," as one of the chiefs emphatically declared at the first council with him.

When Clark had concluded amicable arrangements with several of the principal tribes of the then populous Indian country, Birty and Clinker, who, week after week, with a small party of hunters, had traversed the Illinois forests and

prairies, returned to the camp of the Big Knife. They wandered freely among the savages, Birty in the hope of meeting that countenance which Martha had described to him, when he met her in the Kentucky forest, and Clinker in the hope of gaining some definite tidings of his lost daughter.

Industriously each had pursued his search for several days, without the slightest clue to its object, when, returning to the village late one evening, Birty discovered that a small party of Indians he had not before seen, had encamped upon the opposite bank of the little creek of Cahokia. Secreted in a clump of bushes near the water's edge, he warbled those notes which he had learned from the forest birds. Those were strange sounds for that region, when the sun had gone to shed light upon another hemisphere, and the pale stars twinkled in the firmament. They blended with the whisperings of the night breeze, and with the gentle murmuring of the stream that flowed at the musician's feet, and died away in the distance without echo. Again those wild-bird notes rose upon the balmy air, and when the musician listened to hear them die away, a faint echo, with softened cadence, was borne to his ear. He uttered one shrill note. It was echoed, not faintly, but quite distinctly—again he uttered it, and again it was answered. He was confident, then, that one object of his search was in this Indian camp. He watched the opposite shore of the creek for an hour eagerly, and was about to turn toward the village and take the chance of meeting the white squaw on the morrow, when he heard a shrill note, coming, as it were, from the bank directly opposite. Presently a canoe shot out into the stream, and in a few minutes Birty sat with Martha Clinker, talking over the adventures she had met

since she deserted her father's camp in Kentucky. Through her influence White Eagle had brought his braves to Kaskaskia to ascertain what terms of peace the Big Knives proposed.

When Martha concluded her narrative, she said:

"You know where my father is?"

"Among the whites in the village," answered Birty. "He has been seeking you ever since you left him."

"I wish I could see him," Martha answered; "but you must not tell him I am here. I will not live among the white people unless my husband goes with me."

"Shall I tell him that I have seen you?"

"Not until we meet again. I must return now. I shall be missed, and it may not be well for us to be watched."

"Shall I hear the wild-bird to-morrow night?" said Birty.

"If I am not watched," answered Martha.

The light canoe shot out into the current, and the hunter turned his steps toward the village. He did not neglect to inform an officer in Clark's confidence, of the addition to the Indian forces.

On the morrow Clinker visited the new Indian camp. He mingled freely with the savages, and looked eagerly at every squaw, but he did not see his daughter. She saw him, however, but dare not meet him. She pointed him out to the White Eagle, and said:

"I know you are a warrior of honor. You know I fled from my father to dwell with you in the wigwam. Promise me, that let you meet him where you may, you will protect him for my sake."

The Indian regarded his companion with emotion, and he promised all she asked.

Squaws have not often an influence of this character over

the warriors, in whose wigwams they dwell; but Martha Clinker had been reared under influences differing widely from those which had surrounded the youth of her female companions, and he who had her love was no common Indian.

His fellow-warriors often amused themselves by laughing with each other about his being the squaw, and Martha the warrior; but no one who valued his life was rash enough to utter such a taunt in his hearing.

According to appointment, Birty, who had been in Clark's employ during the day, stood on the bank of the creek opposite the Indian camp, as soon as the stars were mirrored in its waters. He had no sooner given the concerted signal than a canoe shot out from the opposite bank, and it was but a few minutes before he met Martha at the water's edge, where she waited. She was much agitated, and told him she could remain but a moment.

They talked together rapidly not over five minutes, when Birty suddenly took leave of her, and walked briskly back to Colonel Clark's quarters, avoiding the camp of a party of Indians from various tribes, who had pitched their tents within a hundred yards of the fort, on the same side of the creek. Those Indians had manifested great friendliness to the whites, but had been regarded by Clark with considerable suspicion.

The Colonel was absent, and Birty could not see him. He would confide his business to no one, and he wandered again away from the fort. He walked toward the camp of the suspicious Indians, and watched their movements narrowly. Midnight came, and still Birty watched; but the noon of night had scarcely passed, when he saw a number of warriors in complete battle array, sneak out of their camp, and

march toward the creek. He followed them stealthily. They waded into the creek, and were soon on its opposite bank, out of his sight; then he turned his footsteps toward the fort again. He knew Clinker was on guard that night. He sought him and said:

"Now, old chap, afore long you'll have a lot of darned red skins what'll try to get under your protection, and ef you let 'em, there'll be a tarnel fuss in this ere camp."

"Jist you trust old Clinker," was the answer. "I'll give 'em my protection — that's it," stamping his rifle on the ground.

Birty went with Clinker to warn other soldiers on guard, and while he talked with one of them, several guns were fired on the opposite side of the creek, and Birty cried:

"Now watch 'em, boys."

It was but a few moments before a number of Indians rushed toward the American quarters; and when they approached the guard, demanded protection, alleging that they had been fired upon in their camp, by the Indians on the opposite side of the creek. They attempted to press within the American lines, but were repulsed and obliged to return to their own quarters. They had scarcely gone when Birty hastened to Clark's room, and found him, even at that late hour, at his desk, writing. The hunter was excited, and he proceeded to announce the object of his untimely haste without ceremony.

"There's treachery stirrin' out here, Colonel," he said. "You know them tarnal suspicious red devils down here on our side o' the creek? A lot of 'em laid a plan to get your head, but they wasn't quite smart enough."

"Where are the treacherous villains?" interrupted Clark.

"The guard druv 'em home," replied Birty. "I can find every rascal of 'em."

It was no time for compliments. In a few minutes the whole garrison was aroused, and Birty headed a company which hastened to the Indian quarters and arrested the individuals he designated. When brought into Clark's presence, they stoutly denied the charges made against them, but Birty said:

"Look at the red liars' leggins and moccasins—that'll tell the story."

Examination was made as the hunter desired, and the lie that the assassins had been fired at by friendly Indians, put at rest.

Clark was determined that the traitors should be made an example of. He ordered them to be loaded with chains and closely guarded until the following day. The Colonel did not dismiss his followers that night until he had said to Birty:

"Your services in detecting this plot shall not be forgotten."

Birty owed his good fortune entirely to Martha. She had told him that among the Indians on the bank of the river, near the fort, was one who was like a brother to the White Eagle. He had made her husband a visit that day, and she had overheard him reveal a plot to kill Colonel Clark, and murder his garrison. This plot, whose fulfillment Birty had witnessed as far as the savages were permitted to carry it, Martha minutely detailed, and to acquaint Colonel Clark of the threatened danger, Birty had visited his quarters early in the evening, as described.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COUNCIL.

THE Indians who had been detected in their base conspiracy, were known as Meadow Indians. Their tribe, as before remarked, was composed of stragglers from various tribes, so that they had friends among all the savages assembled at Kaskaskia; and their arrest created a great excitement, yet none dared to question the propriety of Clark's conduct toward them.

In order to show the amity existing between the Americans and the French, Clark let it be understood that the latter should decide the fate of the would-be assassins.

On the day following their arrest, they were brought into the council-room, but were not allowed to speak until all other business had been transacted; then Clark ordered their manacles to be removed, and when they were free, he said to them:

" Everybody says you ought to die for your treacherous attempt upon my life during the sacred deliberations of the council, and I had determined that death should be inflicted upon you. You must know that you have justly forfeited your lives, but on considering the meanness of watching a bear and catching him asleep, I have found that you are not

warriors. You are like old women, and are too mean to be killed by the Big Knife. But you must be punished for putting on breech-cloths like men; they shall be taken away from you. I will give you plenty of provisions for your journey home, because women don't know how to hunt, and while you stay, you shall be treated as squaws in every respect."

When Clark had concluded this speech, he began to converse with persons around him, as if there was no further business for the council. The offending Indians were much agitated. The treatment they had received was very different from what they had been led to expect, and their natural pride was deeply wounded.

One of their chiefs arose and made a speech, offering Clark a pipe and a belt of peace. Clark would not allow the speech to be interpreted, and taking up a sword lying on his table, he broke the offering of peace indignantly, saying:

"Big Knife never treats with women."

Chiefs of other tribes now interfered in behalf of the Meadow Indians, and among those who spoke was one whom Birty watched with intense interest. He supposed him to be White Eagle. This Indian said:

"The Big Knife knows that these men have wives and papooses; for their sakes he will grant them peace."

But the American officer was not ready to acquit the offenders so easily, and he said:

"The Big Knife never made war upon these Indians. Whenever we come across such people in the woods, we shoot them as we do wolves, to keep them from eating deer."

The excitement was intense among the Indians. They conversed among each other, and among their friends, in a

manner which showed that they felt keenly the contempt with which they had been treated. The Meadow Indians appeared to feel that the tomahawk threatened their whole tribe, and peace with the Big Knife could alone save them. Suddenly two young men advanced from the crowd, and to the astonishment of the whole assembly, sat down in the middle of the floor, throwing their blankets over their heads, in token of entire submission.

Birty watched the Indian whom he supposed to be White Eagle, and saw that he appeared deeply interested in the youngest of the warriors upon the floor. The hunter judged that he was the Indian from whom Martha learned what she had communicated. Birty became as intensely interested in the scene, as he would have done had he known the search of his life was to be ended—the solemn vow he made to his father fulfilled. He could not satisfy himself why this feeling was fastened upon him, and he was unable to shake it off. He was struck with the nobleness of the Indians who had offered themselves as a sacrifice for peace with their tribe. He knew they had taken no part in the attempted assassination. He stood near Clark—he stepped nearer and whispered:

"Give 'em a fair chance, Colonel, for my sake. Them chaps was'nt in the scrape; one of 'em's the fellow who told the trick, so I got wind of it."

The Colonel turned toward Birty and smiled, but said nothing. At this moment two chiefs arose, and one said:

"The warriors you call squaws, have families—these young men have none. They give their lives for the sake of those families, to atone for the offense of their brothers. Is the Big Knife satisfied?"

Again the pipe of peace was offered. Clark was embarrassed. He had intended to give the offenders their liberty, but in a manner and with a reluctance that should enhance its value, and have an influence upon all the Indians who heard the circumstances. For a few moments all was silence in the council—suspense and anxiety held many of the spectators breathless. The noble youths sat more unconcerned, apparently, than those who contemplated them, only occasionally looking out from under their blankets to see what was passing around them.

Clark regarded them with emotion, evident to all who understood his character. At length he advanced toward them, ordered them to arise and uncover themselves. They stood before him, expecting to receive their sentence of death, while the assembly of Indians, French and Americans, listened with deep anxiety to see what the Colonel would order to be done with them. Birty was puzzled; he did not believe Clark would sacrifice the noble young warriors, but was at a loss to conjecture what would be their fate. Clark summoned him as an interpreter, and said:

"The Big Knife rejoices to find that there are men in all nations. These two young warriors who have offered themselves, are at least proof for their tribe. Such warriors are alone fit to be chiefs. With such Big Knife will treat. Through them peace is granted to the tribe, and I take them by the hand as chiefs."

He took the warriors by the hand, and when Birty had interpreted his speech, the young warriors were introduced with proper ceremonies, as chiefs, to the whites present and the other Indians; the result of the council was communicated

from mouth to mouth, and whoops and yells of the liveliest character resounded about the fort.

A council was now held, peace was formally granted to the Meadow Indians, and presents bestowed upon them to distribute among their friends. Birty rejoiced to see the Indian he judged to be the White Eagle, and the youngest of the recently created chiefs, meet with a cordiality that betokened deep sympathy between them. He was about to step forward and address them, and make himself known to him whom he supposed to be the lord of Martha's wigwam, when he felt some one pull his coat. He turned and saw beside him an old and wretched looking squaw, who beckoned him to follow her. He instinctively granted her wish, and she led him out of the fort, when, taking him by the arm, she said, in the Indian tongue:

"You pale face?"

"What do you want to know for?" said Birty.

"You pale face?" was the squaw's only reply.

"My mother was an Indian," answered Birty, for he was never ashamed of his descent, but was at first reluctant to tell the squaw, because he doubted her right to question him. She was peremptory, however, and having no fears, he yielded, as the best way to escape from her.

"You ever live among Indians?" she said.

"When I was a little boy," he answered.

"You run away?"

"I did."

"One big Indian take you to hunt with him,—you never came back?"

"That's the fact—how do you know?" said Birty in some surprise.

"You are my boy—my boy," answered the squaw, as she attempted to embrace him; but he stepped back and demanded,

"What do you mean?—I don't know you."

"I was your mother's friend—you live in my wigwam. Warrior went to find you--killed your father and brought your mother home—warrior never came back—other warriors say your father killed him. Your mother killed too. Warriors say all killed. You know this?"

"You speak of the murder of my father and my mother —I do not remember you. How do you know me?"

"White squaw yonder tell me you are not Indian," (pointing toward the camp of the White Eagle;) "I ask her who you are—she told me I know you—your mother my friend."

"Then you know that white squaw's husband—you know whether he is an Indian?—tell me if he is," cried Birty.

At that moment a crowd of Indians rushed from the fort. They pressed around Birty and the squaw. She was separated from him, and when he looked for her she had gone. Her information had most deeply interested him. He felt that, through her, he could get the information he had so long sought. He determined to find her again at all hazards.

CHAPTER XII.

A REVELATION.

BIRTY pursued his search for the aged squaw until nightfall. He obtained no tidings of her. He crossed the creek and visited the camp where he supposed he should find Martha. She was absent; her companions had not seen her that afternoon: the White Eagle had come to his wigwam expecting to meet her, but was disappointed, and had returned to the village. Birty had not seen Clinker during the day. He suspected there was mischief brewing, and he hurried back to the fort. There he inquired for Clinker, but could hear nothing of his probable whereabouts. He gave up his search for the squaw, and determined to find his friend. He was about to leave the fort, when he met the White Eagle. For a moment the Indian and hunter looked at each other in silence. The Indian was the first to speak. He said:

"My squaw was this afternoon taken from my wigwam by the Big Knife who is her father. She will not live with him. She must return. You know where she is; tell me, that I may take her back—you are her friend."

Then this Indian knew Birty. That was news to the hunter. He answered:

"I am her friend; she shall return to your wigwam. I go

now to hunt her father. There is an old squaw in your camp who has secrets she would tell me. You saw her speak to me to-day. Bring her to the fort in an hour, and you shall see your squaw."

"She shall come," said the Indian, and he parted from the hunter.

Birty now hastened in pursuit of Clinker. He visited the house of a citizen with whom he had formed an acquaintance, and learned that Martha, having come to the village, had sent for her father—that they had met—and the old man had told her she should never go back to the Indian's wigwam. She resisted him, but in vain. She secretly sent a message to the White Eagle, and he was on his way to complain to Colonel Clark and demand the release of his squaw, when Birty met him. He preferred Birty's offer to Clark's interference. Birty was directed to the house where Clinker had Martha a close prisoner. When they met Birty expostulated with Clinker, but the old man was deaf to advice. He had determined that his daughter should not be among the savages another day. If White Eagle chose to leave his tribe and live with him, he could do so, but Martha should not roam the forest with him any longer. She begged her father to go with her, but he answered:

"I'm agin every one o' the red devils. My wife's scalp hangs in some o' their wigwams. Who knows but I might sit down to eat under it? I'll never go among 'em—you needn't ask me."

Birty saw that he would waste time to argue the matter with the old man, and he knew he must meet the Indian at the fort, according to promise. He hastened on this mission. The warrior waited for him with the squaw.

"Come with me," said Birty, "and you shall see your squaw."

White Eagle and the aged squaw followed Birty. He led them to the house where Clinker had Martha a prisoner. The old man admitted them; and Birty promised that no force should be used to wrest his daughter from him. Happy was the meeting between Martha and the warricr. Clinker was touched by it, and he regarded the finely formed, noble looking Indian with deep interest, when he seated himself upon the floor beside his squaw, took their papoose upon his knees, and played with it until it laughed and crowed in great glee. This was a scene the hunter had not expected to see among Indians, but as we have before said, White Eagle was no common Indian.

Birty was impatient to know what the aged squaw, who claimed to have been his mother's friend, had to say about him, and whether she knew anything of his relatives who had been lost among the Indians. He said to Martha, in the Indian language:

"Did you tell this squaw my history?"

She answered in the affirmative. Then Birty said, pointing to the White Eagle:

"Does he know who I am, and that we have often met?"

Martha answered:

"He knows that you are my friend, but he does not know your history. The squaw saw us conversing together. She told me that she knew you; and she told me of your captivity among the Indians, as you had told it to me, but she warned me not to let my husband know it. I obeyed her warning, on the promise that she would tell me all she knew of you. She will tell you what that is."

Birty turned to the squaw and begged her to comply with Martha's request. She had no reluctance about so doing, and she said to Birty, in the Indian language:

"You were taken among the Indians when a small boy. You were stolen by your mother's brother, and a warrior who would have made her his squaw, had not your father stolen her. His brother was found by them bound in the forest. He said your father left him a prisoner. He vowed revenge. He carried you back to your father. He got your confidence. He was the means of his death and the death of your father, and your mother, and I believed of you, until I saw you speak to this young squaw (pointing to Martha), near her wigwam, when you came there the other day."

"But my mother had other children among the Indians. Do you know what became of them?" cried Birty, eagerly. "Do they live?"

"They do," answered the aged squaw.

"Where?" said Birty, in a tone which fixed the attention of all in the room upon him. The warrior upon the floor was by no means an unconcerned spectator of the scene before him.

"There were two of those children," said the squaw. "When the chief of the tribe did not return from his attempt to take you and your mother prisoners, the Indians were divided. One of the children was taken across the great river, far away into this forest; the other was kept by a warrior, who remained at the old hunting-grounds of his tribe. They never knew that the Indians among whom they lived were not their parents. They now believe themselves warriors; they are warriors—not squaws."

"I will find them," cried Birty, "unless I lose my life in the search; and if you have deceived me, your life, old as you are, shall pay the forfeit."

At these words the squaw stepped back, and pointing her attenuated finger at Birty, said, in a shrill voice:

"Look at that pale-face. You all know him."

All eyes were upon Birty, and all were anxious that the squaw should explain why she wished their gaze thus fixed. In a moment she turned with a statuesque effect, pointed to the warrior upon the floor, and continued:

"Look at that Indian. You all know him. See you not that both might have been born of the same woman?"

The suspicion which had long dwelt in Birty's mind was resolved into a conviction, but for a moment he could not utter a word. The Indian started to his feet and cried:

"The squaw dare not lie. Thou art my brother."

Birty rushed toward the speaker, and the brothers met in an embrace, of which Martha in a moment shared; then Clinker, who had regarded the whole scene in silence, cried:

"Tarnal good luck, arter all. There's some white blood in that fellow my gal's been mad arter three or four years. I allers thought 'twas strange she'd take arter a whole Injun that way."

The old squaw shouted with glee, and she was receiving the congratulations of Clinker, although she understood not a word, when Birty addressed her:

"You said both my brothers lived. Tell us where the other is, and our joy will be complete."

"You saw him to-day," replied the squaw.

"Is he among the Indians who were at the fort?"

"He belongs to the tribe the Big Knife called squaws—

but he was not one of the squaws. He was the first to offer himself as sacrifice to appease Big Knife. That warrior knows—"

"It is the tall chief. We have been like brothers since I first knew him. We will seek him at the camp of the Meadows," said White Eagle.

"No you won't," cried Clinker. "You hold on where you are, an' I'll fotch him."

Birty, the long-lost brother, and Martha, sat down to converse together, and Clinker hastened on his mission. He returned in half an hour, bringing the tall chief. He had not been informed of the joy that awaited him. He had followed Clinker because he had been told that White Eagle wanted him. When he entered the room all were silent, and the aged squaw who had thus far controlled the ceremonies of re-union, met him and said:

"Thou hast been like the lone buffalo on the prairie. Now thou shalt be like the beaver at his dam. Thou hast been like the bird that has lost its mate. Thou shalt be like that bird when its mate is found. Thou hast believed thyself without kindred. Thou hast believed a lie."

"What mockery is this?" cried the young chief.

No one answered him till the squaw said:

"Did I ever deceive thee? When I took care of thee, after thou hadst been wounded in battle, did I not love thee? I tell thee that thou hast kindred, and they are here."

"Where?" cried the warrior, looking about him.

"Yonder," answered the squaw, pointing her thin finger at Birty and White Eagle.

"One I know is my brother," replied the chief; "the

other is a pale-face. He too is my brother, but the same blood does not flow in our veins."

This remark having been interpreted by Martha, Clinker impatiently exclaimed—

"If to be born of the same woman makes you of the same blood, that you are, or this old squaw's a tarnal liar."

White Eagle now stepped forward and said:

"We have long been brothers at heart. I believe the squaw, that we are brothers in blood. She was our mother's friend; our father was a pale-face; our oldest brother here (pointing to Birty) dwelt among the pale-faces. We have dwelt among the Indians. Hereafter we will live together." The tall chief was satisfied; the Indian brothers embraced, and then Birty was acknowledged by the Meadow.

The squaw, who had been the instrument of this happy re-union of the long separated, walked up to Birty and said:

"Thy mother's friend has no wigwam. She was once a chief's daughter. Now she's an outcast. Shall she have a home?"

"As long as I have one," answered Birty. His brothers joined him in that declaration.

The brothers talked long and anxiously about their varied fortunes, while Martha listened with thrilling interest, and the venerable squaw sat silent; but often her care-worn countenance lighted up with a gleam of inward satisfaction.

Clinker saw her smile several times, and he cried:

"Well may you grin. You've done a nice job. That you have."

The squaw heard his voice, but did not understand the import of his words; she did not even turn her eyes toward him in reply. It was all the same to Clinker; he had not

seen so happy an hour since he lost his wife far away in the valleys of Virginia; and he shook and jostled his little grand-papoose till the child, wearied with his rude caresses, cried lustily for its mother's soothing care.

The child's cries, to soothe which Martha had taken it, attracted the attention of the whole company, and an interval of silence between the brothers ensued. The aged squaw started suddenly to her feet:

"Thou didst believe my story," she cried in a shrill voice. The gaze of all in the room was fixed upon her, but her countenance wore an expression none could divine.

"Thou hast believed words as false as the warrior tells the pale face when they ask him for the hunting grounds of his tribe," continued the squaw in the same shrill voice, which trembled with emotion, while she returned the stern gaze of those she had brought together as brothers.

The Meadow chief advanced toward her with a quick step, and in a voice expressing deep passion, cried:

"If thou art false, thy serpent tongue shall never speak after this night. I have loved thee as if thou hast been my mother, but if thou hast brought me here to deceive me, I will kill thee as quick as I would a wolf in my wigwam."

The squaw blanched not before the stern gaze of the young chief, nor did she change expression when Birty, with White Eagle, came forward and stood beside him. Birty was in a maze of doubt and vexation, but he did not interfere with the examination the tall chief had instituted. The squaw answered him who threatened her, in a tone and with a look undaunted:

"When didst thou first know me?"

"Many years ago, when I was learning to be a warrior,"

answered the Indian. "Thou wast brought to our camp by a warrior, who said he found you wandering in the woods. Thou wert kind to me, and I loved thee as a mother, and then thou didst tell me I was not without friends—that I had two brothers, and thou wast acquainted with my father and my mother."

"When didst thou first meet me?" said the squaw, turning toward White Eagle.

"Many years ago, when our camp was across the big river, thou didst come there and beg our protection. Thou wast like a mother to me, and I loved thee. One day when the warriors sought thee, thou wast gone. Thou didst tell me the same story my brother the Meadow has told."

Then the squaw said:

"When I was gone from that camp, I went where this warrior dwelt," pointing to the Meadow chief. "I had been told where those who once belonged to your tribe were, and I sought them. Thou didst not see me again until two moons ago. When didst thou first see me?" turning to Birty.

"Never till my coat was pulled by you at the Fort, after the council to-day," said the hunter.

"Thou hast all answered well but he," pointing her thin finger at Birty. Then she laid her hands on the Indians and continued:

"Thou couldst not know me, but he might. Thou didst believe that I was thy mother's friend. Wilt thou believe that I am thy mother?"

"Thou hast spoken false," said the Meadow chief. He had no opportunity to finish his sentence.

"I can tell," cried Birty, as he grasped the squaw, and tore a piece of deer skin, in the form of a cape, from her neck.

In an instant he threw his arms around the squaw, and mother and son were locked in an embrace more ardent than the embraces exchanged by those who had met as brothers.

"It is my mother—OUR mother," cried the hunter in a voice subdued with emotion. "I thought she was killed with my father, at our cabin, on the mountain in Virginia. Now I know she was not. We are brothers, and we have found our mother."

Confidence was restored. The squaw was received in her true character, with demonstrations of joy, which were not feigned, but were from the heart, for as a woman, the brothers who lived among the Indians had long loved her.

"This is a tarnal queer affair," cried Clinker, when Birty had explained to him what the squaw said; "I'd like to know how it all happens. This tarnal old critter tells two stories. I don't know which to believe yet. I'd like to know how she found out all about these fellers, to know they are her boys."

Clinker's curiosity was a natural one—one which all the party felt, and which the squaw proceeded to explain. Her story was a long one. It need not be given in detail.

She related that on the night of the affray at the cabin on the mountain, she was severely wounded, but not killed, only stunned and weakened by loss of blood. She crept to the cabin window, and called her boy, but in vain; she saw that the hunter's rifle, knife and tomahawk were taken, and she concluded that her boy had gone forth with them, as she could not find his body. She was too weak to leave the cabin for several days. When she did leave, she attempted to follow her boy, but was unable to do so for any distance, and she wandered about the woods until she fell into the hands

of a party of Indians traveling south. She was taken into the mountains of North Carolina, where she remained several years. Then the tribe with which she lived wandered into Kentucky. She heard the warriors describe Indians with whom they had a skirmish, when away from their camp on a certain day. From the description she believed those Indians to be a remnant of the tribe her father once governed. She fled from the Indians among whom she had lived, and sought their enemies. Her conjectures proved correct, and she was kindly received. She kept her own secrets. She learned that the tribe had been divided. Among those she had found, she met a boy whom she knew, and whom she watched with a mother's care, but who had no suspicion why this care was exercised over him. Often she was tempted to reveal herself to him, but was restrained from so doing by a previous determination that she would never make herself known to one till she was satisfied that all her children would never be brought together. When she learned where the other portion of the tribe was encamped, she sought it; there she found another boy. She soon adopted him as her own; and she longed to return to the other, but she waited in hope of some day finding the eldest. The two Indian brothers had often met on hunting expeditions, but the mother knew this not. The youngest boy had separated from his tribe and become one of the Meadow Indians. When they came to Kaskaskia, and the squaw saw the two brothers meet as acquaintances, her determination to reveal herself was fixed. She went to the camp of the White Eagle for this purpose, when she saw Birty conversing with Martha. She was struck with his appearance. She watched his movements, and when her suspicions had become convictions, she went

to Martha, told the history of her oldest boy, and Martha acknowledged that it corresponded with what she knew of Birty. Then the venerable squaw's plans were soon laid. She adopted the deception, which she practiced, to bring all her children together, satisfy herself that they would be as brothers, and that they had love for her as a friend. It required Indian fortitude of the most intense character to support this stratagem.

For a few minutes after their mother had finished her explanation, the brothers were silent. White Eagle caressed his child, and as the Meadow Chief watched him, a shade passed over his countenance, which did not escape the notice of his brother. He said:

"Thou art sad, my brother. Has any harm befallen thy betrothed?"

"She is lost to me," answered the other. "She was captured many days ago by a party of pale-faces, and she has gone, I fear, to the Great Spirit."

"Where was she captured?" inquired Birty.

"One who fought the pale-faces, told me near the Cahokia, which flows past our camp — between this and the great river."

"Describe her," said Birty.

"Her head hung upon her breast as the flower droops upon its stem—her hair was heavier than the moss which hangs on the trees of the Southern forest in the winter season—her eyes were blacker than those of the buffalo in the heat of the chase—her teeth were whiter than the beaver's—and her brow was so fair you would have thought her a pale-face. She was called the Silent Maiden. Often, when separated

from me, she would, for many days, be as silent as the summer stream, which has emptied itself into the great river."

At these words Birty started to his feet and rushed from the room. In less than a quarter of an hour he returned to explain his sudden departure, leading an Indian maiden, whose "head hung upon her breast as the flower droops upon its stem," and who had been "silent as the summer stream that has emptied itself into the great river."

She uttered a wild scream, as her eyes fell upon the young Meadow Chief; then was Birty conscious, for the first time, that she had a voice. Wildly fervent was the embrace with which the Silent Maiden and the tall chief met. The beautiful squaw was then presented to her friends.

The sounds of rude revelry did not die out in Clinker's log hut, till the bright stars lost their lustre in the spreading gray of morning.

All in that hut were happy, in a love deeper than that which brother feels for brother, but Birty. He had no betrothed.

The particular friends of Clinker and Birty were early informed of the re-union of the long separated brothers, and Colonel Clark congratulated Birty in person, for having been so fortunate as to find his brother to be the noble Meadow Indian; and he assured the hunter that his words in behalf of the Indians, under arrest, had weight upon his mind in favor of clemency. As the romantic meeting of the three brothers became known in the fort, many of the soldiers sought their society.

The woodsmen of 1778, though chivalrous, were not versed in those petty arts devised to disguise emotion, and make impulse appear like settled intention—they were plain, blunt men, rude of speech, and honest.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST.

THE Indians, assembled at Kaskaskia to bury the hatchet, and make treaties with the Big Knife, began to depart on their autumn hunting excursions.

The three brothers—who were each called Birty by the whites, one, Hunter Birty; the second, Indian Birty; and the third, Meadow Birty—assembled in council with their mother, Clinker, Martha, and the Silent Maiden, to decide upon their future course of life.

Hunter Birty was emphatically opposed to an identification with the Indians, because, he argued, that there were few of them the right kind of people—that the whites would, in a few years, drive them all from their hunting grounds—that game would become scarce, and therefore the plan which the brothers should adopt, was to select a rich piece of land, build cabins upon it, and farm and hunt together.

Clinker and Martha gave this plan the weight of their influence, and finally Indian Birty and Meadow Birty consented to part from their old companions, and adopt a semi-civilized mode of life. Martha besought Hunter Birty to select a companion from among the French or Indian maidens at

Kaskaskia, but he would not hearken a moment to her counsel. He said:

"I'm Hunter Birty—it don't suit hunters to have wives and papooses."

When the spring of 1779 opened, a colony of half-breed Indians had established a "station" upon the borders of one of the richest prairies of Northern Illinois. The land subsequently came into their hands lawfully, and for many years their descendants held it.

The county of Illinois had been created by the Virginia House of Delegates, and Colonel Clark, having in a great measure accomplished the object of his march among the British possessions, received the thanks and warm eulogiums of his countrymen.

Before the Colonel left Kaskaskia he bestowed upon Hunter Birty a substantial token of his regard—a rifle, which, until the days of his death, was Birty's constant companion—which was to him wife and children. His father's rifle was bestowed upon Meadow Birty, and with the tomahawk and knife, so long the weapons of Hunter Birty, are now cherished heir-looms among the decendants of the Half-Breed Colony of Illinois.