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CHAPTER I

ON THE ATLANTIC

"Come to me, children," said Mrs. Bradley invitingly; "I will be a mother to you, my darlings. You shall not be a burden to the community, but I will take care of you myself."

Having said this, she seized the little boy and his sister and pressed them to her heart, while tears trickled down her full, rosy cheeks.

"Now you little sweethearts," she said soothingly, "you must not be afraid of me. Let me wipe your tears, and then you will come with me to my quarters, and I will give you something very, very good to eat. But by all means don't cry anymore."

The children snuggled up to her and she took them by their hands, away from the crowd which had frightened them by their curious stares. There was a sigh of relief when the woman had promised to take care of them, for all on shipboard were glad that the two orphans had found a protector.

"God bless thee, Sister Clara," said the minister; "the Lord will reward thee, after thy goodness, both here and hereafter. Nor will He ever forsake or leave thee with the extra burden imposed on thee."

"The children are no burden," the woman replied; "but rather a godsend, for both my husband and I have longed for two little angels like these long ago. How they will comfort our hearts in those weary hours of winter when the days are so short and the nights so long! And, please you, sir, there will be enough for us to eat, for the good Lord has blessed us abundantly. But I must not delay to attend to them; so kindly excuse me, I must go."

The minister looked after her with grateful eyes, and then turned to the men and women standing around him.

"A pious woman she is," he said; "a rich reward will be hers for her great kindness."

Then the congregation dispersed, each family departing for the cabins and quarters where they lodged during the long, long voyage over the Atlantic.

Traveling at that time was not as comfortable as it is now, for the conversation that we just related took place just three hundred years ago, to be exact in the year of our Lord 1630.

Since that time many and great changes have taken place in the world, and should the people of that time rise from their graves, they would be amazed at the transformation that has taken place.

At that time the voyage across the ocean was slow and dangerous; the ships were small and propelled by the wind, so that when the weather was contrary, it took the emigrants a long time to reach America. Usually the food was poor, and quite often the water gave out, so that the people on shipboard suffered extremely. At the time of our story there were many who wished to settle in America, and in consequence the vessels were usually crowded to the utmost of their capacity. The result was that sickness spread among the passengers, and many did not reach the country where they hoped to find liberty of conscience.

Among these was the mother of the two children, of whom we just spoke. The boy's name was Fred, and he was eight years old; the name of his sister was Agnes, and she was seven.

They were strong and healthy children, but their frail mother could not stand the hardships of the voyage. For six years she had lived in anxiety, for in 1624 her husband had left England to settle in the Plymouth Colony, which the Pilgrims had established in 1620. He was very sincere in his faith, and rather than stay in good old England and do what his conscience forbade him, he joined the sturdy emigrants who left their homes for the Lord's sake, as they were fully convinced.

He arrived safely in Plymouth Colony and at first sent cheering letters to his wife. But suddenly these ceased, and she worried day and night over her far-away husband. She toiled diligently, so that her children did not suffer for lack of bread, but the worry broke her heart, and when she had saved a little sum of money, enough to pay for her voyage, she left England and joined the colonists who in ever larger numbers sought the land of freedom across the sea.

She did not live to set her foot on that strange, unknown land, but the good Lord called her out of all trouble, and she was buried in the sea.

Fred was old enough to realize what the death of his beloved mother meant, and Agnes, too, wept bitterly when they took away her mother and softly and slowly laid her away in the rolling waves.

The little band of emigrants at first worried considerably about what to do with the children. The majority of them were poor and blessed with large families so that they did not have any food to spare. Hence their joy was great when Clara Bradley volunteered to adopt the children as her own.

She herself was on the way to meet her husband, who two years before, in 1628, had left England with the Puritans to settle in the new territory granted by the King to the Massachusetts Company. The Puritans, as you know, differed from the Pilgrims in many respects; in consequence, they wished to establish their own settlements far enough away from the Plymouth Colony to avoid misunderstanding and trouble.

As soon as Mr. Bradley had arrived in the new settlement he wrote a long letter to his wife in which he described the wonderful country in which he had found a new home. But he begged her to wait for some time until he had built a house, cleared a small piece of land, and made other preparations to welcome his young and beautiful wife.

In England Mr. Bradley had been a merchant, and his wife came from a rich family so that he did not care to burden her with the hardships of primitive pioneer life. But she was a sensible woman, who was not afraid to work, and since she loved her husband dearly, she insisted that she would come and share with him the woe and weal of his life.

When, therefore, in 1630, the Massachusetts Company gave the people in the Colony the right to govern themselves, and in consequence, thousands of Puritans were willing to go to America, she would stay in England no longer, but sold her property, collected her belongings, and sailed with the first band of emigrants, in whose midst was also John Winthrop, the new governor.

It was by accident that she met the poor mother with her two little children, and when she heard her story, she pitied her very much. She, too, made friends with the children, and later when their mother was confined to her cabin, she took them on deck and told them many interesting stories of land and sea, and of kings and queens, and of the Indians that roved in the forests of their new country.

As she was blessed with sufficient funds, she had richly provided herself with special and delectable food so that the children received many a dainty morsel which they had never tasted in their lives.

In this way the children very soon became attached to the strange, fine lady, who wore such rich clothes and had such winning ways; and while she could never take the place of their mother, they nevertheless were comforted when their mother grew so ill that they were not allowed to see her.

When finally she died, they clung with cordial confidence to their new friend, who now taught them to call her mother.

At night Mrs. Bradley would point them to the heavens, when the skies were clear, and told them of the blessedness of their mother who was now with the holy angels and beheld the glory of the Lord Jesus.

"You see the beautiful stars up there?" she asked them. "Oh, how many there are! When I was young my mother told me that each was a window in heaven through which the angels looked to see whether all was well with God's people. Every time a star twinkled, she said, an angel looked down, and it was the glory of his face that shone so brightly."

"But is that true?" Fred asked, for he was well instructed, as all Puritans were, in the Bible. "Our teacher told us that the angels are ministering Spirits. That is what the Bible says, and we must not add thereunto." He said it almost sternly and quite reprovingly, for the Puritans were very religious and followed the Bible closely. Mrs. Bradley had been raised in a rich home, and although her parents had joined the Puritans, they remained much more genial than were their sterner brethren.

"Well, yes," the lady admitted; "perhaps you are right, but isn't it a good story, nevertheless? I love to think of the stars as being so many messengers of God watching over me in this poor life. But the angels are much nearer to us than the stars, and our Lord is still much nearer than they."

"Is He here on the ocean, too?" asked little Agnes who was a bright girl and very mature for her age. "It seems to me that we are here all, all alone with nothing but water around us, and it never ends, never!"

"Yes," said the good woman, "Jesus is here, too, though we cannot see Him. He is here at our services and prayer meetings, and He is in our hearts. When we pray, He hears us, and when we sing, our songs rise up to His throne. Every thought in our heart He knows. So we need not fear, my dear children."

Then she would kiss them tenderly, and give them a piece of ginger bread or some other dainty, so that they would forget all their sorrows and troubles.

On board the ship her solicitude for the children was soon noticed by everybody, and even Governor Winthrop at times turned to Mrs. Bradley and spoke to her about the children.

"You are doing very well as a mother, Mrs. Bradley," he teased her; "the children are very happy under your care, and they are not a whit sorrowful any more. The Lord bless you for your kindness! It is cheering to know that we have such pious folk in our company. God bless us all that His name may be glorified."

Mrs. Bradley blushed deeply when she perceived that her good work was thus graciously

acknowledged. She cared for no praise, and insisted that the children were only a blessing sent to her by the Lord to comfort her and assign to her a worthy task.

As often as the emigrants gathered for worship, she was present with the children, and joined in the singing, for she had a fine, melodious voice. There was no organ on board the ship, neither did the colonists have musical instruments. Yet they sang so wondrously that it was a pleasure to listen to them. The hymns were learned by heart, not only by the older members, but also by the children, who joined their clear young voices with those of their fathers and mothers. So also they learned the Bible, and while not all had copies of that holy Book, the majority of them knew whole portions by heart; especially the psalms which they sang every day. Furthermore, there was instruction in the Catechism each day, so that the children were well occupied, as were also their elders. For when they were not worshipping God by song and prayer, they served Him by doing useful work, of which there was much to do.

The colonists, knowing that they would settle in a primitive country, had brought plenty of wool, which the women spun into cloth from which to make garments. At that time there were no readymade clothes. Everything had to be made at home. This kept the women busy almost all day, and kept them from brooding over their trials and difficulties.

After all, it was not easy for them to leave their homes and settle in a new, uncivilized country. There, as they knew, the winters were much longer and harder; the woods were filled with Indians, who at times were hostile, and before the soil could be tilled, trees had to be cut down and stones had to be removed. The future, therefore, was not promising. The life that awaited them, was not one of ease. Yet they were resolved to carry out their plan and secure a home in inhospitable America, where at least they were not persecuted on account of their religious beliefs.

But also the men were busy in various ways. Some of them were skilful in weaving and spinning, and these helped the women in providing necessary garments. Very often father and mother with their children labored at one piece of work, and there was much jollity, as the parents related many a good story to their children. Others who were skilled in carpentering, made implements which could be used on the farm, in the woods, or in the homes. Others again attended to the sick, of whom there were many at all times, while still others joined in instructing the young.

In short, each emigrant was given some task to do, and the whole activity was superintended by Governor Winthrop, who led the men in wisely employing their time.

He was genial and affable, and even the humblest could go and speak to him. Though he was still a young man, yet he was like a father to every one. In spite of storms and many unpleasant things, the voyage was not altogether dreary, and when the emigrants finally landed, they thanked God heartily for the innumerable blessings bestowed upon them.

Yet they were glad when land was in sight and when the ship passed out of the region of tumultuous waves into the quiet and peaceful harbor of Massachusetts Bay.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW HOME

Six years had swiftly passed by since that memorable landing, and the Massachusetts Company had in this time made fine progress.

The band of emigrants, numbering about a thousand people, had settled in various places, some in Salem, but the majority in the new Colony of Boston, which Governor Winthrop made the capital.

He was an excellent leader, and as soon as he had established his Colony, a steady stream of immigrants poured in from England, though there were troubles and hardships enough for the settlers.

Mr. Bradley came over from Salem, and selling his little farm in the forest clearing, started a business in Boston, where he dealt with the Indians, of whom he bought rich and costly furs, which they exchanged for such articles as the white people had to offer.

The Indians wanted cooking utensils, guns, and above all fire-water; guns were more effective than

their bows and arrows when they were hunting wild animals, though later, when they became hostile to the white people, the governors did all in their power to prevent traders from furnishing them rifles and ammunition.

They also forbade them to sell to the Indians the much-desired fire-water or whiskey, for this insidious poison worked great havoc among them. So anxious were they to obtain it, that they sold their last fur blanket to the white trader, and when they got their whisky they drank to excess, and in their fits of drunkenness committed outrages both upon their own people and the whites.

Mr. Bradley was a true Christian, and therefore refrained from selling to the Indians such things as might harm them. They were like children, and would have given in exchange for worthless beads and trinkets the most expensive and valuable furs. In this way, Mr. Bradley could have made much money, but his heart was not covetous, and he tried his best to teach the Indians what articles were really of use to them.

So he prospered, but not as much as did the wicked traders who only considered their gain, and who without qualms of conscience sold to the Indians worthless and even harmful things.

His home was near the fort, and it was substantially built of huge logs which he had felled in the forest.

Since his wife was accustomed to luxuries and comforts, he tried to make his home as pleasant as possible, though she proved herself a good pioneer, who did not grumble when she did not have the many fine things to which she was used in England, and which could not be obtained in the Colony.

"God has given me so much that is precious," she would say as her husband expressed his regrets that he could not do more for her. "I have you, my dear husband, and God has sent us two obedient and pious children, though we have none of our own. So while not giving us all we want, He has nevertheless filled our cup of happiness to overflowing."

"And to me He has given a most godly and faithful wife," Mr. Bradley would then say as he caught her up into his arms. "How shall I ever be able to thank Him enough for His tender mercies!"

"And we have here so many friends and good neighbors," Mrs. Bradley would say; "the whole Colony is like one big family, though at times they do quarrel over religion and other things. Yet in general they are truly Christian people who desire to do what is right."

The husband assented. "Yes, our Massachusetts Colony is the most prosperous of them all. Every vessel brings hundreds of settlers, and the Indians live with us in peace and harmony. May God continue His blessings upon us, for we are not worthy of them."

Of course, there were also hard times when food was scarce, and when sickness and trouble afflicted many hearts.

Yet God had given to the Colony a man of great piety and wisdom who in all matters of general and private administration conducted himself with prudence and vision.

The Winthrops were great friends of the Bradleys, and often in the winter evenings they would sit together and discuss weighty matters pertaining to the welfare of the Colony. In this way, our friends became intimately acquainted with that great and good man. But every settler acknowledged his sterling virtues, and up to the time of his death in 1649, he was elected almost continually governor of the Colony. For contrary to the prevailing custom, the Massachusetts colonists could elect their own governors, as provided by their charter.

Governor Winthrop dressed very plainly so that when you met him, you could not at all tell by his clothes that he was governor. He was also a very humble man, and labored with his hands among his servants, since he was not ashamed of working. This put zest into those that were inclined to be indolent and who shirked the many toils that were necessitated by the upbuilding of the Colony.

In order to spread the principles of temperance Governor Winthrop drank little but water, and also in other respects he encouraged the habits of temperance and sobriety. This was very necessary since peace and prosperity attend a people only if it is temperate in all things.

When the Colony had little food, he liberally gave to the poor people of his own store. Once his last bread was in the oven, yet when hungry people came to him, and begged for flour, he dispensed to them the small remainder. Fortunately, that very day a shipload of provisions arrived, and for a time the distress was alleviated.

Governor Winthrop also encouraged his fellow colonists in the Christian virtue of forgiveness. One

time a leading man of the Colony wrote him an angry letter, but this he sent back at once with the note appended: "I am not willing to keep such a provocation to ill-feeling by me." The offender, a man of great influence, replied immediately: "Your overcoming yourself, has overcome me." He became one of his warmest friends and from that time diligently assisted him in his arduous tasks.

The Governor was not desirous of vainglory, though according to the custom of the time, he might have demanded absolute submission and obedience. But he was a man who rather desired the love of his fellowmen than their slavish fear, and in all things he guided them so, that they could well govern themselves.

His greatest boast was that he had a "loving and dutiful son," who followed in his father's footsteps and was as pious and sincere in his religion as he was. This son grew up to be a man of excellent virtues, and he became the first governor of the Colony of Connecticut.

No wonder that under such a governor the Colony prospered and became stronger from year to year! And what a blessing it was for our two little friends that they were brought up in such a Christian atmosphere and home!

It is true, sometimes Fred longed to find out what became of his father, but in spite of all efforts made to ascertain anything about him, nothing was heard of him.

In those early times many a settler disappeared, and no one ever learned what had become of him. The woods were full of fierce animals, the Indians at times were hostile, and took revenge for real or imagined injuries which they suffered by killing innocent persons, for they regarded the Colonies as so many units, so that the wrongs inflicted by individuals were regarded as having been done by the whole community.

In the long and dreary winters storms and tempests would rage, and many a settler lost his way in the forests, and perished miserably in the deep snow. Then when spring came, forest streams would wash away the bodies, or wild animals would devour them. In short, there were many ways to account for the disappearance of Fred's father, as the boy learned when he grew up.

Yet he was not a boy to brood over matters that could not be changed, and the rich and varied life in the Colony gave him little time for dreaming idle dreams.

In the mornings he rose early, and went with Mr. Bradley to his fine store, which was near the house. There the Indians gathered, and brought their furs and other goods of barter and sale.

Fred soon learned to trust the Indians and to like them, and in a short time he was able to attend to many a sale himself. He knew the value of furs, and the prices for all articles in his foster-father's store.

Though the language of the Indians was difficult for the white people to learn, the bright lad made rapid progress in it, especially as he played with the Indian children, who did not know a word of English.

This knowledge helped him considerably in his dealings with the Indians who trusted the white people the more as they used their language.

Agnes in the meanwhile stayed in the house with Mrs. Bradley, helping her in the many duties which the housewife of that time had to perform.

Every colonist raised some corn and garden vegetables, and such things as contributed to the food supply of the community; for the food question was of great importance to them.

The corn they planted after Indian fashion, placing two fish into the holes into which the kernels were dropped. The Indians connected with this act some superstitious rite, but the white people knew that the fish were necessary to fertilize the sterile soil. Soon they used improved methods, and their harvests were much greater than those of the Indians.

In the course of time Agnes learned from Mrs. Bradley every art of managing a home. She could sew garments, make moccasins, heal bruises and wounds, cook the various dishes which the Puritans liked, and in short, attend to the many tasks of managing a home.

Mrs. Bradley never had occasion to be sorry for having adopted the children, and often she would thank God for them as she considered that she had none of her own. How lonely the large house of the trader would have been had not Fred and Agnes brought life into it!

But their life was not all work.

Their foster parents were very conscientious in giving them a good education, and for this purpose they hired Master Henry, a young theologian who had studied in England, and now continued his studies privately under the instruction of the learned Reverend John Davenport.

In the meanwhile he earned a few shillings by instructing children, visiting the sick, and doing other useful things for the busy minister, whose tasks increased as the Colony became larger from year to year.

Master Henry's teaching was not the kind which was practiced by pedagogues of little learning and experience, who ruled with the rod and inculcated their lessons by blows and punishments.

Fred and his sister liked to learn, and their lessons were always prepared thoroughly the evening before.

So when shortly after midday the young minister would come to Mr. Bradley's home, he was welcomed by the children with great joy.

Mrs. Bradley always kept a bowl of rich, hot soup for him, or some dainty which he liked. But Master Henry was a man of frugal habits, and while he enjoyed his meal, he partook of the food very sparingly.

The instruction would continue till four o'clock, the children were given a vacation during which they might divert themselves.

These were the golden hours of unqualified joy when they amused themselves to their heart's delight. As Mr. Bradley was becoming wealthy, he could allow them many pleasures which poor parents had to deny their children.

As soon as they were old enough, he bought them two small horses which they could use very well, as the means of transportation were very primitive. So they rode out into the forests and made friends with the Indians, or they visited the other Colonies which were not far away. To the north there was the Salem Colony, and to the south, the old Colony of Plymouth, which was the mother colony of all the English settlements. On these trips they not only made many friends, but also became acquainted with the country and learned to lose all fear of white men and Indians.

One summer Fred, with the help of young Indian friends, made a boat, and he and Agnes rowed up the rivers and streams of which there were many.

At first their only weapons were bows and arrows and home-made spears which they could use with the skill of the Indians. However, when they became older, Mr. Bradley allowed them small firearms for their hunting expeditions.

Thus Fred and Agnes spent a very happy life in the Boston Colony, and they grew up to be strong and healthy, with a wisdom not gotten out of books merely, but which their varied experience taught them.

They could swim, skate, cover long distances over the snow by means of snow-shoes, shoot, ride horseback, and do almost all the things which the pioneers did.

Like all the Puritans they were well versed in the Bible, and they knew many hymns by heart, so that when they joined the church, they did this of their own accord and with firm convictions.

Thus six years passed by with rapidity, and before he realized it, Fred was fourteen years old, while Agnes was thirteen.

Their life had been very happy, and in mind and body they had matured so, that they appeared to be much older than they really were. Mr. Bradley could trust Fred with almost any task that he would assign to a man, while Agnes was a regular little tom boy, who was skilled not only in the duties of a good young lady, but also in those of young men. Whether she was in the house, or outside, she could always be depended upon.

There was not a better rider in the whole community than she, and she handled every sort of weapon with great skill.

Life in the Colony was pleasant indeed!

CHAPTER III

A NEW BROTHER

One evening when Mr. Bradley and his happy family were gathered around the fire-side, he seemed to be in a very meditative mood. The family had just finished its evening devotion and the open Bible lay upon the huge table which stood near the hearth.

"Why are you musing so intently?" Mrs. Bradley asked. "It seems your forehead is more wrinkled with furrows than ever, and you are altogether too young a man to look so worried." This she said with a smile, and as she said it, she lovingly stroked his cheeks.

"I am not worrying, my dear," he replied, "but only thinking, and I wonder whether that which I think, will please you."

"What pleases you," Mrs. Bradley said, "always pleases me. We are two of a kind, and I am sure I am going to agree to what you say. Pray, now tell me what troubles you."

"The matter pertains to another little youngster in our home," he replied; "though the youngster is not so very young any more. He is a year older than Fred, and I think, he would prove a good companion to him."

Fred listened with much interest, and also Agnes laid aside her book.

"What about the young lad?" Mrs. Bradley asked. "Is he the son of a poor family in the Colony?"

"His case is worse," the husband replied. "Yesterday when the good ship 'Hope' came into port, the authorities found a stranger in the band of immigrants. He was a stowaway, though some of the people discovered him during the voyage and supported him with food. Otherwise the poor fellow would have starved."

"And what are they going to do with the lad?" Mrs. Bradley inquired.

"That is the trouble," her husband said. "According to the law the boy must be returned to England. But he has begged the authorities not to send him back. He comes from a poor family, and his father is dead. In England there are no opportunities for him; So he decided to go to America. And now he is here."

"And you decided to take him into your home!" the woman said smilingly.
"That looks just like you."

"Well," the man answered, looking at Fred and Agnes, "you were lucky to find these, so I must make another contribution."

"Nor do I object," consented the woman. "The Lord has blessed us abundantly with all good things, and we can surely give him a good home. Only, I would ask, is he worthy of it?"

"That we must see," Mr. Bradley said; "but he seems to be a good pious boy, and he knows his Catechism well. I hardly blame him for leaving England."

"Then the matter is settled," Mrs. Bradley said; "but where is the boy now?"

"Governor Winthrop has provisionally taken him into his home," the man said; "though he cannot very well adopt the lad. But when he spoke to me about it, I promised to ask you, and I have guaranteed the ship company to pay his fare."

"What a fine Samaritan you are!" Mrs. Bradley said, as she kissed him. "Surely, the Lord will bless you for it, and we shall be the richer for having taken him in."

Fred who had listened eagerly, could no longer restrain himself. Stepping up to his foster-father he asked: "And what is the boy's name?"

"His name is Matthew Bunyan," Mrs. Bradley said; "but what about you, Fred? Do you want to have the new brother? And will you treat him kindly?"

"That I will," Fred responded gladly. "I have always wished for a brother, who could work and play with me. And Matthew Bunyon is such a fine name! When can I see him?"

"You may this very evening, if you care to go to the Governor's house," said the kind father.

"Oh, then, let us go, Agnes," Fred said. "It will do him a world of good to let him know that he has a sister and a brother."

"And could he not come over this very evening?" Mrs. Bradley asked. "I surely would like to see him. Fred's bed is large enough for two to sleep in."

"Yes, bring him with you, Fred," Mr. Bradley said. "Only you must wait until I have written a note to Governor Winthrop, telling him of our resolution."

As Mr. Bradley was a merchant, the writing materials were always kept ready for use, and in a few moments the note was finished.

While the man was penning the note, Fred and Agnes dressed themselves warmly in their furs, for while March had come, the weather was still cold, and heavy snow had fallen. At that time the winters in New England were much severer than they are now.

So they strapped on their snow-shoes, and Fred took down his gun from the wall. The evening was quiet, and on the way he might see some game. In winter the deer and elk often stole into the village in search of food, and sometimes the settlers could shoot them from their open windows.

In a few moments the children were off, having kissed their parents good-by. Then they stepped out into the clear, cold night, where they at once disappeared in the woods.

"How beautiful it is tonight," Agnes said as she laughingly passed her brother. "It makes me feel gay. I think I can beat you to the Governor's house."

"Stay behind me, Agnes," Fred warned her; "there might be a deer running out from behind the brush that I might shoot."

"Do not shoot on such a beautiful night," the girl pleaded; "everything is so peaceful, and the poor animals ought to enjoy their life, too, and not always be in danger of being killed by men, beasts, and Indians."

"You are a little Samaritan," Fred laughed, "and a poet, too; well, if I don't see anything, I won't shoot."

But nothing came in sight, and so within half an hour the children were rapping at the door of the Governor's home. Here they were kindly, received by the Governor and his wife, who urged them at once to lay off their wraps and make themselves at home.

"We do not care to stay this evening, kind sir," Fred said; "for at home father and mother are waiting for Matthew."

He handed the Governor the note, which he took and read.

"I see," he said; "so your father has declared his willingness to adopt Matthew. That is very fine of him. I shall see him tomorrow and draw up the papers."

"Where is Matthew now?" Agnes asked a little impatiently.

"He is at the home of the Reverend Mr. Davenport," Mr. Winthrop said; "the good parson wanted to examine him with respect to his religious opinions. But I trow they will be back soon, for they left quite a time ago."

Fortunately the children did not have to wait long for Matthew, who with the Governor's son John had gone to the pastor's manse. In the meanwhile Mrs. Winthrop regaled them with baked apples and sweet cider.

"Well, Father," John said, as he came in, "Matthew has passed the test, and the parson has found him efficient in faith and morals."

"Good, my son," Governor Winthrop replied; "it pleases me to hear that. Come forward, Matthew, for I have good news for you."

Fred and Agnes looked with deep interest at the boy. He was somewhat taller than Fred, but did not seem to be as strong as he. Evidently the lad had starved a good deal on the voyage, for he looked haggard and wan. Also he was dressed quite poorly. The visit to the minister had, no doubt, been a great strain on him. He was timid and bashful, and as the Governor addressed him, his cheeks became scarlet.

"Come on, my son," Governor Winthrop said, "and be not afraid. We shall not send you back, for you will have a good home with the Bradleys. God has provided for you a dwelling place."

Fred liked his new brother right away, for his blue eyes had an honest and straight forward look.

"You will go with us right now to your new home" he told him after he had shaken hands with him. "Here is my sister Agnes," he added.

Agnes was a bit timid for a moment, but her sweet good nature asserted itself.

"I believe we must carry you," she said smilingly, "since you have no snow-shoes. Where we live is a good ways off, and we must wade through heavy snow."

"I cannot walk on snow-shoes," Matthew said bashfully, "but I will try my best to follow you."

"The snow is frozen pretty hard," Fred mused, "and I do not think you will break through. So let us go."

With a word of caution the Governor sent them on their way, and soon they were lost from view in the dark woods.

The children traveled slowly in order that their young friend might follow them with ease. He seemed to be very tired, and no wonder, for the trip across the ocean and the rude experiences after landing on the strange shore had worn him out. Nevertheless, he walked bravely through the deep snow, happy to be in company of children so kind and good.

But he was very glad when finally the lights of Mr. Bradley's large log house greeted them and the weary trip was over.

Mr. and Mrs. Bradley greeted the new-come warmly, and soon he had lost his fear, and felt quite at home.

After a cup of refreshing tea he related his story, which explained why he had left England and come to America.

"You see," he said, "my father died, and it was hard for me to secure work, so that I was only a burden to my dear mother, who had all she, could do to feed the other children who are smaller than I. A friend of my father's had promised to advance the fare, but when my parent died, he withdrew the offer. My mother was willing that I should go. As soon as I have earned enough money, I shall send it to England and have her come here."

"That is a fine boy," Mrs. Bradley encouraged him; "but in the meanwhile you will stay with us and shall be like a son to us."

"But by all means write to your mother in England," Mr. Bradley said, and the lad at once promised to do so, being happy to be able to report so wondrous an outcome of the venture.

However, the children were not allowed much time for conversation, for by this time it had become quite late, and they had to repair to bed. So they bade their elders good-night, and hurried off to their room.

Fred was glad when the new-come after undressing and jumping into bed, folded his hands and prayed his evening prayer.

"I am pleased that you do this," he said after he had finished his own prayer; "now I can trust you the more and feel much more cordial toward you."

"Father always insisted that we pray and read the Bible," Matthew responded, "and when one has passed through the many experiences which were crowded of late into my life, he needs no prompting. There is so much comfort in it."

Soon the boys were fast asleep, each anxious to know what the next day would bring to them. Only Agnes did not at once fall asleep. It was Mrs. Bradley's custom to accompany her to her sleeping chamber and to pray with her and cover her with the warm bed clothes. It was usually at this time that the girl voiced whatever wish she had to communicate.

So when Mrs. Bradley kissed her good-night, she clasped her head and whispered into her ear: "Will you not also get a little baby sister for me, so that I can play with her?"

Mrs. Bradley smiled as she answered, "If the good Lord will send another little orphan, we shall surely adopt her."

Then with a happy smile on her face the girl fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV

A HAPPY SURPRISE

Events moved swiftly along in the Colony, and in a short time two fleeting months had passed. June came with sunshine, breaking buds, rich, green grass, and general joy among the colonists.

After the long winter they set out with grateful hearts to clear more land and plant more corn. The Colony was increasing from month to month and required more ample supplies with which to feed the many hungry mouths.

Almost every week a ship from England would come in with new immigrants, for the Colony enjoyed an enviable reputation, and in England the persecution of Puritans and Separatists continued. Between 1630 and 1640 more than twenty thousand people came to the Massachusetts Colony, as the historians of our country tell us.

The vessels brought supplies and immigrants and took back with them such raw products as the Colony could produce. The furs which the traders obtained from the Indians and their own trappers were very valuable, and brought high prices in old England.

But England needed also timber, and this was found abundantly in the new country where thousands of giant trees covered the land.

Mr. Bradley was happy that he had gained another helper for his store. In fact, Matthew proved himself an excellent clerk in the trading post. He was not forward, but at the same time possessed courage enough to mingle undauntedly with the Indians, who liked the "pale face" very much because of his frankness and honesty.

The boy had received a good education, and whatever he knew, he turned to good use, so that Mr. Bradley more than once trusted him with important negotiations.

"God has given me a fine helper," he said one evening to his wife, as they were closing the store. "Fred and Matthew are good business men, and will in course of time be of invaluable service to me."

"As soon as possible we must write to his mother and ask her to come over to America," Mrs. Bradley suggested. "I can use her in the house, since my work is increasing."

To this her husband assented; yet this promise was never carried out, for in the course of the summer Matthew received the news that she had found a trustworthy and loving husband, who after their marriage insisted that they stay in England and seek their fortune there. He was a small merchant who was doing well in business, so that Matthew's mother had no reason to complain.

"And now you will return to England," Fred said sadly after he had read the letter to the family. "I might just as well bid you good-by right now."

"Never," Matthew answered; "this is my country and shall remain my country. Here God has given me work to do and dear friends with whom I am happy. So why should I return?"

All rejoiced in Matthew's resolution, and they promised to make life as pleasant for him as possible.

Certainly to him life was not a drudgery. Mr. Bradley wisely allowed the children sufficient time for recreation, especially in summer when the fur trade was not active.

He was anxious that the lads should become thoroughly acquainted with the country and its inhabitants, as his business depended much on the good will of the white men and the Indians.

So he sent them far into the interior with little gifts and trinkets which the boys were to give to the Indians, in order that they might establish trade connections with the "House of Bradley."

These trips were very pleasant to the boys, and as they sometimes took Agnes with them, they formed a merry party, for the girl was full of fun and laughter, and though the boys were much taller than she, she could endure much more fatigue than they.

How the Indians adored her!

When the three pilgrims of the woods came to the Indian villages, Fred, who was thoroughly versed in the language and customs of the red men, would seek out the chief and broach his mission to him.

The chief called together his men and a council was held, in which every one smoked the peace pipe, including Fred and Matthew, who had to submit to this ordeal for business reasons.

Then the matter of trading with the "House of Bradley" was discussed, and Fred told them what prices his great white father, who dwelled in the large wigwam by the sea, paid for furs, much more than the French and other traders. This he could say with truth, for Mr. Bradley indeed was thoroughly honest in his business and never deceived the guileless Indians.

After the promise was made, that they would turn their furs over to the "House of Bradley," the boys would open their treasures and give to each man some gift which he liked. All of them liked tobacco, though many asked for fire-water, which, however, Fred never offered them. Some, however, preferred cups and kettles which Fred supplied as long as the store lasted. Usually, however, these were reserved for the mighty men among the Indians, the chiefs and leaders, since only a limited supply of them could be carried on horseback.

In the meanwhile Agnes would approach the wigwams of the women, and by her winsome smiles, her hearty laughter and gayety soon won their confidence. She spoke the language of the Indians fluently, and sang many of the Puritan hymns in their tongue, so that they were "much entertained," as the old chronicle says.

On her trips she carried her lute with her, and on this she played so well that not only the women, but also the men were attracted to her entertainment. Then she would sit down in their midst, and tell them interesting stories of the white men and women, and their kings and queens, and their gold and silver, and big wigwams, and when they had become thoroughly interested, she told them of their religion, and of God's Son who had become man to save sinners.

The Indians loved to hear stories, and never tired of them, especially when Agnes told them about the miracles of Jesus, how He had healed the sick and fed the hungry multitudes with bread.

It had taken the girl a long time until she had learned how to tell these stories to the Indians. In general, the Puritans did not trouble themselves about the salvation of the Indians; but in 1631 a young minister had come from England, who for sometime had stayed with the Bradley's in Boston, where Agnes became well acquainted with him.

His name was John Eliot, and from the very start this pious minister was interested in the spiritual welfare of the Indians.

"They have immortal souls, too," he said to Mr. Bradley, "and we must tell them of the salvation which God has prepared for all men."

Mr. Bradley was not much interested in the project, though he was a true Christian; but like other Puritans he never believed that the Indians could be converted to Christianity.

Agnes, however, listened to the minister with keen interest, and often she would converse with him on this matter.

At first, John Eliot had no congregation, nor did he know the language of the Indians. But in 1632 he was elected pastor of Christ Church, in Roxbury, Massachusetts.

He at once suggested to his congregation to preach also to the Indians, but at first the men would not permit him to do this blessed work. But he secretly studied the language of the Indians, and at last in 1646, he engaged in mission work among them "amid much opposition and vexation," as we are told by the historians.

At the time when Agnes with Fred and Matthew made their summer trips in the Indian country. Pastor Eliot was not yet preaching to them; but the girl had learned from him how to tell the story of Christ in simple words which all could understand.

Agnes thus became the first missionary among the Mohican Indians in Massachusetts. Later, John Eliot became famous as the "Apostle of the Indians", for besides preaching to them, he translated into their language the Bible and many other fine books.

Usually the children spent a week on their trip but at times when they had drifted far away from the Colony, they stayed away for two and even three weeks. Their foster-parents, however, never worried about them, for they knew that Fred was a brave leader, and that Agnes would not lose her way even in the densest forest.

By this time all three could handle such weapons as were used at that time, and though the guns

were heavy and clumsy, none of them missed the object at which they aimed. So by the grace of God they always returned safe, and then they had many interesting stories to tell.

One evening as they had just related their tale of adventure, Mr. Bradley said, "I must secure some trustworthy person who can attend to my business when I am away. So far, I have not cared to entrust my store to any one here, but I must find some one, for I, too, must venture out to establish more trading posts. The furs are not coming in as fast as they should; there are too many traders elsewhere."

Just then some one rapped at the door, and when Fred opened he saw a huge man standing in front of him.

"Good evening," said the stranger somewhat timidly; "does Mr. Bradley dwell here? I was directed to this house."

No sooner had Mr. Bradley heard the man's voice, when he jumped from the chair and hastened to the door.

"Do my ears deceive me?" he cried. "Can it be you, John Rawlins?"

"Well, I declare," the man answered; "really, it *is* you, John Bradley!"

The two men shook hands warmly, and then the stranger was invited in.

"Where do you come from?" asked Mrs. Bradley after she had welcomed the man to the home. "You are an unexpected visitor, forsooth!"

"From the good ship 'Hope,' which is in the harbor," the man explained. "I could not wait till tomorrow, and so I prevailed upon the captain set me ashore. I just had to see my old mate this evening."

"So the good ship 'Hope' arrived?" Mr. Brad asked. "That is fine, for the colonists are eagerly waiting for supplies; and I know there is a shipment for me."

"Yes, so the captain tells me," the stranger said and he at once began to relate why he had come America.

This he did upon the urgent request of Mr. Bradley who was much surprised at so unexpected a visit.

"Well, it was this way," the stranger began, after he had lighted his pipe and taken a few draughts of the tea which Mrs. Bradley set before him. "In England they are all talking about the wonderful success of the Colony, and there are thousands of people ready to come over, if only they could pay their fare."

"I hope they do not come over without funds" Mr. Bradley said, "for we have difficulties of our own; and I hope, too, that they will not send us worthless and lazy fellows. We cannot use them here."

"I understand, I understand," John Rawlins said; "well, when you sold the business and came over here, Mrs. Bradley, I stayed over in the old country, and this, as you know, for Mrs. Rawlins sake, who was an invalid. But the days of her earthly pilgrimage are over, and she rests under the flowers of old England. What should I do, a widower and a lonely man? So I bethought myself of you, and lo, here I am seeking work, as in the days of yore."

"And you are exceedingly welcome," Mr. Bradley said warmly; "your faithful services are worth gold to me. If you seek employment, you are hired at your own price this very evening."

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow," Mr. Rawlins replied ardently, for he was a devout Christian. "I had never expected such a welcome."

"I just talked about help when you rapped at the door," Mr. Bradley explained, "telling the boys that I must venture out on expeditions myself in search of trade. With an old servant like you in the store, I shall now carry out my plan."

We must explain to our readers that while John Bradley was still in England, John Rawlins was his most trustworthy clerk and helper. He was now an old man, who had lived more than three score years, yet he was hale and hearty, and as enterprising as when he had served Mr. Bradley in England.

It was only after he had related his tale that Mr. Rawlins took notice of the children.

"What fine children you have, Mrs. Bradley," he said, "and how tall for their age! Why you never had any children when you left old England!" He looked at her with surprise.

"These are children which God sent us," the Woman explained, telling the story in words that would not offend the children.

"How wonderful!" the man exclaimed when he had heard the tale. "If such children like these grow here in the woods, I'll adopt a whole dozen. Come, now, tell me your names."

In a short time the children had become acquainted with the queer, old man who was so peculiar and yet so good.

"We are going to be playmates, my lads," said after a while, "and I will teach you some tricks from old England."

"And you, young lady," he continued, "I suppose you are a real miss, not afraid of Indians and lions and such like."

"Please, sir," Agnes replied, "there are no lions in the Colony, but if there were they would soon fall dead before my trusty musket."

With mock dignity she took down the heavy musket and aiming it at the man, said, "And, sir, here is how the women of America defend their honor. Hold on, sir, or you will be a dead man." They all laughed, but Mrs. Bradley urged Agnes to put away the gun, which was a fine specimen that Mr. Bradley had especially imported from England for the girl.

"You are going to teach me a trick or two," the old man said laughing boisterously. "I surely must guard my tongue, or the days of my earthly pilgrimage will be cut short."

It was a lovely evening, and never for a long time was there so much jollity in the house. However, when finally Mr. Bradley took down the large family Bible to read the evening chapter, all were serious and listened to the Word of God with devotion.

The service was closed with a hymn of praise, which Agnes accompanied on her lute.

Tears crept over the rough cheeks of the old man, and as he bade his friends good-night, he said, "Never was the heart of John Rawlins so happy as tonight. The Lord has verily blessed my pilgrimage to America, nor is it altogether a rough country, but one where there is much piety and delight."

CHAPTER V

A WONDERFUL JOURNEY

Mr. Bradley was glad that he had his old reliable clerk with him in America, for he was anxious to leave the colony, and establish trading posts along the Connecticut River, west of the Massachusetts Colony.

Already the year before, in the summer of 1685, many settlers had left the Boston Colony and gone west through the unbroken wilderness to the Connecticut River. They were courageous men and women, for the journey was very tedious and dangerous, and by no means inviting.

Yet they were dissatisfied with many things in the Colony, especially with the farms allotted to them, for they were sterile and did not produce rich crops.

Every one had the pioneer spirit in full measure; for the men who had come from England, braving many dangers, would not linger helplessly in a place where they did not find what they wanted.

The country was immensely large, and opportunities welcomed them everywhere. The first adventurers, who blazed the trail, reported rich and fertile lands along the Connecticut River, with fine opportunities for fishing and trading; for this river, which in the North divides the two states of Vermont and New Hampshire, flows through Massachusetts and Connecticut, where it pours rich deposits of silt into the ocean.

For the early settlers the rivers were means of travel and traffic, and we need not be surprised that so many of the Boston Colony left their homes and sought out this new country.

In the course of time three settlements were made, the towns of Windsor, Whethersfield, and

Hartford. The last is now a flourishing city and the capital of the state of Connecticut.

As soon as John Rawlins had acquainted himself with the intricacies of Mr. Bradley's business, and knew all the prices of the various articles, and could converse somewhat in the language of the Indians, Mr. Bradley prepared for the expedition.

At first he wanted to go alone, but after a while he decided to take Fred with him, who was well acquainted with the interior of the country. Agnes begged so long, until she, too, was permitted to go. Then Matthew hung his head and looked sorrowful, because he had to remain behind. So he, too, was included. Finally Mrs. Bradley insisted on going also, and so, what was originally planned as a little trip of one, became, in the words of John Rawlins, a "huge earthly pilgrimage."

After all, however, Mr. Bradley would not have permitted the family to go, had the expedition been connected with serious dangers, or had the fur season been on. But as it was, the season was dull, and John Rawlins did not have many customers.

He was one of the singular men of whom it is said that to know them is to love them. His age gave him a certain dignity, and his height made him tower above the heads of all ordinary persons. The Indians called him the "tall oak," a name of which he was quite proud. He was kind to the poor and humble but a terror to the bully, who tried to bluff him. Every one who came to the store was treated with cordiality and fairness, and Mr. Bradley knew that as long as John Rawlins was in charge of the business, the management was in safe hands.

So on one bright morning in August the party started out on the expedition. Two large, faithful dogs ran ahead, barking and jumping with glee. Then came Fred and Matthew who knew the trail somewhat, though for safety's sake they had secured a reliable Indian guide, who walked alongside the boys. Next came Agnes and Mrs. Bradley, while Mr. Bradley followed in the rear, superintending the five pack horses, which were in charge of three trustworthy Indian servants. All the white men were armed, and even Agnes carried her gun at the side of the saddle.

Besides the muskets they had also bows and arrows, which were useful for shooting birds and light game of which the forests were full. On these they depended for their provisions, for the large amount of wares which Mr. Bradley carried with him, prevented them from loading on the pack horses rich supplies of food. Nor was this necessary, for on the way they passed through many Indian villages, and in these they could purchase corn meal, which besides meat was the staple food of the pioneers when away from home.

The distance to Hartford, for which the expedition was bound, was about one hundred and fifty miles, which Mr. Bradley hoped to cover within a week's time. This made the journey quite comfortable, though at times it was arduous enough, since often the trail was very narrow, and many streams and rivers had to be crossed.

Toward evening the expedition would halt. The Indian guides would unload the pack horses, and start a huge fire. Fred and Matthew then erected the tent for the ladies, while they laid around it rich fur blankets on which the men slept. The Indians camped near by, one of them watching over the horses which grazed on the tender grass, with their front feet tied so that they could not roam away too far.

While the men were busy preparing the camp, the women cooked the food in a large kettle which hung over the fire. This usually contained a turkey or partridges shot by one of the men on the way. In addition, there were primitive spits on which were broiled huge pieces of meat, while in the hot ashes Mrs. Bradley skillfully baked small loaves of delicious corn bread. In a smaller kettle Agnes cooked the tea, of which the pioneers were very fond, and which was the only beverage the white people drank while on the journey. For while the Indians drank freely of the streams, the pioneers were careful to refrain from it, as it might prove a cause of sickness, which would delay the trip.

After the meal was finished, Mr. Bradley read from the Bible, which was the constant companion of the Puritans, and after that the whole company joined in singing a hymn or two.

The service was simple, but sublime, and the Indians listened with delight to the pious worshippers.

Fred and Agnes, who spoke the Mohican language as fluently as their mother tongue, would then explain to the Indians the contents of the chapter read, in their native language, and sometimes Agnes would sing one of the fine songs which she had cleverly translated into their language.

Finally, when the service was over, the ladies crept into their tent, the men stretched out on the warm blankets, and with the exception of the Indian guard and Fred or Matthew, who watched over the camp, all were soon fast asleep.

Through the thick foliage the stars gleamed down upon the quiet world, and Fred, looking up to the heavens, was absorbed in deep thought as he listened to the breezes that rocked the crowns of the trees, or to the strange, weird noises that came from out of the forest in which beasts of prey were looking for their food. On the other side of the camp the Indian servant watched over the horses, while the Indian guide, ever wary and cautious, would at times raise his head as he listened to strange sounds like the hooting of the owls, or the weary wail of the whippoorwill.

And over all rested that strange peace of God which is found in the forest or on the prairie, where God is near and wicked men are far away.

CHAPTER VI

THE CURSE OF GREED

In Hartford, where the expedition arrived safe and well after a week of steadfast traveling, Mr. Bradley encountered much that surprised him. Sometimes we judge the world by our own standards, thinking that everybody moves as rapidly or slowly as we ourselves; suddenly we are brought face to face with the real situation, and we find ourselves outwitted and outrun.

It so happened to Mr. Bradley, who up to this time had made no efforts to extend his trade as far as the Connecticut River. When finally he arrived on the scene, he discovered that competitors had established themselves long ago in this paradise of the huntsman and the trapper.

The Englishmen from Massachusetts Colony, who had come here in the previous year, had erected themselves sturdy log huts with a strong fort in the midst, to protect them against a possible attack of the Indians, and all along the river traders were plying their craft.

However, others had been there even before them. From the South, Dutch trappers had come from New York, and these had gained the good will of the Indians, from whom they purchased their furs. The Dutch were very cunning, and while they did not always treat the Indians fairly, they nevertheless maintained their friendship and cooperation.

The land along the Connecticut River was very fertile, and the Pequot Indians, who sided with the Dutch, had driven away the original tribes which had dwelled there. These expelled tribes were friendly to the Puritans, and when the Puritan settlers seized the land, they brought back the Indians whom the Pequots had just driven away. At this the Pequots were enraged, and they now took revenge by killing English traders where they had opportunity. The English at once punished the Indians by hanging a few of their representative men, and they threatened them with war, should they engage in other punitive measures.

The Dutch, however, whom the invading Englishmen crowded out, incited the Indians to rebellion war against the Puritans, and thus there was sown the seed of hatred and war which in time brought forth vicious fruits.

When Mr. Bradley arrived at Hartford, he at once met several friends who encouraged him not to turn back, but to establish a trading post up the river, near enough to the fort to enjoy its protection.

This he did, and the venture gave the children no little pleasure. Indian help was readily obtained, and in addition several skilled carpenters, who urged the Indians to work hard and rapidly, so that within a month a large and strong log house was completed. It stood on the west bank of the river, about ten miles from the fort, which could easily be reached by the boat. As hostilities might be expected, it was built much like a small fort, the second story jutting out over the first so that it could be more easily defended. The log house had no windows, but there were a number of small, narrow apertures through which the inmates could shoot in case of attack.

The furs and stores were provided for in the first story, while in the second there were three rooms in which the traders might live and sleep.

No sooner was the trading post established when Mr. Bradley left with his wife to return to Boston, where important business negotiations had to be attended to by himself. He promised to send John Rawlins, and put Fred and Matthew in charge of the log house.

Agnes was to return to the Boston Colony, but she begged her parents to permit her to remain, and this permission was finally granted. So after a last service, Mr. and Mrs. Bradley left, and the three children remained in the wilderness alone, amply supplied with provisions and articles of trade.

For their traffic Mr. Bradley had purchased a fine, strong boat, in which they could easily reach Hartford whenever they cared to go there. In the barn which was built to the house, stood three horses, accustomed to traveling in the woods, and altogether faithful and reliable.

Fred, who till the arrival of John Rawlins was in charge of everything, at once made preparations to become acquainted with the Indians and to gain their friendship, for on them he depended for furs.

He secured a Pequot Indian boy, from whom he could learn the native language, and he won his confidence and good will by little gifts which he gave him.

The task of learning the language of the Indians was the most important one, and each morning several hours were set aside for that purpose. The work proved itself a very delightful one, for the method was simple.

Each of the three white children had a little notebook into which they would write the words which the Indian boy mentioned to them, and although many mistakes occurred at first which caused a good deal of laughter, they progressed very fast so that in a short time they knew the Indian words for the most important articles.

But also on their expeditions the Indian boy had to serve as teacher, and so he was troubled with perpetual questions which his inquisitive friends asked him. As the Pequot Indians had long associated with the Dutch, not a few Dutch words were added to their vocabulary, though strangely changed by the lips of the Indians.

The visits to the Indians, whether made by boat or on horseback, also proved themselves a source of pleasure. It is true, they did not find them in the same friendly mood as the Mohicans, but since open hostilities had not been declared, there was still a chance to win them over.

And how could the Indians resist the three children, who came to them so boldly, and yet so innocently and kindly! Not a village they left without having enriched it with treasures which the Indians prized very much. Wherever they went, they spread the spirit of peace and good will.

Agnes was of great help to the two boys, for by her fine singing and her alluring playing on her faithful lute, she endeared herself to the Indian women, who gave to her the name "little bird of the woods."

When the Indians came to the trading post, they were received kindly, and when they brought furs, they were paid the highest prices possible. In addition, Fred doled out to them little sacks of tobacco, while Agnes usually won over the women and children by some sweets of sugar or fruit.

Thus it happened that when winter came, the trading post became a center of much activity. Furs came in aplenty, which were stored away first in the log house, and then were taken to Hartford, where they were secured in the fort, in which they were safe against a possible attack by the Indians.

That winter John Rawlins did not come, for no sooner had Mr. Bradley returned when he took sick, and was confined to his bed for many months with a lingering illness.

The children heard of this through messengers at Hartford, which, in view of impending troubles, kept in close contact with the stronger colonies in Massachusetts. Though they longed to see their foster-father, yet they realized that their presence in Connecticut was absolutely necessary, and they knew that they could serve his interest best by staying where they were and doing their duty.

However, they did more. One evening when the work was done and they were gathered around the table, Agnes said, "We have forgotten one important duty."

"And what is that?" asked Fred who in all things was most conscientious.

"We have not included Mr. Bradley in our prayers," the girl replied.
"Let us do so right away."

This they did at once, and from that time on they never omitted the holy work of praying for their foster-parents, whom they loved dearly and to whom they were sincerely grateful, as they had bestowed upon them so many and great kindnesses.

Of course, not a day passed on which they did not study the Bible. In those early times attention was

not drawn away from the spiritual values by all kinds of worldly interests. There were no daily papers, no trashy books, and at the trading post, where the three children lived, they did not come in contact with men whose influence was bad. The work was hard; traps had to be set and examined; the furs had to be cured and prepared for trade; the Indian trappers who were in the employment of the post, had to be superintended; supplies had to be bought at the fort, and so the children were kept incessantly busy. When the evenings came, the children were glad to be alone, and to find comfort and strength for their daily tasks in that book, which was found in almost every settler's home,—the Holy Bible.

However, as the winter continued, and the snow depended, shutting them off from the outside world, and at times interrupting their work, they sought new activities in which they could exercise themselves profitably.

The thought was really suggested by Matthew, who was keenly interested in spiritual things, and who chafed under the monotony of the dreary Sundays which the children spent alone in the wilderness.

While the river was still open, they had worshiped at Hartford, but now heavy snow covered the ice that they could reach that settlement neither by boat nor on their skates.

"Well, what do you suggest that we should do?" Fred asked.

"My idea is that we gather the Indian children on Sundays and instruct them in the Bible and psalmody."

"That's a fine thought!" Agnes exclaimed; "and I know that we shall always get enough children to attend."

That same week they invited a number of children through Tom, the Indian boy, who always stayed with them, and on the following Sunday several Indian children gathered in the house. Several of them had brought their mothers, who were glad to have an occasion to hear Agnes sing and play, and at once the Sunday school was opened. The children were instructed in Bible stories, Agnes sang many of her fine hymns which she had crudely translated into the Indian language, and afterwards the children were treated to such dainties as they had in the house. The venture proved so successful that after that several classes were arranged for, which kept the little teachers so busy all day that they no longer complained of monotony.

The new venture, however, also cemented the friendship with the adult Indians, and during the whole winter the furs came in from everywhere so that the supply in the fort increased from week to week.

When finally spring came and the trapping ceased, the children found themselves richly repaid by their work, and when at last Mr. Rawlins arrived with a number of pack horses to convey the furs to the Boston Colony, there were so many of them that more pack horses had to be secured.

So with grateful hearts Fred locked the door of the trading house, turned the key over to an old, friendly trapper, who spent his summers in Hartford, and returned to Massachusetts.

The children as well as John Rawlins were in high spirits, and had it not been for the heavily loaded pack horses, they would have galloped all the way to Massachusetts.

But they had to be patient, while day after day they covered small distances through the thick woods.

They were dressed oddly enough, and looked more like Indians than like white people. Agnes was dressed like the boys, with a fur cap on her head, fur coats and trousers on her body, and her feet covered with moccasins. Yet no one took notice of that, for many of the settlers were clothed in this way, since it was hard to obtain woolen cloth from the old country.

When they returned to Massachusetts, they were greeted with great joy, not only by their foster parents, but also by the other villagers, who marveled that children so young had undertaken so serious a venture.

Yet we must not judge the children of that time by standards of our own day. Their life was lived largely outdoors where they grew up like the trees of the ever present forest. Their daily experiences made them alert and self confident, and while they were behind the children of our time in school learning, they knew a thousand arts which the children of our later times have never heard of.

Life was hard, and the struggle for existence made them strong, hardy, and enterprising. Had those early pioneers been of a weaker fiber, the history of our country would never have been written in glory. But let us not forget that the pioneers were mostly men of deep piety, whose rugged strength was rooted in true faith and the fear of God. Let those who scoff at religion, remember that without it our country would never have become what it is today. The fear of God is not only the beginning of

wisdom, but also the keynote to prosperity and a nation's success.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE THROES OF WAR

The brief New England summer passed much too quickly for our three friends, for whom summer time meant a long and pleasant vacation. As usual they made trips on horseback or on boat to the other Colonies, which were being planted in New England in ever greater number. In this way they widened their circle of acquaintances, and enjoyed many pleasant hours in company with other good New England youths.

Mr. Bradley, in view of the fact that the children had so successfully carried out their mission, excused them from all work, and gave them unlimited time in which to enjoy themselves to their hearts' content.

Yet they were not of the class of young people that wished to be idle, and they were heartily glad when the prospect of continuing their work at the Connecticut river trading post was discussed.

"Of course, we will go, Mr. Bradley," Fred said when the question was put to them.

"We have established friendship with the Indians; we speak their language, and our little Sunday school scholars are surely waiting for us," Matthew commented; "so why should we stay? We do not fear the Indians!"

Nevertheless, Mrs. Bradley was much alarmed at the report of Indian hostilities, and she objected to the trip in gentle but emphatic words.

"We must not send them," she urged, "until we have heard that the country is safe."

"You are right, darling," her husband assented after a while; "money does not mean much to me. The good Lord has blessed us abundantly, and while my fur business is falling off somewhat, my trade in general merchandise is increasing among the settlers."

So the matter was postponed, much to the dissatisfaction of the three children who would have left for Connecticut that very day, had not their parents restrained them.

"Wait, until we get news from Mr. Rawlins," Mr. Bradley finally suggested, and to this all agreed.

After a few days the Indian guide, who was in Mr. Bradley's service, arrived, and the letter was immediately read and discussed by the whole family at the dinner table.

The message was encouraging. While Mr. Rawthis reported that the Indians were becoming more surly from day to day, he also expressed the opinion that there was no immediate danger, since the settlements were well protected, and the militia was well armed for war. But what was better than all this, was that the Englishmen were trying to conciliate the Pequots and to win their good will.

"That decides the matter," said Fred gleefully; "we shall leave as soon as we can get ready."

"But you, Agnes, must stay at home this time," Mrs. Bradley affirmed; "I won't let you go. The boys might escape, if danger should arise, but how can you bear the hardships which follow an Indian War?"

"I must go along, Mrs. Bradley," Agnes pleaded; "why, how could the boys get along without me? Please, mother, let me go."

"No, Agnes," Mrs. Bradley objected; "we must not tempt God, and I would wish that also you boys would not go. It is safer here than in Connecticut."

"But, mother," Fred said; "there is no danger, and if we wait, until the world is a paradise of peace, we shall never accomplish anything at all in life."

The upshot was that Mrs. Bradley finally permitted Agnes to go, and she was happy at the thought.

When she was alone with Fred, she said to him, "Brother, your life is linked with mine, and I will

never let you go alone. Where thou goest, I will go. United we will do what the good Lord will give us to do in this life."

Fred kissed his sister tenderly. "You are as true as gold," he said, "and I would miss you greatly if you would stay at home."

"There is no danger to fear," Agnes said; "the good Lord is everywhere, and we are in His hand. But I do not fear the Indians either; yes, I feel it to be my mission to conciliate and help them."

So after a few days when their preparations were completed, they left the safe and comfortable home to take the trail that led to the forests.

Their departure was somewhat delayed by the arrival of good Pastor Eliot, who came with his young wife to visit the Bradleys.

He was a pious and good man, and he discussed the proposition, which the children had in mind, with conscientious care.

"If we were living in England," he said, "I, no doubt, would dissuade the children from making so hazardous a trip. But since I have lived in America, I have learned many a lesson. Here the people are different. They are men and women, while in years they still are boys and girls. They think in terms which in old England only mature men and women use. They are not afraid of anything. The forest is their home. Hard work is their pleasure. Enterprises are the topic of their conversation. The spirit of adventure is bred into their hearts. What shall we say of this peculiar and heroic generation? May the Lord keep them in piety; otherwise, we, trusting in our strength, will perish."

"Your words are very true," Mrs. Bradley said; "but these children, thank God, are pious and unspoiled. They honor and respect their superiors; they are devout in their prayers and Bible studies; they care nothing for the sinful pleasures of the world; but I wish they would not go to dangerous Connecticut."

"We must entrust them to the Lord," said the good pastor; "perhaps some good will come out of this mission."

So after many a prayer and with many blessings, our three friends left their New England home, accompanied by an Indian guide and an Indian servant who had charge of the three pack horses.

CHAPTER VIII

PEQUOT INDIANS

"Hm," Fred muttered to himself, as he gazed around in wonder. "What is this?"

He immediately ran to the camp and called Matthew who was just rolling away the blankets in which they had slept.

"Look, what I have found!" he said to the boy. "It's an Indian arrow!"

"Where was it?" Matthew asked.

"It was driven tightly into a tree, right next to where the Indian guide slept."

"And where is the guide?" Matthew asked, growing pale.

"I don't know," said Fred while his lips trembled.

"Let us look for him," Matthew suggested.

"No, let us go back to the camp, and get ready to leave," said Agnes. "This looks dangerous to me. Something is wrong."

The children had traveled for six days without having been molested by any one. It was late in August, and all nature seemed bathed in peace. They had not met a single Indian, but found the villages deserted. This had somewhat surprised them, yet as nothing happened, they had not attached to it any

importance.

Only the guide had been suspicious. He was a Mohican, and a man of middle age, who was well acquainted with the ways of the Pequots whom he hated thoroughly.

The old Indian servant who had attended to the horses had observed nothing, and he was greatly surprised when he was informed that the guide was missing.

"I will look for him," he said.

"No, you quickly pack the horses and get things in readiness, while Agnes and I will look for the guide. Matthew, you saddle the horses."

"Come, sister," Fred said, "let us investigate this mystery. Perhaps the guide has only gone after a rabbit, wishing to prepare us a dainty surprise for breakfast."

But Agnes shook her head. "It is not a Mohican arrow, but a Pequot one," she said. "It was driven into the tree by a warbow. See, how deeply it entered the tree! And how strong the flint is and how well preserved, in spite of its being driven into the hard wood. That arrow was sent to kill a man."

"We must not paint the devil on the wall," Fred said cheerfully; but suddenly he became pale, for at his feet the grass was crushed down, and two forms were lying on the ground covered with blood.

One was that of the guide, whose hand gripped the throat of his foe, a large and burly Pequot Indian.

The Pequot was dead, choked by the steel clasp of his enemy's hand. All around, the grass was trodden down, and the ground showed what a fierce struggle had been carried on in silence, while the rest slept in peace.

Suddenly Agnes bent over the form of the Mohican and pointed to a knife which his opponent had thrust into his back, to the left.

"Ah," exclaimed Fred; "brave and good guide! I understand it all now. First the enemy shot the arrow and missed you, and then when you moved he fell on you from behind, and struck you with the knife. You, as a hero, without saying a word, rose and seized him by the throat, until he was dead. Brave Mohican!"

Tears gathered in the eyes of Agnes. "Oh, Fred," she whispered; "this is terrible. Let's go away."

"Sister," the boy said, "you must not talk that way; we will go away as soon as we can. But you have fear in your heart, and that is bad. Only courage and boldness will now by the grace of God save us. Be brave."

"Pardon me," Agnes stammered; "it was wrong of me to show fright. I will never do it again. God is with us, all is well."

"Thank you, dear sister," Fred said; "that makes it easier for me. And now let us bury our good guide."

Softly he touched the body, when suddenly the Indian moved. The wound in the back was serious, but the knife had not struck a vital organ. Only the loss of blood had been severe, as without flinching he held his foe in the death grip.

"The Mohican is alive!" Agnes exclaimed; "perhaps we can save his life."

Tenderly they lifted his body and laid it on the grass. The Mohican opened his eyes, but there was in them a glassy stare. Agnes rubbed his arms and patted his hair.

After a few moments a smile stole over the guide's face. He had recognized the girl.

"My good friend and brother," Fred spoke to him in the Mohican language; "I am so sorry. We thank you—we thank you—as the rain falls from the sky in summer. The pale face children are safe because of your valor. The Mohican fought like the brave warrior he always was. The men will sing of his bravery in the wigwam, and the women will tell his tale when the dusk falls. Never will be forgotten the brave Mohican guide who fought and conquered his foe in battle."

The Mohican tried to speak, but his tongue would not move. He grasped the lad's hand firmly.

Agnes bent over him. She remembered that he was a Christian. Her missionary heart overflowed with love for the guide's soul.

"Samowat," she tenderly pronounced his Indian name. "Samowat, friend of the white men, protector of the weak, brave and noble warrior that knows no fear, hear the voice of the little 'bird in the woods' that sings of Jesus. Samowat dies for his little friends that they might be safe. Jesus died for Samowat that he may be saved. Samowat, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from all sin. Samowat, Jesus will come right away and take Samowat home to where happiness is. Samowat, hear my voice."

The Indian breathed heavily and he fought hard to speak. His native Mohican, pronounced with infinite tenderness by Agnes, had made a deep impression on him.

"Samowat," he stammered weakly, "has saved his little 'bird of the woods.' Samowat loves Jesus, and is not afraid to die."

For a moment he struggled in silence to gain strength for speech.

Fred poured some cold tea into his mouth which he sipped eagerly.

"It is well," he said after a few moments. "Samowat is going home to Jesus. But—but little white warrior—must go—go—north. Pequots on war path—they south. Hurry, little paleface warrior. Kill horses—go Indian fashion—walk."

Fred bent over him for his voice was weak. Yet the Indian struggled bravely to finish his speech.

"He—scout—kill me. Pequots come soon. Flee."

These were his last words. Exhausted by the terrific loss of blood, his heart failed, and he died peacefully without even a trace of agony.

Agnes wept bitterly, as she pressed the guide's hand. Also Fred was overcome with emotion, and he bit his lips until the blood flowed.

"Sister," he said, "call Matthew and the Indian servant; we must bury the brave guide."

The task was assigned to the Indian servant, who alone knew how to bury him in a manner that would hide him from the curious and keen eyes of the Indians. The servant covered the graves with leaves and so skillfully did he conceal the resting place that not even Fred could see where it was.

"We must now kill the horses," the boy said when all was finished.

"But why kill the horses?" Agnes asked. "Why, we can cover more ground on horseback than on foot."

"We must leave the trail," Fred answered, "and in the woods they will betray us. Also on horseback the Indians can see us the better and shoot us before we know they are near."

"Let's not kill them now," Agnes pleaded. "Jenny is so true an animal. I can never see her die here."

"All right, sister," Fred assented; "we shall try to preserve their lives. Only I don't know how to get through the woods with them."

CHAPTER IX

THE REMAINS OF THE LOG HOUSE

In obedience to the instructions of the dying Indian guide, Fred left the trail and pursued a northern route.

Traveling along the trail was bad, but finding away through the woods was impossible.

Fred realized this when the party had traveled for several hours through the dense forest. From the position of the sun he could tell what time of the day it was, yet he knew, too, that they had not covered more than a mile. There were creeks to cross, swamps to circumvent, fallen trees to avoid, and difficulties of all kinds.

At noon the three held a council and considered what to do.

"The guide was right in saying that we cannot travel through the woods on horseback," Fred began; "I fear we must get rid of the steeds."

"But how are we to walk through this mass of entanglement," Agnes asked. "We certainly won't make headway without the horses."

"Agnes is right," Matthew ventured to say. "I don't know where we are going, but I do know that on foot we will not get anywhere. So let's keep the horses."

"I fear you are right," Fred meditated, "but I am sure the horses won't benefit us."

Suddenly Agnes exclaimed: "I know what we are going to do! We'll get back to the trail, and follow that to the next settlement. Samowat said that the Indians are south of us. Very well by this time they may be west of us, and we might escape them since we go east. Let's try it; at least then we know where we are going."

"I am in favor of it," Matthew replied; "if we are attacked, we can fight; but who is going to fight with conditions as we find them in this dense underbrush."

After some delay Fred gave in, and so the three adventurers turned the heads of their horses south, and after a few hours found the trail which they had left in the morning.

Quickly they pushed east, spurring on their horses who by this time were quite exhausted.

They traveled until dusk, and they were about to leave the trail and hide in the woods when suddenly Fred's steed neighed.

"What's the matter with you?" the boy reproved his horse. "You will never get any oats if you make such a noise like that."

To his great horror, however, the neighing was answered by another horse at some distance.

"It's time for us to hide!" Fred cried. "Away into the woods! The Indians are coming."

Fortunately they found a deep ravine in the woods where they could conceal the horses.

"You stay here, till I come back," Fred said. "I will see who they are."

"I am coming along," Agnes ventured; "you cannot go alone on so perilous a mission."

"Stay back," the lad urged her; "this is a job for one man." But the girl would not listen, and so the two stole along the edge of the ravine hiding themselves as best they could.

Near the trail they climbed a huge tree from which they could look down conveniently.

In a short time they saw a horse, followed by several others. They were loaded heavily, and Fred saw at once that this was a troop of Indians carrying supplies.

In fact, he could not see a single warrior, for ugly women and children followed the train.

"The Indians are marching west," Fred whispered to his sister, "this is a troop of women and children. That means that the warriors are ahead of them. We are lucky to be informed of their movements, because we can now follow a definite course."

Agnes nodded, as she intently looked upon the passing horses and people. The women and children were in a jolly mood, and did not make any efforts to keep silence. For about half an hour the Indians were moving along the road.

Suddenly Agnes gave a start, and nimbly as a squirrel she slid down the huge tree, where she crept silently through the brush.

Soon Fred heard the hooting of an owl, and he perceived how at this cry one of the Indian girls, of the age of Agnes, detached herself from the crowd.

"It is time for me to join," he muttered to himself; "Sister cannot attend to that alone."

In a few moments he was near enough to hear what the girls were talking about. The girl was one of the Sunday school scholars whom Agnes had befriended by many acts of kindness.

"Pequots—go—west," she said to Agnes; "will go around big bend south and come back and take

settlements. 'Little bird of the woods' go to big log house, and take boat and tell white men at Hartword. But quick, I must go."

In a few moment she was off, treading softly over the grass and joining the other Indians, as if nothing serious had happened.

At once Agnes stood by her brother's side.

"The path is clear, Fred," she breathed to "now for the horses; we are not far away from the trading post."

They reached the log house just as the sun was setting, but as they approached, Matthew emitted a cry of despair.

"The Indians have burned down the log house," he said sadly. "The smoke is still breaking through the woods."

Cautiously they made their way through the woods, and soon stood beside the remains of their log house, where during the previous year they had spent so many happy hours.

"What a pity," Agnes said; "so this is the fruit of war and hatred." Tears welled into her eyes.

"And our Sunday school classes have become our enemies, no doubt," Matthew reflected; "all of love's labor is lost."

"War destroys, and peace builds up," Fred spoke calmly; "we must expect all this, and more. The end is not yet."

"What do you mean?" Agnes asked as she watched her brother's furrowed brow. "Do you expect trouble?"

"The Indians who burned this log house, are not far away," he whispered to her. "We must try to get to Hartford before they detect us."

"Let's talk it over quickly," Matthew suggested who in hours of danger was always impatient.

"Yes, let's do that," Agnes assented; "we'll hide our horses in the deep woods along the river. I know a fine place, where we may conceal ourselves."

"How about our boat?" Matthew asked. "Wouldn't it be better if we go to Hartford by way of the river?"

"Pst," Fred warned him, "you and Agnes are talking too loudly and excitedly. I am afraid that these woods have ears, as the Dutch say. Let's get away from here."

Fred was right. The children had not seen the Indians who, hidden behind the trees, observed every movement they made. So of this they were unaware, and in a moment they disappeared in the thick bush, drawing their horses after them.

The Indians did not disturb them, for they knew that they could not escape, though they were not many in number, since they constituted only a scouting party, left behind the main body which had moved west to come back from the south and thus surprise the white men.

As soon as the children had hidden their horses, they sought a small cave which they had discovered the year before, and here they held a council.

"First," said Fred, "let us kneel down in prayer; for if the Lord will not guide our thoughts, we shall never escape."

They prayed fervently, as people do who are in great trouble, and closed their devotion with a Lord's Prayer in unison.

"And now you wait here, till I return," Fred said; "but don't make any noise. I must find out whether our boat is still here."

He slipped away from them, carrying his rifle, but avoiding every possible noise.

"How clever Fred is!" Matthew said; "I wish I could be like him. But I fear I can never overcome my fright on expeditions such as these. I was not born to be a soldier."

Agnes smiled.

"The Lord has wisely not made all people alike," she said; "some He wants to be soldiers, other ministers, and others statesmen. Each has his peculiar gift. But oh, how I wish that I had been born a boy! I don't mind this at all."

Matthew looked at her with surprise.

"Aren't you, too, a bit afraid?" he asked her "It seems to me as if you really enjoyed this kind of frolic."

Agnes looked at him seriously. "Indeed," she said, "I do not, for I hate war. War is of Satan, and peace is of God. It is dreadful that People should kill each other, and this for the sake of money and gain. Had these Indians been treated kindly, they never would have gone on the war path. But the English traders deceived them, and the Dutch incited them to bloodshed. So here we are!"

"It *is* a pity," Matthew said; "and what a fine Sunday school we had! The children could sing, and praise Jesus as well as the white people. There is no reason why they should not be true Christians, every one of them. It is the fault of the white men, as you say. I deeply regret that there are rascals who disgrace our religion."

Agnes did not answer. Her eyes were riveted to the entrance of the cave where she anxiously watched the fading light of day.

"It is getting to be night," she said, "and I am hungry as a bear. I wish Fred would come."

"I wonder where he can be," Matthew said wearily; "this business of waiting doesn't strike me as a very opportune thing just now. If I had my way, I would be running like a rabbit, until we were back at Boston. And never will I leave that place again! We did wrong in not obeying our parents."

Agnes looked at him reprovingly. "That does not solve our problems now," she ventured. "I, too, wish we were back, but we are here now, and we must make the best of it. But oh, if only Fred were here."

"Let's go and look for him," Matthew broke in.

"No," Agnes replied, "we must stay and wait. They also serve who only stand and wait."

Yet she also became tired as the moments crept on slowly and wearily. Darkness covered the cave, and she could hardly see the opening any more.

"Matthew," she whispered as she walked forward, "you remain here with the guns. I will go and look for Fred. It is dark now!"

In a moment she was gone, while Matthew almost wept for anguish of heart. Yet he had learned to obey both Fred and Agnes, though he was older than they. There was something indescribably firm in their voices and conduct which he never could understand, and often he himself wondered what made him stand in awe of them.

Just now he bitterly reproved himself for not having followed Agnes.

"She is a girl and you are a boy," he scolded himself; "but she is a heroine, and you are a coward. How could you let her go alone!"

He waited impatiently, but neither Agnes nor Fred returned.

Overcome with fear, he knelt down in prayer, for he was a very pious boy.

"Good Lord," he prayed, "help Fred and Agnes and me, and let us not perish in this wilderness. Show us a way to escape out of this trouble that we may praise Thy glorious name. Help us for Jesus' sake."

Then as the dreary hours passed slowly and monotonously, his strength gave way, and he soon was fast asleep.

CHAPTER X

CAPTURE AND ESCAPE

How long Matthew slept, he could not tell, but suddenly he was awake, and some one was holding his hand over his mouth.

In the darkness the form seemed large and grotesque, and his first impulse was to cast aside the hand and to cry out.

But then he heard a soft voice spoken almost in a whisper, and he recognized Fred.

"Matthew," Fred whispered, "come to yourself; awake, and sit up. I have something to tell you. Where is Agnes?"

"She went away to look for you," Matthew replied; "she left a long, long time ago."

Fred could not suppress a painful cry.

"And she didn't come back?" he asked excitedly.

"No," Matthew muttered.

"Then she, too, was captured," Fred explained sorrowfully, "and she is in the hands of the Indians."

"Oh! Oh!" Matthew cried bursting into tears. "What have I done?"

"Be silent now," Fred warned him. "The Indians are following me. Let me briefly tell you how it all came about. I crept up to the place where the boat was hidden, but found it one. There was no noise, and so I thought I was safe. The boat might have slipped down into the stream. I stood up and looked, when suddenly the Indians seized me, tied me, muzzled me, and carried me off up the bank."

Matthew looked at him with dread written all over his face.

"Fred," he said, "you were captured?"

"Yes," the other replied, "I was, and those cowards at once took me into the woods, where quite a large band of Pequots were assembled."

"I thought there were only a few," Matthew interrupted him; "just a mere scouting party."

"There was originally," Fred continued, "but It seems as if they were joined by another scouting party, and there were even women with them. The Indians are shrewd and clever, much more than we white people think. While the main troop is going west, scouting parties are all over the woods, watching the movements of the whites, and killing off individuals or families as they find them. They are mopping up the woods, ridding them of the white foes. They are doing thorough work."

"But how did you escape?" Matthew asked.

"That wasn't hard," Fred answered; "as soon as they had taken me into the woods, I became very angry, and as well as I could I commanded them to remove the gag from my mouth. I spoke to them in the Pequot language, and this made an impression on them."

"How fortunate that we know that tongue!" Matthew exclaimed. "If I am caught, I know what to do."

"You never will be caught," Fred said emphatically; "I won't let you. If I hadn't been dreaming and forgetting the danger I was in, they never would have got me. But I learned a lesson."

"But tell me your story to the end," Matthew begged. "It is so interesting."

"Well," Fred started, "when they had removed the gag, I first fumed and scolded, much to their delight, for they kept on laughing as I rebuked them."

"I called them cowards who could do nothing else but seize little boys, and them unarmed. This amused them very much, and finally one after another stole away to the fire where the women were broiling large pieces of meat. Seeing that, I demanded food also, and at last an old squaw had pity on me and brought me a rich supply. Here is some of it; We may need it on our way. Lucky, that we have at least one musket! Mine the Indians took."

"But what then?" Matthew asked inquisitively. "How did you get away?"

"When the darkness fell over the camp," Fred related, "they simply lay down to sleep, after they had tied me to a tree. The Indian who attended to the work, must have liked me, for he took pains that the

sinews were not strung too tightly. So what could I do? While they were sleeping, I cleared my hands, cut the bands, and slipped away from them. And look what I took along?"

He held up a large scalping knife.

"Where did you get that?" Matthew exclaimed in astonishment. "That knife will be very valuable to us."

"The scout was sleeping," Fred said, "though he was supposed to watch, and I crept up to him and removed it for safety's sake."

"You are quite a hero," Matthew praised him; "I could never be so brave as that."

"There was little bravery," Fred said contemptuously; "the Indians are not careful; they just began the war; later they will take more care of their prisoners. Now they still despise the whites."

"But what shall we do now?" Matthew asked. "We cannot stay here all night."

"That is true," Fred answered; "we must be going; but first let us thank the Lord for His goodness. Without Him we can do nothing. It is He who hitherto has helped us, and may He bring Agnes back to us."

After a brief pause in which both thanked the Lord, they departed, Fred carrying the musket, while Matthew held on to the knife.

Silently they crept up the high bank of the river through the deep brushwood, until they could see the Indian camp. But though they looked hard, the Indians were gone.

"What is the matter?" Matthew asked, as he looked at Fred with deep concern in his eyes. "I see no Indians."

"Lie low," Fred admonished him, "and follow me."

The boys crept on, but the Indians were gone, not a trace could be found of them.

"Perhaps it is a trap," Matthew commented; "we must be careful." Deeper and deeper they pierced the woods. Dawn came, and day light, and the boys were still walking, but not a trace of the Indians could be seen. They had disappeared completely.

"Well, if they don't bother us," Fred remarked, "we shall not bother them. We are angels of peace, and don't want war. So if they leave us alone, we are satisfied."

"I should say so," Matthew assented. "No war for me, if I can help it."

"Suppose we lie down here," Fred said after a while; "I am dead tired, and so are you. My head is spinning, and I cannot think clearly. 'He giveth His beloved sleep,' says the holy Word."

"You are right," Matthew responded; "nothing could be more welcome to me than a good bed at this time, though I am still hungry."

"If you are," Fred said, "have some more Indian meat; it is very good, although it is rather rare. But the Indians like it that way."

Matthew ate ravenously despite of the fact that the meat was only half done. But hunger is the best cook, as the proverb says, and he was not very fastidious. Anything would have tasted good to him just then.

"But don't eat it all," Fred admonished him; "we may need of it for dinner, though I hope that by that time we may have something better."

"I will mind your admonition," Matthew said smiling, as he plunged his teeth into the juicy bear meat.

Then they lay down and slept, as if they were at home and not in the Indian infested woods.

Yet they were safe, for the good Lord to whom they commended themselves before falling asleep, watched over them, better than they knew.

CHAPTER XI

BACK AGAIN AND AGNES

"Don't bother me," said Fred half awake; "it's not time for breakfast; just let me sleep a little more."

Matthew pinched his nose so that he could not breathe, and this brought Fred to his feet.

"Oh, I clean forgot!" he said laughing. "My, but that sleep was good! What time of the day is it anyway? We must have slept all day."

They looked to the sky, though the huge trees were much in their way, and noticed that the sun was far in the west.

"We are great heroes," Fred said laughing; "we sleep while the enemy is around us. Let us go."

The boys were in high spirits, and thanked God heartily for having preserved them so wonderfully.

"Who knows what was going on around us while we slept?" Matthew reflected. "Perhaps the Indians were in our vicinity, and we were shielded from their view. We have much to be grateful for."

"If only I knew where Agnes is!" Fred said; "she is a bright girl, and if they don't take better care of her than they did of me, I fear that she will escape them. She is as spry as a squirrel."

"We must find her," Matthew urged eagerly; "but where shall we go? I must confess that I am completely bewildered. Why, even that sun has turned. Before it was in the west, and now it is in the north. What's happening to me?"

"You need some more bear's meat," Fred said; "you are starved. So let us first eat and then think."

After eating a little of the meat, they found themselves wonderfully refreshed. A little brook furnished them a cool, welcome drink, and with renewed spirits they set forth on their trip. They walked all day and long after the sun had set, they were still groping in the dark.

"This will never do," Matthew finally said; "we are getting nowhere."

"You are right," Fred answered; "as long as the sun was shining, I knew the way, but now I am completely lost. We better lie down and sleep until it is day. Then we can see where we are."

They prayed still more fervently than they had done before, for their strength was exhausted and they were bewildered.

"If the Lord will not help us out of this," Matthew said, "we are completely lost."

"The greater the need, the nearer is God, indeed," Fred said; and after eating a little of the bear's meat, the boys lay down on the soft grass, creeping close to each other, for the nights were cool. They slept soundly until dawn, when Fred awoke and awakened his companion.

"Brother," he said; "listen, there are Indians in the neighborhood. I hear them. And now see, they are making a fire!"

The boys crept through the woods, and when they had reached the top of a low ridge, they saw the camp before them.

"It's the same band of Indians that burned down the log house," Fred suggested; "I recognize some of them."

"Then let's go, for it is not safe to be near them," Matthew urged. "I don't care to fall into their hands just now."

"The sun is rising," Fred said cheerfully, "and now we can again find our way through the woods. Here is the direction; we go east to the river."

They walked away swiftly, but they had not gone more than a few rods, when suddenly they saw two large dogs running after them.

"Shoot them," Matthew ordered his companion, "they look wild and hungry."

"Not by any means," Fred answered; "a shot in the woods will bring the whole Indian band on our tracks."

"But what shall we do?" Matthew asked.

"Run," Fred replied.

They ran as fast as they could, looking around occasionally to see whether they were followed by Indians, but only the dogs came after them, gaining a little more on them as the boys became weaker.

"I am through," Matthew finally said; "I cannot run any more."

"Neither can I," replied Fred; "but see, here is a hollow log; let us creep into it."

At once they remembered that this act was foolish, for the dogs, barking at their prey, would eventually attract the Indians. But they had no time to change their minds; they were dead tired, and no sooner had they slipped into the tree when the animals were upon them.

For a moment the boys were silent, while the dogs endeavored to follow them into the hollow log.

"Say, we are company enough," Fred muttered; "we don't need you in here. What shall I do, Matthew? Slip me the knife."

"If those dogs are as hungry, as I am," Matthew said, "a little bear's meat might do us good service."

"That's a great idea," Fred answered; "well, hand me some of what is left. It is unfit for us to eat anyway."

The plan worked out well. The dogs swallowed the pieces of meat greedily, and when Fred coaxed them with friendly words, spoken in Pequot, they wagged their tails and showed signs of conciliation.

Slowly Fred crawled out of the log, still feeding the hungry animals of the meat that remained.

Soon he had succeeded in winning their friendship, and when Matthew finally came out from the retreat, the dogs were completely won over.

Together they walked on, the dogs following them, as if they had been friends for many years.

"If we could only get rid of these beasts," Matthew sighed; "they will finally betray us."

"We'll give them the slip soon enough, just as we did to their masters," Fred smiled; "wait."

The opportunity was soon granted them, for when suddenly a rabbit jumped out of the thicket, Fred sent them leaping after it, for he was well acquainted with the Indian way of hunting with dogs.

"Now we run straight forward, and the dogs will forget us and finally return to their masters."

They walked rapidly, and to their joy arrived after some time at the place where the log house had stood. While they had made no progress, they at least knew where they were, and could manage a way to reach Hartford.

"We must see whether our horses are still here," Fred said, as he hurried down the bank.

To his astonishment the horses were just coming out of the woods, feeding hungrily on the thick grass.

"Indians!" he muttered. But then he cried out with joy.

"Agnes!" he cried; "Agnes, you here?"

The girl, who had released the horses and was driving them out of their hiding place, smiled as she saw the boys.

"Brother," she said cheerfully, "Oh, what a surprise!" Then she fell around his neck and kissed him ardently.

CHAPTER XII

AGNES' STORY AND HARTFORD

"We must not stay," the girl said, as soon as she had greeted her brothers. "The Indians will surely come back, and we must reach the other side of the river. I am glad you are here. Oh, how good the Lord is! I prayed for your deliverance ever since I was captured, but did not believe that the good Lord would hear my prayers and grant my request so soon."

"What do you want to do?" asked Fred.

"Tie the horses together, and swim the river. There are no Indians on the other side, and we can make Hartford easily."

"How do you know that?" Matthew asked.

"Don't ask foolish questions," the girl pleaded; "help me get these horses roped together. Then I will leap into the river with the end of the rope tied to my saddle, and the horses must follow. You bring up the rear."

She was so resolute that the boys did not resist, but did her bidding.

"But where did you get that fine Indian pony?" Fred asked when the work was done.

"No questions, until we are on the other side," Agnes said; "that belonged to a Pequot chief once; now it is mine by right of spoils."

She mounted her pony and at once drove it into the stream; the other horses followed, urged on by the showers of blows which Fred and Matthew gave them. The crossing was dangerous, for the river was wide and the current swift. But after much struggling they got across and spurred their mounts up the bank.

"There is a trail that leads north," Agnes said; "let's find it. Loose the horses, and let me ride ahead."

"What a wonderful girl she is!" Matthew exclaimed; "she is a veritable leader."

Soon the boys heard the hooting of an owl, and they whipped their horses into a trot. Agnes had found the trail.

"Come now," she admonished them, "we must do some fast riding, until we are safe. Then I will tell you my story."

For two hours they rode in silence, Agnes taking the lead on her piebald pony which was a wonderful traveler in the woods, much more clever and docile than their own horses.

Sometimes the trail was hard to find, but the Indian pony followed his sense of smell and walked on and on.

"We are making good time, thanks to my pony," Agnes said jubilantly. "Come on with your steeds, gentlemen; don't mind it, if they are a little tired."

However, the horses were showing signs of fatigue, since they had not eaten for two days.

"Very well," Agnes said; "look!"

The river made a sweeping bend, and from the high bank they could see the fort.

"Hurrah!" Matthew cried; "how good it is to see the dwellings of white men."

"We shall rest now," Agnes suggested, "and allow the horses their meal. Look at my pony; isn't it a wonder? And it was gotten by just a little trick."

"Yes, tell us the story," Matthew begged.

"Not until the fire is burning, and the meat is cooking, and the horses are eating!" the girl said with a roguish smile.

Soon the log fire blazed brightly, and the horses were tied to ropes, enjoying the rest and the grazing abundantly.

"Where did you get that meat from?" Fred asked; "why, you have stacks of it."

"All Indian meat," the girl laughed; "spoils of war."

"Oh, tell us the story," Matthew asked again.

"Wait, until we are eating."

Afterwards, while they were sitting around the fire with the juicy meat stuck on bits of wood, and eating as if they had fasted for a week, Agnes told her story.

"You see," she began, "I ventured out very bravely, but I made the mistake which others made, and did not look out for the Indians."

"Your brother is guilty," Fred smiled; "the same fool head rests on us both. We are flesh of one flesh."

"Well," the girl went on; "the first thing I felt, were two arms around me, and then a band which pinned my hands together. A rude hand was thrust before my mouth, so that I could not cry out. The Indians then carried me up the bank, and brought me to the camp, where they quartered me with the women, quite comfortably, but nevertheless a prisoner."

"Just my story," Fred interposed, "only they did not trust me with the women."

"You don't belong there either," Agnes said; "they might have made you marry one of their number."

They all laughed while Fred shook his head.

"Never in my life," he affirmed.

"But where did the women come from?" Matthew queried. "I thought it was a scouting party, consisting only of men."

"That is true," Agnes explained; "but the scouting party was supplemented by other Indians from across the river. That is the reason why I urged you to cross the stream. The Indians are all over the other side, headed for the south where they are going to unite and attack the white men conjointly. I heard it all, for the women spoke about it, not knowing that I understood the Pequot language. It is always good to know many languages."

"That is true," Matthew agreed; "and if we get out of this, I am going to study all kinds of languages, until I am a regular Babel. That's the way."

"Go on with your story, Agnes," Fred urged her; "you just finished chapter one, and I am anxious to hear the rest. The reader is always looking for the climax."

"There is no climax to my story," Agnes smiled; "it is all the wonderful grace of God which freed me. You know, the women were very impolite. After I had been lying in the tent for some time, trying in vain to sleep, for the bands were cutting into my flesh and causing me much discomfort, the women all left the tent and went out where a huge fire was burning and the men were eating. In fact, the men had eaten, for they were as impolite to their women, as these were to me. Well, the women went out to eat, and I thought that I ought to have some meat, too."

"So you stole away and got some," Fred interrupted. "That is just the way I acted."

"No, I did not," Agnes replied; "I was too firmly bound for getting away. But while I was thus lying in the tent, feeling miserable, suddenly a young Indian girl came in, who addressed me in the Pequot language. Talk about Indian ingratitude! When the war is over; I am going to locate right here, and start a huge Indian school, and invite them all to Sunday school every Sunday. Why, it pays wonderfully to teach the Indians religion!"

"That is what I believe," Matthew joined in; "I am going to be an Indian missionary like the good Pastor John Eliot. We must not destroy the Indians, but save them."

"That is true," Fred joined in; "and in order that you two missionaries may continue your work and not starve, I am going to build up the trading post again, and you shall be my guests as long as you live, and whatever expenses you have, I will repay."

"We shall hold you to your promise," Agnes replied, "shall we not, Matthew?"

"Not one word shall he have spoken in vain," Matthew said. "He must pay every cent. But now

continue with your story."

"This good Indian girl," Agnes said, "had attended our Sunday school, and she was very grateful. Silently she cut my fetters and freed me. Then she told me to escape. It was not yet quite light, and so no one noticed me, as I lifted the rear part of the tent and crept through. But that was not all. My dear benefactress led me herself, and in order that I might not starve, she showed me the Indian kitchen, where large supplies of meat were kept, smoked sufficiently to keep it from spoiling. After I had taken all I could carry, she showed me where the horses were, and urged me to take the one belonging to the chief, since it was clever and gentle. At first I had compunctions of conscience, but no choice was left me, and I had to do it. I made a rude bridle of birch bark, and jumping on the horse, came here just a little before you."

"But what about the Indians?" the boys asked; "where did they go?"

"The girl told me," Agnes replied; "they were on their way west to join the other Indians, having received orders to come as soon as possible."

"Then we would have been safe on the other side!" Matthew stated.
"Why was it necessary for us to cross? I am all wet from the task."

"There are many stray Indians on the other side," Agnes replied; "but, no doubt, they will soon be gone; the whites are gathering their forces together, and then they will strike a speedy blow. But now we had better move on."

They tied the horses together, and after a while found a place where they could cross the river. They arrived safely, much to the surprise of the settlers who had gathered at the fort, which was filled to its capacity so that the stockade had to be enlarged to accommodate the fleeing settlers that left their homes in haste when they heard of the hostilities of the Indians.

A number of outrages had been perpetrated already, and the pioneers were lashed into fury over the horrid tales which were related.

Our three friends were received with open arms; no one manifested greater surprise than John Rawlins, who had gotten as far as Hartford, where he was confined to his bed by a severe attack of rheumatism, which made him as helpless as a child. He had now recovered sufficiently to limp about, but he was still in a bad shape so that he could not be of much service to any one.

"Your presence here will make me well in a short time," he exclaimed joyfully as he embraced the children. "And I am sure you have a real story to tell."

But how great was his surprise when he learned from the children the war plan of the Indians. Why, that is real news, for which we have been looking all this while. We were all interested in what the Indians would do. Tomorrow you must go to good Captain Mason and relate to him what you know. That will greatly help him in freeing the country from the Indian pest.

"Yes, tomorrow," said Agnes; "for tonight we are too tired, and the matter does not press."

For the first time after a long, long trip they slept as white men do, in real beds, protected by American soldiers.

CHAPTER XIII

THE VICTORY OVER THE PEQUOTS

The next morning the children had occasion to meet Captain John Mason, that gallant Indian fighter, who was to suppress the Indian uprising. He was a trained soldier, and thoroughly understood the principles of warfare, not only among the whites, but also as these could be best applied to the Indians.

He was a rough and burly man, though kind to the helpless and weak. At present he was busy with reforming the Colonial methods of defense against the Indians.

So far the white men had failed to meet the Indians successfully because they were reluctant to adopt their war methods. The soldiers were heavily armed, cased in armor, and could therefore not

accomplish anything against the red men who were light of foot, and easily got away from them. The white men moved slowly, and while they had redoubtable musketry, the Indians would not stand still, until their opponents got ready to shoot them. To load, aim, and fire was a tedious business, and the Indians with their swift movements and their reliable bows and arrows had much the advantage over the white troops who really were trained to fight only their fellow Europeans.

Captain Mason was anxious to change all this. Much of the heavy armor was discarded, and many of the fighting habits of the Indians were adopted. Every day the soldiers, together with the volunteer trappers and settlers, drilled and trained for the fight that would soon take place.

That something decisive had to be done to check the Indian outrages, was clear to all, and every man who could bear a gun was drafted into service. From Massachusetts even many volunteers appeared, and they were gladly received into service by Captain Mason.

Our three young friends found the Captain surrounded by his officers, as soon as he had learned that the children had an important message for him.

He delighted in hearing their stories, and when he was told that the Indians were massing their forces in the eastern part of the country, he at once had his plan ready.

"I am still expecting some troops," he said, "but as soon as these arrive, I shall march out to prevent our foes from getting too near the settlements. You boys, of course, will follow me, because you are well acquainted with the country and the ways of the Indians. Besides, you speak the Mohican and Pequot language, and that is worth a great deal. In the meanwhile, you shall be my personal guests, and whatever you need, shall be given you. You shall eat and sleep in the officers' tents."

Fred and Matthew at once joined the troops, and drilled with them. Among the soldiers they found many boys, who were not much older than they, and so they had good companions, with whom they romped, played, discussed warfare methods, and diverted themselves in a profitable manner in the few hours of leisure left to them.

Old John Rawlins could, of course, not take part in the work of the soldiers, but there was nevertheless much for him to do. His recovery was rapid, and while he still limped somewhat, he was of great assistance to the quartermaster in distributing and managing the supplies.

Agnes, who was a born missionary, soon found occasion to exert her talents. In the fort there were gathered not only men, but also women and children, and the latter she gathered into little groups and instructed them in the Bible. For this the mothers were very grateful, for the children now had something worthwhile to do, and quarrels and strifes were thus obviated. In short, everybody said that the three children proved themselves valuable to the inhabitants of the fort in many ways, and soon the topic of general conversation was nothing else than their varied and useful activity.

But the longer John Mason waited, the less could he repress the strong desire of his men to go and fight the Indians. News arrived every day of settlers captured and tortured to death, and the blood of the soldiers boiled with wrath as they heard of this.

So finally when October came, and the ground was frozen and covered with snow, the troops set out, led by faithful Mohican guides, to attack the Pequots in their own village. From a European point of view the army presented a pitiable appearance, being little more than a rabble of men. But they all burned with a desire to punish the Indians, and every one of them could handle his gun with precision.

Slowly and carefully the whites proceeded to the Indian village at Mystic, where the fierce Pequot chief Sassacus had gathered almost a thousand Indians, the majority of whom could fight.

The Indian village was well concealed in a huge swamp, and had not the ground been frozen, the white men could never have approached it. But the cold winter, of which usually the colonists stood in dread, now proved their best friend, for they could march over the hard ground with ease and reach the Indian village in spite of the swamp which surrounded it.

One day, at noon, it was reported to Captain Mason that they had almost reached the village of Mystic. The troops were gathered in the thick woods, in a little valley, which shut them off from the inquisitive eyes of the Pequot scouts. It was a cold, unpleasant day, and a fierce storm was raging, which drove the sharp, icy flakes into the faces of the men as they moved forward.

Hurriedly John Mason called together his officers and discussed with them the matter of attack. Both the officers and the men desired to go forward at once, since the Indian village was only about seven miles away.

"We can make that in two hours," one of the men said; "and there will be sufficient time left to punish the redskins thoroughly." To this all seemed to agree.

"And what do you think of the situation?" the Captain asked Fred.
"Do you think we should attack right now?"

The eyes of all were turned upon the boy with eager expectancy, for not one had expected that so great a fighter as Mason should ask him for his advice.

Yet he answered briefly and truthfully.

"I would not do it, Captain," Fred said calmly; "if I were in command of the troops. Your men are worn out by the march, while the Indians are no doubt ready for an attack. Then, too, if the attack should fail, the night would intervene and disconcert us. My advice would be to give the troops a thorough rest, start out when darkness has set in, and attack the Pequot village toward the morning. This will not give them any time to gather their forces."

"That advice seems good to me," the Captain says; "I myself entertained similar thoughts. But pray, tell us more of the plan."

"We may start fires," Fred resumed, "since the storm rages and the woods hide the smoke. Also from the Indian village the smoke can not be seen, since it is closed in by trees. So the soldiers can thoroughly rest. When we attack I would supply a number of brave and enterprising men with burning fire brands. These will proceed to the village and set it on fire. The rest is a matter for all of us who fight."

The plan was adopted, and the march was not resumed until late at night. Just before daybreak the white men surrounded the slumbering village. Due to the severe storm the Indians had not even placed guards around the village, since they did not expect the enemy to attack them.

So it happened that the attack worked out successfully. Fred himself led those who carried the fire brands, and they succeeded in entering the palisaded village and setting it on fire. Eggleston in his "History of the United States and Its People" reports the battle, and says: "In the war which followed this attack, the whole Pequot tribe was broken up, and the other Indians were so terrified that New England had peace for many years after."

All this is true, for Eggleston is a fine historian, who always relates the events truthfully and accurately. Yet the matter was not as simple as all that. In fact, there was much marching and lighting and suffering, before peace was restored. Fred and Matthew took part in it, until all was ended, and the troops returned to the settlements. But they were heartily glad that the fight was over, for war was very distasteful to them, and their aim in life was not to be good soldiers and kill, but to be useful citizens who could serve both whites and Indians with the more blessed and valuable arts and pursuits of peace. How eager they were to accomplish these, will be learned from the last chapter of our story, in which we find our three young pioneers back at the trading post on the Connecticut River.

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTMAS AT THE TRADING POST

Christmas Day is always a day of great joy and blessed peace.

Fred was glad that it could be celebrated in a peaceful manner, the only way which becomes this great peace day of the Prince of Peace.

Let us note how Fred with Matthew and Agnes, spent this day in glorifying their Lord.

The log house had been rebuilt, but it was much larger than the old one which the Indians had burned. In fact, it was a little fort with palisades surrounding it, for never again would they find themselves without the means of defense in a war with the Indians.

The main building was the trading post proper, which was twice as large as the old one and could accommodate all the furs and articles of trade which the increasing merchant ventures required. South

of it on the bank of the river, with a wonderful view to the other side, stood a spacious dwelling house, consisting of two stories, very conveniently built. West of these two buildings stood a school, which Agnes intended for the Indian children that would return with their elders to their old haunts. In fact, even now some of the tribes had come back, very sorry for the war in which they had engaged. But not far up the river a settlement of white people had been made, and even now log houses were being built for the settlers. Agnes was anxious to have in her school also such white children as would come.

John Rawlins had superintended the erection of the fort, and as he was clever in making plans, he had done his work well.

"Shall we proceed with our Christmas program?" Agnes asked her brother; "the school is filled with people, and they are becoming impatient."

"No, let us wait," Fred replied; "our friends from Boston must be here any minute. They started early from Hartford this morning, and I expect them every moment, for it is almost noon."

To his great joy, he soon heard the barking of dogs, and as the children ran forward toward the trail, they heard the hoofs of horses stamping the hard ground.

"They are coming," Matthew cried.

In a short time the visitors were welcomed by the men, women, and children of the trading post. There were Mr. and Mrs. Bradley, who were anxious to see the children, a young Puritan pastor, who had recently come from England, and to whom the new settlement in the woods was assigned, and among other great and distinguished men, Captain John Mason, the hero of Mystic.

The joy of every one was great beyond words, and every one felt like talking, but Agnes urged them to come to the school, where the celebration was to take place.

We shall not enter into detail in describing the service, which was attended alike by white men and Indians. The new pastor preached a long and edifying sermon, and then Agnes with her class of little ones sang hymns about the little Lord Jesus and His wondrous love. Though the time was short, Agnes and Matthew had drilled the story of the nativity well, and the children answered promptly. The service lasted three hours. Then each child received a small gift, and the whole company was treated royally with a feast that all remembered for a long time after.

John Rawlins, clever and resourceful, had arranged this in his usual thorough way. For many days before he had sent out his trappers and hunters, and these brought huge supplies of game,—turkeys, ducks, geese, partridges, bears, and what ever else could be found in the Connecticut woods, beautiful to behold and pleasant for food.

When finally the settlers and Indians had left, and darkness shrouded the woods, the children with their parents, John Rawlins, John Mason, and the new pastor gathered in the large living room of the new dwelling.

Here they related what had happened during the last months, and they united once more in giving thanks to the good Lord who doeth all things well.

They spoke also of the future.

"Now, you children must return to Boston," Mrs. Bradley said, "and never leave us again; for we miss you so much. The home seems dead to us since you left."

But the children demurred, very respectfully, but firmly.

"We shall always return to Boston and spend a number of weeks with you during the summer," Agnes said; "but this is our home, and you must promise to visit us often."

"And what will you do here?" Mr. Bradley asked.

"I will be a trapper and trader," Fred said proudly, "and will serve you faithfully und John Rawlins, so that Agnes and Matthew, who are not interested in this work, may have food and clothing."

"And I will be a school teacher," Agnes said, "and teach all the children that come, white or Indian, the blessed story of Jesus, besides other things. It is a noble calling, and one which deserves that many good children dedicate themselves to it with heart and soul."

"And I," Matthew finally said, "will study theology under our new pastor, until I, too, may preach and teach and win souls for Jesus."

There were tears in the eyes of all, even in those of the rough soldier John Mason.

"If our young people are thus minded," he said, "we shall have no fear for the future of our colonies. We shall become a strong and powerful nation."

"If our young people are thus minded," said old, genial John Rawlins, "we shall have a large city here in the woods some time, with plenty of happiness and peace and wealth."

"If you are thus minded," Mrs. Bradley finally said, "I shall die in peace and thank God eternally for having bestowed upon me such dear children. God bless you richly in time and eternity."

"And that is also my prayer," Mr. Bradley joined in, as he gathered his arms around the children and kissed them.

"Well, well," John Rawlins finally said, when no one knew exactly just what to say. "All day long I thought of something which would not come into my fool head, because we were so busy and happy. I never forgot it in England, but here my poor head is so addled that I am forgetful of even the most important thing.

"What is that?" they all asked.

"I forgot to wish you all a merry, merry Christmas," the old servant said, as he bowed himself out of the room to go to bed.

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