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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RODNEY, THE RANGER, WITH DANIEL MORGAN ON TRAIL AND BATTLEFIELD ***



"THAT MORNING, A CANOE CONTAINING TWO SAVAGES CAME UP PAST HIM." (*See page 119*)

RODNEY, THE
RANGER

WITH DANIEL MORGAN ON
TRAIL AND BATTLEFIELD

By

John V. Lane

Author of "Marching with Morgan," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

John Goss



BOSTON

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Rodney, the Ranger

CHAPTER I

"YOU--YOU SIMPLETON!"

A sturdy boy in homespun, a lad of nearly fourteen years, whose eyes were clear and gray and whose face was resolute and honest, led his little sister by the hand, for she was small and the road was rough.

"We'll rest, 'Omi, when we come to the big tree. Are you cold?" he asked, for there was the chill of March in the wind, though the sun lay very warm in the sheltered places.

"No. Who?" she asked, pointing a tiny hand at two riders turning the corner, a youth of about seventeen and a young girl. Their horses were spirited and the black groom following urged his horse.

The youth was not attractive, though his riding habit was the fashionable product of a London tailor in the style of 1772. His hair was dark, his eyes steely blue and set close to a long nose; his mouth was ill adapted to a pleasant smile.

The girl was attractive, a fact people were quick to recognize, and she was so accustomed to seeing them turn and look after her that she would have been piqued had they not done so. Her ways were wilful but there was a grace in them all. Mischief lurked in the dark blue eyes, which now lighted with genuine pleasure. She fluttered from her horse as a bird alights and threw her arms around the child, exclaiming, "And how is little Naomi?" Then, holding the child from her, she looked in her face and said, "You are a dear. Aren't you proud of her, Rodney?"

"She's just as good as she looks," the boy replied, blushing with pleasure, and then glanced at the youth, who did not appear to notice him but slyly spurred his horse, so that the animal in swerving would have knocked Rodney into the ditch had the lad not been nimble.

"Nith; red," said the child, clutching the girl's scarlet cloak.

"Yes, and you like my poor, old red hat, too, don't you? though Cousin Mogridge says it ill becomes me."

"Eth, pretty too," and the child pouted her lips for a kiss.

Not one, but several, were most graciously given her with the admonition: "Next time you be sure and remember me and my name. Say Lisbeth Danesford."

"Lithbeth Danethford," repeated the child, looking up into the face of the girl, her big, brown eyes full of seriousness. "I like 'oo."

"Have a care, 'Omi, for once Lisbeth knows that she'll treat you as she does her other admirers."

This remark was surprisingly impolite for Master Rodney Allison, but he was offended that Lisbeth had not introduced him to her London cousin, whom he was itching to thump. Moreover he had experienced Lisbeth's fickleness.

She ignored him and said: "'Omi, where did you find such eyes? They are like stars with dew on them," but suddenly she broke off and, with a bound, snatched from her cousin's hand the whip with which he was about to lash Rodney.

The youth, evidently not liking the conversation, had again spurred his horse against young Allison, who without ceremony had seized the bit and set the animal on his haunches, nearly upsetting the rider.

Lisbeth had seen enough to know what had caused the trouble. "Boys are bullies," she cried. "Here's a test for your valour. Who'll rescue my abused hat from the dragon?" saying which she sent it spinning over the fence.

Now the dragon was nothing less than a full grown and surly bull grazing in the pasture.

Rodney, enraged at Mogridge's insolence and taunted by her words and the sight of the hat scaling like a low-flying swallow, yielded to the mad impulse to follow it. He would show the arrogant London youth what a Virginia boy dared do!

The bull had lifted his head in amazement, which gave place to rage at the red thing flashing before his sullen eyes. Snorting, he charged just as the lad snatched the hat from the ground and, turning, ran toward the fence.

It was a foolhardy deed, and the boy's chance of escape seemed hopeless,--when the unexpected happened.

A little figure climbed the fence and with a shrill cry ran to meet him, waving her red cloak to distract the brute's attention.

The boy started to run between the bull and the girl, but she shrieked, "I'm all right. Run for your life!"

Had not the beast hesitated, uncertain which of the two was his tormenter, this story would be brief indeed. Before Mogridge had dismounted the two had reached safety.

The girl, almost breathless, turned to Rodney, stamped her foot and between her gasps cried: "You--you--simpleton!"

Rodney Allison, being now in his right mind and a sensible lad, realized the merited rebuke, though scarcely from the girl who had dared him to make the venture.

"I fancy Squire Danesford will think you one too, Bess, when he hears of you facing charging bulls like a Spanish picador, all to save churlish fools from their folly," said her cousin, sneeringly.

"Don't you dare tell him! If you do I'll never speak to you again." There was a tearful note in the girl's voice and a disagreeable one in the youth's laugh.

Again he laughed and with flaming face she cried, "Perhaps you had better tell him all while you're about it; how you sat your horse like a pat of dough and watched me do it."

It was Rodney's turn to laugh, which he did most heartily, and Mogridge, his face redder than his fancy waistcoat, wheeled his horse and rode after the girl who was spurring ahead.

"I'd like to roll him in the mud and you'd like to have me do it, wouldn't you, 'Omi?"

Naomi, trudging confidently by his side, looked inquiringly out of her big eyes, stars with plenty of dew on them now, for during the excitement she had lifted up her voice in wailing and the tears had flowed freely.

Not until the riders drew rein at "The Hall" did Henry Mogridge overtake his cousin in the headlong race home. As it was, she dismounted before he could offer assistance and ran up the steps and across the white pillared veranda into the great wainscoted hall. An instant she paused, looking up at the portrait of a beautiful woman hanging there, and then went to her room.

The flickering light from the logs in the big fireplace relieved the shadows on the face in the frame, a face so like that of the girl's as to leave no doubt whence she had inherited her charms.

The colour of hair and eyes, the poise of head, all were strikingly like, but in the girl's face was a wilful recklessness, perhaps due to lack of a mother's care, the mother she had never known, but more than probable an inheritance from her father, the reckless, hot-headed, sporting squire.

At table that evening the girl said little and made an excuse to leave before the last course.

Would her cousin tell her father? At the thought a look of defiance was in the girl's face, a look not pleasant to see there.

As for the youth with the long nose and the narrow eyes, he had other plans for the present. Just now he was making himself as companionable as possible to his uncle, and it must be admitted he knew somewhat of the ways in which to do this. He told of the latest plays and scandals, to all of which the squire listened with occasional interruptions and allusions to what he knew of the London of the Fifties.

"Jupiter!" cried Mogridge, "but I'd think you'd find the Old Dominion mighty tame after the pleasures and associations you enjoyed in that good old town."

"It's all in adapting one's self, my boy. I'm a bit old and Lisbeth is too young to show you what pleasures the Old Dominion really can afford. I'll have to turn you over to the Reverend Pothero. He's a rare blade and sure cure for ennui."

"We hear tales of some of your Virginia parsons, and the joke of it is the stories, many of them at least, come from churchmen."

"Oh, well, some things might be better, I suppose, but what can you expect when so few desire to take up the work in this country? To tell the truth, it sometimes was confoundly lonely at The Hall before Pothero came. But you haven't told me anything of the government's latest policy with respect to these colonies. Will Lord North's hand be strong on the helm and what have we to fear from that arch demagogue, Pitt?"

"North's hand will be as firm as the king's and no firmer. Pitt will be dead when he has ceased to be a demagogue. The king speaks of him as 'That Trumpet of Sedition,'" replied Mogridge with an air of sagacity.

"I fear you are right. His words have afforded the would-be traitors in this land their chief encouragement."

"And from what I hear they seem to be having their way in Virginia."

"Yes, there's the very old Harry to pay here. Men whose position and interests lie in retaining the old order of things are catering to the rabble for a little temporary advantage. You see, the past few years, the Scotch-Irish immigrants have been pouring into the northwestern part of the colony. By nature and education they are hostile to rightful authority, are Dissenters and opposed to contributing in the way of taxes for the support of the established order."

"I understand that the other side, the men who are using these ignorant people for their purposes, have control of the House of Burgesses."

"Fools! to think they can scare England by refusing to buy goods of her just because she wishes

them to pay a small tax. I've just heard that Colonel Washington met Richard and Francis Lee at the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg the other night after the governor, God bless him! had dissolved the Burgesses; that with Tom Jefferson and Patrick Henry they laid their plans for uniting with the rebels in the other colonies. I can't understand of what such men as Washington are thinking. Treason, *pur et simple*, that's what 'twill come to."

"Henry is a wonderful orator, they say."

"Words, words, and more words. Where he learns 'em all is a mystery, for he'd much rather talk than study. He's infatuated young Jefferson, who's yeoman on his father's side, but who's as smart as he is conceited. What do you suppose that young scamp is trying to accomplish? Nothing less than the ruin of the old families of this Dominion, sir. He would so change our laws that, instead of our estates descending to the eldest son and thus being kept up, they would be divided among the children, as is done in Massachusetts. And he would disestablish the church, he would, by gad, sir!"

The squire's face, always florid from high living, was now so purple with passion that his wily nephew, fearing apoplexy, changed the subject.

"By the way, uncle, why don't you send Lisbeth to England to finish her education? She's growing to be a handsome woman and surely, if you'll pardon me, your broad acres can yield sufficient to fit her for the high position she'll be called to occupy."

"She's but a girl, all I have. She's like her dead mother and I--I can't let her go."

"But think what her mother would wish. Go over with her."

"I can't leave the estate. The slaves are only to be depended on when they have a capable overseer. Mine is not altogether trustworthy."

"Excuse me but I don't think it right for her to associate with servants and people like the Allisons. By the way, who are these Allisons? When riding this afternoon we met the boy and child, and Lisbeth made much of them. Surely they are not of our class."

"Allison is a Scotchman. I happened to be at Norfolk when he landed from the old country. The captain told me the fellow had been brought on board unconscious and with a bad wound in his head. I liked the man's face, and asked no questions. He never spoke of the matter. I paid the cost of his passage and let him work it out. He's a good accountant."

"An objectionable person, probably an escaped convict," remarked Mogrudge with the air of a judge.

"On the contrary he seems a most respectable man. To be sure he's a Dissenter, but one has to expect that. I've always found him trustworthy. He has taught a field school for years and the children make good progress under his instruction."

"You can't mean that you allow Lisbeth to go to such a school?"

"Well, you see," replied the squire as if in excuse, "the school is a small one, confined to my neighbours' children, otherwise I wouldn't allow it."

"So she associates with such boys as that Allison."

"He's a fine lad. His mother was a Tawbee, old Squire Tawbee's daughter. She was a playmate of mine and lived at Greenwood till it had to be sold, after the squire's death, to pay the debts."

"But you don't know about the father?"

"I said," replied the squire, rather testily, "that he's a decent man except for his revolutionary notions. He wants to say 'amen' every time Patrick Henry opens his mouth. That, I have no patience with. England has helped us fight our foes. This hullabaloo about no taxation without representation fills the ears of the ignorant. Why, fifty years ago the chronic growlers opposed the establishment of a postal service because the government, without consulting the colonies, charged postage on the letters."

"It seems, however, that you are providing a living for a man who is a chronic growler and opposed to you." There was the evident suggestion of a sneer in Mogrudge's voice.

"Well, I suppose I might look at it that way. I took him up when he hadn't a friend."

"Pardon me, but I do not see how one might look at it in any other way. A fellow who will do as you say he is doing, is an ingrate."

The squire frowned, but made no reply, and Henry Mogrudge smiled unpleasantly, for he saw that his words were surely poisoning his uncle's thoughts respecting the Allisons.

CHAPTER II

SEVERAL PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLES

Mogrudge's sneers went to bed with the squire and arose with him in the morning. The thought

that a man whom he had befriended was opposing him rankled deeply. And while in this irritable condition one of the first persons the squire met was David Allison, who had come early to work on the accounts.

"Good morning, Allison," was the squire's greeting, spoken gruffly.

"Good morning, Squire Danesford," replied the Scotchman. "I thought I wad coom early an' ha' the work oot o' the way."

"So as to have time for carrying on your treasonable mischief, I suppose."

"Excuse me, Squire, but I dinna think I understand."

"D'ye think I don't know that you go about preaching the pernicious doctrines of Patrick Henry and Tom Jefferson, who sports on his seal that sentiment of the demagogue: 'Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God.' Who's the tyrant? Why, our most gracious sovereign! That sort of talk is nothing short of treasonable. The purpose of it is revolution. Oh, I know!"

Allison looked at the squire in wonderment, which apparently served to further excite the squire's rage, for he, without waiting for reply, exclaimed: "There soon will come a time when the traitors will have to eat their words. When she was ready, England put her powerful hand on the Indies, and they became hers. She reached out into Canada and, taking France by the coat collar, marched her out. When she feels like it, she'll devote some spare half hour to knocking your heads together."

The bent figure of the Scotchman straightened as he looked full in the face of his employer. "You misunderstand me, Squire; I only ask that England shall treat the colonists as she would treat Englishmen, for that is what we are. But for us she wad na' found the task o' running France out of Canada an easy one. I fought for England in that war as surely as I did for the colonies an' I dinna intend to make talk that a self-respecting man should not."

"That sounds well, but it means treason; and I for one will not harbour or support traitors," was the angry response.

"And I," replied Allison, with dignity, "will permit no man to control my thoughts or call me a traitor to the country for which I fought."

Thus the kindly relations between the two men, who in their hearts held warm regard, each for the other, were abruptly ended in mutual ill will. At a window looking out stood Henry Mogridge, with the same disagreeable smile his face had worn the previous evening.

How like a chill fog stealing in and shutting down, shrouding a place, is trouble in a household!

The squire was uneasy all the morning and then, calling for his horse, mounted him and rode away. Elizabeth eluded her cousin, who, left to amuse himself, heartily wished himself back in London.

At the home of the Allisons the trouble was of a very serious nature. David's intention to keep from his wife and family what had occurred that morning, failed. Mrs. Allison knew that something serious had happened and, in her quiet way, finally learned what it was. Rodney, too, learned of it and that night went to his bed feeling that other boys fared better than he. There was his cousin, Dick Tawbee, with horses and dogs and servants to care for them, while he--well, there was no lad he knew who had so much of trouble.

It might have contributed to Rodney's peace of mind that evening could he have seen the predicament of a boy, about his own age, who, to escape abuse, had run from his cabin home and huddled down behind a stump in the clearing around the cabin. He lived on the frontier of the colony of Pennsylvania, and, though a rather uninteresting little fellow, had troubles of his own and was bearing them without a murmur, and, instead of thinking about them, was considering the pleasures the day had afforded him.

The Vuysens with whom he lived, because after the death of his parents he could not find a better home, had been abusing him for running away in the morning, leaving his duties because he had wished to see a beaver colony at work. He had not intended to do anything wrong, but the temptation had been too great. That morning the world seemed overflowing with the alluring promises of spring, and the birds were singing in the forest. He thought of the beaver colony he had discovered the winter before when it was locked in ice. The ice would now be gone. Surely here was his opportunity.

He had approached very cautiously so as not to alarm the little animals, and finally found a place where he had a good view of them at work, cutting down trees with their chisel-shaped teeth and building dams with a skill which causes men to wonder.

While trying to get into a comfortable position he had stepped on a dry twig that snapped under his feet. A big beaver slapped his broad tail on the water. Splash! and they disappeared in a twinkling. But Conrad, that was the boy's name, was a patient little fellow and after a time his patience was rewarded by seeing the beaver resume their tasks. Some cut down the trees, cutting them so they fell just where the beaver wanted them, woodsmen could have done no better. Some were piling brush among the branches of the trees while others brought earth to fill in the network of brush, patting it down with their broad tails, as masons would use their trowels; others were rolling a stone into the dam they were building. Seemingly they had the work as carefully planned as men could have done.

Conrad was fond of the woods and animals, his only friends, for the Vuysens looked upon him as a sort of slave and treated him unkindly. It was rare pleasure for the lad to watch the beaver

colony, and, now that he had been turned out of the cabin supperless, he sat down by the stump to think over his pleasure, rather than his trouble, and soon fell fast asleep. While Conrad slept, a small band of Indians was approaching along a spotted trail leading through the forest.

When awakened, Conrad thought he was dreaming; but, after rubbing his eyes and collecting his senses, he realized that the yelling and commotion were being caused by savages. His instinct prompted him to steal away, but, when he saw them leading the horse from the stable shed and one Indian cruelly beat it, he forgot himself and rushed to interfere. The horse was the best friend Conrad had known since his mother died.

A half drunken savage seized the boy by the hair, but others interfered, and so it happened that, instead of being killed on the spot, he found himself, together with the horse, a prisoner and hurried along the trail in the forest.

Conrad made no complaint but quietly went with his captors. He recalled that Vuysen had said there was peace with the Indians but had added, in the words of an old chief, "The rogues on both sides always make trouble." Perhaps, after all, this was but a thieving expedition and they might adopt him as a member of the tribe, a thought which strangely enough brought comfort to the boy's heart. He loved the woods and did not love the Vuysens. The savages could not know this and so, though he had no thought of trying to escape, they bound him. Although his bonds were uncomfortable he slept soundly, while Rodney, down in Virginia in his comfortable bed, passed a restless night; all of which helps to prove that it does not always depend so much on what one has, as on what one thinks about it.

When Rodney came down to breakfast the next morning he was resolved to urge his father to make a pioneer home in the wonderful West he had heard so many tales about, out where there was plenty of big game and where there were broad acres to be had for the taking.

Not until he had nearly finished his breakfast did he screw up his courage to the point of carrying out his resolve. Then he said: "Father, I've heard you say there is land out on the Ohio River which you can have because of your service in the last war. Why don't we settle on it? This place has nothing for us with the squire for an enemy, and not much at best."

"You little know of the perils, my lad. Surely ye wouldna' ha' the mother an' little one killed by the savages? But I'm minded to say that a venture into the western part o' this colony is much to my liking this morning. From all I can learn a poor man in those parts is not so hedged about as here."

Neither father nor son thought of the generally observed fact that when a poor man began to seek a home where land was cheap he usually became a pioneer with his face turned toward the West, the great longing for a better home luring him toward the richer lands said to lie beyond the mountains.

CHAPTER III

HOW RODNEY AND ANGUS BECAME FRIENDS

"Say, Sim, what's the story you's goin' to tell, the one yer cousin told ye?"

"Yes, tell us about it, Sim."

The pupils of the cabin school were having recess. A few weeks before David Allison had moved his family up to Charlottesville from the "tide-water country," and had opened this school.

"Well, ye see--" began Sim.

"Yes, we see all right, but thar ain't much fun lookin' at you gittin' ready to tell a story. You sure are slower'n our ol' nigger, Absalom."

"Give Sim a chance!"

Angus MacGregor spoke as one with authority and his stockily built body looked capable of enforcing the order. Sim proceeded.

"As I was sayin', Bill, that's my cousin, he lives over in the Shenandoah valley two looks and a yell from the Jumpin'-off Place, was out fishin' with another feller. When they was goin' home an' come out inter the clearin' roun' Fin Anderson's cabin, they see an ol' Injun, Bowlegs they call him, snoopin' roun'. They hid an' watched perceedin's. When ol' Bowlegs found no one was ter home what's he do but walk right in and bring out a jug o' corn liquor an' set right thar an' fill his gullet. Then the ol' varmint laid down fer a snooze."

"Oughter tarred an' feathered the ol' cuss," said Angus.

"That's jes' what Bill thought, but they didn't have no tar, let alone feathers. But Fin Anderson's a curis feller, an' Bill remembered that when he went out inter that country he toted along a feather bed; 'lowed he wanted somethin' different to sleep on ter home than he had in ther woods. When Bill thought o' that feather bed he jes' sithed fer tar, when he'd make a turkey gobbler outer Bowlegs. Well, while they's rummagin' roun' ther cabin they found some wild

honey Fin had brought in, so they took that an' daubed ther ol' feller from head ter heel and then rolled him in the feathers."

"Kinder rough on Fin's feather bed."

"Oh, he'd sure enough lay it to the Injun. After they got back home an' told the story some o' the fellers 'lowed as how they'd go over an' give Bowlegs a lickin' ter boot. Well, when they got in sight o' the ol' rascal, he was jes' soberin' up, sittin' thar rubbin' his eyes. 'Bout that time he seen ther feathers stickin' out all over him an' he let out a whoop an' went tearin' off through the brush, sheddin' feathers at every jump like an ol' settin' hen scared off'n her nest."

"They oughter licked the ol' redskin; they're all thieves," said Angus with an important air.

"He stole the liquor but it looks like some one else stole the honey and feathers."

All eyes turned toward the speaker who had joined the group unobserved. He was Rodney Allison.

The face of Angus turned red as a beet. Here was this upstart new boy with an air of questioning his authority. By means of Angus' ability to give any boy in the neighbourhood a sound drubbing if necessary he had become the recognized leader. Evidently this new boy needed to be shown his proper place.

"Huh! Bill an' his friends ain't thieves, I can tell. An Injun is a born thief, so are most niggers, an' I've been told that, when England used to send her thieves to Virginy, some of 'em turned schoolmasters after they landed."

Sammy Dawson snickered and it was Rodney's turn to get red in the face.

"I know one schoolmaster," he said, "who is an honest man and always was, though thieving must be more fun than trying to teach some o' the lunkheads who go to his school."

Sammy didn't snicker this time, but his eyes grew big and round.

Angus began to swell with anger. He stepped forward and shook his fist under Rodney's nose. Then he found his speech. "I've known o' folks," he said, "who weren't wanted down in the tide-water country, comin' up this way an' bein' sent back with their hides tanned;" saying this, he tried to slap Rodney's face.

In all the house of MacGregor probably there never had been a more surprised member than was Angus five minutes later, for David Allison had taught his son other things than were found in books; but he also had taught that this knowledge was not to be used except rarely, and when absolutely necessary. Rodney uneasily recalled this part of the instruction after the fight was over, and he had time to reflect on his part in bringing it on. Evidently he wasn't doing anything to make the family popular with their new neighbours, whereas, if he'd kept his mouth shut instead of interrupting the conversation, all would have been well.

"Angus, let's shake hands. I didn't mean any offence and said more than I ought."

Angus took the proffered hand rather reluctantly, and on his face was a look of suspicion, visible along with a black eye and a bleeding nose. Then he said: "You don't come to school; got larnin' enough, I reckon."

"I have to work days, but study what I can nights," was the reply.

"I saw ye workin' with the nigger this mornin'. I 'lowed as how down in the tide-water country an' in most other places folks as 'sociate with niggers ain't much thought on. A slave has ter be kept in his place."

"The work has to be done and there are only Thello and I to do it. He is not a slave, nor is his wife. Mother granted 'em freedom after grandfather gave them to her. Father doesn't believe in slavery. But they would die before they'd leave us."

"I reckon they're niggers jes' the same."

"Yes, and I would trust 'em farther than I would most white folks."

"I got no use fer mixin' with niggers."

"Look here, Angus, I thought you and I shook hands."

"Well, I didn't like ter refuse to meet ye half way," replied the boy, sullenly, adding "My father says he allus 'spicions roosters as don't crow."

"What do you mean?"

"I 'low as how 'twould be like most fellers, as had licked another, to brag about it."

So Angus suspected the proffered friendship! "Well, you see, when I came to think it over, I saw that I was partly to blame," said Rodney. "I broke into the talk and invited trouble. I don't like to hear any one blamed because their skins happen to be black or red, but it wasn't exactly my business, as the talk wasn't addressed to me."

"I reckon you're all right," said Angus, holding out his hand, this time with a heartiness which was unmistakable. Then he said, "I'm glad you've come up inter this neck o' woods, but I'm sorry ye bought that place o' Denham, unless ye paid cash down an' mighty little at that. The land's worn out and the ol' skin-flint has stuck two or three others in the same way. Had a mortgage on it, an' then foreclosed."

"I don't know what arrangements father made," replied Rodney, uneasy in mind because of

what MacGregor had told him. He knew his father was not considered a good business man, but always believed the other man as honest as himself. "Anyhow I'm much obliged to you, Angus, for the warning. Come over and see me, will you?"

"Thank ye, I'll do that," was the reply, and the boys parted friends.

While working in the field that afternoon, Rodney was so absorbed in assisting and giving Thello directions about the work they were doing, that he did not notice the approach of a tall man on horseback until a pleasant voice greeted him: "Is this David Allison's son?"

"Yes, sir," Rodney replied, recognizing Mr. Jefferson of Monticello.

"I overheard some of your directions about the work, and concluded you have a good understanding of it."

The boy flushed with pleasure. "Thank you, sir. Thello thinks I've a lot to learn."

"Deed no, Marse Rodney. Yo' certain sho--"

"Modesty is a good quality, my boy. I had a long talk with your father the other day. He is anxious for you to have all possible advantages. Now I have books in my library which I'm sure would afford you both interest and profit. If you will come to Monticello soon we'll select some," saying which he rode away.

"'Scuse me, Marse Rodney, but dey'll sho' think yo's not one ob de quality ef yo' talks dat ar way 'bout what ol' Thello thinks."

Rodney made no reply. He stood looking after the man on horseback who had spoken so kindly and who had such pleasant eyes, clear hazel in colour, and which so invited one's confidence.

David Allison was an enthusiastic admirer of Thomas Jefferson, and, on coming to Charlottesville, had at his first opportunity called on him with a letter of introduction. At times he would speak so enthusiastically that Rodney would notice a smile on his mother's face as she said: "You should remember, David, that you often have too much confidence in men. There are those who say that he is striving to be popular and to win success, and, to please the rabble, would destroy laws and customs under which the Old Dominion has flourished."

"Aye, lass, that's true o' the part but not of all. Look ye at the lack o' schools. Teaching is honourable work in the old country and in New England. What is it here, an' what chance have the childer to ither teaching than I'm able to gie them? Thomas Jefferson is an inspiring leader under God's direction I do believe. He's surely a fine man to meet an' seems disposed to help our Rodney."

CHAPTER IV

RODNEY'S VISIT TO MONTICELLO

One day there came to David Allison's house a stalwart young man clad in the typical garb of the hunter, fringed deerskin hunting shirt belted at the waist, and breeches and moccasins of the same material.

This was no less a person than George Rogers Clark, who was to bear such a conspicuous part in the Revolution, as a daring leader of the forces which saved the great territory north of the Ohio River to the United States. His little brother, then but two years old, was, thirty-six years later, with Captain Lewis, to conduct the Lewis and Clark expedition from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean and thus enable our government to secure the territory of the great Northwest.

"Cap'n George," as he was familiarly called, was now planning to establish a settlement near the Ohio River, and had called to interest David Allison in the project.

Rodney listened with open-eyed attention to Clark's glowing accounts of fertile lands apparently only waiting for a little enterprise to be developed into a perfect paradise.

The boy saw that his father was much interested, but hesitated, saying that circumstances were such that he must remain where he was for a few years. Rodney thought he knew the reason but said nothing.

"Perhaps you may yet see your way clear, Mr. Allison," said Clark on leaving. "I expect to pass this way again in a few days, and will call to see if you haven't changed your mind."

After the caller was gone Rodney said: "Father, I'll go to Monticello, to-morrow if I may. You know Mr. Jefferson invited me."

"Glad to have you, my boy."

The morning gave promise of a beautiful day. By the time Rodney came to the hill, up which the road led to Mr. Jefferson's residence, the sun shone hotly and the dust lay thick, but the boy's thoughts were on the visit, and his heart beat quickly.

The country round about is hilly, but "Little Mountain," as the hill was called before Jefferson gave it the Italian name, Monticello, was queen of them all, though Carter's Mountain, a short distance west, is somewhat larger.

Rodney always remembered that morning in May, when Nat "single-footed" the hill without stopping. No knight ever stormed a castle, no pilgrim ever approached a shrine with greater earnestness. So eager was he that he did not fully appreciate the glorious beauties of the landscape. The Rivanna River looked like a ribbon of silvery satin laid on green velvet, all in striking contrast with the red soil of the tilled fields. The Blue Ridge mountains, nearly fifty miles distant, were, in the clear air, a massive and misty blue background for the picturesque Ragged Mountains near at hand.

There was little about such small portion of the house as was then built to indicate to the boy what its future charms would be. Later, when Mr. Jefferson talked with him, and explained the plans he had made, Rodney understood and admired what, after thirty years in building, thousands have since admired, the beautiful "Monticello."

Mr. Jefferson was found in his garden, working among his early vegetables. His face was red from sunburn and he was dressed in a blue coat, gray waistcoat and green knee breeches. He recognized the lad at once, and greeted him pleasantly. He had been measuring the growth of various plants, during stated periods, and with different fertilizers, and was recording these facts in his neat handwriting, such as four years later was to appear on the famous Declaration of Independence.

"That's a fine colt you have there," he exclaimed with enthusiasm, as he noted the horse Rodney had ridden, and which was being held by a small black boy.

"Nat is a fine animal, sir."

"And well groomed."

"I care for him myself. He belongs to me, for father gave him to me when he was a little fellow. He has learned several tricks. Nat, do you want to go home?"

Nat pawed the ground twice and whinnied vigorously.

"That's his way of saying yes, isn't it, Nat, boy?"

The colt's answer was to thrust his velvety muzzle caressingly against the lad's cheek, blinking his large purplish eyes the while.

He was truly a fine animal with breeding in every line, dark bay in colour, with a black stripe running from mane to tail.

Seeing an opportunity, Rodney said: "Mr. Jefferson, may I ask your advice?"

"Certainly you may."

"I--I'm afraid father made a mistake when he bought our place of old--er Mr. Denham. I've been told two other men bought it and made a failure, having a mortgage on it. I don't know whether father gave Denham a mortgage, but I do know that, while he wants to go out on the Ohio and take up his soldier's claim to land, he doesn't think it wise to leave home, I suppose on account of debts. I feel sure he ought to go. I want to go with him, but if I can do more by staying at home I ought to. Don't you think he should go?"

"Was the boy seeking a loan?" thought Jefferson, but he said: "I would not like to advise. Your father doubtless knows better than we what is best. There is great eagerness on the part of many people to seek new homes in the great West, but many who go over the mountains will return poorer than they went, and many others will never return at all. That part of the country has a glorious future, and there's much excitement over the prospects. The pioneer spirit is resistless, but, were I your father, I should not wish to take my family. The Indians are troublesome and growing more restless."

"I would be willing to stay at home if I could earn some money to help along."

"You ought to be at your studies."

"I suppose so. I've had a pretty good training in the three Rs and am half way through Cæsar. I can study a little in the evenings."

The boy noticed that the look the man gave him was one of warm good will.

"Indeed, you certainly haven't been idle. Don't give up. Labour and learn, that must every boy or man do to succeed, and if he learns thoroughly he'll see that good character is also essential to the success which endures. I rise at daylight, winter and summer. Yes, my boy, there is something I can get for you to do, though the recompense will not be large. I'm having some land surveyed and you could serve as an assistant and acquire some practical knowledge besides; that is, if your father will permit it."

"Thank you, sir. I'm sure he'll be proud to have me in your service."

"We'll now go to the library and see what we can find, for I'm of the opinion that what the Reverend Mr. Stith said about King James won't apply to you."

"What was that, sir?"

"In his History of Virginia he writes that King James' instructor had given him 'Greek and Latin in great waste and profusion, but it was not in his power to give him good sense.' By that don't

think that Greek and Latin are not both excellent. I would advise every boy to study them if possible."

They were walking toward the house when they met Mrs. Jefferson. Rodney was introduced, and was received most graciously. He flushed with pleasure, and thought how gratified his father would be at the kind manner with which he was received.

"What book would you especially like, Rodney?"

"May I have 'Josephus?' I began that down at the old home but father loaned it, and the borrower never brought it back."

"Which assures me I'm perfectly safe in loaning to you. Yes, here's 'Josephus.' It's well to know history, especially these days when very important history is in the making."

When Rodney mounted his horse, Mr. Jefferson stood stroking the animal's nose, for he ever admired a fine horse, and he said: "If worse comes to worst this colt would help pay off the mortgage, and, should you decide to sell him, I would like to have a chance to buy him;" then, seeing that the lad's face had become very serious, he quickly added: "but there won't be any need of that yet awhile. By the way, why did you give him the name, 'Nat?'"

"I named him after Nathaniel Bacon. Father says he'd rather have had Bacon's fate and reputation than Lord Berkeley's."

"Berkeley didn't believe in encouraging boys in Virginia to read books, so he and I wouldn't have agreed," and as the boy rode away he said to himself, "and the Berkeleys in this generation think the good English blood of these colonies can be ruled like serfs!"

As for Rodney, the brightness somehow seemed to have departed from the bright day which had held such promise. His mind had been full of the importance and pleasure of his visit. Now, he could only think, "Must I sell Nat?" It had never occurred to him until suggested by Mr. Jefferson. Was it his duty to part with the colt? Well, if necessary he would do it, "But first I'll work my fingers off, Nat," and he patted the glossy, arching neck while Nat champed impatiently at the bit.

By the time they reached the cabin, the boy had recovered much of his cheerfulness, and entertained his father with a glowing account of his visit.

David Allison was busily engaged in cleaning the old rifle he had carried through the French and Indian war. It was apparent that he had not put away altogether his desire to join Clark's company.

When Rodney told of Mr. Jefferson's offer to give him work, his father, turning to his wife, said, "Harriet, I think I should go."

For some minutes nothing was said. Rodney noted the shadow on his mother's face. Finally she replied, "It does seem that the hand of Providence is shaping matters," and both father and son knew that the struggle was past; she would spare no effort to assist in her husband's departure.

The thought of what the wives and mothers endured, in the work of winning this mighty land, ought to bring the blush of shame to the face of every son of woman who does aught to sully its fair fame!

One week later David Allison left for the land "over the mountains," and disappeared into the great forest, which swallowed him as a huge cave the one who explores it. Both wife and son noticed that he did not seem bent and old as he had of late. He was the brave soldier going forth to battle again.

Before he left he arranged, if all went well and another party the following year should leave for the West to join them, that Rodney might go with them.

The next day the boy began his work at Monticello, but saw little of his employer, who was a very busy man. Though but twenty-nine years old, Jefferson was a leader in the colonial legislature, the House of Burgesses. He had been first among those who pledged themselves not to buy imports from England, he favoured better schools, and was known to admire the methods of government in New England, especially the town meetings.

These were not held in Virginia. There, the control of parish affairs was kept in the hands of a few leading families, and the large estates were handed down to the eldest son, and so kept entire; whereas, in New England property was divided among the children. This, Jefferson was trying to have changed, and consequently incurred the ill will of those who preferred the existing methods and laws.

The summer passed quickly with Rodney. The crops were scanty and his earnings meagre but enough to warrant his hope that it would be possible for him to join his father the following spring.

Angus was a frequent visitor at the Allison home. He was generous, impulsive and rough, and had not many home advantages, but his friendship for Rodney never wavered. Like all the boys, he disliked Denham, who was a fat little man with a greasy smile and eyes like a pig's. He was said to be a miser, and a cheat, and a coward, which, in the eyes of the boys, was an unforgivable weakness.

One night Rodney and Angus had been over to a quilting party at the Dawsons', or rather to the frolic which followed the quilting. There had been dancing to such music as the squeaky fiddle of Ander Byram could afford, also refreshments, in which a big ham and a roast of venison were

two prominent features. The boys left early, Rodney because he had to rise by five o'clock the next morning, and Angus because he had quarrelled with Betty Saunders. They came out into the crisp December air singing, "Polly put the kettle on, we'll all take tea."

Rodney, being in a confidential mood, told his companion of his plans for joining his father in the spring, and then said: "Angus, I should feel a lot better about leaving mother if I knew there was some one like you to help her out of any trouble that might come up. She might be sick, you know, and old Denham might try to cheat her in some way."

"I'll shake hands on that, Rod. Don't you worry. Jimminy Jewsharp! but I wish I was goin' too."

CHAPTER V

A PLUNGE INTO THE FOREST

March fifteenth, 1773, Rodney Allison set out with a party of five men who were leaving to join Clark's party on the Ohio.

The task would be somewhat like finding the needle in the haystack, perhaps, but all were confident and went away in high spirits.

Mrs. Allison smiled bravely and Naomi called after him, "You bring back a little bear for me to play with," whereat they all laughed, but the laughter was very near tears. Indeed Mam threw her apron over her head and fled to the cook-house.

"You don't want ter look so blue, Rod," cried Angus, coming into the yard. "I only wish I was goin' along. Alec Stephens' father says thar's prairies out thar where buffalo hev wallered great traces through the grass, thet's higher'n yer head, an' the deer an' elk are thicker'n skeeters in the swamp. He 'lows as how them as gits the land will sure beat the tide-water gentry on ther home stretch."

Thus encouraged the boy turned his face westward. There were two pack horses in the party and they were heavily laden. The journey to the river was without special incident. Many were going over the trail, and scarcely a day passed that they did not fall in with others. On arrival at the river the horses were left and the goods were loaded into canoes.

It was April and the great stream was filled to its banks. At the start Rodney felt as though he were paddling their frail craft out to sea toward an unknown shore. There was something sullen and irresistible in the might of that dark, swollen river, and the craft was swept along like a twig on the great waters.

The red buds were showing on the trees, a sign of hope, thought the boy. On his calling attention to them one of the men remarked: "They ain't the only red thing that's out. We want to be on the lookout, fer the word from the posts is thet the redskins are gittin' sassy."

The third day Dominick Ferguson was Rodney's partner in the canoe. He was a vigilant and powerful man, speaking a rich brogue, and when he laughed all who heard him laughed with him. He had lived in this country for twenty years, coming here as a soldier, and had passed much of that time on the frontier. It appeared that he was a man of some education as well as valuable experience.

"I'm of the opeenion," he remarked, "that there'll be doin's out i' this country ere long. Virginny'll not yield her claims to the country wi'out speerin' the why, an' Pennsylvania Dutchmen will cling to what they ha' like dogs to a root. I've noticed aboot half the parties we've met are from that colony."

"Do you think there will be fighting?"

"Will there be fightin' at Donnybrook fair, do ye ask? Sure there will be fightin', an' while the two white clans are tryin' to eat each the ither, the red devils will be lookin' for a mouthful, I'm thinkin'."

"You talk as though 'twould have been better for us never to have left Virginia."

"I'm not sure but 'twould ha' been, but nothin' venture nothin' have is a sayin' as true now as iver. You don't want to turn back?"

"I surely do not."

"That's the Scotch in ye; an' 'twould ha' been the like if 'twere Irish. Now I ha' the advantage o' gittin' it both sides. Me mother's eyes were as blue as any colleen's in all Leinster, while the father o' me was from Argyll, which is sayin' muckle. The one was papist an' the father a Presbyterian. When they tell ye oil an' water'll not mix, look at me."

"I've heard they don't ask a man about his religion out in this country."

"Right, lad, but a mon ha' need o' all his religion, I'm thinkin'."

"Well, as for me, mother is of the established church an' father is a Dissenter."

"Either'll do an' the both ought. It'll be no fault of our forebears if we ha' not religion in plenty, an' some o' the gude as should gang wi' it."

Rodney thought of the morning prayers at home, his father kneeling by the old splint-bottomed chair. Tears came to his eyes, he knew not why, for was he not soon to see his father and were they not to prosper and go back in the fall for his mother and sister? Yet he looked out on the swirling water as through a mist.

"One of the men said you had seen long service as a soldier in the king's army, Mr. Ferguson."

"That's how I came to this country, an' when I laid by me red coat I thought this a bonny place to hide in. I got me a good team an' was makin' a tidy bit cartin' supplies ower the mountains when the war broke oot. I drove me team with Braddock's army an' afterward joined the militia."

"Father was a soldier under Braddock. I've heard him tell how brave some of the teamsters were in the midst of the panic and how cowardly were some of the others."

"Same old story; all kinds o' folks to make a world. I mind well the grit o' one o' them, Daniel Morgan was his name. We drove our teams ower Braddock's grave in the road so's to hide it from the redskins. Morgan's a mon as belongs at the head o' the column. He fears naught on the face o' the earth, an' such men lead oot in this country where courage an' skill at war are more account than any ither place i' all the world. Morgan an' I were teaming supplies to Fort Chiswell i' the summer of 1756. One o' the British officers got mad at him an' struck him wi' the flat o' his sword when Morgan he oop-ended the officer's person wi' a smart crack o' his feest. That was fat i' the fire you may be sure. Insubordination don't go i' the army an' they tied Morgan to his cart wheel an' laid five hundred lashes on his bare back. 'Twas a wicked sight, the flesh o' him hung i' strips, an' he as cool as a cowcumber an' countin' every stroke. He always declared they missed a stroke. A braw lad be that same Dan Morgan."

"I should have thought it would have killed him."

"Keel him! Lad, ye don't know the stuff o' which such men are made. Why, after he'd gone into the service he was ambushed by the savages an' was shot i' the neck, the bullet comin' oot the mouth an' takin' the teeth o' one side along wi' it."

"What became of him?"

"He settled doon i' Winchester, which was then weel nigh the jumpin' off place, licked every mon in town as wanted a fight, an' then married a fine woman an' bided there as respectable as ye please. I sure thought, tho', he would go to the dogs. I'm o' the opeenion that wife will be the makin' o' him. What the boats ahead doin', lad?"

"They are landing at the mouth of the little creek, there."

"I have it; 'tis nigh sundown an' I reckon they hope to shoot something fer supper," saying which he began to sing in a rollicking voice the following, which may be presumed to be of his own composition:

"Swate Widdy Hogan's married rich Flannagan
To provide for Hogan's heirs;
All tin twins o' thim great at shennegan,
An all o' thim born i' pairs.

"Pat an' Terry, Tom an' Tim,
Peter, Mary Ann,
Dinnis, Nora, Shaughn an' Fin,
Wid Kathleen an' Dan,"

"Never mind the rest o' the family, Ferguson, come ashore an' help with the work."

"Help wi' the work, is it, Joseph, me boy? Joseph wore a coat o' many colours, ye know, but he was the same old Joe all the time. You'll niver improve, I'm thinkin'."

Rodney was left to build a fire and told to keep his eye "peeled," for a prowling savage might happen along any minute.

When he had a good blaze started, he sat down to wait. After a few minutes, hearing nothing, he decided to take his rifle and go up the creek a short distance in the hope of seeing game.

That those returning and finding him gone need not be alarmed, he cut a piece of bark from a young tree and with the point of his knife wrote on the inside: "Up creek, back soon."

The boy had not gone far when he came upon a path made by animals passing to and from the creek. He noticed no fresh tracks but concluded this as good a place as any where one might lie in wait for a sight of game.

He selected the trunk of a fallen tree which commanded a view of the path and where he would be screened from the observation of any animal passing.

It was near sunset and the rosy light shone through thin places in the foliage overhead. Not a sound could be heard save the murmur of the water in the creek. Rodney had paddled all day and was tired. He began to feel drowsy. That would not do and he shook his head vigorously, resolving to keep awake. He was fond of hunting and thought it would be very gratifying if he might return to the fire with something to show for his efforts.

Back in the woods a fine buck came walking along the narrow path. When fully six rods from the creek he suddenly stopped, and lifting his delicate muzzle snuffed the air inquiringly. The next instant his tail was lifted, showing the white of the under side, the "white flag," as the hunters term it, and with a bound he was off in the forest.

A few minutes later a dark form cautiously came along, careful not to break a twig beneath his moccasined feet. He was naked except for a breech-clout. The tuft of feathers fastened to his "top-knot" and the paint on his face indicated that he was on the warpath.

Turning, the Indian followed the narrow trail in the direction of the creek for a short distance and then, leaving the path, made a detour on the side where Rodney had taken his station.

The boy slept! The sun had gone down and only twilight remained. He dreamed that a huge bear appeared on the path, its shambling feet softly treading. He tried to raise his rifle but his arms were powerless, seemed paralyzed! The bear came on, now faster. Stopping before him it rose on its hind legs and hugged him with its fore paws, and he struggled to scream but could not utter a sound. He opened his eyes. A brawny hand was over his mouth, a powerful arm about his arms pinioned them to his side. The hand was red, and on the wrist was a copper bracelet!

A guttural voice spoke low but harshly in his ear: "Um no speak. Die!"

Then the boy felt his arms being bound with leather thongs and he looked into the face of the savage, saw the hideous paint on it, the bright, beady eyes, the whites of which looked yellow; noted the high cheekbones, the nose like an eagle's beak, the cruel mouth like a thin slit in the face, and fear was upon him, such, as he never had known.

"Halloo."

Surely that was Ferguson's voice, and must be calling him.

"Halloo!"

The last call was from the other side and it was not Ferguson's voice.

The Indian lifted his tomahawk and the lad expected it to be buried in his head. Instead came the low-spoken word: "March!"

Guided by the savage from behind and stepping cautiously, as he believed should he break a twig or make other noise he would be struck down on the instant, Rodney went on into the forest.

They had thus advanced less than twenty rods when, through the trees and standing back to them, they saw a man. He appeared unconscious of their presence. Yes, that must be Ferguson! The thought flashed through the boy's mind and, unconscious of his own safety, his lips opened to cry the alarm, which would have sounded his own death knell, when he saw a tomahawk hurtle through the air and bury itself in the man's brain. He fell to his knees without a moan. The Indian, leaping to his side, had scalped him before Rodney realized what had happened. Then, seizing the lad by the shoulder, he ordered him to "Run."

When they stopped the boy was breathless, but the savage was as cool and snakelike in his movements as at the first. Soon they were joined by other Indians. The boy was bound to a tree and they left him.

"They've gone to ambush our party," thought the boy. What would become of him should the savages be driven off and he left tied to a tree in that wilderness?

A squirrel running behind him startled him so the perspiration stood in beads on his forehead. He tried to comfort himself with the reflection that it would be better to starve to death tied to a tree than to be burned to death tied to a stake.

He tugged at his bonds until the blood started on his wrists. A rattling fire of musketry was heard in the direction of the river. After a lull there were more shots followed by yells, which indicated that the savages had been successful in driving off the whites.

All was still for many minutes. Then he felt, rather than saw, that he was not alone. A heavy hand was laid on his wrists, untying the thongs, and his captor's voice again ordered him to "March."

The moon had risen and its light filtered through the tree-tops. Stumbling forward, and guided as before, he went on till they came up with the main party of Indians.

He looked to see if there were other scalps, shuddering as he did so; but, save that one at the belt of his captor, he saw none which had been freshly taken. He therefore concluded the others of his party had escaped in the boats, leaving him to his fate. There were other scalps, but they were not from white people. Evidently the Indians had been South and had battled with their hereditary enemies, the Cherokees.

For several miles the Indians continued their march. Rodney was faint from hunger and thirst when finally they camped for the night. Dried venison was eaten, the boy receiving his share with the others, also an opportunity to drink his fill at a cool spring. He then was stretched upon the ground and each wrist and ankle was tied to a separate sapling. The red men prepared for sleep and no one was assigned to guard. Little sleep came to him. Thoughts of home, of his father in the great wilderness, flitted through his mind all night and he rose unrefreshed and sore in every muscle.

The next day they continued their journey, from sunrise to sunset, stopping at noon for a hasty lunch. The second night he was treated as on the first, but slept soundly because of sheer

exhaustion. The following day the party killed a deer. The Indians, as was their custom, gorged themselves on the meat, eating it half raw. They cut up some of the best of it to carry along with them.

That night, their heavy eating made the savages sleep soundly. Rodney, bound as on the previous nights, lay looking up through the trees at the moon, occasional glimpses of which it was possible to get through the branches.

For a time his thoughts were far away from his surroundings. Suddenly he became conscious of something cold and metallic under his right hand.

It was a knife!

Evidently one of the Indians, when cutting up the meat, had accidentally dropped it.

Somewhat awkwardly, for his hand was tightly bound, he managed to clutch the blade in such a manner that after persistent effort he succeeded in cutting his bonds.

His joy at the sense of freedom almost made him faint when he found himself clear. Quietly and slowly, it seemed as if the beating of his heart must waken the savages, he got possession of one of the rifles. He knew that a snapping twig would probably mean his destruction. He had heard of captives, who, in such straits as his, had slain their captors while they slept. The thought was revolting to him. Cautiously creeping away into the outer darkness, it seemed hours before he dared press forward without fear of making a noise.

CHAPTER VI

A WILD FLIGHT

Many a time in his wild flight that memorable night the boy thought what good fortune it was that the sky was clear and the moon shining. By its light he was able to make good progress and avoid walking in a circle, as otherwise he doubtless would have done.

He directed his course toward the east, with the moon slightly on his right. Many a fall he had over slippery, moss-grown logs, and his face was bleeding from scratches received while rushing through the bushes. He could not conceal his trail, hoping to do that by daylight. During the night he must make every effort to travel as fast and as far as possible.

His nerves were at the utmost tension. He realized that any moment he might hear a yell or see some shadowy form glide alongside. The instant an Indian awoke and discovered his escape the chase would begin.

The picture of the poor fellow murdered back at the creek was before his eyes and the horror of it spurred him to his utmost. Just at dawn he arrived at a small stream so nearly exhausted that he stumbled and fell while crossing it, yet he dared not stop to rest. He must first conceal his trail, which up to this place the savages could easily follow.

After crossing he walked a short distance alongside on the bank down stream, leaving plain imprints of his feet in the soft soil. Then he again entered the water and turned up stream.

For nearly an hour he forced himself onward, stumbling over the slippery rocks and not once leaving the water. Finally he came to a bare ledge jutting into the brook. He stepped from the water to this, careful to leave no imprints of his feet. At the farther end was a fallen tree. Walking along the trunk of this as far as he could, he stooped to the ground and rejoiced to note that it was firm, so that his moccasins left no impress on it. One who has never tried the experiment cannot realize the care necessary in walking through the woods not to displace a leaf or break a twig, which would attract the attention of a wary savage.

Rodney succeeded so well that, after he had gone nearly half a mile and came to a dense clump of underbrush, he decided it would be safe to hide there and sleep. He believed the Indians would think he had fled in the direction of the Ohio River, and, seeing his footprints on the bank, would follow down stream. He could not remember when he had been so tired and soon was in a sound slumber, not waking till nearly noon. He was very hungry but found a spring of sweet water and some checkerberry leaves, and, thus refreshed, continued his flight.

He did not rest again till nightfall. He had seen no game save squirrels and, having but one load for his rifle, hesitated to waste that on small game. From the first he had thought his only chance of escape would be to follow some stream flowing in the direction of the Ohio. At dusk he came to one and concluded it now safe to follow it, but soon he must eat, for he was very weak.

Selecting a convenient place he sat down to wait for a chance glimpse of game. Possibly a deer might come that way to drink, and a deer would be worth his one bullet. Rodney by this time concluded his pursuers had lost his trail and he felt as though he were alone in the great forest. His eyelids were heavy, but, recalling what happened to him through falling asleep three days before, he rose to his feet the better to keep awake. As he did so he was startled by a shot, fired a little way down the stream.

The boy's eyelids were no longer heavy. He experienced something like a chill and he asked himself, "What if I had seen game and fired?" After waiting a few moments, it occurred to him that there was a possibility that the shot had been fired by white men. Of course it was improbable, but he must investigate. If they were Indians, they would gorge themselves with the meat and sleep soundly so that he ought to have no trouble in getting past them. Moreover, unless many were in the party, they would leave a portion of the carcass if it were a deer they had shot. Why might he not secure that? He was hungry enough to eat the flesh raw.

Cautiously approaching he finally saw the gleam of firelight among the trees and then shadows of men, and his heart sank. They were Indians! Two came up to the fire from the stream and the boy noted the direction whence they came. After the moon appeared he entered the brook to descend it and look about for signs of the place where the game was killed. At last he found it, and the carcass of a deer from which the hind quarters had been cut. Quick work with his knife secured him a goodly portion of what was left and with this he hurried on down the brook, on the slippery bed of which he kept his footing with difficulty. His hunger urged him so that after going about a mile he decided he was far enough away to risk a fire.

He gathered a lot of dried twigs and rubbed them between his palms, thus making a small powdery mass into which, after mixing with it a few grains of powder from the priming, he struck sparks from the flint and steel of his rifle. The smell of the cooking meat made him ravenous and, like an Indian, he ate it half raw. He then lost no time in extinguishing his fire and renewing his journey.

The good food and the reflection that so far he had outwitted the savages, put him in a very happy frame of mind. He was congratulating himself on his good luck when he heard a dry twig snap in the dense growth beside the brook. It was a moment of horror for the lad and he instantly crouched in the shadow of the bushes and cocked his rifle. The noise continued, a shuffling sound, and then his straining ears detected the snuffing of some animal. One may imagine his relief.

The animal soon emerged from the bushes, a black, shaggy bulk with muzzle uplifted, following the scent of the meat which Rodney carried.

Now, being followed by a hungry bear under such conditions would not be agreeable to most people, but the boy's courage was good and his relief at finding his pursuer not an Indian was so great that he felt like laughing; instead he hastened his pace.

The chase continued, mile after mile, though to the tired lad stumbling over the slippery stones it seemed league upon league. Occasionally he stepped in a hole to his waist, but he was too excited to heed the drenching or the fatigue.

An hour passed, and bruin yet followed. "Reckon he's hungry as I am," Rodney remarked to himself. Then came the thought, why not divide with the bear? Suiting action to word the lad quickly cut his meat in two pieces, flinging one behind. With a growl the brute savagely seized it and the boy hurried on. The respite was brief, however, for not many minutes passed before he heard his pursuer, appetite whetted by what he had eaten, following the trail.

Rodney was now more exasperated than frightened. The dangers through which he had passed seemed to embolden him, though he knew his plight would indeed be unpleasant should he attempt to shoot bruin and by some cause miss fire. The muskets sold to the Indians were usually of the cheapest quality, and the one he carried certainly appeared to be of that variety. He looked behind. The bear was gaining. Seeing this, the lad resolved on extreme measures. First, he would try the effect of a rock and he picked one up, about as large as his two fists.

Rodney had thrown many stones in his life and most of them had been well aimed. This was no exception and landed fairly on bruin's snout. The animal stood on the bank not twenty feet distant and he turned a somersault, in his pain and rage, landing in the water with a loud splash.

Young Allison did not stop to laugh, as he felt like doing, but put as much distance between himself and his pursuer as possible. After a time, hearing nothing of bruin, he concluded the old fellow had given up the chase and lay somewhere curled up and nursing his sore snout. Now that the excitement was past the boy began to be sensible of his fatigue. Nature was asserting herself and he must eat and sleep.

Just at dawn he noted a clear space among large trees on a knoll a little way from the brook, which now had grown to a considerable creek. He reconnoitred and, finding no trace of an enemy, built a fire. While broiling a piece of the venison it occurred to him that he should husband what was left of the meat as it might be a long time before he could find venison, killed and dressed by Indians, awaiting him along the route. Accordingly, after eating a hearty breakfast, he cut crotched sticks and drove them into the ground on either side of the fire and placed green poles across, over the fire. By hanging the meat on these he planned to smoke and dry what remained, after cutting it into strips. Rodney seemed to forget about both Indians and the bear and was whistling softly as he worked when a noise behind him caused him to turn.

Not over fifteen feet away was the bear! He smelled the cooking meat and evidently was in an ugly mood. Scarcely thinking what he did, the boy, snatching a brand from the fire, threw it full in the face of the brute and sprang for his rifle. The firebrand only seemed to infuriate the animal and he charged. Hastily Rodney fired.

A growl of rage and pain followed the report, and through the clearing smoke the boy saw the bear biting at the wound in his side. Round and round bruin whirled until he caught a glimpse of

his assailant, when he rushed forward. As in a haze the boy saw the huge bulk almost upon him, the little fiery eyes gleaming like coals of fire, the open jaws flecked with bloody froth. The boy clubbed his rifle with no thought of running. The bear rose on his hind legs. One blow from his powerful paw, and all would be over. Rodney struck, shattering the stock of the gun, and sprang aside. He now was helpless!

The bear, full of fight, struck, his claws ripping the boy's sleeve. Crack! A well-aimed shot from behind brought bruin down with scarcely a struggle and the huge bulk lay stretched at Rodney's feet.

A child's scream of delight followed the shot. A white boy of about ten years, accompanied by an Indian, came out of the thick woods, the little fellow crying, "He's mine. I want him, Caughnega."

To this pleading the Indian paid no heed. Confronting Rodney he demanded, with a sweep of his arm: "Pale face no hunt; Indian country."

Rodney, by this time, was in a somewhat hysterical condition. The idea that he was there for the pleasure or profit of hunting bears struck him as so ludicrous that he laughed loudly, a performance that evidently puzzled the redskin not a little.

The little fellow here renewed his plea, saying: "I saw him first and I want him to play with; he's mine," and he stamped his foot like a petty tyrant and seized Rodney by the hand, saying, "You'll play with Louis?"

"I'll be very glad to do so," Rodney replied, looking at the Indian rather than at the boy who tugged at his hand.

"No hunt, what for here?" the Indian asked and his voice was stern.

Rodney hesitated a moment. The red man's beady eyes, noting this, glittered. "I'm lost," Rodney finally said, adding, "I want to get back to the river."

"Humph!" And, having thus expressed himself, Caughnega turned to the work of skinning and cutting up the bear, in which task Rodney endeavoured to assist, his efforts, however, being received quite ungraciously.

When all was done, the meat was tied into two bundles, one of which the Indian ordered Rodney to take and walk ahead. Now, walking ahead of a hostile savage is not a pleasant arrangement, but the boy tried to comfort himself with the thought that, so long as the Indian might wish the bundle carried, he would not kill the carrier. Then the little fellow ran alongside and took the older lad's hand, an act of confidence and friendship the latter never forgot.

They forded the creek and climbed the bank to a small plateau overlooking a meadow through which the creek wound its way. Here, on this high land, were clustered about twenty huts or wigwams, some covered with skins and others with bark. As no one expected them, their approach did not excite especial commotion, fortunately for Rodney, otherwise he might have been compelled to run a gauntlet.

Caughnega stopped in front of one of the wigwams and motioned Rodney to enter.

Louis protested, saying, "He is mine, I found him," but to no avail. Disappointed, he ran away, crying bitterly, while the scowling savage flung his prisoner into the hut, and indicated by word and gesture that the lad was not to leave it on peril of his life. Then he stalked away, and Rodney was left to the bitterness of his reflections.

CHAPTER VII

LISBETH WRITES FROM LONDON

From the filthy wigwam, into which Rodney Allison had been thrust by his captor, to the little home in Charlottesville the distance was more than three hundred miles, as the crow flies, and much farther for those that travelled on foot and not by wing, threading the winding forest trails, wading and swimming the fords and climbing the mountains. Yet the lad's thoughts sped across like a flash of dawn.

He lifted his head--his surroundings had, for the moment, cast the spell of despair on him--and looked out. He seemed to see, not the woods that hemmed in the little Indian village, but his humble home in far away Virginia. Poor and shabby outside, inside, the "living" room was as neat as soap and water and sand and plenty of scrubbing could make it. The meagre furnishings were tidily arranged. He could see, "in his mind's eye," the faces of his mother, and Mam, and Thello; fancied he could hear the whinny with which Nat always greeted his entrance to the stable. He imagined just what familiar task each of them might be doing. He knew Thello's forehead was wrinkled, as always when working, that Mam was humming a melody, and his mother's face was anxious. He could not know that she stood by the west window looking out toward the mountains and thinking of him and his father; nor could he see black Sam stop at the door and with an air of importance give to the "Missus" a letter, dingy and worn by its long

journey across the ocean, the negro scraping and bowing as he did so.

Sam was saying: "Squar, he says, 'Sam, you done tote dat yar letter right smart to Missus Allison wid my bes' respec's. She'll be wantin' ter read it.' Spec's it's from Lunnon. Squar, he jes' home from Willumsburg."

"Thank you, Sam. The squire is indeed kind, and you will say that Mrs. Allison thanks him for his kindness."

"Yass'm."

To most people the arrival of any letter was an important event in those days, especially one from "the old country," six long weeks by sailing vessel at best. Moreover, at that time, there was only a weekly mail between Philadelphia and Williamsburg, unless sent by special messenger, and then on to its destination by any chance carrier, each person along the route being helpful in forwarding it. So it was not surprising that Mrs. Allison eagerly opened the letter, breaking what she recognized as the Danesford seal.

The ink on that letter has dimmed with the long years, but time has not obliterated a certain daintiness in the writing, for Lisbeth's innate grace was somehow transmitted through the quill pen to the neat, clear characters fashioned by her hand. The reading of it, too, will assist the reader to a better understanding of the girl and the conditions surrounding her, and Lisbeth was a girl worth knowing, though she may yet need excuses, and those will be the more easily made after reading.

"DEAR AUNT HARRIET:--I know you keep promises and so I address you as 'aunt.' I'm sure you remember one day when I came to you in tears. I didn't often come that way, did I? I was so lonely, I'll never forget how lonely, just because it suddenly occurred to me that most little girls had mothers and aunts, and I had never seen one that belonged to me. You took me in your arms and said you would be my aunt, that you had been thinking how nice it would be to have a little girl for a niece, and I went home comforted and actually believing you had wanted me for a niece all the time.

"Well, I've got a real aunt now, Aunt Mogriddle, and sometimes I think neither of us is real glad it is so. I'm a wicked girl for writing that, and would scratch it out only I somehow want you to know how I feel. She is just as kind as any aunt could be, but, well, she doesn't care for the things I do, and--vice versa, as the books say. Now, while I'm sighing for a glimpse of the Old Dominion, and papa, and you and--and all of them, Aunt Mogriddle is sighing because she can't have a new dress for Lady D---'s to-morrow night, and worrying lest I say something I ought not to, because there is to be a real live duke there. I have met dukes before, and found them very uninteresting, although I suppose there are various kinds.

"What wouldn't I give, this dismal afternoon, to jump on the back of Moleskin and ride like the wind and hear solemn old Jeremiah clattering behind, his black face turned white with fear lest I fall off! Instead I've been listening to old Lady Brendon retail the latest gossip. She's a wheezy old lady, so fat her chairmen's faces always shine with perspiration, and all she cares about is the latest gossip: 'Lord So-and-So has wagered his last farthing at White's or the Chocolate House,' until I want to say, like black Susan, 'Jolly fuss!' You should have heard Aunt Mogriddle tell Lady Brendon about what a rich man papa is. I used to think, to hear him talk, that if the crops failed he'd never be able to pay his debts.

"I saw the king at the theatre the other night. He looks just like some of the German farmers papa and I saw in Pennsylvania. They say he is very pious, and frowns on gambling, as well he might for the good of his kingdom, and that he is determined to do as his mother told him and be a real king. He doesn't look as though he'd exactly know how. You should have heard him laugh over a little silly joke, when one of the actors sat in a chair on a make-believe baby and a ventriloquist squalled just like a baby. But they says he's obstinate and the colonies can't make him yield to their demands.

"People here think just as dear papa does, that England has helped fight the battles of the colonies and protect them with the strong arm of England--I tell 'em there are strong arms in the colonies--and that they should help pay the taxes.

"It's all too profound for me, though I am sixteen and should be, they tell me, a dignified young lady. Indeed aunt is planning to have me introduced at court.

"I must tell you what a bore little Lord Nobury is getting to be. It's partly Aunt Mogriddle's fault. Anything with a title she loves and, though she deplores the way young men gamble, and I think her beautiful son--he's yet in Virginia, thank Heaven--hasn't much money to squander, she boasts of his losses at 'hazard' to Lord Nobury.

"He was the first specimen, Nobury, I mean, that I met. I hadn't been at aunt's more than a day before he called. I'd been awfully seasick on the voyage and the sight of him nearly brought on another attack. It seemed that aunt had been singing my praises to him before I arrived. Well, he bowed very low and, had he remained in that posture, I might have liked him, for his clothes were gorgeous; a coat of creamy velvet, a wonderful waistcoat with gold embroidery, black velvet breeches, white silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles and the lace at his wrists and neck was so fine I was actually envious.

"He began to talk right away about the theatres. Of course I was so ignorant of it all that I could only listen. He said I must see Garrick at the Drury Lane and I hope I may.

"The little 'macaroni' is so short that he wears very high heels and has his hair done up high in front. You ought to see the wonderful and fearful things they do with their hair, both ladies and gentlemen.

"After learning I didn't know anything about the theatres, though of course I had read about them at home, he seemed at a loss what to talk about, and his face looked so blank and pasty I wished old Doctor Atterbury could have been there to prescribe for his liver.

"I turned the conversation to horses by telling him I thought those in the Old Dominion were much

superior to those in England and then went on to tell him about the time I got on Moleskin's back against orders and how he ran away with me when he heard the baying of Squire Dupont's hounds. The little lord declared with a smirk that I must have looked like an aboriginal Indian princess. I asked him why not rather like an original one, and he stared and fingered his little sword; a sword on such as he makes me wonder how black Tom would look in the beadle's wig. But here am I running on about lords and ladies when I hate the sound of their names and am wishing I were back in Virginia where the sunshine isn't strained through fog and the logs burning in the big fireplaces, are fragrant and cheerful.

"I suppose Naomi is a big girl and so you won't feel the need of nieces to write long letters about nothing. Is Rodney talking war? Poor papa, he was worrying, when I left him in New York, about the talk being made against our rightful sovereign. Well, I now will write him a long, cheerful letter, so thank you for being an aunt to me once more.

"Your ob't and affectionate niece,
"ELIZABETH DANESFORD."

Did she but know it, her father stood in need of cheerful letters, for the bitterness of the rising war spirit was daily making feuds between former friends, and all who talked loyalty to the king and condemned Henry, Jefferson and Washington soon discovered they were champions of an unpopular cause.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHIEF WHO DEMANDED THE TRUTH

Four days of intense excitement, without proper food or sleep, subjected to peril of life, would test the hardiest person. Rodney Allison felt like breaking down and weeping hysterically. To add to his discomfort he believed the hut to be alive with vermin, not an uncommon condition in any Indian's wigwam, and this one looked filthy.

His unpleasant reflections were interrupted by the return of the little boy, Louis, who cried, "Ahneota, he say you come right away."

"The redskin who threw me in here said he would kill me if I left."

"*Ce n'est rien*, Ahneota says come."

Under the circumstances Rodney decided to run the risk, for evidently the little chap was the only friend he had found, so he said, "Well, you don't want me killed, do you?"

"*Non*. I will have you to play with me. Ahneota is my friend. He will give you to me."

They went to a wigwam at the farther end of the village and found awaiting them an old chief. He was tall and gaunt. His face was long, the nose sharply aquiline, and his eyes were as keen and bright as those of a youth. The chief's manner was very, dignified, even stern. Louis began his plea, but was ordered to call the Indian, Caughnega. Then, turning to Rodney, the chief asked: "Why come to Indian country and kill game? White man's game below big river."

Rodney hesitated. What could he say? He feared to confess that he already had escaped from Indians, it would not be a helpful introduction, to say the least; neither would he lie.

"I was lost and hungry. The bear was hungry, too. I had to shoot," he finally said.

The searching look of the Indian embarrassed him.

"The pigeon dropped by the eagle spoke not truth but said he fell."

Rodney flushed under the fierce gaze of the bright eyes of the aged chief. Then lifting his head he resolutely replied: "I have told you the truth, but not all of it. I am here through no fault of my own and am trying to get back to the big river and my people."

"The big river is many days' journey. There is blood on the pigeon," replied Ahneota, pointing to Rodney's wrists, which yet bore the marks of the thongs with which he had been bound.

"That is the work of Indians. I was on my way down the Ohio to meet my father near the Great Kanawha. The party I was with landed for supper and was attacked by Indians, who killed some and made me a prisoner. I escaped from them and am here. Neither I nor my father ever wronged an Indian."

"The land north of the big river belongs to the Indian. The Great Father gave it to the Indian and the palefaces smoked the pipe of peace with the red man. Now they would come and kill our game and the red man must die."

"Our party was not seeking land north of the river when the Indians cruelly attacked us."

"The Wyandottes are at peace with the Shawnees and do not take away their captives."

"You all are at peace with the whites and have no right to make me a prisoner," was Rodney's reply, so boldly spoken he feared its effect might be bad.

"Young braves will not always obey their chiefs," was the rather evasive reply of the old man,

and the boy instinctively felt he had not displeased Ahneota by his bold speech.

"Ahneota has one brother. He left the palefaces and is an Indian."

The boy understood this to mean that he might, by forsaking his people, find safety as a member of the tribe. Every tie of affection bound him to his own people. He knew, moreover, that if an adopted member of the tribe ever deserted it the offence was regarded as a most serious one; that on the contrary he would be expected, if need be, to fight against his own people. He made no reply.

"Will paleface be Ahneota's brother?"

Thought of home almost brought tears to the boy's eyes. He gulped down his emotion, for he knew the Indians look with contempt on any display of one's feelings.

"It would be deserting my people," he finally replied. "My father and mother and sister are living. I thank you for the--the kindness. I hope you will permit me to go to them. My people are at peace with your people."

"The palefaces speak words of peace but their deeds are war."

There was silence for a few moments and then the old chief spoke with Rodney's captor. They talked in the Indian tongue. Little Louis, standing by, evidently knew what they were saying, for, as the Indian who claimed Rodney spoke more loudly, he interrupted, claiming, as afterward appeared, that the prisoner was his, that he had first seen him and wanted him for a playmate.

The old Indian did not speak for a time, evidently being puzzled what to do. Then, addressing Rodney, he said: "Young paleface will not be the Indian's brother; he cannot find his way to the big river. He may share the Indian's lodge and meat." Saying this he turned and entered his lodge.

"Come."

It was Louis who spoke and, taking Rodney by the hand, he led him away, while Caughnega, with a sullen look on his face, went his way.

Louis was a handsome little fellow, affectionate in his manner and delighted with his success in obtaining a new playfellow. As they went along they met one that at first Rodney thought to be an Indian but on closer inspection decided was a white man; the fellow was, in fact, none other than Conrad, whose capture has already been related.

"Ah, Conrad! *mon ami*. I have a new friend," exclaimed Louis.

"I suppose you are one of his old ones," remarked Rodney with a smile. Conrad made no reply, but looked inquiringly while Louis rattled off an account of the events of the morning.

The news did not appear to be agreeable to Conrad, who walked away without comment; but the little fellow was too full of the novelty of his experiences to heed Conrad's manner, and they went on to a lodge on the edge of the village and Louis led his companion into where, seated on a bear skin, was a woman weaving mats out of rushes. She looked up quickly, and Rodney saw at a glance that she was superior to any Indian women he had ever seen, evidently a half-breed. The blanket she wore and her surroundings looked clean, and her face showed intelligence much beyond the ordinary; but there was something in the look she gave him that warned Rodney she would be his implacable enemy.

The little fellow's tongue ran on in a mingled jargon of French, Indian and English and Rodney comprehended, rather from the looks and gestures of the woman and child than from the words, that Louis was determined the newcomer should live with them, while she objected, whereat Louis began to wail imperiously, and the glance of dislike she gave Rodney was not reassuring.

"I will build a lodge, you can show me how to do it, and then you can have one more home to go to," said Rodney, trying to soothe the troubled feelings. This idea pleased Louis, who dried his eyes and was for beginning on it right away, but "Maman," as he called the half-breed woman, did not appear to like this plan any better than the first, and her beady eyes snapped ominously; but she said nothing. Rodney wished he might lie down on one of the clean mats before him and sleep, for he was so tired he scarcely could keep awake even while walking. He shrank from asking the woman for a place to sleep, but finally did so, and she grunted assent.

While Rodney slept the sleep of exhaustion, Louis went in search of Conrad, and asked him to build his new friend a wigwam.

Conrad scowled and replied that the new boy wouldn't live long enough to need it, and Louis cried, "They can't kill him, Ahneota won't let them."

"Vat for you vant him, yet? Conrad your friend is."

"I want him, too; he's white like Jules. Papa said: 'Jules is a good boy and you may play with him all day.' You don't play with me all the time, but go away hunting and will not let me go, too."

"He need will have to eat, und to hunt, I tink, alretty."

Louis was so insistent that Conrad finally assisted him in cutting poles for the proposed wigwam and setting them in place. By this time Rodney, who had been waked by the woman, joined them and worked as hard as his sore muscles would permit. By night he had a shelter of bark and boughs. Louis brought a mat and there the weary captive lay down for the night, hungry and sore. Later, the little fellow brought him some dried venison and showed him the spring that supplied the village with drinking water.

The following morning Rodney chanced to see the half-breed, "Maman," as Louis called her, though Rodney felt sure she was not his mother, talking very earnestly with Caughnega and their talk ceased when he approached, which aroused his suspicion. He made inquiries of Louis and learned that Caughnega was the "medicine man" of the village and possessed influence. Ahneota was the more influential and the boy shrewdly guessed that Caughnega was jealous.

A chief of a tribe maintained his influence through no laws, for the Indians had none. The position might be strengthened by the chief having influential relatives, but this did not appear to be true of Ahneota. Generally speaking, a chief retained his place because the tribe trusted and respected him, as it was evident they did Ahneota. Not only members of his tribe, but other Indians, came and held counsel with him. At first Rodney hesitated about calling on the chief but gradually became a daily visitor at his lodge.

One of the accomplishments which Rodney had learned from Thello was fishing. When leaving home he had taken a good linen line and several iron hooks. Indians speared or netted most of the fish they took, but occasionally angled for them with bone hooks and lines made of twisted fibre. The boy obtained permission to fish and in this way often contributed to the food supply of the village.

Food was held in common. Any one having it was expected to share equally with the others. When luck smiled on the boy he was careful to have a nicely broiled fish to take to Ahneota. He also attempted to make friends with Conrad but always met with a surly reception.

Louis was so friendly as to be almost a nuisance, especially as Rodney believed the little fellow's fondness for him was a cause for the dislike of Conrad and "Maman." The little boy, whenever he could escape the watchfulness of "Maman" would pay a visit to Rodney's wigwam, which had been made quite substantial, being covered with strips of elm bark. Louis was always clamouring for stories about white people and one evening, Rodney replied: "I have told you all my stories. Now you must tell me some; tell me of the place where you lived before you came here. Is 'Maman' your real mother and is your father living?"

A startled look came into the lad's big brown eyes. He peered about in the growing dusk, then he said: "You will not tell? Maman says she will kill me if I tell. Maman is not my mother. She had eyes like flowers and papa, he was *gentilhomme*, would carry her in his arms when she was sick. He was tall like Ahneota, only his eyes were not so black. Mamma called him her soldier."

"Where is he now?" asked Rodney, thoroughly interested.

"He went away after mamma died and I went to live with *grandmere* above Lachine. Marie, that's Maman, she says I must call her that, she was a servant for *grandmere*, who died last harvest. She was not sick a long time like mamma, but only a few days. Marie said it was small-pox, and we must go away and find papa, but we have not found him. I want to see my papa," and Louis threw himself sobbing on the ground.

Rodney stroked his long yellow hair and called him "Yellow Locks," but the little chap peevishly exclaimed, "I like Louis better. I don't want to be called 'Yellow Locks.'"

A faint noise behind caused Rodney to turn quickly. There stood Marie, the half-breed!

How much had she heard? the boy asked himself; but he was learning to control his feelings, and he said pleasantly enough, "Good evening, Maman. Louis is tired and I reckon wants to be in bed."

"I want to sleep here," exclaimed the child.

"Not to-night," replied Rodney. "You are too tired and the bed in Maman's lodge is softer."

She took the little chap up in her arms and carried him away. It was evident she was fond of him, which might account for her having stolen him, as it appeared she had; also for her jealousy. What would be the end of the muddle? Rodney asked himself. He thought of the stake and the frenzied villagers dancing around the fire with blood-curdling yells. Would he be able to endure the torture? He hoped so, for the boy was proud of his race. But why borrow trouble? All around him were signs of peace and savage contentment. The little camp-fires twinkled in the gathering dusk. Some of the squaws sang bits of a wild lullaby to their children and he could hear, in droning refrain:

"Wau, wau, tee, say.
Wau, wau, tee, say,"

sung as a lullaby by one of the squaws, who had slung the wicker-work frame, into which the papoose was strapped, across the limb of a tree and swung it back and forth while she sang, as one would rock a cradle.

"Poor little mummy," thought Rodney. "No wonder Indians can endure pain. Tied into that framework straight as an arrow and unable to brush away a mosquito or help themselves, they ought to learn to endure anything."

It already has appeared that Conrad's wish that he might be adopted by the Indians, a thought which comforted him as he lay bound on the first night of his captivity, had been realized; also that he had been adopted by the old chief, Ahneota, who now wished to adopt Rodney.

As Conrad's experiences were such as the other lad might expect, should he finally yield to the old Indian's desire, a brief account of them may be found interesting.

Following the night of Conrad's capture the party travelled for two days in a westerly direction. Just at dusk on the second day they came to a small river. Here canoes were brought from hiding and all, save one Indian who swam across with the horse, paddled to the other side in the canoes.

Arriving on the other bank several guns were discharged, followed by lusty yells that soon were responded to with like yells from over a wooded ridge near the river. Within a few minutes squaws and papooses came running to meet them.

Though Conrad was a stolid lad his pulse quickened, for he had heard many tales of tortures inflicted by the savages. The Indian dogs snapped at his heels; the children and some of the squaws tormented him by pinching, slapping and threatening, to all of which the men paid no heed and the boy tried to appear indifferent.

As they came near the village all the spectators formed in two lines, between which he was ordered to run.

He was to run the gauntlet! For an instant his heart stopped beating, the next, a sharp blow from a stick set the blood inherited from a brave ancestry tingling through his veins.

Lowering his head he charged, as a mad bull charges, warding off what blows he might with his sturdy arms. He was thwacked with clubs, jabbed with sharpened sticks, tripped and pommelled till it seemed that not an inch of his body escaped. One old hag threw a handful of sand in his eyes and he stumbled, but crawled the few feet remaining between where he fell and the wigwam toward which he had run. Once inside, his tormentors left him. He was so sore that he almost wished he could die. After a time he slept and thought his mother came to comfort him, but it was only a young squaw who brought him food. Then one of the men came and the boy complained of the rough treatment. The Indian said that running the gauntlet was the custom, that he had been brave and the Indians would adopt him into the tribe, and Conrad could have cried for joy, only that he was a boy who did not cry.

Conrad never forgot the day he was formally adopted into the tribe. First in the ceremony was washing away his white blood and, it seemed to the boy, at least a part of his skin as well.

In full view of the assembled tribe, whose ideas of modesty differed much from those of civilized people, he was stripped and led into a pool in the river and there thrust under the water and then stood upon his feet and scoured with sand. This was the most thorough scrubbing Conrad ever was to have. Life with the Vuysens had not been conducive to cleanliness and Indians in those days were not noted for bathing.

Following the bath came the process of greasing him from head to foot and decorating his face with pigments, after which he was clad in breech-clout and moccasins. This done, he was seated upon the bank for a no less severe ordeal.

This consisted in plucking out the hair of his head, all but a tuft, or scalp lock, to which coloured feathers were tied. An Indian did the work, dipping his fingers in ashes that he might get better hold. Conrad never winced or made outcry throughout the various ordeals.

A blanket was given to the boy, who was then led into a wigwam, where an old Indian conducted ceremonies, on which Conrad looked with awe, though understanding but little of them. Their solemnity, however, impressed him deeply and it is very doubtful whether, after they were over, he would have dared run away had he been so inclined.

The boy's eyes were light blue and his hair was yellow; but his cheekbones were high, his face stolid, so that now, when paint and grease had been added to sunburn, and he stood clothed in full Indian garb, no one would think him other than an Indian but for those tell-tale blue eyes.

The Wyandottes, of which people he now considered himself one, occupied territory in what is now the north-central portion of Ohio.

The year was 1772, not long ago in history, but measured by change, very long ago. Then, the country was little different from what it had been for thousands of years. Now, it seems another world and the map of it shows great cities where were forests and connecting these are what at first resemble spiders' webs, but which are highways. Few white men then came to that region, where now few red men are seen, indeed none living the life they then lived. Such whites as came were a few French voyageurs and Jesuit missionaries and hunters and traders from the English colonies. The traders did not scruple to exchange, for valuable furs, guns, tomahawks and ammunition, which they knew would be turned against the whites of the frontier in time of war; and many of them sold the savages liquor, knowing an Indian would sell his soul for it and having drank it would become a fiend incarnate.

On the south flowed the Ohio River, along which white men were pushing their way, and settling on land in what is now Kentucky and Tennessee, and looking with covetous eyes on the land between that river and the lakes, but which the Indians claimed had been reserved to them

by treaty. The shrewder among the Indian leaders foresaw the time when they would have to fight and overwhelm the intruders or submit to their hunting grounds being spoiled by the white man. This feeling of uneasiness was spreading among the tribes, and the younger warriors were eager to fight and not infrequently were guilty of marauding expeditions.

One day a party of young braves had returned from a hunting expedition down in what was called "the dark and bloody ground," Kentucky, which the Indians of the North and the Cherokees and Chickasaws of the South made common use of for a hunting place. Frequent were the bloody skirmishes fought by these hostile tribes in this territory, though none of the Indians made permanent homes there. This party had brought back several scalps and among them Conrad noted two torn from the heads of white men. Ahneota had looked grave and the boy shuddered, and for the first time his dreams about his future were not as bright as they had been.

One day there had come to the village a Frenchman, clad in the picturesque garb of a voyageur, wearing a gaudy handkerchief about his head and a gay capote, or blanket coat which the savages much admired. With him was a half-breed woman and Louis, then not quite ten years old. Conrad thought this boy the most attractive person he had ever met and the little fellow, clad in the softest of deerskin tastefully ornamented and wearing a jaunty cap of the same material, was indeed a handsome lad. Conrad had attached himself to the boy as does a dog to his master. When Rodney arrived, and the little fellow preferred him to his former companion, then Conrad, who in one year of the wild life had become an Indian in looks, became one at heart.

CHAPTER X

HATING, BUT WAITING

Ahneota was an Indian of superior intelligence and varied experience. As the summer advanced, and the corn and tobacco which the squaws had planted in the meadow put forth glossy leaves and promise of the harvest, the boy's visits to the old chief became more interesting as well as more frequent. Rodney recognized in him his only safety and instinctively knew that the Indian liked him.

The more he learned of the aged man's wisdom and his kindness toward the people of the village, the greater his wonder at the ferocious expression in the face of this savage when persuaded to recount his exploits. There could be no mistaking that this otherwise kindly old man bore the whites a bitter hatred, though more tolerant of the French than of the English.

In his youth Ahneota had been taught by a Jesuit missionary, indeed had been regarded as a convert. He had retained, however, many of the superstitions of the savage; believed in all sorts of evil as well as good spirits, thought animals had spirit existence after death, had faith in dreams, and, though he had little to do with the arts of the "medicine man," so great was his dislike of Caughnega, Rodney became convinced the chief also believed in them, to some extent, at least.

"The French," he said, "treat the Indian like a man who is weak; the English treat him like a dog they despise. Both cheat him, but the Englishman kicks him after he has robbed him, or kills him and takes his scalp." He declared that the traders robbed the children of the forest, and that every frontiersman wanted the Indians killed so as to get the land. He had known of Indians being shot in time of peace by trappers, who murdered them for their furs and took their scalps and kept them so as to get bounty on them whenever there should be war with the red men.

"But you would kill an innocent white woman and torture her children, in revenge for the wickedness of the traders."

"Palefaces do not punish palefaces, but honour them for the bad deeds done to the Indian, and must we suffer alone?"

"It's impossible for us to punish these traders for deeds we white people know nothing about."

"Ugh!" and there was bitter scorn in the old savage's exclamation, "you do not open your ears. The trader boasts and white men laugh."

Rodney felt there was much of truth in what the old savage said, moreover he feared to excite him by further controversy, so to turn the conversation he remarked, "You must have been with the French in the great war?"

"Ahneota brought many scalps to the French," he replied, proudly. "Frenchmen give us many presents for our furs. They do not steal our land and drive away our game."

Reminded of those fearful scenes during the war, he stood erect and, pointing his long arm toward the southeast, said, "Ahneota fought Braddock. At Bushy Run his bullets made white men sleep, but Colonel Bouquet was wise and fooled Indians. Ahneota go with Pontiac, and cut off his gun so to hide it under his blanket and go inside Fort Detroit. He was a chief at Bloody

Run. The French promise much. They make fool of Indian and tell him Great Father across big water had slept, but was awake and would come and help his friends, the red men, and bring beads and brandy and shining cloth."

"Do you think the Indians did right in pretending to be friends of the English in order to kill them?"

"You think trader right when steal Indian's furs? Soldiers killed our women and children. They scared away the game and we must starve. They say they brothers of Indian; they lie. They make us old women so to steal our land. They fool the Delawares. What does 'Little Knife' say when they kill good Indians at Conestoga and make dogs of Moravians? Ahneota declares paleface and Indian can never live together."

The hatred displayed in the face of the old savage was unmistakable, yet the boy did not fear him.

"You must have seen Colonel Washington in the Braddock campaign?"

"I have seen him. The Great Spirit keeps him and turns the bullets away from him."

"He is much respected in Virginia. He inherited a big estate, Mount Vernon, with much land and many slaves."

"Like all palefaces he wants more. He sends men into the Indian country to take more land."

"The Indian does not use the land as do the English. The Indians want to roam and hunt over it. The white man works hard and builds a home and lives on much less land than does the Indian."

"He scares away the game and the squaw and pappoose must cry in hunger. The Great Spirit made this country for Indian and he must hold it or follow the sun."

Rodney did not know but that he had said too much, yet he liked a good argument and was curious to learn how the Indians felt and what they believed. "Do the Indians want to dig up the tomahawk and make war on the whites?"

"The young braves do, but Ahneota fought with Pontiac. No chief was ever obeyed by so many Indians, by Ottawas, Wyandottes, Pottawattomies, by the Ojibwas of the far north, all took the war belt and made their faces black. Some day another great chief will bring the war belt and the red men will follow where he may lead, but he has not come. The signs are not right. Already the Great Father of the English says to his children, 'I have made peace with much wampum with the Father of the French. Give me wampum.' The children grow angry; they kick away the peace belt and will not smoke the pipe. Then the Indian will rise from the ground like the leaves in a big wind and blow in their faces. When father and children quarrel, the eagle comes down like fire from the sky, and the wolves howl in the forest."

The boy sat looking into the wild face of the savage and shuddered. He knew the Indian hated and waited, and, when the storm burst, he would be like a wild beast.

Notwithstanding the bitter hostility displayed by the old man, his counsel was for peace and it was evident he feared a conflict would be precipitated before the Indians could be ready. He scowled at all reports of disturbance. The capture of Rodney worried him. Whenever the subject was mentioned he would say: "Shawnees. The spirit of evil is upon the red man and the paleface."

One day the chief asked the boy if he knew Daniel Morgan, who lived at Winchester, and from the Indian's manner of speaking it appeared he had great respect for the man's fighting qualities. He told of an attempt to ambush Morgan, in which he took part. They shot him, the bullet entering the mouth and coming out on the left side, taking the teeth along with it. Morgan was on horseback. He reeled in the saddle but clung to the horse's mane and urged him forward. Ahneota ran after him, thinking to seize the horse, as he was a swift runner. Failing in this, he threw his tomahawk. He failed to hit Morgan, though his skill at throwing the hatchet was great. He declared the evil spirit turned the tomahawk aside that Morgan might live and persecute the Indians. After the war, such was his curiosity, he visited Winchester to learn more about Morgan, and told the boy many things, which the latter was to recall.

A few days later François, who had brought "Maman" and Louis to the village, came back to buy furs, offering in exchange blankets, knives and hatchets, powder and ball, also he had several bottles of brandy. The "fire-water" was, of course, the most attractive of his wares and by afternoon several Indians were drunk, among them Ahneota. When Rodney learned this his heart sank, for his old friend was helpless to protect him. He looked for Caughnaga and noticed that he was sober. That fact indicated he intended mischief. Unless an Indian had a very strong purpose in mind, he would not refuse liquor. Later, Caughnaga and Marie were seen talking together, and then the trader joined them. Rodney was walking past, and when near them Caughnaga noticed him and made a signal to the others and they lowered their voices. Out in front of the village the young braves had built a fire, and were dancing around it and yelling like fiends.

"Do they intend to burn me?" was the question which arose in the boy's mind.

"I'll die trying rather than waiting," said the boy to himself. He hastened to his wigwam, and taking some dried meat and parched corn, arming himself with knife and hatchet, also bow and arrows, he stole unobserved out of the village and into the woods.

Most Indians of that day had become unaccustomed to the use of bow and arrow, and were dependent on the whites to furnish them with guns and ammunition. This was a fact which the

old chief bemoaned. Rodney, being deprived of the use of a rifle, shrewdly induced the old Indian to show him how to make a bow and arrows and how to use them and he already had acquired considerable skill.

A little distance away in the forest stood a large tree with a hollow trunk, inside which a tall man might stand up straight, though the opening was small. Once he and Louis had made a sort of perch in the upper part to which a boy might crawl and be safe from observation, unless one went to the trouble of crawling into the hollow and looking up.

Rodney made his way to the tree as best he might in the gathering dusk and hid himself on the perch. There he remained throughout the night, with dismal thoughts for companions and the cries of the night hawk to cheer him. Toward morning he fell asleep. He was awakened by a slight noise and, looking down, saw the face of Caughnega peering in!

Fortunately for both, the savage did not see the perch and went away. Later, Rodney, cramped and sore, crept out in quest of a drink of water. On his return a sound inside attracted his notice and listening, he heard sobbing. It was Louis. With a cry of joy the little fellow threw himself into Rodney's arms, saying, "I thought you had run away. Caughnega said you had. He was hunting for you last night, and this morning I told him about this place but he came back and said you were not here."

"Don't you ever tell him where I am when he's hunting for me. He hates me and would like to kill me. But how came you here?"

"Maman was cross like a bear and François whipped me."

"And she let him do it?"

"Non, but she was so cross I wouldn't tell her. François was tipsy."

"The drunken dog! I'd like to horsewhip him. Well, you run back, and when Ahneota is sober tell him I've not run away but will come back when the carousal is ended. Don't say anything to any one else about me. If François beats you again tell Maman."

Louis turned back toward the village and, at a turn in the path, met the tipsy François. Rodney saw the meeting, and concealed himself behind a tree.

The voyageur had no arms other than the knife in his belt. When he saw Louis he cried, "*Hé bien! Tiens! prends cela,*" slapping the little fellow's face and knocking him down.

Seeing this Rodney was infuriated and forgot all caution. In a few bounds he reached the voyageur and, as the latter turned, hit him a stinging blow on the nose, following it with a well directed one on the Frenchman's chin. The fellow went down like a log and Rodney on top of him. He rolled the dazed man on to his face and bound his arms behind his back with a leather thong he carried.

"I'll fix you if you ever strike Louis again. You get back to the village and, if you want to live, you behave yourself."

François was a sorry sight with the blood streaming from his nose. He was sobered and scared but he was to have revenge.



"HE ROLLED THE DAZED MAN ON TO HIS FACE AND BOUND HIS ARMS BEHIND HIS BACK."

CHAPTER XI

FATHER MOURNING FOR SON

What of David Allison's fortunes? Weeks had lengthened into months and no word had come back to Charlottesville from the man whom the great woods had swallowed.

After several weeks of weary travel, through forest and by river, the party had reached the location they sought. It was one that would attract even the most practical and stolid of frontiersmen: a plain of several hundred acres surrounded by the forest, a detached part of those great plains farther west, which stretched hundreds of miles with scarcely a tree to dot the expanse.

Along each of two sides of the plain a small stream ran, the two uniting in quite a respectable little river that joined the Great Kanawha River a few miles distant. Through the tall grass of this little prairie were great "traces" or paths beaten by the feet of passing buffalo, elk and deer. Fish swam in the streams and the wild turkey's call was heard in the forest.

"The Garden of Eden with a redskin for sarpint," was the remark of weather-beaten Dick Saunders, when first he looked upon it.

"We'll do him no ill an' consider weel before taking his advice about forbidden fruit," replied David Allison.

On the eastern side of the little prairie, near the forest, a stockade was built of big logs, sharpened at both ends and set close together in the ground, enclosing about an acre in the form of a rectangle, on one side of which, and forming part of the stockade, were several cabins.

The work of construction was arduous and occupied the greater part of the summer but when completed it afforded a wall of protection, and a place where, another year, such cattle as they might be able to drive over the mountains could be sheltered from Indians.

As yet no sign of the red men had been found. While this country was part of the neutral ground between the savages of the North and those of the South, a territory over which all hunted, yet through it warlike bands frequently passed on their expeditions, for there was a chronic state of hostility between these savages.

The new settlers planted a little corn, but for other food relied upon hunting. Late in the fall all but three, of whom David Allison was one, left for home, planning to return in the spring with

their families. Clark had not remained with the settlers as he had other ventures. Mr. Allison sent a letter to his wife by the only one of those returning, who lived in Charlottesville; but he, being taken sick on the way, did not reach home till the following spring, after Rodney had started to join his father.

The winter months passed slowly for David Allison. Most of his companions were uneducated men, accustomed, as he was not, to the rough life. They respected him and he did his share of the work uncomplainingly, though an older man than the others.

One bitter day an Indian called. As there had been no alarm, the entrance to the stockade had carelessly been left open and he readily gained admittance. It appeared he had been with a hunting party, but became separated from them and was nearly famished. He was given something to eat and was then told to go along about his business. In those days some Indians would hang around a settlement, living off the bounty of the inhabitants, and these men didn't intend to encourage the habit. A storm threatened and the Indian was loath to leave. Mr. Allison took him to his cabin and kept him until after the storm was past.

This act did not please the others of the party and one of them remarked, "Ye'll find that handlin' lazy, sneakin' redskins is different from teachin' school boys."

"I'm of the opinion there's human nature i' the whole o' them," was the quiet reply.

The three men got along without unpleasantness until spring. One day in March Peter Cogan went out to hunt and did not return. Later he was found dead and scalped.

For the first time in his life the horror of Indian treachery in time of peace was forced upon Mr. Allison's mind. He had fought them and knew of their cruelty in time of war, but he had never lived on the frontier and had supposed the stories of outrages somewhat exaggerated and due to ill treatment. His views had been similar to those held by the Quakers of Pennsylvania. Surely this fiendish deed was unprovoked. With but two left, there was need of the utmost caution and neither of the men ventured far from the stockade.

One evening in May several guns were discharged in succession outside the enclosure. The first party from Virginia had arrived and the warmth of their welcome may be better imagined than described.

"What of home?" were the first words.

"All well."

"But I thought to see the lad along wi' you," said Mr. Allison.

Then was told the story of the attack on the Ohio, when one man had been killed and Rodney had disappeared, whether killed or captured was not known.

"An' you left, deserted him!" he cried, and his cry sounded like a scream. "Cowards each one o' ye! Who'll go with me to find the laddie? Not one? Then I'll go alone."

It was with difficulty that he was restrained, and finally convinced of the folly of such an undertaking.

"You have a wife an' child at home yet to care for," said one, "an' it's not yer duty to throw yer life away," and the wisdom of this prevailed with him. But he was never the same man again. The stoop came back to his shoulders never to leave them. He said little and worked unceasingly, as though in that way to forget. On his first opportunity he turned his face toward Virginia, resolved never to bring his wife and little girl into the perils of the wilderness. The journey back to Charlottesville was uneventful. Nearly as many weeks were required for the making of it, as hours in this age of swift transportation.

How he dreaded breaking the news to his wife! She was always so patient with his many failures. Yet, the courage displayed by Mrs. Allison at the setting out of husband and son was such as to leave no doubt she would meet the new ordeal bravely, as indeed she did. From the first, she expressed great hope that the boy had been made a captive and in time would be restored to them, and so strongly did she urge this view of the matter that her husband regained a little hope. In his heart, however, there was a bitterness he could not overcome and, as rumours of Indian outbreaks were more frequent, he became uneasy. When, the following spring, General Andrew Lewis was ordered by Governor Dunmore to lead an expedition down the Kanawha River, and across the Ohio River to the Shawnee towns, David Allison resolved to go. The men of the party from which Rodney was captured declared that their assailants were Shawnees and this induced him to enlist under Lewis.

The mortgage on the little place was as yet unpaid. Mr. Allison on his return had reopened his school, but the pupils were few. He went to Denham, told him of his desire to join the expedition against the Shawnees and his reasons, and asked him if he would not allow him longer time on the payments.

"All the time you want, Meester Allison, all the time you want," and he smiled his greasy smile!

Rodney did not dare to follow François back to the village, nor did he think it wise to return to the tree. Being thirsty, he risked a visit to the spring, waiting till the dusk deepened and the last squaw had filled her kettles or the deerskin bottles in which they carried water. Having drunk, he concluded he would pass the night on a little dry knoll near the spring, and from which he could observe what was happening in the village.

As he lay looking out upon the bluff, whereon sat the village, and down on the broad meadow, he admired the location with the eye of a young pioneer. What a delightful spot for a plantation! His boyish imagination pictured a home like "The Hall" on the bluff overlooking the creek. Back of that he would have the negro cabins and the stables, for he would have fine horses like Nat. With such a home he would be as important a man as Squire Danesford and his father need be under obligations to no man. Had Lisbeth married her cousin and gone to England? And so day dreams drifted into those of sleep.

The next morning he returned to Ahneota and told him what had occurred. The old chief seemed contrite after his debauch, but did not mention it. As Rodney left him he said: "Better be Ahneota's brother," but the boy shook his head, saying: "You know why I cannot be."

François had left the village. Caughnega did not look at the boy as they met. That evening Conrad came and, much to the boy's surprise, suggested that they go fishing in the morning. Rodney readily agreed and the following morning they went up the creek several miles to a place where the stream broadened out into a small pond. Its shores were lined with lily pads under which the pickerel lay in wait for their prey, motionless as sticks, which they resemble.

Rodney, who had fished there, led the way to the mouth of a little inlet, where a tree had fallen into the water. He had cleared away the rotten limbs so that he might go far out on the trunk and be able to cast the bait at a specially inviting spot. Wishing to be friends, he offered Conrad the place at the farther end and also the loan of his better fishing gear. Conrad, who was very glum, hesitated, but finally accepted the offer.

Now, there is luck as well as skill in fishing, as every one knows who has tried it. Again and again they would both cast their minnow bait, which was exactly similar, and Rodney's would be the hook that was seized. Once, while the latter was baiting his hook, a huge pickerel, darting like a flash of light, took Conrad's and he, being too eager, yanked vigorously before the fish had taken the bait far enough into the mouth to be securely hooked. Rodney immediately skipped his bait over the place and the fish, taking that, was skilfully landed. He was a beauty. The look of hatred in Conrad's face startled his companion but he soon forgot it in the sport he was having. Tired at last, he said: "Let's go back to the village, Conrad. We've got enough for one day."

"Yah! You back go vith basket full an' show Louis an' ol' chief vat a smart brave you be."

Rodney made no reply, but turned and carefully picked his way over the slippery trunk toward the shore. While doing this a thought of the look of hatred in his companion's face prompted him to turn his head.

Close behind him, with his hatchet uplifted in the act of striking, was Conrad!

Rodney thrust his pole backward as one would thrust a spear and the butt hit the other boy full in the chest, knocking him off the slippery log into the water.

Squirming and spluttering, he tried to regain his feet but, instead, sank deeper and deeper.

He had fallen into a quagmire!

By the time Rodney had recovered his self-possession Conrad had sunk to his chin. The delay of another minute and he would have disappeared from this story.

Rodney ran back and reached out his pole. The other seized it and was pulled to safety, covered with mud.

The boys stood looking at each other. Conrad said nothing, but looked more sullen than ever, though his blazing wrath was well extinguished. Finally Rodney spoke.

"Why did you try to kill me?"

"Och! me, I hate you."

"What for?"

"You, you a paleface."

"That's not the reason. So are you."

"*Nein*, me, I a Wyandotte brave; ain't so."

"I never wronged you."

"Louis my brother vas und you come. You tell him Conrad not goot brother, alretty."

"That's false. I never said a word against you. Some one has been lying to you."

"Maman heard you, yet."

"She heard nothing of the kind. She wants me killed for some reason, and is trying to have you murder me, kill me from behind like a coward."

"Red man's way for me goot enough."

"Well, it's not good enough for me. 'Twould have been an Indian's way, I suppose, to have let you go down out of sight in the mud. If I'd had the slightest enmity to you that would have been my chance after you tried to murder me, you blockhead! I've a good mind to give you a thrashing. Maman and Caughnega have been making a catspaw of you to do their dirty work. If you had a spoonful of sense you'd know, now anyway, that I have nothing against you. If you are jealous of me, help me to go back to Virginia out of the way. Don't try to strike me down from behind."

Conrad hung his head. He had not lost his sense of shame altogether, and, noticing his embarrassment, Rodney, prompted by an impulse he could not have explained, held out his hand, saying, "Let's shake hands and be friends, to each other and to Louis. He'll need us both." Conrad met the offer and they returned to the village, no word being spoken on the way.

About a week later Conrad came to his wigwam and said, "Go to Ahneota's lodge. Franois has a Shawnee brought, vat say you to heem belong."

This was startling news indeed; Franois's revenge!

Rodney lost no time in reporting to the chief, who remarked, "They have been long in coming," from which it appeared he had expected them.

Franois, bustling and important, announced a messenger from "our brothers, the Shawnees, who has come for this paleface, a runaway."

"Let him enter," replied Ahneota, with dignity.

A villainous looking fellow, accompanied by Caughnega, entered the lodge. Rodney did not recognize him, which was not strange; indeed, he may not have been one of the party that captured the boy.

Having entered, he made formal demand for the return of the captive. To this Ahneota replied: "Our people are at peace with the paleface. They have wronged us, but we wait. Leaves do not fall until the tenth moon. The hatchet is buried. The paleface sits by our fires and smokes the pipe of peace."

To this the Shawnee responded: "I have come for my prisoner. Our brother would not warm at the fire of the Wyandotte the snake from the lodge of the Shawnee."

"Do you, my brother, come from the mighty Cornstalk, wise in counsel and fierce in war?"

The Shawnee hesitated, and Ahneota continued: "Has he declared war on the paleface?"

The Shawnee drew himself up, he was tall and strong, and replied:

"If Shawnee meet Wyandotte bringing venison to his lodge does he ask him where he got it and take it from him?"

"If my brother kill the paleface and bring war on the tribes when there is peace, shall my lodge be burned by the braves of the paleface? No, my brother. Go back to Cornstalk and say Ahneota would sit in council with him before the hatchet is dug up," saying which the old chief signified that the talk was at an end and the Shawnee withdrew discomfited.

When Rodney learned what the old chief had done in his behalf his heart warmed in gratitude toward the old savage. At first opportunity he thanked him, but the Indian made no reply. Caughnega soon after left the village and did not return before the village was moved that fall farther north, where the hunting was said to be better.

One day Louis came to him, crying, to bid him good-bye as Maman was to take him to the river, which he supposed meant back to his former home. She had told him he was to see Father Arbeille again and was to be taught how to be a wise boy. Louis did not want to go, and Rodney feared ill for the little fellow. There was nothing he could do, however. He did speak to Ahneota about it, and said he thought she had stolen the boy and intended no good toward him.

"She would be like bear for cub, she would die for him. Would Little Knife do as much?"

This name the savage had lately given the boy. The Indians termed the Virginians "Long Knives," hence the name, "Little Knife," applied to the lad.

That winter several of the men relied upon for hunting visited a distant tribe, and meat grew scarce. Since the departure of Caughnega and Maman, Rodney went about more freely and the old chief loaned his rifle and allowed him to hunt. He and Conrad made several excursions together. On one of these trips they set out with but little food and wandered for several days, nearly starved and half frozen. On the third day Conrad, discovering a hole half way up the trunk of a big tree, stopped.

"Vat you tink?" asked Rodney, mimicking his companion's speech, for now they were excellent friends.

"I tink dat one goot hole for bear, ain't so?" was the reply.

"You suppose an old fellow has a nest in there?"

"I tink some look in be goot."

They cut down a sapling standing near, "lodging" it against the big tree. Then they built a fire and, collecting the tips of green boughs and long grass damp with frost, tied them into a bundle at the end of a pole. While Conrad "shinned" up the sapling till the pole would reach the hole,

Rodney lighted the bundle which smoked like a "smudge." Conrad thrust the smoking bundle into the hole and, a minute later, a wheezing sound was heard. Bruin was there and was waking from his winter sleep!

Rodney seized the rifle while Conrad slid to the ground. But the bear looked out and made no effort to descend.

Conrad then relighted the torch and climbed up far enough to thrust it in the bear's face. This angered him and he began to back down the tree.

Unlike Rodney's first encounter with a bear, the lad now had ample time for taking steady aim and the brute fell mortally wounded.

How delicious the meal, which followed, tasted after their long fast!

Taking as much of the choicest cuts as they could carry, they returned to the encampment to find the Indians in a famished condition. Ahneota for the two previous days had given his allowance of food to the children.

The winter, what with hunting and trapping, passed quickly. The wild, free life with all its hardships and annoyances appealed to Rodney, and he came to understand how children taken captives by the Indians, and later returned to their parents, would occasionally run away and rejoin the red folk. His home ties were too strong, however, for him to entertain such a thought, and he lay awake many nights wondering how he might make his escape.

The severity of the winter had greatly weakened Ahneota. The skin was drawn over his cheekbones like parchment. He was so lame with rheumatism that he needed constant care and the boy served him in many ways.

The hunters, though few in number, had gathered a fine lot of furs, and, when the ice was breaking up in the streams, the sugar maples were tapped. Their implements for this purpose were crude. Their method consisted in cutting a gash through the bark with a tomahawk and into this driving a chip which served as a "spile" to conduct the dripping sap into the dishes of elm bark, from which it was taken and boiled into sugar. This sugar was often mixed with bear's fat and stored in sacks made of skins, a mixture much prized by the Indians.

A little later the tribe returned to the bluff where Rodney was first introduced to its life, there to plant the corn and tobacco.

Rumours of trouble with the whites increased. The latter part of May François returned, but without Maman and Louis, and he brought, to trade for the valuable furs, rifles and ammunition and brandy, and waxed rich, while the savages with their new implements of war became more restless.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BEGINNING OF WAR

From the history of those days one learns that there were white savages who compared unfavourably with the red ones.

Of such were those border ruffians who, tempting the family of a friendly Indian with liquor till they were stupefied with drink, murdered them.

The Indian chief returned to find them weltering in blood. He was an Iroquois who had moved his family from New York to the Ohio River.

His Indian name was Tahgahjute, but he was commonly called Logan from the fact that he had in early life lived with a white family of that name. Ever after he had been a staunch friend of the whites. Now he became almost insane in his natural anger, and went about among the various tribes calling on them to avenge his wrongs.

Had those border ruffians desired to bring on an Indian war they could not have so quickly done it in any other way. Soon, tales of pioneer families murdered by the Indians were brought over the mountains into Virginia. Logan's friends were seeking vengeance.

Undoubtedly the war would have broken out later had not Logan's family been murdered. The Indians believed they must fight or be overrun by the white immigrants pouring into the western country.

The royal governor appointed by the king over the colony of Virginia was, at this time, Lord Dunmore. He was an ardent loyalist, but he also is said to have been interested financially in some of the land ventures, concerning which there was much interest in the colony, also much speculation. Though Governor Dunmore knew that the policy of the English ministry at the time was conciliatory, he did not hesitate to prepare for a war which should bring the savages to submission.

Just why the English ministry tried to discourage immigration into the western country is not

definitely known. Doubtless there were various reasons. England wanted peace with the savages. Only a few years before, her representative, Sir William Johnson, had made a treaty at Fort Stanwix with them and given them many presents. They had been told they should have, as their own, the country north of the Ohio. The laws which governed the province of Quebec, recently captured from the French, were to be applied to the western country, a plan which did not meet with the approval of the colonists who wanted laws of an English character.

There were influential men in England who were interested in the fur trade with the Indians, which would be seriously injured if the country were opened up to settlers. Besides, the colonies of Virginia and Pennsylvania made conflicting claims to the new land and each had friends in England.

Many of the colonists declared that England feared to have the powerful colonies increase in power with new territory, and wished to confine them to the seaboard. Be that as it may, Dunmore resolved on establishing Virginia's claims by prompt and effectual warfare. Perhaps he thought to divert the colonists' minds from the increasing hostility to England. Instead he was to take the first step toward securing that rich land to the United States of America.

This is but one of many instances when the plans of supposed wise men result in the opposite to that intended.

The assembling for this war might be likened to a swarming of bees and hornets, the one for the sweets of fertile lands and adventure, the other for vengeance on account of wrongs received at the hands of the Indians.

There came a British officer, pompous and resplendent in scarlet and gold; the British soldier for his first experience in border warfare; the trapper with his long rifle and frontier garb; the sturdy settler in homespun. Nor were the camp followers altogether absent, those who hang about for pickings and have little intention of fighting.

One heard the polite accent of culture, the soft spoken Southerner, the dialects of Scotch and Irish and the gutturals of the German. About them were the green woods and filtering through the leaves overhead the hot sunshine of summer.

Early in the season that already famous frontiersman, Daniel Boone, had been sent to the Falls of the Ohio to lead back to the settlements a party of surveyors. He did it, for in the ways of the wilderness no savage was his equal.

Governor Dunmore, on July 12, 1774, ordered General Andrew Lewis, who twenty years before had been with Washington at Fort Necessity, to raise four regiments of volunteers and, going down the Great Kanawha River, to cross the Ohio River and march against the Shawnees on the Scioto. In this expedition was David Allison.

Another expedition was to meet near Wheeling to assist General Lewis. For this purpose Major Angus McDonald marched seven hundred militia and frontiersmen over the mountains in the latter part of June. Daniel Morgan assisted in raising a part of this little army from among his neighbours and acquaintances, which were many, for he had served in the two previous wars with French and Indians and was a natural leader of men.

Under the supervision of George Rogers Clark, none other than "Cap'n" Clark who had induced David Allison to try his fortunes on the Kanawha, Fort Fincastle was built. In the latter part of July these troops moved down the Ohio River to Fish Creek and started on a raid against the Indian villages on the Muskingum River, which is fed by the creeks that flow through the country where Rodney Allison had been passing his months of captivity, one of them the creek overlooking which stood the lodge of Ahneota.

Of this motley army some were in canoes, some in pirogues and others in batteaux. In a large canoe, third back from the prow, sat a fine-looking man, distinguishable from his associates in more ways than may be easily described. His clothes were such as one would see on the well-dressed man about the streets of Philadelphia; his companions were in the garb of the frontier. He was broad of shoulder with erect, military figure; while they were lithe and sinewy. His features bore marks of good breeding and his voice and language were those of a man of the world.

His companions had discovered that he knew nothing of woodcraft, but much of military matters. Just where Morgan found him or he Morgan does not yet appear. On the day the militia assembled Ezekiel Holden of Boston had given him a name. Ezekiel was a character, Yankee to the backbone. He had found his way to Norfolk on a coasting vessel a few months before and was "lookin' araoun a leetle." "Zeke" was fond of argument and delighted in arguing with Virginians about what he considered the superiority of New Englanders. He was for liberty and "pop'lar rights," "first, last an' all the time," and the rich Virginians he looked upon as part of the English aristocracy, descendants of those who had fought for King Charles, while "Zeke" wished it understood his forebears fought under Cromwell.

When he saw this man he was in the midst of his pet argument and exclaimed: "There's one o' them chevaliers naow," meaning cavalier, but pronouncing it "Shiverleer." From that moment the rather distinguished looking recruit was known among his fellows as "Chevalier," and in truth the name fitted his manner excellently. Furthermore he appeared to like the nickname and to take delight in letting his companions know that he considered himself their superior, though, be it said, this was in a spirit of humour rather than of conceit, and he was ready to share toil or rations with his mates. Yet this air did not please them and there was consequently much chaffing.

The afternoon was hot and the men tired, just the moment when a little inspiration was needed. One of the men said to his fellow in the prow of the canoe, "Nick, ah reckon it's about time fer you to lead off with a tune, one we kin hit the paddles to," and this was Nick's response:

"The only good Injun, he died long ago.
Shove her along, boy, shove her along.
An' thar's nary one left on the O-hi-o.
Push her along, boy, push her along."

"Bravo, my worthy companion in toil. Verily thou makest the bending ash to glide through the water like a swan's wing. Another verse and we bid adieu to work."

"If it affects the Chevalier that ar way, better give him another, Nick," said one of the men.

"The trees do grow tall where the corn ought to grow,
Push her along, boys, push her along.
Virginy's a-comin' an' she don' move slow.
Shove her along, boys, shove her along."

"I would applaud, but my paddle is now going of itself and I dare not let go. Methinks we'll find around the next bend Pan with his flocks of aborigines assembled and kneeling in adoration. I'm not sure but he'll have the moon goddess with him."

Now the Chevalier's three companions knew nothing of Pan or the moon goddess, with the possible exception of Nick, whose knowledge of mythology, if he possessed it, had not as yet appeared. Not knowing, they resented this intrusion of classical subjects and one remarked, "Your talk has a sweet sound; 'sposin' you sing us a verse."

"Oh, melody is a wayward minx and vouchsafes her treasures of song to few. Were it springtime and had I the gift I would sing:

"When the red is on the maple and the dogwood is in bloom."

"Keep right on, you'll bloom right soon," said Nick with a laugh in which all joined.

"Keep her goin', Chevalier," said another.

"Forsooth, my merry men, Puritans, Roundheads, I'll try:

"When cavalier doth draw his steel
The ranks fall back and yeomen kneel,
For that is as they should.

The pikes may gleam in thousands strong,
But men who ride shall right the wrong.
For throne and home they stood."

"Sure they stood not on the order o' goin', or I've misread me history," laughed Nick.

"Ho, ho! my merry figure-head at the prow, this from you, *et tu Brute!* I feared the lines would not scan, but it's not expected that every man in the crew must be an Adonis because the figure-head of the craft is a thing of beauty. One failure begets another, 'tis said, so perhaps you'll like this no better:

"Oh, the paddle, the knife and the trusty gun,
And a land in which to roam;
The stars at night for my beacon light,
Wildwood for my home;
What care I for the gay cavalier,
His plumes and his flashing steel?
He rides not here in the grassy mere.
In grateful shade of the forest glade
We laugh at those who kneel."

"Ah! but that's worse than the first. I yield the palm of song to him who goes before me."

This bantering was interrupted by a stalwart man sitting in the prow of a canoe which overtook them at this point. He was as fine a specimen of rugged manhood as all the border could produce, being over six feet in height, of commanding figure and boundless energy and courage. He was Daniel Morgan and, laughing as he spoke, he said: "I've heard of hunting Indians with fife and drum, but charmin' 'em with song is something new, I reckon."

CHAPTER XIV

HORNETS WITH AND WITHOUT WINGS

During François's visit a runner came in with the report that two Indians, descending the Ohio

River in a canoe, had been fired upon and killed by the whites. Inflamed by the brandy they had drunk, and infuriated by the report, several of the younger men blacked their faces, set up a war post and danced around it in the firelight like demons, yelling and throwing their hatchets into the post. The following morning a party of them set out for revenge.

On such occasions Rodney kept in hiding as much as possible and his mind was dark with forebodings, so that he would wake in the night from dreams of torture and find himself wet with perspiration.

A little later Logan himself came to the village, pleading that the Indians dig up the hatchet and unite in a war of revenge upon the whites for the outrage committed against him. He was a distinguished looking Indian, straight and tall, a typical chieftain of the better sort. Ahneota pleaded the necessity of delay, but, that being of no avail, urged him to secure the services of Cornstalk, the wise and wily Shawnee chief.

Rodney sympathized with the Indians until a returning party brought back scalps torn from the heads of women and children as well as from men, and then his heart sickened and he looked on them with trembling to see if among them he could discover that of his father.

Having no rifle, the boy armed himself with the bow, this being his only defence in case of attack, though he knew it would be of little use against savages armed with rifles. One day, in the latter part of July, he was strolling through the forest not far from the village when he heard voices.

During his captivity Rodney had learned to stalk game and this training he now put to use. Stealthily approaching, he saw a group of strange Indians, and with them Caughnega. The latter had set up, in a little opening among the trees, his wigwam of skins, in which he was accustomed to perform certain of the rites of a "medicine man." The boy knew that Caughnega's fame was not confined to the local tribes, and at once concluded these Indians had come to consult him, probably as to what the spirits, good and evil, might have to say respecting the approaching war.

Evidently Caughnega had begun his work, for he was now ready to enter his wigwam. Silence came upon the group waiting patiently outside. After quite a long wait a medley of sounds issued from the interior of the wigwam in which Caughnega was shut and the structure itself rocked as if in a gale. Knowing that Indians can mimic the sounds of all animals and birds with which they are acquainted, the boy had no doubt these sounds were made by Caughnega himself. If so, he was certainly an artist, and the assembled group sat around awestruck, for they had no doubt the noises were made by the spirits.

After the disturbance subsided, Caughnega came out and, standing before them, addressed them, telling what, he said, the spirits had told him. The message incited the savages to great ardour, which they manifested by brandishing their tomahawks and yelling.

"So this is the work that villain is doing unknown to Ahneota," thought Rodney. Just then he espied a large nest of hornets suspended to a limb overhanging the group. He recognized the nest as that of a variety of hornet which is large and valiant. The spirit of mischief entered the boy and, taking careful aim, he shot an arrow, which struck and tore away a portion of the paper nest.

Now a hornet does not hold a council of war when disturbed, but instantly attacks, like an Indian, the first object that presents itself, and in this instance Caughnega was the first target.

He stood, his back toward the nest, pouring out the words of the message in sonorous tones. Suddenly this flow of language was punctuated by a blood-curdling yell, as one of those winged bullets struck him just behind the left ear. About the same moment others in the group were hit. Yells and back somersaults were mingled for a moment, and then those doughty warriors fled as never from the face of a white man.

Rodney lay on the ground in convulsions of silent laughter.

On returning to the village the boy related his story to the old chief, who listened gravely and at the end said, "The Great Spirit will be angry."

"Do you believe the 'medicine man' can talk with him?" asked Rodney, incredulously.

"Ahneota knows the ways of the birds and the beaver, but the ways of the spirits he does not know. I see the medicine lodge tremble and hear voices; they are not the voices of Indians."

Rodney did not dare to argue the matter, and there was silence for a long time. In the flickering firelight the old chief's face was ghastly.

The boy fell into an unpleasant reverie. Soon would come the moment when he must flee, for to remain, he was sure, would mean his death. The difficulties of escape, because of the uprising among the Indians, had greatly increased.

"Between here and La Belle Riviere are many Mingoos, Delawares and Shawnees. Little Knife cannot fly nor leap from tree to tree like panther. He must be brother of Ahneota."

The boy was startled. It seemed to him that the Indian had been reading his thoughts.

"The paleface comes and Ahneota's brother must take his scalp. That Little Knife cannot do," Rodney replied.

Silence of many minutes followed. Rodney became uneasy and was about to leave when the chief, taking a stick in his trembling hand, drew it over the sand and began to describe the

country which lay between them and the Ohio River.

"Before another moon," he said, "the palefaces will come in many canoes to the Indians' country. Little Knife will run to meet them. He will not be the brother of the chief. He must go to his people. He must go like the fox."

The following day Ahneota called in several men of the village and Rodney. Then, giving his rifle to the boy, he said: "Little Knife has been brother of Ahneota, has brought him meat when he starved. He must have gun to bring more meat, for the chief is old and cannot hunt."

The Indians did not look pleased, for the rifle was a valuable one and much coveted. One said, "White blood must be washed away," but, as the old chief made no reply, they went away.

As the boy started to leave the lodge the Indian lifted his head and said, "When Little Knife points the old chief's gun at man, let him not see the colour of skin."

Rodney now began to store up, against the emergency he knew was approaching, a stock of dried venison, and hominy and parched corn. His experience when surrounded by hostile savages had taught him the difficulty of securing food on the march.

As he lay in the shadow of a bush one day he noticed a little worm travelling along a twig. It was the variety commonly called an "inch worm," which advances by pulling its rear up to its forward feet, its back in a curve, and then thrusts forward its length. As the boy watched its laborious progress he thought, "If one may only keep going he'll get there in time," and somehow he felt encouraged. Had he not thought it his duty to remain and care for the old chief he would have set forth that very hour.

As he came near the village several guns were fired in quick succession down at the creek and he knew a party of savages had returned from one of their raids!

The inmates of the village hurried down to meet the newcomers, but the boy lagged behind. Soon they came running back and formed two lines. Some captive must run the gauntlet!

The prisoner was a man of forty years or more. His hair was long and matted and his arms were bound. Evidently his captors had found him a difficult subject with whom to deal. In running the gauntlet he could not ward off the blows, his arms being tied, but he delivered one well directed kick that doubled a brave up in agony. He got through, but was horribly beaten. All the while he was yelling at the savages in derision, calling them old women and apparently doing everything in his power to enrage them.

A post was set in the ground in front of the encampment, and the prisoner was led out and tied to it. On the way he kicked an Indian, who in his rage would have killed him on the spot, had not another interfered. Sudden death in preference to torture was evidently what the captive sought, but it was not to be granted.

Thinking Ahneota might prevent the torture, which now seemed inevitable, Rodney hurried to the chief's lodge. Within, it was almost dark and he could but dimly see the figure of the man seated on a bear skin, his back against a bale of furs. His head was inclined forward, his chin on his breast.

"Ahneota!" called the boy loudly in his excitement, but there was no answer.

Thinking the Indian slept, the boy grasped him by the arm to wake him.

Ahneota had passed to the "happy hunting ground!"

CHAPTER XV

A WELCOME VOICE

Dense bushes fringed a bluff looking down on the Muskingum River. In these, concealed from view, lay a boy of fifteen. His face was worn and thin. His moccasins and leggins were frayed from much running through undergrowth. He was peering through the branches to a bend in the river. He had lain there hours, watching. That morning, a canoe containing two savages came up past him. The Indians were paddling vigorously. Why their haste? That was what the boy would know.

The reader has guessed the lad's name and so will readily understand that Rodney Allison concluded if the Indians were being pursued it was by white men.

Ah! was it? Yes, surely that was the shadow of a canoe. Now he could see its sides under the overhanging branches which concealed its occupants from his view.

"An' all tin twins o' thim great at shennegan,
An' all o' thim born in pairs.
Pat an' Terry, Tom an' Tim,
Peter, Mary Ann--"

"Halloa!"

"There's one of 'em coming down through the bushes now, Nick," exclaimed a man in the stern of the canoe.

"I never could sing that song without interruption, Chevalier."

The speaker had shipped his paddle and grasped his rifle, saying as he did so: "Look out, boys, the voice is white but there may be red shennegan behind it."

Rodney Allison leaped to the beach below in full view of the party. There he stood, panting and staring as though at a ghost.

"I say, sonny, if ye've objections to our looks now's the time to put 'em on file," said Nick.

"Dominick Ferguson! I thought you were dead!" gasped the boy.

"Aisy now, don't feel so bad becase I'm not. Whereabout did ye find the handle o' me name, lad?"

"So you're not the man the Indians killed, that day down on the Ohio, when they captured me?"

"Do I look loike I was?" Then dawning comprehension showed in the man's face. "Ah reckon poor Job Armistead was the unfortnit one; he never showed up. May your name be Allison?" he asked.

"It is. Have you room in the canoe for one more?"

"We'll make room," spoke two of the men at the same moment, turning the craft to shore. Thus, after long months of captivity and days of fleeing through a country infested with warlike savages, Rodney Allison came back to his own people.

"You must have seen my father, then, Mr. Ferguson?" said the boy as he stepped into the canoe.

"Sure; found him expectin' ye an' he was nigh crazy. You ought to heard him call us cowards an' knaves fer leavin' ye. He wanted to start right off alone to bring ye back, an' would, but we told him thar were others in his family to think about."

"Where is he now, and have you any news from Charlottesville?"

"He went back to Virginny an' give up the enterprise down on the Kanawha. Saw a man the other day who said he heard yer father had joined the men under Lewis. Now if he'd come along with us we'd had a family gatherin' right out here in the woods. The family's well, I reckon, or yer dad wouldn't hev gone sojerin'."

The next day the expedition left the river and began a march toward an Indian settlement known as Wappatomica Town. In the order of this march the division under Captain Wood went ahead, much to the disgust of some of the men with Morgan, for they were greedy for glory, and a chance to win laurels and the consequent promotions.

As they were marching through a part of the country through which Rodney had passed in his flight, he remarked to Ferguson, "I don't envy the fellows on ahead when they come to a place about a mile from here. If I know anything about Indians, they'll lie in wait for us there," and he described a locality where he had hidden from a party of savages, one of the critical experiences in his flight.

"Me lad, you come with Ferguson," and Rodney was conducted by him to Morgan and introduced.

"Well, my boy, if you got out alive we ought to be able to get in."

"Captain Morgan, from where I lay in hiding that day a dozen men could shoot down fifty marching below."

"This lad, Captain, knows what he's talking about. The chief of the village where he was captive was the redskin that shot ye through the neck and chased ye an' threw his hatchet at yer head."

"Yes, Ahneota said the Great Spirit turned the tomahawk aside so that you might live to persecute the Indians."

"I hope the old rascal was right. I think, young man, we'll need you for scout duty."

"Askin' yer pardon, Captain, but the lad's had his share o' risk, to my thinkin'."

"Nick, we are here to do something. Every man must do the best he can. This boy can do that work better than you or I. If you were the best man would ye shirk it?"

"I'll go, Captain," replied Ferguson, "but don't send the boy."

"I want to do what I can, Captain Morgan," said Rodney.

"I can tell 'em, Ferguson, I can tell 'em," and the look of approval Morgan gave the boy as he spoke was one for which Rodney Allison would have stormed an Indian town alone and single handed.

"Now, young man, you run ahead and warn Wood. Tell him Morgan sent ye."

Rodney ran forward with alacrity, proud of the responsibility that had been placed on him. He had not gone far before he discovered that the place of ambush was much nearer than he had thought, an error wholly excusable, considering the conditions under which he had first seen the country.

He ran at top speed, but was too late, otherwise he might have been among the men who fell under the volley which a band of about fifty Indians, lying in ambush at the very place indicated

by the boy, poured into the ranks of Captain Wood's men.

Rodney hesitated and then ran forward, joining in the mêlée.

A moment later there was yelling and commotion behind, and Morgan and his men came running to their support. A heavy hand was laid on the boy's shoulder, and Captain Morgan demanded of him, "Do you know of any place where we can get behind the red devils and dislodge 'em?"

"This way, Captain," and Rodney ran to the right. He recalled the way he had left the hiding place. Up that bluff they might attack the Indians in the rear.

"Come on, boys," Morgan shouted, and a rush was made upon the heels of young Allison.

A shot from above warned them that the Indians had discovered their approach. Rodney heard the bullet singing. The next instant Morgan seized him by the shoulder, saying, "Go back! You are ordered to the rear;" then, with a yell, the leader charged up the hill, his men close at his back. The charge dislodged the Indians and they fled.

The troops advanced toward the town more cautiously, but found the Indians had deserted it, carrying away everything movable.

"Why ain't we chasin' 'em, I'd like to know?" asked an ensign with an important air.

"We first better find out whether they're running or hiding," replied Rodney, nettled at the fellow's importance.

"Sensible remark," said Captain Morgan, who had come up and heard the conversation. "You know something about this country, also about Indians. Suppose you slip along behind the trees an' cross the creek half a mile up stream and see what ye can find. Don't shoot unless obliged to and don't hurry. Don't leave shelter until you are sure there ain't a redskin behind the trees in front."

It was a perilous task, and some might blame Morgan for assigning the boy to it. As it has already appeared, he would ask no one to attempt that which he wouldn't do himself, and the conclusion must be that he thought the boy the best one he could send on the duty which some one must do.

The boy had listened to Ahneota's descriptions of Indian methods in battle and knew they would have scouts out. He believed the main body would simply cross the stream and lie in wait for the troops and attack them crossing so as to throw them into confusion. They would, however, send men to reconnoitre the main body of the troops, and these scouts, assigned to a task similar to his, were the ones he must avoid, a difficult thing to do, as will be readily understood.

Rodney made his way with extreme caution until he caught a glimpse of an Indian stealthily advancing toward the main body of troops; then, believing that Indian would be the only one sent from that quarter and having eluded the redskin, he went hastily forward to the creek, crossing it at a narrow place fully half a mile above where the savages had crossed.

Making his way down toward the ambush was nerve-racking work, but finally the boy was rewarded by discovering a sentinel on guard.

The Indians were waiting just where he had supposed. Now to get back without meeting the scout he had passed! At last the feat was accomplished without a glimpse of a savage on the way. On his arrival he found the troops getting ready to advance, for another scout, sent out at the same time as he, had returned with the report that he found no Indians and that they must have fled.

"Well, they are there," exclaimed Rodney, and he told what he had seen.

"The youngster's got redskins on the brain, I calc'late," drawled one fellow, at which the boy got very red in the face.

Captain Morgan here appeared, saying, "You're back at last. What d'ye see?"

When the boy described what he had done Morgan promptly said, "You did your duty, my boy," and proceeded to act on the information. A guard was posted to make sure the savages did not recross and make an attack, for it was found they were in considerable force.

After several days, during which skirmishes were fought and the Indians beaten, the savages sued for peace and were asked to give hostages.

Rodney did not believe they wanted peace. They had been too angry to be satisfied with no worse defeat than this. His opinion proved correct and, the troops being short of provisions, a retreat began, everything belonging to the savages being first destroyed even to the corn, of which the troops took for their own use all they could carry. In fact, before they got back to Wheeling, they were obliged to live on one ear per day to each soldier, very short rations for men marching and fighting, as the savages dogged their footsteps and inflicted considerable losses on them.

There were times on the retreat when it seemed the troops would be cut off and annihilated. In this struggle Rodney bore his part so well as to win the approval of his associates. One day on the retreat, when the boy and the "Chevalier" were acting as flankers, scouting ahead and outside the main body, Rodney saved his companion's life.

The "Chevalier" was not familiar with Indian methods of fighting and held them in contempt. He and the boy had several arguments about the matter, the former contending that a savage was

dangerous only when one was running away from him.

In the work they were now assigned to, it was a part of wisdom to screen one's self behind trees, advancing quickly from one to another.

The "Chevalier" declared he was not out in that country for the "fun of dodging." Rodney, however, adhered to the practice, luckily for both.

The "Chevalier" was striding along as though an enemy were not within a hundred miles, when the lad's trained eye caught sight of the heel of a savage, who was kneeling behind a big tree and waiting for his foe to pass. The "Chevalier" was walking on, his head up, and in three paces would have exposed himself to the redskin's rifle.

Rodney yelled an alarm and took a quick shot at the Indian's heel, the only part of him exposed.

"Jump behind a tree and hold your fire," the boy had cried, for, if he missed the savage, he would need the protection of the "Chevalier's" rifle before he could reload. But his shot went true, as a howl from the savage bore witness.

Startled by the cry and the report of the rifle, the "Chevalier," for once, moved quickly to cover, and, between the two, they compelled the Indian to surrender. He had a painful wound in his ankle and finally, after being disarmed, was left behind, though some of the men wanted to kill him.

The "Chevalier" extended his hand to Rodney, saying, "I have you to thank for my poor existence. You did ill trying to do well, but of course you didn't know it. Perhaps I will find a way to repay."

The man spoke seriously, not in a spirit of banter, and Rodney wondered. When he told one of the men later what the "Chevalier" had said, the fellow remarked: "So the Chevalier was solemn, was he? Kain't be possible his mightiness is sufferin' from liver complaint with only one ear o' corn a day."

All were glad to be back at Wheeling, where Major McDonald decided to wait for the arrival of Governor Dunmore. The governor finally arrived in all the pomp of war and with enough men to raise the total number to about twelve hundred.

Up to the time of his arrival it had been supposed that he would take his army down the Ohio River and join that of General Lewis before making an attack on the Indians. Now he announced that the army would proceed in boats down the Ohio to the Hockhocking River and up that river to the falls, whence he would march across country to the Indian towns on the Scioto River. He sent messengers to General Lewis ordering him to join the main body at that point.

"If the redskins learn what's up they'll have a chance to wipe Lewis off the earth," remarked one frontiersman in Rodney's hearing.

The Indians did learn Dunmore's plan and almost succeeded in defeating the division under Lewis.

CHAPTER XVI

RODNEY MEETS WITH REVERSES

All historical accounts of the battle between the forces under Lewis and the allied Indians commanded by the Shawnee chief, Cornstalk, which occurred at Point Pleasant on the Ohio River, October 10, 1774, agree that it was the fiercest conflict which had been fought in this country between white men and Indians led by an Indian, unaided by the advice of any white officer.

Cornstalk was a chief of unusual ability and good sense. He had been opposed to the war, but, finding it inevitable, succeeded in raising a formidable army of the various tribes, and commanded them with such skill and bravery that, in the battle, which lasted all day, the Indians fought doggedly and all but achieved a victory, which would have made a very different affair of what is known as Dunmore's war.

His spies had kept him informed of the movements of the two Virginia expeditions, and he resolved to attack them separately before they could join their forces.

Leaving scattering bands of Indians to delay the advance of Dunmore, he marched his main body of warriors to the Ohio River, crossed, and attacked the troops under General Lewis.

This commander had wisely chosen a position on a point, having the Ohio River on his left, Crooked Creek on his right, and the Great Kanawha at his rear. He was a veteran seasoned in the French and Indian war. With him was the courtly John Sevier, a French Huguenot planning for fortune in the lands of Kentucky, James Robertson, a wise leader of pioneers, and others of but slightly less distinction in the eyes of the hardy men who had gathered under their leadership.

All day long the battle raged there among the trees of the forest. The colonists could hear the voice of Cornstalk as he passed from tree to tree among his men, encouraging them. Rarely did they see more of their foes than a coppery gleam from behind a tree trunk, perchance the arm or leg of a savage or a glimpse of his warlock, and it was sure death to leave the shelter of the trees.

Toward night the company, with which David Allison at the time was associated, was ordered to make a flank movement. This was done with great difficulty and danger. When the movement was nearly accomplished, the men leaping from tree to tree as they advanced, he fell with a bullet through the neck. A brawny savage leaped from his cover, knife in hand and greedy for a fresh scalp, when a ball from a colonist's gun stopped him half-way and he too went down in the brush by the side of his victim. Over them leaped friend and foe without heeding.

Allison had fallen into a depression between two little knolls and the savage in falling had swept the bushes down over him so that he was covered from view. Later the Indians succeeded in dragging away their fallen comrade but overlooked, fortunately, the body of the white man.

General Lewis and his men were eager to pursue and thoroughly chastise the Indians. They reasoned that, while they were about it, the only wise thing to do was to administer such a defeat that the red people would keep the peace for years to come.

They crossed the Ohio and took up their march toward the Indian towns. When Dunmore's messenger arrived with orders for them to join him they were angry. He had left them to their fate, they had won a hard earned victory and were determined to follow it to its logical conclusion.

Lord Dunmore's force, after building a hastily constructed fort at the mouth of the Hockhocking River as a base for their supplies, continued to advance on the Indian towns. The savages had met overtures for peace with evasive replies or delays until they heard of the defeat of Cornstalk at Point Pleasant, then they earnestly sued for peace.

Cornstalk urged a continuation of the war, but in vain. The savages had acted more determinedly under him than ever before, but now they wished to save their towns and crops from destruction.

Dunmore moved forward to a place called Camp Charlotte. Lewis pushed ahead to wreak vengeance on the savages, not stopping until a third order had been sent him by Dunmore commanding him to halt.

Lewis and his men thought this an interference with their rights. There were many heartburnings in his command, and rumours that Dunmore was acting under the advice of England to put an end to the war were generally believed.

Rodney obtained permission to visit the camp of General Lewis, eager to find his father. He went without forebodings and with a feeling of assurance that he should find him. The Indians had been defeated. The command had won a glorious victory, and, as is usually the case, while exulting over it, he overlooked the sacrifices made and hardships endured. He did not realize that General Lewis had lost half his commissioned officers and between fifty and sixty of his men. When told that his father, the man he loved above all others, was missing and undoubtedly had fallen in the battle, the blow was terribly hard to bear. He had known nothing like it, and made his way back to his quarters as one walking in his sleep. There, Morgan chanced to find him, his head bowed in his hands.

"Homesick, my lad, or a fit o' the blues?"

Morgan had a voice that sounded in battle like the roar of a lion, but in it, as he spoke to Rodney, was a tone of genuine sympathy and the boy broke down and sobbed, as though heartbroken. Throughout his captivity and when in extreme danger he had not shed a tear.

"Take heart, lad, an' let me know what I can do for ye."

After the boy, struggling with his sobs, had told him, there was silence for several minutes. Morgan's hand was laid kindly on the boy's shoulder, and finally he said, "I'd like to comfort ye, boy. He wouldn't like ye to mourn. He'd say, if he could, 'just go ahead an' do yer duty.' Death comes to us all sometime. An' I want you to remember that Daniel Morgan'll never be too busy to lend ye a helpin' hand if it comes his way."

A pressure of the sinewy hand on the boy's shoulder followed the words, and the kindness it signified went straight to Rodney's heart. He never forgot it. That day another was added to the full ranks of those who loved Daniel Morgan and would follow where he led, though they might know certain death awaited them.

Governor Dunmore sent runners to the Indian towns requesting the chiefs to meet him. All complied with the request save a few in the northerly towns and Chief Logan. Major Crawford was sent with a force to destroy the towns of those who had failed to respond to the request, and in this force went the men under Morgan. They met with no resistance and, after burning the villages, the troops returned. An interpreter and a messenger were sent to Logan, and to them he is said to have made the memorable speech, a model of dignified eloquence and sublime pathos, beginning: "I appeal to any white man to say that he ever entered Logan's cabin but I gave him meat." Broken in spirit, he afterwards became a sot and was killed while in a drunken fury.

Hostages having been taken from among the Indian chiefs and arrangements made for the return by the Indians of all whites held captive by them, they promising to observe the Ohio

River as the boundary of their territory, Governor Dunmore's army returned to Virginia.

On arriving at Fort Gower they were met by the news that England had closed the port of Boston, hoping by this arbitrary measure to punish the independent colonists. This news was doubtless received by Governor Dunmore with delight, but it was otherwise with the great majority of those in his army. Expressions of sympathy for the Bostonians were heard on all sides. Moreover, Dunmore's delight was to be tempered with chagrin when he heard that the House of Burgesses had appointed a day of fasting, as an expression of the Old Dominion's disapproval of England's act.

For several months these men of Dunmore's army had been deprived of what many, even in that day of primitive living, considered necessities. For weeks at a time they had eaten no salt; they had slept without other covering than the sky overhead. They were returning victorious, yet believing that Dunmore, instead of contributing to that victory, had belittled it.

Self-reliant, hardy, convinced they possessed in their own strong arms the power to live and rear their families in this great country of the new world without interference from England, they spoke very plainly. Meetings were held, and at one of these a speech was made which, alluding to what they had been able to accomplish, concluded: "Blessed with these talents, let us solemnly engage to one another, and our country in particular, that we will use them for no purpose but for the honour and advantage of America and Virginia in particular."

A resolution was passed to bear faithful allegiance to King George, the Third, "while his majesty delights to reign over a free people," a proviso worth noting; also worthy of note is the fact that this resolution pledged them to do everything in their power for the defence of American liberty. Indeed, many of the men shook hands on an agreement to march to the defence of Boston if necessary. Some of them were to be called upon to fulfil this promise.

Such demonstrations away out there on the frontier ought to have served as a warning to the royalists, but they gave it little heed. The "Chevalier" forbore to take part and looked upon the whole affair with a pitying smile. "I know of none more in need of being ruled over, than you, my merry lads," he said and laughed at the scowls in the faces of his associates. He laughed, too, at the retort of Ferguson, "Sure, me gallant warrior, 'tis we as will have a word to say about the ruler an' how he rules, mind ye."

Ferguson had expressed the temper of the men composing the army, while the "Chevalier," with his confident smile, was a type of many throughout the colonies who did not for a moment doubt the ability of England to govern the new land as she might wish.

At the post where the men received some of the pay for their service, Rodney Allison was to undergo temptations and experiences that were to cause him bitter reflections. The soldiers had endured privations and, as frequently happens, many sought relaxation in debauch at the first opportunity. Liquor was to be had by those with money to pay for it, and many a frontiersman would not leave it until his last penny should be spent and then would resume his life of wandering and peril. With the drinking there was gambling with cards and dice.

The drinking had no attraction for young Allison; on the contrary he looked upon it with deep disgust. Ordinarily the gambling would have had no fascination for him. Indeed, until his captivity, he had not known one card from another. One of the accomplishments Ahneota had learned from his acquaintance with white men was the use of cards, for which he had a great passion, and to please him the boy had spent many an hour playing various games.

Rodney's grief over the reported death of his father, his dread of returning home with the sad news to face debt and poverty, coloured his thoughts,—often woke him from sleep, and made him reckless. As he watched the games he heard a familiar voice and, looking, saw Mogridge at a table with large winnings at his hand. Rodney, from the day they first met, had cherished an unreasoning dislike for the young Englishman. He felt, rather than knew, that Mogridge had been instrumental in having his father dismissed by Squire Danesford. The boy was shrewd enough to suspect the fellow had come on with other adventurers to meet the army and fleece the unsuspecting. That money at his hand would clear the little home from debt and assure protection for the family for the present. How cool and insolent the fellow was!

"Sorry your luck runs so badly. The game's much less interesting, you know," Mogridge drawled as he swept the poor fellow's money into his own pile. Then, looking up and noticing Rodney, though it did not appear that he recognized him, he said in a bantering tone, "Hello, here's a young warrior who looks as if he'd like to tempt the fair goddess, Chance, with a sixpence."

With the hot blood pounding his temples, and scarcely knowing what he did, the boy took the proffered seat.

"I'll take a hand, if there be no objection," said a bystander with a wink at Mogridge, which Rodney could not see.

While the cards were being shuffled the "Chevalier" came along and remarked that the game would be worth watching. Neither Mogridge nor his "pal" seemed pleased, but the "Chevalier" remained standing where he could observe every movement of Rodney's antagonists. The cards were dealt and played. The luck, which so often leads the amateur on to his downfall, smiled on the boy.

"If the gentleman from London doesn't like the luck that goes with the warrior's sixpence I'll let some worthier foeman have my place," said Rodney, who, now that his excitement had subsided, desired to leave the game.

Mogridge looked narrowly at the boy, but apparently failed to recognize him, and he replied, "Gentlemen usually grant their antagonists an opportunity to win back the smiles of the fickle goddess."

"Deal," replied Rodney with an air of importance he was far from feeling.

The "Chevalier" yet loitered near, and luck continued to run in Rodney's favour. After four hands, and with quite a little pile of winnings before him, he wanted to leave the game, but was ashamed to do so. Then Mogridge said, "Let's double the stake," which was done. The cards were dealt, and the play was begun, when the "Chevalier" coolly remarked, "Card exposed. You'll have to deal over."

Mogridge's little eyes looked like tiny, glowing coals, and closer to his long nose than ever, but the cards were dealt again, and again the boy won. Then Mogridge and his confederate rose and left the table while Rodney sat gloating over his winnings.

"One who would accustom himself to the whimsies of Fortune must learn to lose as well as to win. In your behalf I will endeavour to instruct you in that part of the game, my boy. Won't you gentlemen remain to see that I pluck the winner fairly?"

"You're welcome to such small game. We didn't know we were poaching on your preserves," replied Mogridge in a surly tone, walking away.

Rodney was surprised. He had no desire to play with his friend. Yet in a masterful way the "Chevalier" appeared to take it for granted that they would play, and proceeded to deal the cards. The boy shrank from saying or doing anything which would excite the man's ridicule, for he had come to regard him as a superior sort of a person, and was somewhat in awe of his rather grand manner.

The first game Rodney won. Then the "Chevalier" remarked, as though he were doing the lad a favour, "Now we'll not prolong this; I must be going. Here's my wager."

To meet it required the last shilling of the boy's winnings, but he staked it all, and the "Chevalier" won, coolly swept the money into his pocket, all but a few shillings which he carelessly shoved toward the boy, saying, "You'll need those to get home. It's bad practice to wager one's last farthing."

Friends of Rodney Allison would not have recognized him now as the same fellow he was an hour before. Fury filled him to overflowing. That coveted money was gone and his own with it, taken by a man whose life he once had saved, his supposed friend, who now had plucked him as one would a pigeon. He seized the money and threw it in the Chevalier's face, then, as he reflected what his act signified, he grasped the handle of his knife in readiness to defend himself.



"HE SEIZED THE MONEY AND THREW IT IN THE CHEVALIER'S FACE."

The "Chevalier" fixed his handsome eyes on the boy. His face was pale but those burning eyes

held the lad as under a spell. Then the man spoke, his words as cool as ice, his voice low but painfully distinct: "One might think, my boy, you had staked your character, your soul, and lost. That's what the gambler does. I did not realize this till I had killed my best friend. You will understand my motives better when you learn more."

He turned away. The boy looked after him, and shame quenched the fury in his heart.

CHAPTER XVII

SOMEWHAT OF A MYSTERY

A long, dusty road swept by the bleak wind of a November day. A boy, young man he seemed in his ragged frontier garb, trudged wearily on. The long rifle he carried had a fancifully carved stock, once the pride of a veteran Wyandotte chief.

The lad's face was worn and thin and, by reason of long exposure, almost the colour of an Indian's. "Four miles further to Charlottesville," he said, and threw himself down beside the road as one exhausted. At the sound of a galloping horse he looked up with dull, sullen eyes, into which there came a flash of recognition and he cried, "Nat, old boy!" The horse stopped so quickly his rider narrowly escaped being unhorsed.

"What in thunder are you doing? er--shadder of old black Tom! is it you, Rodney Allison, or your ghost?"

"I feel like a ghost, Angus, and I don't think I'm heavy enough to bother Nat if we ride double back to town. How is mother and 'Omi? and how did you come by Nat? Is the place gone? I feared Denham had the colt."

"Never heard that ghosts could ask questions or I'd sure think ye was one. Ride double? You bet ye can, an' if thar ain't horse enough, I'll walk. Give us yer hand, thar, now I'll answer the rest o' yer questions. The folks are right smart but powerful anxious fer yer dad. Reckon they'd lost hope o' seein' you again."

"Father was killed in the battle at Point Pleasant."

"Yer father killed! An' he thought you was dead. He was a good man, Rodney. Everybody'll be mighty sorry to hear that," and then, words failing, he said no more and in silence they arrived at the Allison home. Angus led the colt to the stable while Rodney entered the house.

Mam saw him first, and for a moment she was almost a white woman. His mother fainted and his little sister ran from him in terror. But why attempt to describe that which words fail to express? Tragedies were not uncommon in the frontier homes of that day in this new land, and wives and mothers were heroines, though the great outside world never was to learn their names and Fame could not record them.

Angus with true delicacy went to his home, but later in the day called, and the two boys had a long talk.

"You haven't answered my questions, yet, Angus. I haven't felt like talking business with mother. I find poor old Thello sick and I don't know as Mam will ever get over her scare at sight of me."

"Thello's bein' sick was why I was exercisin' the colt. I say, Rodney, old Denham mighty nigh owned the critter, and the place to boot. He'd got his thumb right on 'em when along come a feller as told him to take it off."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Denham was--er--foreclosin', that's the word, when this man interfered."

"What man? Not Mr. Jefferson?"

"No. He would, though, if he'd been round home an' known about it; but he's away most the time. No, I don't know who the man was. Yer mother may know fer he left the deed with her. Ye see, 'twas this way. I met him ridin' like the wind. His nag was all of a lather. He pulled up an' says, 'Can you tell me where the Allison home is?' I says, 'I reckon I can, it's right over thar.' He kept on an' met ol' Denham leadin' Nat out'n the stable. I dunno what was said, but I saw 'em an' moused right along down whar they was talkin'. Yer mother had gone to the village. Well, when I got within earshot, I heard the man say, 'I've got the money right here.' Denham didn't act as though he had any use for money, which looked mighty funny. But the man, he was a masterful one, I tell ye,--"

"I'll bet Mr. Jefferson sent him. What'd he look like?"

"Oh, I dunno. He was one o' the quality, I c'd see that with half an eye. Anyhow he jes' tol' Denham to take that money an' Denham 'lowed he wouldn't. Then the man, he says, 'You'll take that money an' give me a deed o' that Allison place, free an' clear, or I'll fight ye through the courts an' I'll win.' Denham, he hemmed an' hawed, but the man wouldn't stand fer no foolin'

an' Denham, he wilted. They went down to the Squire's to fix the matter up."

"I wish I knew who he was or how I'm going to pay him."

"Don't reckon ye got to pay him. Yer mother's got the deed fer I see him give it to her."

"It's a debt of honour, Angus. You must help me to think up some way to make a living, and something besides, off the old place."

"We'll figger it out certain sure, Rodney. You've got a home as no one can take away from ye if ye don't mortgage it."

On his return to the house Rodney asked his mother about the matter.

"It's all very strange to me. The gentleman, and it was very evident that he was one, called and handed me a paper, saying, 'Madam, there is the deed to your home. I understand that leaves you free of debt. I do not wish to seem impertinent but am I correct?'"

"I told him I knew of no other obligations. I said: 'You are very kind and I am deeply grateful if I do not seem so. It is hard for one unaccustomed to charity to accept it, you know. I must know to whom I am indebted, for I certainly hope the time may come when it may be repaid.'"

"What did he say?"

"His reply was, 'This is not given as charity. It is to repay a debt owed to one very dear to you and I am not at liberty to mention the debtor's name. I assure you, however, that it is not charity, but the payment of an obligation. The only request is, that this home, never, so long as in your possession, be mortgaged again.'"

"Father was always helping people and saying nothing about it," replied Rodney, and the tears came to his eyes.

They sat many minutes looking into the open fire. Then Mrs. Allison said: "Rodney, I wish you would go to the closet in my room and get the little trunk in which your father kept his papers."

The boy brought back a little leather-bound trunk, neatly ornamented and secured with brass headed tacks.

Mrs. Allison was a woman of strong character and, after the shock of hearing the report of her husband's death, took up her duties with composure, though the lines in her face seemed deeper, and Rodney saw that an errant lock of her hair, which he had always thought a part of the attractiveness of her fair face, was now quite gray, and, as she pushed it aside, a familiar way she had, he noticed how thin and white her hand was and saw that it trembled.

"As I put the deed in the trunk with the other papers, the day it was brought to me, I noticed a sealed paper there, which I think we perhaps should open," saying which she took it and held it out that her son might read the inscription, which was: "To be opened by my dear wife after my death, if she should survive, otherwise to be burned unread."

She broke the seal and read, the boy watching her face as she did so. Having read it, she allowed it to lie in her lap for a time, and then gave it to Rodney, and this is what he read, his wonder increasing with every line:

"MY BELOVED WIFE:--As you read this you may recall the last evening in the old home before we came to Charlottesville. I sat by the window and you said, 'It is a pretty picture, David, the water in the creek, in the sunset colours, looks like wine and the road is a brown ribbon on green velvet. But perhaps you are not thinking of that at all. Sometimes, David, I think there is a part of your life in which I do not live.'

"You did not see me start at those words, for they were true. After you had retired I sat for a long time and then it became clear to me that you should know in good time that other part of my life, for there really was another.

"I had not seen the colours on the creek nor the brown ribbon on the green velvet, as I sat by the window. Instead I saw the streets of old Edinburgh, the shadows heavy in the Greyfriars' churchyard, the familiar scenes along High Street of an evening, when the students were out laughing and joking, strolling along, each with hand on the other's shoulder, and I among them. For I was as care-free as any one of them all. The good mother had not let me see that she was making any sacrifice in giving me those years at the University, and I was confident of the future.

"I have told you of those days, but not that my mates knew me as David Cameron,--David Allison Cameron, to be exact, Allison being my mother's name. 'Why should you change it?' I can hear you ask, apprehension in your voice. That is the part of my life in which you are now to share. Nor do I clearly know why you have not been permitted to do so before. It was no guilt of mine that caused me to change my name, except, possibly, that I was influenced by pride. My father's brother was a merchant in Glasgow, who urged that I become his apprentice. Mother was all for having me educated. I think the dear soul hoped to hear me expound in the kirk, as possibly she might but for the cold that came upon her and, before I realized what it meant, the good doctor was telling me it would be her last illness.

"Ah! the mists hung heavy over the lowlands the morning I turned my face toward London, where I was determined to seek fame and fortune. I might have gone to my uncle in Glasgow, but no, mother had wished otherwise and I was as proud as I was inexperienced.

"I will not pain you with a recital of the struggles I endured until, as I thought, Fortune came to my relief and Lord Ralston engaged me as the tutor of his son, Dick. And, when I saw the lad,

my happiness was complete. He was a handsome fellow, generous to a fault, and his pleasant smile and hearty greeting won me at the first. The stipend, to one impoverished as I was, seemed munificent, but I soon found that Handsome Dick, as he was called, made sure the spending of it should not trouble me. He could borrow a pound or two as if doing one a favour, and I knew it was with the firm intention that I should have it back. This, however, he found so inconvenient I rarely had enough to help him out of scrapes when his own funds were wasted. Admonitions to him were like the falling rain on the back of the duck. He early acquired a passion for gambling. His father knew it, but hoped that time would work his cure. He, himself, I learned, had been somewhat of a profligate.

"I loved the boy and life with him would have been a pleasure but for the anxious moments when it seemed he would go headlong to perdition despite my utmost efforts. Once, I thought, he seemed inclined to mend his ways, when, after the manner of youth, he met a young lady in whose eyes he thought his happiness to lie. For a time his passion for cards was forgotten, and neither White's nor the Coffee House saw him for months. But she went abroad and he became restless. Then came news of her marriage and he returned to his first love, the gaming table. Do what I might I could not restrain him. He was perfectly reckless. Soon he was in debt and his father, when it was too late, sought to check him and cut down his allowance. From associates at White's he descended to the lower resorts. There was one fellow that I specially feared, and with whom he had become a boon companion, a Captain Villecourt, a gambler and a rake, whose reputation was unsavoury. I pleaded, but in vain. I could not desert the boy. He loved me, and I him, and so I dogged his footsteps, helped him out of difficulty whenever I could, and lost no opportunity for pleading his cause with his father.

"One night, I shall never forget it, word came that his father was ill. The laddie was out and I thought he had gone to meet Villecourt, who lived in a low tavern and frequently did not dare venture abroad for fear of meeting his creditors and being lodged where he belonged, in a debtor's gaol.

"It was a villainous place. A dismal rain was falling, the street was poorly lighted, and, but for the mean attire I put on, I might easily have become the victim of footpads.

"I was not a welcome caller at the tavern, was told with an oath that neither Villecourt nor Ralston was in the house. There seemed nothing to do, and I turned down the ill-smelling passage leading to the side entrance, when, from a room on the right, I heard Dick's strong young voice cry out, 'You are a knave, sir!'

"I tried to open the door; it was bolted. I threw myself against it and the rotten casing yielded, the door burst open. The room was in semi-darkness, one candle, along with the cards, having been upset and knocked to the floor. Dick with uplifted cane stood over the cowering Villecourt. Hearing the noise of the bursting door, and doubtless thinking Villecourt's friends were coming to the rescue, he wheeled and struck me a savage blow.

"How long I remained unconscious I do not know. I awoke with an aching head on a pallet of filthy straw. The place I was in was in utter darkness. I listened for any sound which might explain my situation. The vile odours of a ship's hold, the sound of water, and a slight sense of motion convinced me I was on shipboard! I felt in my pockets, but they had been rifled!

"I fell asleep, or fainted, and was again awakened with an oath. I was on board a ship bound from London to Norfolk, Virginia, and soon learned that I not only was to work but would be sold on arrival there for a sum equivalent to the cost of passage. How I toiled until I secured my freedom!

"You know the rest, except my motive for not giving my full name. That I scarcely know myself, but suppose shame at the condition in which I found myself led me into the deception, and I adopted the first name that suggested itself. Afterward, an explanation would have been embarrassing and apparently of no value, yet I much regret the mistake.

"What became of Dick Ralston I have never learned. He may have been killed, and the crime laid at my door. The place he was in was one convenient for such a crime. Had he lived I am sure he would have prevented my being put aboard the ship, for he was as brave and loyal to a friend as he was reckless. As for the name Allison, it is as honourable as the other, and I intend now to retain it and hope you will appreciate the wisdom of so doing.

"My life at times seems a failure, but that is when I am thinking of the little of this world's gear I have accumulated for my family. In you, beloved, and in our dear children, I am blessed beyond my deserts. That you may forgive my unintentional deception, and never have cause to suffer by reason of it, is my daily prayer. Believe me, your affectionate husband,

"DAVID ALLISON."

CHAPTER XVIII

RODNEY RIDES WITH DISPATCHES

Rodney had been at home but a short time when he realized that important events had occurred in his absence.

"Mother," he said one day, "it looks as though the king will have to send over a new governor in place of Lord Dunmore, or there'll be trouble. You know, Colonel Lewis and his men were mad enough to fight both him and the Indians because, instead of punishing the Indians, he made peace with 'em. I hear he had trouble before he left Virginia on the expedition over the mountains, and is having it now."

"Yes, he dissolved the Assembly because, out of sympathy with Boston, it appointed a fast day. England, you know, closed the port of Boston. The year before Governor Dunmore dissolved the Assembly because it expressed sympathy with Massachusetts. I fear he is too arbitrary."

"Well, they do as they have a mind to after all. Last year, I understand, Mr. Jefferson and Colonel Washington and others met at the old Raleigh Tavern and arranged to have correspondence with all the colonies so they could all act together if necessary."

"Yes, they also met there five years ago and resolved not to import goods from England, and, before they went home last June, they met at the same place and planned for the Colonial Congress they held in Philadelphia last September. I believe these meetings were in what is called the Apollo room. I remember dancing there when I was a girl. It is a large room with a big fireplace at one end. I expect the king's ears would tingle if he could hear all the angry words that have been spoken against tyranny in that room. Oh, I don't know what it all will come to. There must be faults on both sides. I think Patrick Henry is too impetuous for a safe leader. I've been told that he believes the colonies should declare themselves independent of England. That would mean a terrible war. I do hope we may escape such a calamity."

The king had heard of the words spoken in the Apollo room of the old tavern. Governor Dunmore, an irritable, haughty Scotch nobleman, with little respect for the people, also had heard enough to fill his heart with rage. He sent the legislators, many of whom had ridden many miles to the capital at Williamsburg, back home with his disapproval. He would teach them submission!

On their part, the people had no thought of submission. Wherever they met there was a sound as of angry bees.

"I think our people must have much of right on their side, or such men as Colonel Washington, who is an aristocrat with much to lose and very conservative, 'tis said, would not favour what is being done in opposition to the British ministry," said Mrs. Allison. Rodney, while seeing the matter largely through his mother's eyes, nevertheless recalled the words he had heard fall from the lips of the rough frontiersmen. He knew that they were ready to fight, indeed many of them eager for a conflict, confident that they, who could clear the land, build homes in the wilderness and defend them against the Indians, could likewise defy the tyranny of King George. The boy became restless. He wanted to participate in the agitation which was noticeable on all sides, indeed the air seemed charged with it.

There was little work to be done on the farm during the winter. Hearing that Mr. Jefferson was then at his home, Rodney decided to visit Monticello. There he met with a warm greeting, though a shade of disappointment was in his face when he learned that the great man had been so busy he had not followed the fortunes of the Allison family, and did not even know that Mr. Allison had fallen at the battle of Point Pleasant. For the first time Rodney now doubted whether after all the man who had paid off the mortgage, and thwarted Denham, was really an agent of Mr. Jefferson. Finally, an opportunity came for assuring himself. His host was admiring Nat when Rodney said: "The colt is in fine condition, handsomer than ever. I nearly lost him. Denham wanted him and, when he started to foreclose, he took possession of Nat."

"Denham foreclosed? Have you then lost the home? I wish I had known of it, I might have prevented that."

"Some kind friend learned of it and paid the mortgage; neither mother nor I know who it was. I thought he might have been your agent."

"I am glad you think I would have assisted had I known, but this is the first I have heard of the matter. You see I have been very busy and away from home much, and not in a way to hear. I'm very glad you were rescued from the clutches of Denham."

"He seemed determined to have both the place and the horse. Both Thello and Mam offered to sell themselves, even suggested that to Denham, but he told them he didn't want any old, worn out niggers on his hands. I'm glad I wasn't there," and the lad's eyes blazed with indignation as he thought of the old miser's greed.

"Denham is said to be as ardent a Tory as he dares to be," remarked Mr. Jefferson, as though to himself. Then, turning to the boy, he looked into his face, and Rodney felt as though his inmost thoughts were being read.

That he stood the test well appeared in the next words of Jefferson.

"I believe your experience with the Indians has greatly matured you. How old are you?"

"I am well on to sixteen, sir."

"In other words," replied his host with a smile, "you are fifteen with ardent hope of soon being sixteen, and I'll warrant extremely desirous of active and honourable employment. The colt, too, looks as though he wanted to exercise his faculties as well."

"Sir, I am very anxious for employment. There is not much I can do at home this winter. Indeed, the little place will barely afford existence and I need to earn money."

"What I have in mind will demand discretion and judgment beyond your years, as well as fidelity to a trust. Of your fidelity I have no question, and am inclined to believe that, with your intelligence and the experience you have had, you will be able to meet the requirements."

"Won't you give me a chance, Mr. Jefferson?" There was pleading in the boy's eyes and in the tone of his voice.

"Rodney, I will, with your mother's permission. You explain to her, but tell no one else, that the work will consist in carrying messages to different parts of the colony. Supervision of the work being done by the various committees of safety, and quick and reliable communication between the men taking the lead in this business, require such service as you will be expected to perform. Nat looks as though he might be depended on for the quickness, and to you must be left the discretion. You must have eyes as well as ears and use both more than the tongue. The employment will not be without slight danger, for, after a time, our opponents will inevitably discover what you are doing. Then, in the present unsettled state of things, the long rides, some of the time at night, will demand courage and prudence."

"I'm sure mother will consent. There certainly won't be the danger there was living among the Indians."

The man smiled. "I doubt if your mother would consent to expose you to those conditions again. I will write to her and you may be the bearer of the message and plead your cause."

With the letter finally in his pocket, and Nat making use of a free rein to gallop like the wind, Rodney Allison felt as though he were entering upon a new world with much more of sunshine and hope than for a long time he had known. The following week he began his duties by setting out for Mount Vernon with a message for Colonel Washington, and another for Richard Henry Lee, who, also, had been a delegate to the first Colonial Congress.

Angus saw that something was afoot and was displeased at Rodney for not taking him into his confidence. "Where now, Rodney?" he said, as he sauntered into the Allison yard, where his friend was bidding his mother good-bye.

"I've got to take quite a long ride on one of Mr. Jefferson's business matters; I don't quite know how far it will take me."

"You go prepared for trouble," replied Angus with a nod at the butts of two horse-pistols which could be seen under the flaps of the holsters.

"Those are some father had with the saddle," replied Rodney.

Angus winked and said no more, though it was evident he would like to have done so.

"Well, good-bye, Angus, and good-bye, mother. Don't expect me back till I get here," said Rodney, vaulting into the saddle and riding away at a furious gallop, his head up and shoulders thrown back and as full of a sense of his own importance as is permitted to a modest lad, such as Rodney Allison really was.

Before him lay long stretches of miserable roads, clogged with snow or mud, a bleak landscape, not to mention many inconveniences which the travellers through that region were then obliged to endure. But all things come to an end and so, one crisp morning, the lad reined Ned into the road leading to Mount Vernon.

Now, those of us who visit the place feel that we approach the shrine of our country. To Rodney it was a visit to one of the finest plantations in all the Old Dominion, and its owner was one of the most influential citizens as well as one of the wealthiest. The general appearance of the place that morning was much as one now finds it, save for the evidences then seen of the little army of negroes who worked on the plantation. The smoke curled lazily up into the frosty air; the majestic Potomac flowed past between bleak banks on which the first green of spring had not shown itself. A kinky haired coloured boy was promptly on hand to hold the horse, and another met him at the door.

"Talk as little as possible and see everything," was his mother's parting advice, and he thought of it as he looked about him. On all sides were evidences of thrift and he felt the atmosphere of home.

How Washington loomed before the lad's eyes on entering the room! Not that he was unduly long of limb, for, though a giant in stature, he was perfectly proportioned; but he seemed to fill the room with his presence. Rodney had wondered how he would compare with the man he so ardently admired, but he could find no point of resemblance between the man who greeted him and the host of Monticello, save in the courteous, kindly manner of both. The boy's first thought was of the masterful manner of the man before him, yet those calm, blue-gray eyes, looking out from under the heavy brows, did not embarrass him.

This is the man who Ahneota believed was guarded by the Great Spirit, was the thought which flashed through his mind as Washington extended his hand in greeting, the man who had dared take Governor Dinwiddie's message into the enemy's country, who had saved the remnants of Braddock's panic-stricken troops amid a hail of bullets. How could such a massive figure have escaped, with men falling all around him?

Rodney delivered his message and received a reply, was introduced to Mrs. Washington and given refreshments and departed rejoicing that his new work was affording him such pleasant

experiences. What satisfaction it must be, he thought, to be so rich, have such a fine home and be respected by all one's neighbours. If he had such a plantation as this he would hunt and fish to his heart's content, and Lisbeth Danesford would be proud to introduce him to her cousins from London, and he would not condescend to notice them either, unless they were different from Mogridge, the insolent fellow! What had become of him? Anyhow, though the "Chevalier" finally had gotten the money, there was the satisfaction of winning it from Mogridge. Ah! Rodney, you were not experienced in the tricks of gambling or you would have known that, but for the "Chevalier" watching them, Mogridge and his "pal" would have stripped you of every farthing.

Rodney had read the letter Lisbeth had written from London. He was glad she was finding the nobility, the lords and dukes, not to mention duchesses, such uninteresting people, and that she longed for Virginia. Had she come home? It would be but little out of his way to ride around past "The Hall." No, he would not call, for he would not wish to meet the squire after the shabby manner in which he had treated them. Possibly he might meet Lisbeth on the road. She was a mighty fine girl, and, if she did get him into that scrape with Roscome's bull, she had gotten him out. From the girl his thoughts reverted to the man he had just left.

The boy recalled that firm mouth, the grave dignity, and the something about his personality which had said to the lad as to others: "You can trust me." Rodney Allison was never afterward to doubt George Washington. The next year, when it was said Washington had declared that if necessary he would raise a thousand men at his own expense and march them to Boston, Rodney exclaimed, "He'll do it, too!" When Boston was evacuated he said, "I knew it." When Washington, in the face of all sorts of difficulties, led his scattering forces in masterly retreat before the victorious British, Rodney was to say, "He's doing all that man can do." But this is getting ahead of the story, for young Allison is now on his way to the home of Richard Henry Lee, who later was to propose independence in the Continental Congress, when to do so might mean loss of not only his property but his life as well, for King George would have liked to make an example of at least a few prominent "traitors," could he have got them in his clutches.

The meeting with Mr. Lee was for Rodney another pleasant experience; a fine man, and what an agreeable voice he had! Then the lad turned Nat's head toward home, well pleased with the success that so far had attended his journey.

Two days of travelling brought him to the neighbourhood of his old home. He was aware of a dull ache in his throat as he rode by the school house. It seemed as if he saw his father bowed over the rude bench within. In the distance he caught a glimpse of "The Hall." There was a feeling of homesickness with it all, and he would have given all that his scant purse contained to see Lisbeth and have her know that he had become a person of some importance. Wouldn't the squire rave if he knew the errands he had in charge. Ah, but those stiff-necked Tories would have to yield!

As he rode past "The Hall" he looked long at the house. The squire galloped up behind and passed him with a stare and a salute, not recognizing him.

"I wonder he didn't remember Nat," thought Rodney, and it was surprising because the squire was a great admirer of a good horse and knew the "points" of all the best in the county.

A little farther along lived the Roscomes. There he was sure of finding a place to spend the night. It was then about four in the afternoon. He would have time to get his supper and then ride up on the hill for one more look at the familiar view.

The Roscomes, father and son, owned but a small plantation, but their hospitality was princely and it was with difficulty he got away for the hill.

Hitching Nat in a grove at the foot, he climbed to the top just in season to see the sunset and the extended view, which had been so familiar to him, so that he felt well repaid. On his way back, and as he was unhitching the horse, he heard voices in the road which ran near the grove.

"I say, me 'earty, I've about enough o' this dirty country. I'd like to put me two legs across the back of a fine 'orse, an' I'd ask no questions of the owner."

"Right ye are, Bill. At the speed we're walkin' we'll git to Occoquan about midsummer, I'm thinkin'."

"They've 'orses in plenty 'ereabout to go with their muddy roads. They'd not miss a couple, though they think more of a 'orse than they do of a nigger, I'm told."

"We'd have two an' ask no questions, but they've both dogs and niggers, an' one or both always sleeps in the stable."

"I tell ye wot, d'ye mind the lad and girl go ridin' by when we was eatin' a bite beside the road, along back?"

"I did an' thought ridin' would do me a sight more good than them."

"They wouldn't 'ave no guns an' would be easy to scare. Suppose if we meet 'em we give 'em the 'int an' not wait for an answer?"

"We'd have the whole country at our heels."

"An' there wouldn't be a 'orse in the lot could overtake us or me eye knows not a good one."

Rodney looked to the priming of his pistols, then mounted Nat and followed slowly after the men.

CHAPTER XIX

RODNEY TO THE RESCUE

It would not be true to say that Rodney Allison was not nervous as he gripped the handle of the big pistol he drew from its holster, and cocked it.

Whether the men were armed he did not know. If they failed to meet the two riders they sought they might conclude one horse would be better than none and attack him. Indeed, this seemed very probable; besides, if they should attack the other parties, the boy resolved he would take a hand in the affair.

A little farther on, the road on which he was riding crossed the highway leading to Roscome's. The men probably were waiting at the corner. He decided to ride slowly and await developments.

In event of attack he would spur Nat directly against them and use the pistol!

The frogs were croaking in the nearby meadow. The sound jarred on his tense nerves.

"I say, sir, be this the road to Occoquan?"

They had met some one! Rodney stopped his horse and listened. A horse whinnied, and Nat lifted his head to reply when a touch from the spur changed his mind.

A clear voice rang out, "Back, you knaves! Take your hands off that bridle!"

A girl's scream and sounds of a struggle came to the lad's ears, and he spurred ahead.

Near the corners of the roads, though now dusk had fallen, he discerned two riders on horses that were rearing and plunging. One of the riders, a man, was plying his whip over the head of the fellow who clung to his bridle; on the other horse was a girl struggling with a rascal who was trying to pull her from the animal's back. Rodney turned his attention to this one.

Not daring to fire, through fear of hitting the girl, he rode straight at the miscreant and, clubbing his pistol, struck him over the head what proved to be but a slight blow, for the man dodged, but his hold was broken and he staggered back, and Nat trampled over him. His accomplice, seeing this, fled. The girl hung by the side of her horse, one foot in the stirrup and both hands clutching his mane. Thoroughly frightened, he plunged ahead and ran wildly down the road.

"She will be dashed to death!" was the thought which flashed through Rodney's mind and, wheeling his horse, he spurred after the fleeing thoroughbred, the girl's companion galloping behind.

The spirit of a racing ancestry, and the cruel rowels, drove Nat close on the flanks of the runaway. Could he overtake and pass him?

The girl was unable to regain her seat, and at every leap of her horse was tossed, now almost touching the ground, and again almost as high as the horse's back. Could she retain her grip until Rodney might reach the bridle rein?

Every moment the boy expected to see her dashed to the ground and trampled to death under the hoofs of the running horses. He shut his eyes for an instant, and then urged faithful Nat to the utmost, and could feel his muscles respond to the strain.

Inch by inch, Nat gained on the runaway. The boy leaned far out to seize the loose bridle rein. He could not quite reach it; another foot and he would have it within his grasp. Ah! Now he gripped it and pulled both horses to a stop, crying, "Are you hurt?"

"I--I'm not--sure. Not seriously, I think; somewhat like Doctor Atterbury's prescriptions, 'well shaken before taken.'"

It was Lisbeth's voice!

"Steady, Nat. Here, let me help. Isn't your ankle wrenched? If I'd known who it was I'd been scared worse than I was."

"Why, Rodney Allison! Where in the world did you come from? I was wishing some knight errant would happen along to stop Firefly; but I never imagined you in that rôle. I--I think you'll have to help me up, my ankle is beginning to complain at the rough treatment."

Rodney lifted Lisbeth into her saddle just as her escort and Black Tom rode up.

"Mr. Enderwood, this is my old playmate, Rodney Allison. He and I always were getting into scrapes. I'm going to ask him to sell Nat to father so my escorts can have as good a horse as Firefly. The one you have, Mr. Enderwood, has seen his best days and was no match for mine. But for you, Nat, I should have had a longer ride than--would have been agreeable." There was a little catch in her voice.

"So Nat gets all the glory and Enderwood is excused for being behind," thought Rodney, not altogether pleased, and he scarcely heard the old darky saying by way of apology: "I suttinly hab

no 'scuse on 'count o' hoss. Don' put no nose front o' yo', Moleskin," he said, patting the sleek neck of the fiery hunter he rode. "I'se 'lowin' Tom's room's better'n his comp'ny, an' was sojerin' along. But I'se boun' ter say, Marse Rodney, I couldn' done better myse'f."

"That's Rodney's way of doing things, you know, Tom," said Lisbeth, and the boy's feelings were somewhat soothed by the balm in her words. "Having rescued the maid," she said, turning to him, "it's now your duty to return with her to the castle, and explain to her papa that it was none of her fault, and afford us all opportunity to thank you properly, while Aunt Betty gets out her bandages."

"I thank you, but, you see, I've made arrangements to stay over the night at Roscomes' and they are expecting me. I supped there and then thought I wanted to see the view from the hill, once more. Now I must return."

"So you were going through Pryndale without calling on your old friends."

"I shall be most happy to call on the morrow if I may be permitted," was Rodney's response, and he was really surprised at his ready reply.

"We ought to ride as far as Roscomes' with him," said Lisbeth, and, because of the dusk, they could not see how pale and drawn was her face.

"Those villains will have no stomach for further trouble, I reckon, and I'm sure you need Aunt Betty and the bandages more than I do the escort. I hope to see you in the morning, none the worse for to-night's experience. Good night," saying which, he rode on to Roscome's. His mind was in a whirl and, now the danger and excitement were past, he felt very weak, and trembled when he thought of Lisbeth's peril; yet he was conscious that he had borne himself well. Then he fell to wondering who young Enderwood might be. Rodney had only seen in the dim light that he was young, not much older than himself, and apparently a gentleman. Enderwood? Why, he must be Squire Enderwood's son, from Norfolk. If so, he had both family and fortune, and somehow the idea didn't please Rodney, though why should he begrudge young Enderwood such an inheritance?

The following morning Rodney set out for "The Hall." He felt he could ill spare the time but nevertheless was glad of the opportunity, though he dreaded the meeting with the squire. His father might be alive at that moment but for the injustice of Lisbeth's father.

The sun shone brightly but the air was clear and cold. From a light rain of the previous night icicles had formed on the trees and gleamed like so many jewels. It seemed to the boy as though he had dreamed a long dream of wild forests, peopled with Indians, and was now awake and at home.

When Rodney arrived at "The Hall" he was met by the squire, who came to him with outstretched hands, saying, "My boy, you are a brave lad, and have placed me under greater obligations than I can ever hope to repay. I will write your father and tell him how grateful I am, and how proud he should be of you."

"My father is dead, sir; he was killed in the battle at Point Pleasant."

"You--you--er--I'm astounded! I hadn't heard a word. Why, only the other day I was thinking of him."

The unmistakable signs of grief in the squire's face somewhat softened Rodney's feelings. "You know Charlottesville did not afford father the opportunity to provide for his family as he wished and so he went over the mountains to take up land. When I was on my way to him I was captured by the Indians and held for a year. Meanwhile father, thinking I was dead, joined the army under General Lewis."

"I never should have let him go away. I've wished him back every day since he went away," and then the squire turned and walked to the window, where Mogridge had watched the effect of his plot and seen David Allison turn his back and walk away never to return.

At this moment Enderwood came into the room. He was a fine looking fellow of nearly twenty, straight and rather tall, with dark hair and eyes, and had an air of breeding. Greeting Rodney cordially, as he looked at him keenly, he said, "Aunt Betty requested me to tell you that Lisbeth cannot leave her room. I fear her ankle is badly sprained and she was much shaken. She will regret not seeing you this morning."

"Yes," said the squire, turning from the window, "my little girl suffered more than was thought at the time, but I hope she will be up in a few days. Meanwhile you are to make 'The Hall' your home. I'm sure that you and Lawrence will find plenty with which to amuse yourselves."

"Thank you, Squire Danesford; but I must go on. I came out of my way for the sake of riding through Pryndale and have already lost a day. I feared your daughter was hurt more than she would admit. She had an awful experience. I thought she would be dashed to pieces before her horse could be stopped."

"Don't speak of it, please. I haven't slept for the night. But, surely, your business isn't so urgent that you must away at once. I want to hear about your mother. You know she and I lived on adjoining plantations when we were children and were playmates. Now, my boy, I want you to bring your mother back to Pryndale. You should never have left it."

"It was leave or starve," were the words on Rodney's tongue; but he did not speak them, and ever after was glad that he hadn't. Instead he said, "I will tell her of your kind invitation. She was very fond of her home here. You are very kind. Please give my regards to Lisbeth and say

that I regret not seeing her and hope for her speedy recovery.”

And so, despite the squire’s urging that he remain, Rodney set out on his journey home, less satisfied with himself and the promises for his future than he had been the night before.

The lad was, however, to have little time in the succeeding months for reflections, pleasant or otherwise. No sooner had he delivered the dispatches he was carrying to Mr. Jefferson than he was off again on similar missions.

In that early spring of 1775 Virginia was in a ferment. Most of the leading men believed that war was coming, and bent their energies to planning and so shaping affairs that the colony might be ready for it. Of this Rodney learned enough in his travels to appreciate the gravity of the situation, and the importance of vigilance and faithfulness on his part. He received many compliments from his employer and deserved them.

The position of those who favoured the king became daily more unpleasant. Not only had they lost influence, but were made to feel that they were marked men, looked on by even their old neighbours with suspicion. Soon they were to be called traitors to their faces and to know that their lives were in peril, for always those may be found in times of excitement to seek excuse for wreaking vengeance on enemies, doing it in the name of the cause that is popular.

When the choleric royal governor, Lord Dunmore, dissolved the House of Burgesses he accomplished nothing save to increase the bitterness already existing. The Virginia representatives met and chose delegates to the General Congress to meet in Philadelphia, and now Virginia was to have a convention of its own, and hold it at Richmond, then a village of not more than nine hundred white inhabitants, and there, in the fire of his eloquence, Patrick Henry was to fuse the differing views into one grand purpose and arouse the people to the fact that war was indeed approaching.

Rodney Allison, whose duties, much to his delight, had taken him to the convention, was one of the spectators of that memorable scene when Patrick Henry spoke. Ten years before, in the House of Burgesses, Henry had told the awestruck delegates what he thought of the infamous Stamp Act, and that, if what he said were treason, they could make the most of it. Now, he favoured raising volunteer soldiers in each county, such as the Minute Men who had done such valiant work in Massachusetts.

The opposition to these resolutions aroused him, and he rose to reply, and his words seared his views upon the minds of the delegates, who sat motionless like men in a trance. It seemed to Rodney, when the last word was spoken, as though he had not breathed from the moment the orator began. The speaker’s face seemed to become luminous and his eyes blazed and the boy shivered as though with a chill. Certain of the immortal sentences he never forgot and as they were spoken he saw them in his excited imagination as though written in letters of fire: “Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed by a kiss,” referring to the king’s promises. “In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of reconciliation.” “There is no longer any room for hope.” “The war is inevitable! and let it come!” “The next gale that sweeps from the North will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms!” At the close came those words as from a prophet with a face of flame: “Give me liberty or give me death!” and when he sat down his listeners were ready to rise and declare war on the instant.

Not all, for among those who heard were some who, while they sat as though under a spell, nevertheless were resolved past conversion to stand by their king. Among them Rodney saw Squire Danesford elbowing his way through the door, his face purple with rage, and, once outside, he mounted his horse and rode away at a mad gallop, followed by Black Tom.

The convention over, the delegates went to their homes to make ready for the impending conflict. The war spirit was abroad throughout the Old Dominion, and young Allison found Nat unequal to the riding he was required to do and was furnished with another horse. Volunteers, with such arms as they could procure, drilled daily and some among them were eager for the fray to begin; but, when once it was begun, not a few lost much of their ardour.

As Patrick Henry had predicted, the next gale sweeping from the North was to bring to the waiting ears of the Virginians the clash of resounding arms, of the shots fired by the farmers in homespun from behind stone walls and fences, all the way from Lexington to Boston, into the ranks of panic-stricken British soldiers. The day after that event, April 20th, though before the news of Lexington reached Virginia, the minute men of the Old Dominion were to shoulder their guns in defiance of British authority.

CHAPTER XX

RALLYING VIRGINIA’S MINUTE MEN

The evening after Rodney returned to Charlottesville, Angus rode over on a raw-boned steed that evidently had outlived his day for leaping fences and following the hounds.

“What d’ye think of him, Rod?”

"Why, he's some horse, looks like a blooded one," replied Rodney, speaking as favourably as he could, for he liked Angus and knew the boy had been a little envious of late. "Where did you get him?"

"He's one Squire Herndon got down on the Pamunkey. Reckon I made a good trade, fer I found he was blind in one eye an' the squire took him fer a bad debt an' already had more hosses than he could feed."

"You ought to trade him off and make a good thing."

"Don't reckon I want to trade right away. I 'low after plantin' I'm goin' to ride round a bit. Thar's a heap o' things a feller can learn by travellin' around. You know that."

"I suppose so. Tell you what, Angus; I've got to go to Williamsburg next week. Let's go together. I've never been there. It's the capital of the Old Dominion and, when the Burgesses are in session, one can see more of the aristocracy in Williamsburg than in any other place. Besides, the famous William and Mary College is there. You know many of our greatest men went there, the Byrds, the Lees and Randolphs, and Thomas Jefferson, he was a student there. I've heard that he would like to have a college right here in Charlottesville run according to a plan of his own. I'll wager if he wants it he'll get it if he lives. Yes, we'll ride down there and have a fine time."

"That we will fer sure, if we go. Reckon I can fix it. Think we can see Patrick Henry? I want to see him. They do say he can talk the birds right out o' the trees."

"You never heard anything like it. He isn't much to look at, but when he speaks he can make the hair in the back of your neck stand out straight like the ruff of a cockerel in a fight."

"I hear the fellers talkin'. They'd march right to Joppa if he'd lead 'em."

"Don't believe he's much of a soldier, but he surely is an orator."

Angus rode home whistling.

That evening Mrs. Allison received the following letter in which the reader may be interested, as was Rodney:

"PRYNDALE, Va., March 28th, 1775.

"DEAR AUNT HARRIET:--I threw away my crutches this morning, and tried to celebrate by dancing a jig. I'm sure I should have succeeded to my later sorrow but for Aunt Betty's horrified look, whereupon I sat down to write you instead.

"Lawrence Enderwood thought Pryndale prosy and I had begun to believe him when lo, two highwaymen set upon us; a knight errant mounted on a splendid steed rides to the rescue; Firefly takes fright and runs away with a helpless maiden hanging by one foot to the stirrup, and both hands in the mane, expecting every moment to be dashed in pieces and actually thinking of every wicked thing she ever did; my, but it was an awful panorama! A snorting steed is heard in pursuit, the knight errant spurs him on and seizes the bridle of the running horse, rescues the hapless maiden, who has discovered that she is so wicked she wants to live, and then, *mirabile dictu!* the knight errant is discovered to be no less a personage than one Rodney Allison. Excuse me, Auntie, if I express the opinion that you've not brought him up right; he's too shy and actually had to be urged to call on his old playmate. Seriously, I would have seen him before he fled, had I known he was there. Aunt Betty didn't tell me. You don't know what a shock it was to papa and me, the news Rodney brought of the death of Uncle David. I turned my face to the wall and cried, which as you may know I'm not in the habit of doing. Not till after he had left Pryndale did I realize what I owed to him. He was much superior to any teacher I had in London and he was so patient and kindly with us, imps that we were.

"Since you left Pryndale things seem much changed and for the worse. Papa is all out of sorts with what he terms the disloyalty of the people. He insists we are being driven into a wicked war by a few hot-headed men together with those who are so ambitious they would sacrifice their country. I wish I knew the right of it. People who used to be friendly now look the other way. Only the other day Gobber's urchins were playing by the road when I rode past their cabin and the dirty imps made faces and cried out, 'Tory, I hate Tories.'

"Next month papa and I are going to Philadelphia and he may later sail for London. Somehow, it seems to me as if I weren't coming back. I suppose being shut up in the house with my sprained ankle makes me spleeny. Write me in the Quaker city, won't you, and address care of my uncle, Jacob Derwent. Now don't forget.

"But I know I have tired you already, so here's good-bye and my regards to Rodney, not forgetting Nat, splendid fellow.

"Your affectionate niece,
"ELIZABETH DANESFORD."

Rodney and Angus arrived at Williamsburg April 19th, the very day the Massachusetts minute men were hanging on the flanks of the running British like so many angry hornets. The following day, the minute men of that part of Virginia were to be aroused by a similar cause, the attempt of the representatives of England to get possession of the colony's powder.

It will be remembered that it was in the night that the British troops sneaked out of Boston to go after the powder stored at Concord. It was also in the night that the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, secretly removed the powder from the old arsenal in Williamsburg and put it aboard the British vessel *Magdalen* in the York River. The British in Boston didn't get the powder, but

Dunmore's men did, only there were but fifteen half-barrels of it.

The population of Williamsburg at the time was only about two thousand, and it must be remembered that the country round about was not so thickly settled as Massachusetts, consequently the minute men couldn't assemble so quickly; but there was buzzing enough in the morning when it was discovered what Lord Dunmore had done. The minute men of the town were for marching to Dunmore's house and seizing him, but cooler heads prevailed.

The two boys had spent the previous day looking over the capital and visiting the college at the other end of the one long street, three quarters of a mile distant. They lodged at the famous Raleigh Tavern, which had sheltered the most prominent men of the day, and so were right in the midst of the hubbub when the excitement began. Out in the street they watched the people assemble and listened to the talk. When some one proposed marching on the "palace," a tipsy fellow cried out, "You jes' th' feller t' go."

Then when another bystander interfered and tried to take him away, he began to struggle, and was being roughly handled when a fat, pompous man bristled up, saying, "Treat him kindly."

At that moment the drunken man, swinging his arms about wildly, struck the pompous man on the head, knocking his old three-cornered hat into the dust.

The change in the fat philanthropist was marvellous, for he jumped up and down crying, "Kill him, kill him."

The crowd laughed. A man came running toward them saying, "They've sent for Patrick Henry."

"I'll see him, after all," exclaimed Angus.

"I've got a message for him, so we had better ride to his home in New Castle. We may meet him," Rodney replied.

"I want to see him and I want to see the fun."

"Want to keep your cake and eat it too," replied Rodney.

Just then a report spread through the crowd that Dunmore had seized the powder for the purpose of sending it to another county where he feared there would be an uprising of the blacks.

"We're likely to have one of our own," exclaimed a bystander.

An old woman, somewhat deaf, cried, "The blacks are risin'! I knowed it. I didn't dream of snakes fer nothin'."

"If I had your imagination, Granny Snodgrass, I'd make molasses taffy out o' moonshine," remarked a pert miss.

"Looks to me, Angus, as though these people were going to do their fighting with their tongues," said Rodney. "So let's get away to New Castle."

When they reached New Castle, late the next day, they found Mr. Henry busy assembling the volunteers for a march on Williamsburg to demand return of the powder, also to see to it that Dunmore did not take the money in the colonial treasury. These men were called "gentlemen independents of Hanover," and they were manly looking, resolute men, and well armed. By the time they had reached Doncaster's, within sixteen miles of Williamsburg, their number was increased to one hundred and fifty.

"Dunmore will wish he hadn't when he's seen 'em," remarked Angus.

Dunmore was frightened before he saw them and sent Corbin, the receiver general, to meet them and make terms with them, which he did, paying three hundred and thirty pounds for the powder, surely all it was worth.

"I've concluded, Angus," said Rodney, "from what I can see and hear, that Mr. Henry hasn't cared so much about the powder as he does for an excuse to rouse the country, get the men together and encourage them by backing Lord Dunmore down," all of which indicated that the lad had become a shrewd observer.

After the powder was paid for, Patrick Henry, who was a delegate to the Colonial Congress, set out for Philadelphia. Lord Dunmore, however, had been badly frightened, and he issued a proclamation against him, and declared that if the people didn't behave he would offer freedom to the negroes and burn the town; he also had cannon placed around his house, proceedings which, it is easy to understand, made the citizens very angry.

The boys returned to Charlottesville and Angus immediately joined a company of volunteers, declaring if there was to be a war he was going.

By this time they had heard the news of the battle of Lexington, brought all the way from Boston by mounted messengers riding by relays.

"That means war," Rodney remarked to his mother. How he wanted to go, to do as Angus had done and join the volunteers! But he hadn't the heart to propose it after seeing the look which came into his mother's face. It sometimes happens, however, that war comes to those who do not go to war, and so it happened to Rodney Allison.

CHAPTER XXI

VIRINIANS LEARNING TO SHOOT BRITISH TROOPS

Rodney's duties took him to Philadelphia during the Continental Congress. There he saw Washington, a delegate from Virginia and clad in his uniform, for he knew war must come, and that warlike dress proclaimed his belief more loudly than his voice. There also were the Adamses, from Massachusetts, Samuel and John, the latter a wise, shrewd organizer determined to have all the colonies, especially the southern, committed to the revolution he saw approaching. In this effort he used his influence, not for John Hancock of Massachusetts, who coveted the place of commander-in-chief, but for George Washington, who the day after the battle of Bunker Hill was chosen and modestly accepted with the proviso that he should receive no pay for his services. There, also, came Benjamin Franklin, just returned from England and convinced nothing remained but war; and there, too, was Jefferson, likewise certain the time had come for the colonies to declare their independence of England.

Rodney's boyish prejudices were in favour of everything Jefferson did, and he was impatient with those, and they were the greater number, who wished to delay decisive action in the hope of conciliation. This prejudice extended to the Quakers in their broad-brimmed hats, nearly all of whom were opposed to war.

Boys are usually impatient, unable to work and wait and keep working, as the wise men of that Congress were doing.

The boy had but part of two days in the city, which was the first he had seen and consequently full of interest; so he did not call on Lisbeth, indeed, had there been plenty of time he would have hesitated in his rough dress of homespun to have presented himself before her aristocratic friends.

The day he turned Nat's nose in the direction of Virginia a young man rode alongside and said, "Why, this is an unexpected pleasure, if as I suspect, you are on your way home."

He was Lawrence Enderwood. Rodney's reply was almost surly, as several reasons for Enderwood's presence in Philadelphia flashed through his mind.

"I'm not going directly home but by way of Williamsburg. I live in Albemarle County."

"I, too, am riding by way of Williamsburg, and if you have no objections to my company should be delighted to join you. It is a long ride."

Rodney could offer no objections, indeed, as they went on, he found his companion a very agreeable one, notwithstanding that in course of the conversation it appeared that Lawrence had seen Lisbeth.

"She is very gay, seems to be absorbed in the gaieties and social life so that she has little time for anything else." Somehow this remark of Enderwood, spoken rather impatiently, afforded Rodney a little comfort, though he hardly could have explained it.

On arriving at Williamsburg, they found the little town well filled, for Governor Dunmore had convened the House of Burgesses to listen to Lord North's plans for conciliation.

"Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed by a kiss," quoted Rodney, and Lawrence laughingly replied, "Patrick Henry has a way of saying things so the people remember them."

"I'll wager they remember that and turn Lord North down with a slam."

"It's evident to me you are for war, Rodney."

"Aren't you?"

"Yes, er--I suppose I am, but it isn't pleasant to think of losing one's estate if not his neck, all of which is possible. The business men of Philadelphia are pretty long-headed, and most of them believe England will win in the end and that the war will be most destructive of property."

"Surely Washington and Jefferson have estates to lose."

"Oh, I reckon we're in for it, and my father says when there's something to do, do it."

As was expected, the House of Burgesses would have nothing to do with the kind of conciliation proposed. The people were restless and Dunmore, fearing them, left his "palace" and went aboard a British vessel and ordered that the bills be sent to him for signature. He was politely informed that if he signed them he would have to return, which he did not do. Then the Burgesses adjourned to October, appointing a permanent committee to have charge of colonial affairs, and that committee appointed Patrick Henry to command of the colonial troops.

Rodney's visits to Charlottesville were brief and it seemed that his absence worried his mother. The latter part of October he was sent to Norfolk, where Dunmore proposed to establish his headquarters. As it happened, he fell in with the troops which Colonel Woodford had been ordered to lead to the relief of the village of Hampton, and was present at the attack on the place and took part in the defence.

In this encounter the marksmanship of the Virginians decided the matter, for, when the ships approached the town and commenced to bombard it, the riflemen picked off the gunners and

drove them from their cannon and then, when they tried to work their sails so as to escape, the Virginians shot them out of the rigging. Although the town was damaged by the bombardment, the defenders escaped serious injury, though the sensations of being under fire afforded many of the defenders their first taste of war.

On leaving Lawrence Enderwood, the previous summer, Rodney had promised to pay him a visit at the first opportunity. Indeed, mutual liking had resulted from their journey from Philadelphia. Here was the opportunity, and young Allison accepted it.

He found Lawrence at home, managing the plantation in the absence of his father in England. It was a delightful old place, having been in the Enderwood family for four generations. The house reminded him of "The Hall" and, being a privileged guest, he enjoyed all the luxuries which the old Virginia plantation could afford. He rode after the hounds, Nat acquitting himself so well that Lawrence offered a round sum for him.

"I'd sell my shirt from my back before I would that horse," Rodney replied.

There was good shooting, and Allison excelled his host. His training with the Indians stood him in good stead. He made a bow and arrows for Lawrence's younger brother, such as Ahneota, himself, would have approved, and when it came time for him to depart he was sorry to leave.

"There'll be ructions over Norfolk way and I'm going to ride over with you," said Lawrence, the morning Rodney was making preparations for leaving.

"That's good news and makes it less hard for me to go away."

They set out about eight in the morning. The sunshine was brilliant and the air cool and invigorating. Here and there in the landscape were faint bits of green untouched by the frost. As they rode along they learned that the people were almost in a panic, fearing Dunmore's marauders, who had been pillaging and burning in the county below.

"That man is only arousing the people and accomplishing no good," said Lawrence. "He declares he will rule the colony and at the same time induces the negroes to revolt. That very act drives every Virginian, not under British protection, into the ranks of the so-called rebels. They realize that, while the negroes won't do any effective fighting, they may, in a fury of resentment, cause great damage and imperil the lives of hundreds of families."

"I think the poor governors England has sent over here have had much to do with the colonies' rebelling. Hark! I hear horses at the gallop."

As he spoke, nearly a dozen mounted men, several of them in British uniforms, came around the corner about sixty rods behind them.

"Dunmore's marauders!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Let's get out of here."

Their horses had both speed and "bottom" and besides were fresh, so that the chances were in favour of the young Virginians. The troopers behind spurred after them, however, and evidently were determined on their capture.

As Lawrence and Rodney approached a plantation near the road, they saw flames leap up from the hay ricks, and the next instant two mounted men rode out on the main highway.

"Those are Britishers, sent ahead," exclaimed Lawrence.

"There's nothing for us but to go ahead," said Rodney, passing one of his two pistols over to Lawrence.

"I'm with you to the finish," replied the latter, his face very grim and determined.

"Halt!" cried one of the marauders, who waved a sword as if to enforce his authority.

"Get out of the way. We are on our own business!" cried Rodney.

The second marauder lifted his pistol, but Rodney anticipated him with a quick shot which brought the man's arm down, while the pistol clattered to the road.

"That's a lucky shot," thought the boy.

His companion was not so lucky; he had fired and missed his opponent, who rode forward with drawn sword evidently resolved on cutting him down.

Rodney seized his pistol by the barrel and hurled it straight for the trooper's head and hit the mark squarely, the man pitching out of his saddle like a log! Not in vain had been those hours the boy had spent with Conrad learning to throw the tomahawk.

"I'll buy you the finest pistols in Norfolk if we ever get there," said Lawrence, thus expressing the gratitude he felt.

Having distanced their pursuers, the remainder of their journey was without incident; but from report of conditions in Norfolk, where Dunmore had seized Mr. Holt's printing press and was enforcing martial law so far as he could, they decided it was not a safe place for them to visit and turned aside to join the volunteers they heard were approaching under command of Colonel Woodford, who had done such good service at Hampton.

Dunmore also had heard of the approach of the Culpeper men, and resolved to keep them at a distance from Norfolk.

Knowing that they would have to cross what was known as Great Bridge, about nine miles from Norfolk, he forwarded troops under Captains Fordyce and Leslie to check the Virginians at the bridge.

The British had thrown up earthworks at the Norfolk end of the bridge when the Americans arrived. The latter built an entrenchment at their end of the bridge. Lieutenant Travis with nearly one hundred men occupied this, while Woodford, with the remainder of the Virginian forces, was stationed at a church about four hundred yards distant, when the British came across the bridge to make an attack. The British fired as they approached, while their two field pieces in the rear kept up a cannonade.

Travis ordered his men to withhold their fire until the enemy should almost reach the entrenchments. Captain Fordyce took this to mean that the Americans had deserted the breastworks and waved his hat in anticipation of victory. Then the Americans, who had been lying down, rose and poured a deadly fire into the ranks of the enemy, and Fordyce was among the first to fall.

Captain Leslie now came to the support of Fordyce's men, and Colonel Woodford led his men forward to support Travis, while Colonel Stevens led a body of men, with whom were Enderwood and Allison, to attack the British on the flank.

For a few minutes the skirmish was hot. The British fought doggedly, as many believed what Dunmore had told them, that if captured the Virginians would scalp them. Rodney received a light flesh wound, but most of the Americans escaped uninjured, while several of the enemy were killed.

All this seems very tame in the telling, but to those who took part in the engagement it was most exciting and the Americans were jubilant, for they had met the British troops and driven them!

For several days reinforcements poured in from the different parts of Virginia, and five days later Colonel Woodford marched his men to Norfolk.

Lord Dunmore decided he could not oppose him, so withdrew aboard his ships.

"Here are the pistols," said Lawrence the next day, presenting Rodney with a handsome pair with silver mounted handles.

"Thank you; they are beauties. I hope you bought a brace of them for yourself as well. You are likely to need them."

The following day both left for their homes, parting the best of friends and planning to meet again.

As for Dunmore, his career in America was drawing to a close, though he was able to do more mischief.

Provisions getting scarce, and the riflemen in the city annoying the British, he sent word that unless this firing was stopped and provisions furnished he would burn the town. His threat was defied and, on another ship joining Dunmore, he sent a force ashore to start a conflagration. In this way much of the thriving town of nearly six thousand inhabitants was burned; what buildings escaped were burned later by the Americans to prevent their occupation by the British.

Later, Dunmore left and established barracks on Gwyn's Island in Chesapeake Bay, whence he was driven the following July by that grim old fighter, General Andrew Lewis, who had wanted to fight him out on the Pickaway Plains, during the Indian war.

When Rodney reached Charlottesville he found his mother sick with fever. Without hesitation he gave up his employment and remained to care for her. For many months she was almost helpless.

The change from the excitement of his previous occupation to the monotony of home--Angus had joined the army--sorely tried Rodney's patience.

The previous summer Morgan had marched his riflemen to Boston and soon it was reported that, under Benedict Arnold, he had gone by way of the Kennebec River, to attack Quebec. Since then nothing had been learned of him and his gallant men.

General Washington was trying to make an army out of the mob of patriots he found awaiting him outside Boston, but as yet it did not appear that any headway was being made toward dislodging the British from the town.

Spring came and with it report of the evacuation of Boston; then news of the defeat of the Americans in Canada. Morgan had been captured and was a prisoner within the walls of Quebec. Later, tidings came of Washington's march on New York.

May 6, 1776, one hundred and thirty of the representative men of the Old Dominion, in convention assembled, declared that the king and Parliament had disregarded the constitution of the colony, which accordingly was free to exercise such independence as it might be able to maintain. Nine days later they instructed the colony's delegates in the Continental Congress to vote for independence, and the flag of England fluttered down from the capitol building. By doing these things every one of them exposed his neck to the British halter; but they were virile men, who had arrived at the parting of the ways.

A few weeks later the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, was proclaimed throughout the land amid great rejoicing. Then the country settled down to its grim task. What a task it was! Many times it seemed that the poor, thinly populated land might endure no longer. England was a very powerful foe, feared throughout the world. Not all Americans were patriots. Some were Tories on principle, others for gain. Very many were selfish and not a few corrupt; but enough so loved their country and independence as to endure

and struggle unto the glorious end.

CHAPTER XXII

RODNEY'S SACRIFICE AND HIS MOTHER'S

One midsummer day Rodney Allison walked along the dusty road. He did not carry his head erect as usual but seemed to be pondering over some problem.

He was a "strapping," fine looking lad, almost a man grown, and in experience already a man. He stopped before a little gate opening into a pasture and gave three shrill whistles. Over the top of a ridge two pointed ears appeared, poised for an instant, and then their owner galloped into view.

"What a beauty you are, Nat," said the boy, as if talking to himself, stretching out his hand to stroke the silky nose that was thrust over the fence.

The two standing together formed a picture to afford delight so long as the eye shall admire grace, breeding and power. The boy's figure was erect, his wavy hair hanging gracefully to his broad shoulders. His face, while not handsome, was clear cut, resolute and showed lines of character not usually graven in the face of one as young. His dark gray eyes always looked at one steadily. Now they were darker than usual and had in them the shadow of trouble.

"Nat, how would you like to change masters?"

The colt nuzzled the boy's face and then his pockets, in one of which he found the nubbin of corn he sought.

"You rascal, all you care about having is a good commissary. You won't miss me, will you? Oh, no! I'd thought we'd go to the war together. We would have something worth fighting for, a free country, where a man wouldn't need to have dukes for uncles in order to be of some consequence in the world. We would show 'em, you and I, that horses and boys raised in this country are as good as the best; but that can't be. You are too good a horse to drag the plow on this poor little farm. You shall have one of the greatest men in this great land for a master, while I will stay away from the war and both of us may save our precious skins and perhaps be British subjects in the end."

Nat's purplish eyes seemed full of comprehension, as he mumbled the lad's hand with his lips.

"Horses seem to know more of some things than they really do, and know more of some other things than they seem to; how's that for horse sense, Nathaniel Bacon Allison?"

Nat blinked, but shed no tears. Rodney blinked and his eyes were wet. The boy opened the gate and the colt followed him to the stable, where he was saddled and ridden to Monticello.

As Rodney left the manager of Mr. Jefferson's estate he said: "I only ask that you say to Mr. Jefferson, I sell the colt with the understanding that I may buy him back if I ever get the money."

"I'll do it, an' you won't need it in writin' so long as Mr. Jefferson lives."

What a long, dusty, gloomy road was that over which the boy walked back to his home!

"What has become of Nat?" his mother asked, a few days later. "I haven't seen him lately."

"He was too valuable a horse for me to own and I sold him to Mr. Jefferson. I can have the privilege of buying him back," and Rodney turned away, afraid to trust himself to say more.

The crops that fall were successful and the neighbours told the boy he would surely make a good farmer. He worked early and late and grew strong; whereas his mother, watching him with sad eyes, became weaker.

When Mrs. Allison was absorbed in thought the old coloured woman would stand looking with anxious face at her mistress. One day she said, "Missus, yo' jes' done git well. Dat's no mo'n doin' what's right by Marse Rodney, ah reckon."

Mrs. Allison looked up into the kindly old face of the coloured woman, and a wan smile was on her lips as she replied, "Mam, you are a woman of good sense, and, God willing, I will get well." From that day she began to improve.

Angus being away, Rodney had little diversion.

His chief pastime now was target practice with the rifle. The old Indian had chosen wisely when he purchased the rifle, and the boy became very proficient in marksmanship. One day when he had made a fine shot he turned and found his mother and the two servants watching him.

"I hadn't an idea you were such a fine shot, Rodney," said his mother.

"Scolding Squaw hasn't an equal in the whole county of Albemarle, mother."

"Lan' sakes, an' what heathen mought she be?" asked Mam.

"She was once the rifle of a noted chief of the Wyandottes, and when she speaks a deadly silence follows," replied the boy, laughing.

"Marse Rodney will be wantin' ter jine de riflemen, I specs," remarked Thello.

Mam, noting her mistress' face, hastened to say, "Reckon de riflemen done froze up in Canada las' winter. Dey won't be rantin' down in ol' Virginny fer one right smart spell."

That year, 1776, there were no steel rails laid nor copper wires strung to carry the news, yet it was surprising how quickly tidings of victory and defeat spread over the country.

Charlottesville was a very small town out near the shadows of the Blue Ridge mountains, yet its people, not many weeks after the events occurred, had heard how Donald McDonald had led the Scotch Tories of North Carolina against the rifles of the Whigs and how the rifles proved more powerful than the Scottish broadswords; then had come the joyful news that Commodore Parker and his forty ships had sailed away from Charleston, South Carolina, which they had come to capture as though the doing of it were the pastime of a summer's holiday. Between them and the town they had found a little island and on it a small fort built of soft palmetto logs bedded in sand and defended by a few daring men under the gallant Moultrie. These brave fellows could shoot cannon as straight as could the North Carolina Whigs their rifles. Later, even among the hamlets along the frontier, the cheers rang out when it was learned that Congress had finally approved the Declaration of Independence, and aid was now expected from France!

Not all the news was encouraging. Washington had known that, unless granted men and supplies, he could not hold New York against the British. Congress had insisted that he make the attempt, but gave him no assistance. He had failed, and barely kept the greater part of the American army out of British clutches. The king had succeeded in hiring Hessians, some twenty thousand of them, to fight England's battles in America, with the promise of all the loot they could secure. France was very slow in granting aid, uncertain as yet how much resistance America might be able to make. The attempt to capture Quebec had failed, and the Americans were chased out of Canada. Washington had been unable to keep an effective army together as Congress would provide only for short terms of enlistment, and little money or supplies for the troops. Men who had shouted for freedom were now despondent, and some of them were going over to the enemy, which occupied New York and most of New Jersey and had concluded the war was about ended.

In September Morgan came back from Quebec, but under parole. He had been offered great inducements to fight with England, but scorned them as an insult to his manhood. If he could be released from parole he would do loyal service for his country. Arnold had fought desperately around Lake Champlain with the remnants of the troops driven from Canada, but the odds against him were too great. Washington, alone, was the nucleus around which the hopes of America centred, but he could accomplish little except to hold positions between the British and Philadelphia.

Winter came on and the situation grew worse. Congress became frightened and made ludicrous haste to vote all sorts of assistance to Washington, after it was too late for him to use it for striking an effective blow.

It was evident that Rodney brooded over the long series of failures, but he still stoutly insisted, "It's not Washington's fault, I know."

When, just after New Year's, 1777, report came that Washington, with his ragged troops, had crossed the Delaware amid the floating ice, and marched almost barefooted to Trenton in a howling snowstorm, and there had defeated the Hessians, Rodney fairly shouted in his joy, "I knew he'd do it, I knew he'd do it!"

About a month later, Angus came home. He was a sorry looking Angus, what with a severe wound, and his ragged regimentals, and his feet bound up in rags. But he was a very important Angus, withal, for had he not crossed the Delaware with Washington; had he not left bloody footprints on the snowy road to Trenton; had he not charged down King Street, swept by the northeast gale and British lead, and driven the brutal Hessians as chaff is swept before the wind? He was, to the village folk, the returned conqueror, and much they made of him, the Allisons with the others. He no longer envied Rodney mounted on Nat riding over the country with all the importance of a special messenger, and it is to be hoped that Rodney did not envy him, now that conditions seemed reversed. To young Allison's credit be it said that, if in his heart lay a smouldering spark of envy, it did not show itself.

When Angus was able to go about, he frequently visited the Allison home, and revelled in narrations of his experiences. He, like the common people generally, regarded Washington as an idol. He delighted in descriptions of the appearance of his beloved general at the crossing of the Delaware; again at the battle of Princeton, when Washington had ridden out directly between the lines of the British and the wavering Americans he sought to encourage, sitting like a statue on his big horse, while the bullets of friends and foes flew about him, and then riding away unscathed, as though by a miracle. The lad's enthusiasm made it all seem very real, even when he told how, one winter morning, the general walked about among his men while wearing a strip of red flannel tied about his throat because of a cold, and picked up with one hand a piece of heavy baggage, that would have burdened both arms of an ordinary man, and lightly tossed it on top of a baggage wagon.

"He had but twenty-four hundred men to capture Trenton, an' all the other generals who were to help him failed. I was right close to him when the messenger rode up to tell him Cadwalader couldn't git across the river, an' I heard him say 'I am determined to cross the river and attack

Trenton in the morning.' I tell ye thar was no fellers who heard him but would hev follered him on their knees, bein' they couldn't hev used their feet."

"The British thought the war ended before they lost Trenton, I hear," said Mrs. Allison, her eyes shining, for one of her ancestors had ridden with Nathaniel Bacon, the Virginian rebel, when there was British tyranny in the Old Dominion.

"No doubt of it; why, all of us in the army reckoned how the war couldn't last much longer. We hadn't rations nor clothes; the men were goin' home when their time was up an' wouldn't enlist again. We heard that Cornwallis was goin' home to tell the king how he'd licked us, an' old Howe was gamblin' an' guzzlin' in New York, spendin' his prize money like water. Oh, they thought they had us licked for sure! Long's Washington lives they can't lick us nohow, though they've got over thirty thousand men an' plenty o' money, an' we with neither. But the soldiers are 'lowin' as how France will help us. Benjamin Franklin is over there an' they say he has a way o' gittin' what he goes after."

"I believe it was Doctor Franklin's 'Poor Richard' who said, 'God helps those who help themselves.' We've got to rely on ourselves," Mrs. Allison said, as if speaking to herself, but all the while looking at Rodney.

He did not notice this, for he sat gazing into the fire, saying little, though no word of Angus escaped him. Finally, looking up and addressing his mother, he said, "Wasn't it Mr. Mason who said he did not wish to survive the liberties of his country?"

"I think so," she replied, adding, "but we say things in time of excitement which are pretty hard to live up to," and turned away.

Rodney had secured quite profitable employment that winter. His mother's health had improved, and the lad could hear the clatter of her loom through the open window one warm morning in early March when a passing horseman brought the news that "Dan Morgan was having hard work to raise a body of riflemen." He had been appointed a colonel the previous fall, and, as soon as he was released from his parole, began to enlist men to go to the assistance of Washington at Morristown.

The man talked loudly, and the noise of the loom ceased while Mrs. Allison listened. After supper that evening she said, "I hear that Colonel Morgan, of whom you have told me so much, is enlisting men."

"Yes, mother, and there is no finer man for a leader than he, unless it is Washington."

"I've thought, since Angus came home, that you were wishing you might enter the service."

Rodney looked up quickly. "Why, if I could get away I'd like to go, but I--my duty is at home."

"I am well, now," she said, "and affairs are in such condition I think we can care for them."

"But--er--no, I ought not to."

"My boy, you have my permission, indeed I'm not sure but it is your duty to give your service, your young life perhaps, to the cause of liberty."

Rodney sprang up, his face aflame with eagerness. "Do you mean it, mother?"

"Some one must fight our battles if we are to win. Your father is not here to go to the front, as he would have done had he lived, and--and I feel sure he would like to have the house of Allison represented in a cause he had so much at heart, and I'm afraid I should make a poor soldier, Rodney."

"Mother, you are braver than any soldier who ever went to war!"

And so it happened that the following Monday, dressed in the homespun of his mother's loom and carrying the rifle he had taken from the lodge of the Wyandotte chieftain, Rodney Allison left for Winchester to join Morgan's command.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE THICK OF IT

"Can ye shoot straight an' often, travel light, starve an' yet fight on an empty stomach?"

"I've had some experience at that sort of thing, Colonel Morgan, and think I can be of service in your command."

"Where have I seen you? Yer face looks familiar. I have it, your name is Allison an' you were the little feller as showed me the way to the rear of the redskins the day they ambushed Wood out in the Ohio country. Want ye, I reckon I do! I want five hundred like ye."

And thus it was that Rodney found welcome when he presented himself to Morgan at Winchester, and the welcome was so hearty that it helped put the boy on friendly footing with his fellows at the start.

The march to Morristown was not very pleasant owing to the bad condition of the roads. On the way recruits joined them so that on the first of April, when they reached Washington's headquarters, they numbered about one hundred and eighty men, considerably less than the five hundred wanted.

One of the recruits who joined them on the march was a young man whose reception by Morgan attracted general attention, it was so cordial. He was a straight, sinewy fellow with shrewd, kindly gray eyes and "sandy" hair. He was clad like a frontiersman and the moment the colonel saw him he exclaimed, "By all that's good an' glorious, Zeb, I've seen ye in my dreams followin' me up the ladder at the barrier, but I never expected to see ye in the flesh again. Where's yer Fidus--what's his name, that Lovell boy?"^[1]

"I left him in Boston after the evacuation, an' haven't heard from him since. How are you?"

"Never so well in my life. Prison fare up in old Quebec agreed with me, I reckon. Boys," he said, turning to a knot of his men who had gathered about, "this man Zeb, an' a Boston boy, brought up the rear on that march to Quebec. It was the hardest thing I ever did when I detailed 'em for the duty. How they got through alive I never could understand. And young Allison, here, is a chap as was with me fightin' Indians out in the Ohio country. I wish all the boys who've marched with me could fall into the ranks to-day; we'd keep right on to New York an' capture Howe, bag an' baggage."

"When we take New York," laughed Zeb, "we'll need more men than Congress ever has got together, I'm thinkin'. I was there when Washington tried to hold it, because Congress an' the country expected him to do the impossible. But, Colonel, I will say as how if you led the way, thar'd not be one of 'em, as ever marched with Morgan, who wouldn't be at yer back."

"Good! I like that kind of talk. Meanwhile we'll get the kinks out of our legs marching to Morristown."

"So you are an Injun fighter," remarked Zeb to Rodney, as they fell into line side by side.

"Scarcely that," replied Rodney, flushing with pleasure as he thought of the introduction by his colonel. "I've been made prisoner by them, lived with them for a time and ran away from 'em, doing a little fighting by the way."

"Anyhow, the colonel appears to like ye, an' that's a recommendation not to be sneezed at."

"I hope I can keep his good will. I never saw a man whose men were more loyal."

"He's a lion in a fight, asks no man to go whar he won't go himself. And he knows what the boys are thinkin' about, an' just how to manage 'em."

"I was told that on the march to the Scioto one of his men disobeyed orders, in fact had been disgruntled for some time, and that Morgan walked up to him and said, 'Come with me a minute.' They went into the woods together and, when they came back, the man had a black eye and looked as though he'd stolen a sheep; but ever after he didn't have to be told twice to do a thing."

Zeb laughed, saying, "That sort of treatment was what that kind of man could understand. But Morgan never allowed one of his men to be flogged."

"He was terribly flogged once himself."

"Yes, but he was too much of a man for that to break him, though the ordinary man who's been whipped seems to lose his self respect and his courage, an' Morgan won't allow it in his command."

By the time Morgan's men arrived at Morristown, Zeb and Rodney were the best of friends, and the latter had heard the story of the expedition to Quebec,^[2] of Donald Lovell and what a fine lad he was, until he hoped that Zeb's wish, that they meet him, might be granted.

It was a very small army which Morgan found at Morristown. Of the sixteen regiments Congress had requested the colonies to furnish (Congress could do little but request), not over six hundred men had arrived. The next two months were passed in recruiting the army and getting it into condition, a very trying time to the many impatient spirits in Morgan's command, and doubtless very trying also to their commander, who always chafed under any sort of inaction. What with target practice and drilling, all were kept out of mischief, however, and Rodney found that as a marksman he could "hold his own" with the best.

Zeb, who had become his daily companion, received in May a letter from his old friend, Donald Lovell, who wrote that he had fully recovered from a wound he had received in the battle on Long Island the year before, and hoped soon to get back into the service.

A corps, called Morgan's Rangers, was made up of men picked from the various regiments, five hundred in all. There were, among them, Virginians, Pennsylvania "Dutchmen," men from the Carolinas, men from the frontier and Yankees. Skill in the use of the rifle was a necessary qualification for membership. They were a fine lot of men for the perilous duties to which they were to be assigned.

The corps was divided into eight companies, the captains of which were: Cobel, Posey, Knox, Long, Swearingen, Parr, Boone, and Henderson, all men selected by Morgan.

The organization of this corps was completed on June 13th, on which day it was ordered by Washington to watch for the approach of British scouting parties, for it was learned that Howe was to begin active operations. The American headquarters had now been changed to

Middlebrook. That very day two divisions of the British forces, one under Cornwallis and the other under DeHeister, set out from New Brunswick for the purpose of engaging Washington, confident that, with a little more fighting, they would crush the revolution.

The Rangers had their first glimpse of the British under Cornwallis when the latter reached Somerset Court House, and, for several days, there was sharp skirmishing with scouting parties.

Rodney and Zeb were stationed one afternoon on one of the roads as pickets, when a company of the British were discovered approaching. The pickets' orders were to fire and fall back on the main body, unless it should be thought possible, in case of a small number of the enemy, to report their presence and secure force enough to cut them off. This was the view taken both by Zeb and his companion, so they ran back to report.

A squad of the Rangers was hurried forward to meet the enemy, with instructions to get between them and their main army, and make them prisoners. Before this could be accomplished the British came upon them. The enemy outnumbered the Rangers two to one, yet the latter would have charged them but for orders to halt and fire. So quickly was the order obeyed that the crack of their rifles rang out together with the British officer's command to fire. The British fired blindly into the smoke, whereas the riflemen had taken quick, accurate aim. But one among the Rangers was hit, and that was Rodney, he receiving a slight flesh wound in the left arm.

"I thought a bee had stung me," he said, later, when Zeb discovered the blood on his friend's sleeve.

The enemy, being uncertain as to the number of the Rangers, fell back in good order, carrying their dead with them. They were pursued by the Rangers until a larger body met them, when the Americans retreated.

Skirmishes like this were of daily occurrence, and Cornwallis, finding that Washington was not disposed to accommodate him by rashly engaging in battle under disadvantageous conditions, retreated to New Brunswick, with the Rangers dogging his flanks.

Quite a number of deserters were picked up. Benjamin Franklin had devised a shrewd scheme for encouraging desertions. Learning the brand of tobacco specially liked by the Hessians, he had offers concealed in packages of this tobacco, which was distributed where the Hessians would get them. These hired troops had no love for the cause for which they were fighting, and many of them had little for the tyranny with which they were treated when at home in Germany. When they read these offers, printed in German, of money and land, they were sorely tempted to change masters, especially if they did not happen to be of those who loved fighting for the privilege it gave them to loot and ravage.

How the country people, all the Americans, indeed, except the Tories, despised and dreaded the Hessian! In fact he was no more brutal than many of the British, but he was trained to loot and thus was held in disrepute. On several occasions he had bayoneted the American soldier after the latter had surrendered.

"Why didn't our men serve 'em a like turn at Trenton?" was a question some had asked.

Zeb well expressed the matter once when the subject was being discussed around the camp-fire.

"I reckon that job at Trenton was most complete. Thar's nothing about it to be ashamed of, an' everything to be proud of. If we'd butchered the pig-stickers when they were whinin' on their knees it wouldn't hev looked well in history."

"There comes a detachment of 'em now!" exclaimed Rodney, the following morning. He and Zeb were doing picket duty. The latter gave the call, and several Rangers ran up. A half mile down the road the Hessians came marching on in close order till they arrived at some farm buildings when they were seen to break ranks.

"Let 'em have it!" cried Zeb, bringing his long rifle to his shoulder. Then, loading as he ran, he called, "Come on, boys, let's get to closer range."

Other Rangers, hearing the firing, came running after them. In doing this they not only obeyed orders, but most of them gratified their own desire to get into a skirmish with the enemy at every opportunity.

Soon the bullets were singing anything but a cheerful song about the ears of the Hessians, who began to reform their ranks and returned the fire. After several of them had fallen in their tracks, the remainder retreated, bearing off their dead and wounded, pursued by the Rangers clear to the enemy's lines, when they, too, were compelled by overwhelming numbers to retreat.

As they passed the farm on the way back, "Do-as-much Bunster," a Pennsylvania Dutchman, exclaimed, "Dey vas not alretty till Christmas for roast pig to vait, I tink."

"Reckon your thinker is workin' this mornin'," was Zeb's reply as he turned aside to look over into a pen beside the road where a fine litter of white pigs lay cuddled about the old sow.

"You fellers hev earned one o' them beauties," said the farmer, coming out of his barn and proceeding to slaughter one of the innocents without evident compunction.

"Do as much for you zumtime," said Bunster, whereat all laughed. That was what the Dutchman always said when any one did him a favour. He was as good as his word, too, which not only gave him his nickname but made him one of the most popular men in his company.

He was both fat and jolly, as Dutchmen should be, but not always are. His blue eyes twinkled

with good humour and shrewdness, and his eagerness showed that he was fond of roast pig.

How good it tasted though cooked, as it had to be, under unfavourable conditions over a camp-fire, and without proper utensils. There was, however, a look of contentment on the faces of those who partook of the feast that afternoon, and sat around on the warm ground licking their fingers.

"Let's see," said Zeb, "Bunster and I and Rodney are off duty to-night."

"Yah, and I tink I zum sleep get."

"One of those Hesse-Cassel ruffians swaps even for one good American, and there's a lot of our boys rottin' in the prison hulks in New York harbour to-night."

"Which is one way of saying we should capture a few Hessians for a pastime; hey, Do-as-much Bunster?" and Rodney thrust a forefinger into Bunster's fat ribs. The Dutchman squealed and leaped to his feet, for he was so ticklish that one, wishing to see him squirm, only had to point a finger at him.

"That farmer is certain sure a good one, though he is too lazy to take his pigs in out of danger. I hate to see him lose 'em. Besides he has a big rick o' hay right nigh that pig pen an' it looked like a good place to sleep. What d'ye say, boys, if we tote ourselves down thar this evenin'?"

"Zum place to sleep, yah?"

"I'm not sleepy yet, but I am ready to go," replied Rodney, so they set out.

They crossed the fields, some of which were new mown and fragrant. The sun was setting after a hot day. The swallows skimmed over the field.

"Swallers flyin' low, sign o' rain," said Zeb.

"Needn't lay it on the swallows when the clouds are piling up as they are this evening. We'll want a roof to the hay rick before morning, I think," was Rodney's reply.

They found the farmer doing his chores. His smile was a trifle apprehensive as he said, "That pig tasted so good ye come back fer more?"

"We be no hogs. We reckoned as how the fellers as didn't git roast pig might come back and try it this evenin'."

"Hope ye don't intend fightin' round here. My wife Nancy is dretful nervous."

"My kind and tremulous friend, do ye want the pig-stickers ter git yer pigs? We 'lowed as how we might stay here an' save yer next winter's pork. 'Sposin' you explain it to Nancy. We'll not allow any one to hurt her, if we can help it."

This seemed to satisfy the farmer; but he took fresh alarm when Zeb went along to a two-wheeled ox-cart, piled high with hay and backed against the pen. As Zeb raised the tongue, and told Bunster to put a stick under it, the farmer called excitedly, "Look out! Ye'll tip it into the pig pen; that load is too heavy behind, anyhow."

"Hay mought be good fer some kind o' hogs," which enigmatic remark by Zeb called forth no response from the farmer, who bade them good night and went into the house.

"I'll stand guard the first part or we'll draw lots, as you wish," said Rodney.

It was decided to draw lots, but Rodney, drawing the shortest straw, had his wish to stand guard the first part of the night for, though tired, he was not sleepy.

His companions threw themselves down on the hay at the foot of the rick and soon, by their regular breathing, he knew they slept. Sleep was a luxury with the Rangers in those days of continuous scout duty. Rodney's nerves were high strung and no sound escaped him. He heard the rustle of a toad in the grass at his feet. An occasional mosquito hummed about his ears. His mind wandered away to that little Indian village he had known. In his imagination he could hear the crooning song of the squaws about the camp-fires, the shrill cries of the whip-poor-will. He thought of the old Indian chief, whose savage hands had so often grasped the rifle the boy now held. Had Ahneota lived he doubtless would be encouraging the red men in aid of the British, and would not hesitate to torture women and children as well as men. How he hated the whites!

Hark! What was that sound? Surely the clink of the iron shoe of a horse on a stone in the road!

The boy waked his sleeping companions. They seized their rifles and all went nearer the road.

Out of the darkness misshapen objects could just be discerned, and the guttural voices of several Hessians could be heard. Then a light glimmered as one of the approaching party drew an old horn lantern from under his cloak. Two others, by aid of the light, clambered into the pen, leaving outside the one with the lantern and the fourth holding the horse.

The next moment a pig squealed. The vandals were sticking them with their bayonets.

"Follow me," whispered Zeb, running forward and tilting the cart tongue in the air, dumping the load of hay into the pen, and burying human and other hogs in the mire underneath.

"Surrender!" Zeb cried, thrusting the muzzle of his rifle under the nose of the fellow holding the lantern, while Rodney and Bunster disarmed the Hessian with the horse. Then Zeb quickly tied their hands behind their backs, and, telling Rodney to guard them and shoot them down if they moved hand or foot, he and Bunster turned their attention to the commotion in the pig pen.

From under the hay there issued grunts and squeals and German oaths. Sorry looking hirelings

were those two Hessians when they crawled out into the light. Wisps of hay clung to their well greased pigtail queues and their hated uniforms, blue coats and yellow waistcoats, were daubed with muck.

"Pass out yer guns, an' take this fork an' pitch out the hay," was Zeb's order, which the dazed prisoners attempted to obey, when the farmer, calling out the window, said, "I'll look out fer that."

"Better let him, Zeb," said Rodney. "If we stay here too long we may have more Hessians than we need."

"Good advice, ye townsman of the immortal Jefferson. Forward march."

[1] See "Marching with Morgan."

[2] The chief incident in "Marching with Morgan," in which Zeb and young Donald Lovell are the leading characters.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RANGERS SENT AGAINST BURGOYNE

England proposed to snuff out the rebellion that summer of 1777: so she sent all the troops she could spare and hire, also bribes to secure the services of the Indians. England must win, though the savages kill and torture every man, woman and child on the frontier.

General Burgoyne must leave the writing of plays for a time and lead an army from Canada down to New York, and then Philadelphia was to be captured and the Continental Congress sent a-packing.

Howe is said to have thought the Burgoyne plan unwise, for he knew something about war, though frequently too indolent to put his knowledge into practice. This beautiful month of June he had his army down in New Jersey, watching for a chance to outwit Washington and seize Philadelphia.

After the first failure, he abandoned New Brunswick and marched his troops back to New York. Here was an opportunity for Morgan's Rangers. They followed Howe's army like a swarm of angry hornets. When too annoying, the British would turn and drive them back, but, as soon as the march was resumed, they would return and again sting the rear of the column into desperation.

When the Rangers first came in contact with the retreating British the latter were crossing a bridge. Here was a fine opportunity for Morgan's men, and they used it to the fullest extent. Their bullets laid many a poor Hessian in the dust, for the aim of the riflemen was quick and accurate, whereas that of the British was mechanical.

"Ah! Another bee has stung that arm. The redcoats intend to get it, I believe," suddenly cried Rodney.

"Does yer arm feel numb?" asked Zeb.

"No, I guess it's just a scratch. Anyhow I'm going to use it while I may."

No, our two comrades lost no time examining trifling wounds, while British bullets whistled about their ears. On the contrary, they were loading and firing as rapidly as possible, and the perspiration was streaming down their powder-blackened faces, for the day was hot.

"They are going to support the column; look out for a volley. Git down here, lie low," and, suiting action to word, Zeb threw himself on the grass.

A body of Hessians had wheeled about and posted themselves behind some temporary breastworks, which had been thrown up that morning. "Up and at 'em," was the word, and the Rangers ran forward and threw themselves on the ground so that most of the volley from the enemy passed over their heads.

"Up and at 'em" again, each time nearer, while flanking parties were working around toward the rear of the redoubts. The enemy behind the breastworks had the advantage both in number and position, and held back the Rangers, who had no bayonets and could not charge successfully.

"Here comes General Wayne's brigade, now we'll dislodge 'em," shouted Zeb in his excitement, and Bunster stood up and cheered.

"We'll teach 'em that they have to earn their money when they hire out to lick Americans," cried Rodney.

"What's the matter with Bunster!" exclaimed Zeb, for their companion staggered and pitched forward in a heap, his hands convulsively clutching the grass.

"They run, they run, at 'em, boys!" and, with this cry in their ears, Rodney and Zeb charged down on the flying enemy.

Bunster lay face down in the field. How he would have yelled and run after the retreating Hessians! He had made his last charge, poor Bunster! Such a genial fellow; such a kindly, helpful soul, with no fear in your heart! You have done as much as the best and bravest of them, and your country can never do as much for you.

At the first opportunity his companions sought him out from among the slain, and laid him in a hastily constructed grave. Zeb's eyes were wet and tears made furrows among the powder stains on Rodney's face. Their hearts would be hardened in the days of war to come, for that is one of war's penalties. What sympathy they might have would be rather with those writhing and waiting for death.

"Thar's a heap o' walkin' ahead of the Rangers," was Zeb's greeting as he returned from a talk with their colonel several days later.

"What is it now?"

"Schuyler an' Gates are howlin' fer more men an' expect Washington to furnish 'em whether he has 'em or not. Burgoyne's comin' down Lake Champlain with a horde of red devils at his heels, an' the country people up that way don't feel easy about their hair, with the lovely flag of England wavin' over 'em."

"I just heard a report that the farmers were taking the field. If they do as well as they did at Bunker Hill, Burgoyne may not have an altogether pleasant summer."

"Thar's too many people in this country who want to be independent of everything, even to fightin' whenever and how they please. It's time they did something."

"Certainly they don't respond very promptly to Washington's call for troops."

"This war has got to be won, if it's won at all, by armies an' not by a few men shootin' from behind a stone wall whenever the Britishers march their way."

"It can't be said that Morgan's Rangers don't respond when called upon."

"That's right. The country will remember us after we're killed. We've got a reputation for fighting already. Two thirds of us 'd rather be at a fight than a feast."

"You among the number."

"Not right. I hate war except when I get in a skirmish, an' then I don't think about it. I wish the men who bring on war had to do the fightin'."

Howe, twice foiled in his attempts to outwit Washington, had returned to New York, leaving his antagonist in doubt whether he proposed taking his army up the Hudson to meet Burgoyne or around to Philadelphia by sea. During this period of uncertainty, Morgan's Rangers marched to Hackensack and back again. They travelled light, each man lugging his provisions, rations of corn meal and a wallet containing dried venison. August 16th they received final orders to march to Peekskill, and there to take boats for Albany to join Gates' army.

Here at last was something definite, and how the men cheered! Washington was sending his best men to aid Gates because he thought the country needed them at that place. George Washington was a big enough man to forget self and think only of his country. Gates was not, and was to repay his chief for this assistance with treachery.

Rodney never forgot that day when they first came in sight of the beautiful Hudson. He made some remark about the scenery, when the man next him in line exclaimed: "Whew! but I'd like plenty of shade trees in my scenery," wiping away the perspiration with his sleeve.

"Ab, you are in as big a hurry to git thar as any of us," said another.

"I don't feel right certain about matters after we do. Thar must be some rattle-headed men in charge up in this country; what with fillin' ol' Ty full o' powder an' ball an' then allowin' the Britishers to climb a hill an' drive 'em out the fort. Thar sure be some folks as think they're generals by grace o' good looks an' lots o' friends. Then some feller, as knows how, comes along an' trees 'em," was Ab's reply.

A warm welcome awaited the Rangers when they joined the northern army. In fact all along their route they had received admiration and cordial greeting to their hearts' content. Gates flattered Morgan by arranging that the colonel should receive orders only from the general in command. Quarters were assigned them at Loudon's Ferry, and here they were joined by Major Dearborn with two hundred and fifty men selected from other regiments. This was pleasing to Morgan, as he and Dearborn had fought the enemy at Quebec, where both had been taken prisoners.

The Rangers welcomed the recruits heartily, and proceeded to get acquainted. In the midst of this Rodney saw a fine looking fellow, of about his own age, clad in the uniform of the Massachusetts militia, run toward Zeb, exclaiming, "I might have known if I could find Colonel Morgan I could find you, in flesh or spirit. How are you, anyway?"

"Shades of the Great North, Don, yer face looks good ter me."

Then, after they had shaken hands and patted each other on the shoulder, literally and metaphorically, Zeb, turning to Rodney, said, "Here's Donald Lovell, the lad who found me in a Quebec snowdrift an' saved my life when I was about as fer gone as poor Bunster."

"Easy, Zeb. I don't want to tell all you did for me, there isn't time, but I'm glad to know any one that's your friend."

"You two boys make a likely pair. Ye both really do credit to my judgment in pickin' ye out. How long ye been here, Don?"

"Only a few days. You've heard about Stark and the battle at Bennington, of course?"

"We certain have. He gave those Hessians a sound drubbing if reports are correct. He was at Trenton, you know. Was disgruntled, because he didn't get the promotion he wanted, an' went home."

"Lucky he did. He was just the man needed to do that job at Bennington. I went as messenger to Portsmouth and heard John Langdon, the speaker of the New Hampshire assembly, pledge his property to fit out Stark. That's the kind of statesmen to have."

"A durned sight better than the majority of those in Congress. Whar is yer Uncle Dick, at home worryin' about ye?"

Donald laughed, and then his face grew serious as he said, "No. He joined Stark and I'm the one who is worrying about him."

"General Arnold played a good trick on St. Leger, when he sent that decoy messenger to him with the cock-and-bull story about the reinforcements marching to Fort Stanwix bein' thicker than the leaves on the trees," remarked Zeb.

"And wasn't that a glorious fight poor old Herkimer's men made against the Tories and Brandt's Indians? That must have been terrible, a regular hand-to-hand struggle. Yes, Arnold is here and many think he should have the command."

"And I'm one o' the number," said Zeb, stoutly. "That man has more courage an' energy than the whole Continental Congress. Look at the way he fought in the Canadian campaign! They tell me, though the British defeated the fleet of boats he built to oppose 'em on the lake, that no man ever led a braver struggle against greater odds and got away without bein' captured. He was ready to resign before this Burgoyne campaign, an' I wouldn't hev blamed him. He doesn't know how to git along without making enemies, for, when he has anything to do, he goes at it hammer and tongs no matter whose toes he treads on, but he gets it done, by hook or by crook."

"You know, Zeb, that somehow I never had great liking for him, but he certainly is a brave, resourceful leader. I think he's the most ambitious man in the service."

"He's willing to earn his promotion, which some of 'em wouldn't if they knew how. He's earned it ten times over. The men who can do things are the ones we've got to have to win. One thing, this army isn't goin' to lack fer men, such as they are, by the way the farmers are comin' in with their old guns and hay hooks."

"Such as they are! Zeb, you're a dyed-in-the-wool Virginian. These New Englanders and New Yorkers coming into camp are of the same mettle as those under Stark and those who died with Herkimer. There are no better men in the world."

"Reckon ye better make an exception o' the Rangers. They sent us down here, when we ought to be with Washington, specially to save you people from the Indians."

"Yes, and the day you started, Stark and his New Hampshire and Massachusetts men, with the help of Seth Warner's men, won a victory which will result in the defeat of Burgoyne. You Virginians are all right; you have your Washington and Morgan and the Rangers, but don't cry down the Northern farmers in their homespun. They've had to fight for a living from the beginning, and, from Lexington right down through till now, they've fought for their country."

"Except when they've left to go home and gather their crops. Soldiers who stay in the field till the war's over are the kind that is needed."

"Excuse me," interrupted Rodney, for the conversation had waxed warm, "but, from what Zeb told me, both Virginia and Massachusetts were needed to pull through the wilderness on the way to Quebec."

Zeb laughed and said, "I reckon Virginia and Massachusetts will have to hang together if we get the job done."

"And if we don't," added Donald, with a laugh, "they'll hang separately, as Dr. Franklin said of the signers of the Declaration of Independence."

CHAPTER XXV

PUT TO THE TEST

"Likely lookin' men Dearborn's picked up," was Zeb's comment as Major Dearborn marched his recruits past. "Hi, Don. An' thar's his uncle. Glad he got through Bennington safe an' sound. Don was some worried about him. Man an' boy, ye can't beat 'em."

"His uncle is a fine looking man. Those men have bayonets. They ought to be of service. But there's none like the Rangers, eh, Zeb?"

"Askin' such questions is waste o' breath."

"Well, I hope we'll soon have a chance to prove it."

"We've been sayin' the same thing for more'n two weeks. I reckoned we sure would get it two days ago when we occupied Bemis Heights. Hello! What's doin'?"

"Fall in!"

As though there were magic in the words, those travel-stained riflemen sprang to their places with an eagerness never seen among regular troops.

"The enemy is crossing the Hudson, an' we're to make 'em wish they hadn't," was the message which ran along the lines. Many a man turned to the next in line and said in matter of fact tone, "That means fight."

"There they are," exclaimed Rodney, as they came in sight of the solid lines of the British army. Under Burgoyne were some of the finest soldiers Europe could produce. They marched in compact lines, moving like weighted machines under their heavy trappings which were gorgeous and imposing.

"They don't intend to leave any hole for us to wedge in," said Rodney.

Ah! There opens a way to get at that German regiment. Morgan sees it and the battle is on. It was, however, only a brief skirmish; a few volleys, a few human beings stretched on the ground dead and wounded, a few prisoners. France, across the water, waiting for something decisive, before committing herself to the cause of America, will hear of it and of battles to come. But many more men than were with Morgan that day would be required to stop that British army. On they came and established their camp within two miles of that of the Americans.

Between these armies the land was rough and hilly, part of it covered with forests. Well out in front of the American army Morgan's corps was stationed.

"If anything happens we're likely to be the first to know it," was Rodney's comment.

"That's what we're here for. We're the whiskers, the feelers o' the cat that's set to watch the mouse."

"A full grown rat, I'd say, by the size."

"Six to eight thousand, includin' Tories an' redskins, who won't count when the pinch comes. By the way the country folks are comin' in with their rifles an' pitchforks we're in a fair way to snare the lot."

"Zeb, you certainly are the most hopeful man I ever knew. Anyhow, if Burgoyne wants to eat his Christmas dinner in New York, he's got to give us a chance at him soon."

Evidently Burgoyne arrived at a like conclusion. On the morning of September nineteenth the pickets reported the British advancing. Morgan's corps was immediately ordered forward to engage the enemy and delay his progress. The gallant Major Morris led one line and Morgan the other, and Morris encountered the enemy first, a picket detachment of about three hundred men. The Rangers charged and drove them, and followed so impetuously on their heels as to run into the main body, and as a result of such recklessness they suffered severely. Morris rode right into the midst of the British, but, wheeling his horse, escaped and rejoined his men, who were now badly scattered. Donald Lovell received a severe wound in his side. His uncle, marching by his side, picked him up as though a child, and across his powerful shoulders carried him back to a place of safety.

Morgan, hearing the firing, was hurrying on to support the other line when, finding it broken and scattered, he is said to have shed tears in his chagrin at what he thought was due to carelessness and meant defeat. Were the Rangers, the pride of the army, to be shattered in their first encounter after all their boasting? It is not surprising that Morgan felt that his fondest hopes had been recklessly ruined.

But the Rangers had been trained for just such emergencies and, when their colonel blew the "turkey call" on the bone whistle which he carried, and those piercing sounds were heard above the din of battle, his men rallied.

Quickly they formed into line, eager to regain what they had lost. Every man felt that his country and the honour of his corps were at stake, and he was ready to die if necessary. Already the afternoon was half gone, but before night could stop the bloodshed many a man would pay the penalty of a soldier; some of those lithe, bronzed, hardy fellows, throbbing with health and vitality, would not see the sun rise over Bemis Heights on the morrow.

In the forest ahead a little clearing had been made for a small farm, and there the Rangers came upon the advance line of the enemy.

"Now we'll get it hot!" exclaimed Rodney under his breath, but among them all not a face paled nor a hand grasping a rifle trembled. On, directly at the British, the men ran like deer, except a few detailed to duty as sharpshooters, dodging behind stumps or climbing trees as agile as monkeys. On go the Rangers. Now the British fire into the line and some fall.

Why do they not return the fire? Ah! now their rifles leap to shoulder at close range and every shot tells! What ghastly gaps are left in the British ranks, and the Rangers are still rushing on

like demons, loading as they run! It is too much for those fighting machines accustomed to fight, as they march, with mathematical precision; they turn and run. Back they go to the hill behind, where there are reinforcements waiting with cannon, the riflemen at their heels. Oh, the cruelty of it all, shooting, stabbing, yelling!

Now the British swarm upon the meagre lines of the Rangers and the latter are forced back, literally by weight of numbers. And, as they retreat, a British detachment is sent around to attack them on the flank. They press forward, expecting to crumple up Morgan's men like tall grain in the hand of the reaper! They will teach those rude fellows a lesson, that Americans can't stand before the trained soldiers of Europe.

"Here come the New Hampshire boys!"

Stalwart men they were, those men from New Hampshire, led by Cilley and Scammel. Their training in military matters had been meagre, indeed, but they fight, and Morgan's men rally for another onslaught, and again another, for they will not stop until darkness stops them. Hurrah! now they have the cannon, but the retreating British wisely carry the linstocks with them so the cannon may not be turned against them, and later they are able to recapture them.

Backward and forward, yells of triumph on one side and again on the other. Rodney and Zeb keep together. There is blood on the side of young Allison's face, scratched by a bullet, as he would have said, had he known it. "On and at 'em." Down goes Zeb, his companions in their onward rush leaping aside or over his prostrate body. Rodney saw him fall, but what could he do? If they ever came back he would find him. He doesn't forget, and, when they come staggering back through the smoke, with the British bayonets behind them, Zeb is carried to the rear.

"You're lucky it's no worse, Zeb."

"That's what the feller said as lost both legs. If I can keep clear o' the scalpin' knife I'll fight agin, sure's yer born!"

"If I'm alive to do it I'll see that you are taken off the field to-night."

"I know ye will if the redcoats don't take the field away from ye. If they do, the red devils will get more scalps than they can carry."

"They haven't got it yet. Here we go again," and, saying this, he joined the mass of running men returning to the charge.

There was the same din, the same clouds of acrid powder smoke, which now is lifted by a breeze, showing the solid ranks awaiting them. As Rodney fires he is conscious that he has shot an Indian, an Indian with blue eyes! What was an Indian doing in those serried ranks, why wasn't he skulking on the outskirts as Indians should? The enemy yield, and are driven back on to a rise of land in their rear, where they make a stand and again hurl back the riflemen.

As the Rangers retreat, Rodney sees the Indian lying on the ground lift his rifle to shoot. A Ranger knocks it aside, while another aims a blow that would have brained the savage had not Rodney knocked it aside, for he had recognized Conrad!

"Help me to take him," he cried.

"Kill him an' leave him," cried another.

Rodney grasped Conrad by the shoulders and another rifleman, with a growl at such folly, seized him by the heels. So it happened that he was laid by the side of Zeb.

By this time the battle raged along the entire front. American reinforcements were coming up and greater reinforcements were being sent to support the British, and Gates was back in his tent thinking it all a small affair.

With nightfall the two armies lay back like panting wolves, exhausted, and, now that there was time, Rodney made sure that both Zeb and Conrad had their wounds dressed.

"The Rangers won glory to-day and bore the brunt of the fighting. It was hot, though."

"I reckon you're correct, Rodney. I felt of it an' found it so," was Zeb's reply.

"It is reported about camp that Gates and Arnold have quarrelled, and Arnold was so mad he resigned and Gates accepted it."

"That so!" Zeb whistled, and then made a wry face on account of the pain in his leg. "That leaves Arnold in a pickle. 'Taint the height o' military etiquette to resign under fire. I wish Arnold was in command, though."

"You aren't the only one who wishes it. Well, I must find that Indian or he won't forgive me for shooting him."

"Too bad ye can't shoot straighter."

"That's unkind. When you know him you'll change your mind."

"Humph!"

Of what happened in the two weeks following this battle, history tells but little, for there was little that was decisive. Burgoyne waited for Clinton to come to his assistance. He did not come. Some of his messages did not get through the lines to Burgoyne. The Americans gradually got control of vantage points between the British and their avenue of retreat to Canada. But these were not dull days for the Rangers. There was scouting and skirmishing in which they bore an

active part.

On the afternoon of October seventh Rodney brought in word that the British troops were moving, and Gates quickly ordered Morgan forward to engage them. The latter, as was his custom, had obtained a knowledge of the country and he saw a better plan, which was to lead his men around to a wooded hill on the enemy's flank and attack from there. This suggestion was approved.

"This will begin the end," remarked a fellow on Rodney's right.

"Unless Gates blunders," remarked another.

There before them lay a panorama which might well stir the blood, the finest looking soldiers in the world forming on the plain below.

General Poor's men were advancing to engage the enemy in front. Now is the moment for Morgan's men!

How they swept down on those British regulars, loading and shooting as they charged, and every ball finding its mark!

The enemy's volleys were not those of marksmen and did comparatively little execution. Now Dearborn's men are charging with the bayonet, and sharpshooters are picking off the British officers. Human beings could not stand under such an onslaught. The enemy's lines wavered, and then were swept off the field by the soldiers they had ridiculed. What will the King of France think when he hears of this?

Ah! there rides Frazer, gallant soldier, rallying the disheartened British troops. Frazer is a host in himself. If he succeeds, he may turn the tide of battle. What! he reels in his saddle and aides ride to his side and he leaves the field to die a few hours later. Those Rangers back on the hill seldom miss the mark.

The enemy shield themselves behind their entrenchments, and the Americans, flushed with victory, are charging them, and there goes Arnold riding the field like a madman, though Gates has ordered him to remain in camp. It shall not be said he resigned through fear, if he dies for it. But this desperate charge could not succeed, and Morgan's men turn back and Arnold is wounded in the same leg that was shot during the attack on Quebec. The British admire bravery and Arnold's portrait is to decorate shop windows in London for the curious to gape at. Alas for Arnold that the bullet was not better aimed!

At last it is night. The Americans have not been able to deliver the finishing stroke, but the British have learned that their fate is not to be a pleasant one, whatever happens.

These are but glimpses of that eventful struggle. The history of it is another story and a thrilling one.

We may think of Rodney and Zeb exulting as the days passed and they saw the American lines tighten about the hesitating enemy, hesitating only to be lost. Conrad, true to the manners of his adopted people, sat in stolid silence, seeing much and saying nothing, while his wound quickly healed. And there is Gates, so anxious for glory--he thinks now that he may get Washington's place,--that he is willing to agree that Burgoyne's soldiers may return to England if only they'll fight no more against America, and we may imagine the smile on the face of the English general. Nor is it difficult to imagine the dark red of anger in Colonel Morgan's face when Gates seeks his support for the place of commander-in-chief, and the "old wagoner" curtly tells him that he will have no part in such a scheme, that he will fight under Washington or not fight at all.

Zeb was sufficiently recovered from his wound to be able to see the British troops march past on the day of the surrender, looking down the ranks of Americans, some trim and soldierly, as were the Continentals, and others clad in homespun or the skins of the forest. And in the ranks filing past in dejection Rodney saw the sneering face of Mogridge. The flower of the British aristocracy, sons of nobility and members of Parliament, had been subalterns under Burgoyne. Mogridge, as ever, had followed in the wake of those having money so that he might live as the leech lives.

"I have got a furlough, and as soon as this wound will let me I'm going to Boston to see the folks." And at the moment Zeb said this he was carrying, in an inside pocket of his dirty hunting shirt, a letter from Melicite, the fair young French girl whose kindness to him and young Lovell in Quebec had won from him more than mere friendship.[3]

"And I'm going down into Connecticut to find the girl who sewed her name inside my coat," remarked a militia man standing by; for there were girls who won husbands by this simple little device, stitching their fate into the homespun coats they made for the soldiers.

Rodney turned away, feeling a bit lonely. He would find Conrad.

"Conrad, if I can get you freed will you promise me to live a friend to Americans and, on getting back to your people, will find Louis and bring him to my home in Charlottesville?"

For several minutes Conrad made no reply, and then he said: "Yah, I vill." And so it came about that, when his wound was healed, he turned his face toward his chosen home in the forest.

[3] See "Marching with Morgan."

CHAPTER XXVI

TRICKED, AND BY HIS FRIEND

Burgoyne, on meeting Colonel Morgan after the surrender, had said to him: "Sir, you command the finest regiment in the world."

"A feller with ornary judgment mought reach that ar conclusion with half the experience," remarked a lank old rifleman, whose peculiar gait had given him the name of "Lopin' Luther." Nevertheless, the compliment greatly pleased the Rangers. It could not, however, remedy the injustice done Morgan and his corps by Gates in not making favourable mention of them because the "old wagoner" so sturdily refused to participate in Gates' scheme to supplant Washington.

"Nawthin' ter do but keep at it; sun'll be shinin' bimeby," was the terse comment of one of the Rangers, and his was the philosophy which prevailed.

Rodney thought of the Indian saying: "My foot is on the path and the word is onward," when, on the first of November, orders came to join Washington's army.

"Now we'll be under a general as will play fair," was the way one rifleman expressed the general sentiment, and they set out on their journey, war-worn and ragged and weary with the arduous campaigning of the previous months.

As they marched away, one of the number sang to improvised music those stirring words written by the Reverend Timothy Dwight, one of the army chaplains:

"Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise,
The queen of the world, and the child of the skies."

Sorry looking Rangers were they when they arrived at Washington's headquarters; shoes worn out, clothes in tatters. There they found a dwindling army. The battles of the Brandywine and Germantown had been fought in their absence, and the British were in Philadelphia, planning for a hilarious winter. What remained of the American army must exist outside in the cold of a bitter winter and do what they might to keep the enemy where it was and cut off its supplies whenever possible. Those of the Rangers who had suitable clothing were immediately assigned to duty. At Gloucester Point they bore themselves so creditably that Lafayette said of them: "I never saw men so merry, so spirited and so desirous to go on to the enemy...."

Later, at Chestnut Hill, their unerring rifles did such execution that Howe's soldiers bore a sorry burden back to Philadelphia. There were sad gaps, as well, in the ranks of the Rangers, and among those fatally wounded was the gallant Morris who had charged the line at Bemis Heights.

As usual, the Rangers were assigned to outpost duty and scouting. Owing to need of secrecy, many a bitter winter night was passed by Rangers in this work without a camp-fire. These were wretched weeks for Rodney Allison; and there were moments when they seemed worse than the days of his captivity among the Indians. Then he would be reminded that Morgan's men were noted as well for endurance and fortitude as for courage and skill. It should not be said that the son of David Allison flinched or shirked a duty!

At the close of one cold, gray day spent on guard the officer in charge of the guard said to Rodney: "Can ye keep awake all night? I needn't ask ye though; ye've got to, fer thar be no men left to do the job."

"I'll try. What is it?"

"This mornin' one of our scouts saw a British officer ride to a house 'bout half a mile from here. We sent three Rangers down thar an' hunted high an' low, but hide nor hair could they find. I 'low he's thar an' to-night he'll try to git ter Philadelpy. You got ter go down thar an' stop him. If a word won't do, try a bullet."

It was a dismal prospect. The wind was cutting, and Rodney's clothes were worn thin. The weather was almost too cold for snow, but by night it fell in fine, stinging particles. Out on the road young Allison tramped to and fro to keep warm, occasionally stopping to thresh his arms. Late in the evening he saw someone go to the stable, and soon after a double team was driven out. The door of the house opened and a woman came out and entered the carriage. There were good-byes spoken in loud tones with no apparent attempt at concealment. Rodney was no coward, but in his heart he was glad that, instead of two men, he had only one and a woman to deal with. The woman might scream but probably wouldn't shoot.

The driver cracked his whip and the team came down the road at a rattling pace.

"Halt!"

The word rang sharply on the ears of the driver, a black man, and he quickly brought his horses to a standstill.

"Drive back. My orders are to allow no one to leave that house."

"You surely aren't making war on women," said the girl, opening the door of her carriage, and

her voice sounded strangely familiar.

"I am making war on no one who obeys orders," he replied, his rifle levelled at the driver.

"Is that you, Rodney Allison? It is!" Then she laughed, such a merry, rollicking laugh, which the next instant gave place to indignation, as she exclaimed: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What have I done that I should not be permitted to return to Philadelphia? Am I the man your backwoodsmen searched the house for, do you think? Black Pete does not greatly resemble any British officer I ever saw," and then she laughed again. "And I'm not forage, am I? And there's not a soul but me in this carriage; look for yourself. There, now tell Pete to drive on, please. After all, I'm glad to see you. And send my love to your mother and Naomi, won't you."

Rodney hesitated. She was the same imperious, winsome girl who had been his favourite playmate. No, there was no one inside the carriage; he was sure of that. How the men would laugh at him for capturing a negro and a girl! He felt like a ninny and afraid he might look like one.

"Drive on," he said with all the importance he could command, adding: "I am sorry to delay you, but must obey orders."

"Good night," she called back as she rode away. The coachman was plying the whip, and there was a note of triumph in her voice that somehow jarred on Rodney's nerves.

As he paced back and forth the conviction that he had made a grave mistake grew upon him, though for his life he could not be sure why it might be a mistake. Why need he say anything about the affair? The men would only joke him. Yes, he would tell the whole story and take the responsibility.

"Did ye inspect the inside o' the nigger as well as the carriage?" was the question sharply asked him by the officer the following day, when it was found that the officer's horse was gone from the stable, and that every slave on the place had run away the day before, just after the search of the house.



"SAY, YOU FELLERS AS HEV BREECHES OUGHT TER BRING US IN A BITE TER EAT."

Assuming the disguise of a black menial was the last thing he would have suspected a haughty British officer to do!

Oh, but the disappointment was a bitter one! He had expected promotion. Certainly he had earned it. Now, that hope was gone. His blunder was the jest of his comrades, who would call after him: "Nigger in the woodpile, nigger on the box."

Morgan, troubled with rheumatism, had gone to his home in Winchester for the winter. The army was half starved and poorly clothed, and to make matters worse, it was generally understood that these hardships were due to corruption and incompetency; for there were some in authority, in those days, who were greedy, dishonest and hard-hearted.

Young Allison had occasion to visit the camp at Valley Forge and the sights he saw there never left his memory. Wretchedness and misery were on every side. How did Washington, knowing as he must that these conditions were unnecessary under proper management, how could he hope ever to save the country?

Who was that haggard fellow with bare feet wrapped in rags and little but an old horse blanket to keep out the wintry wind? Angus? Yes, no doubt of it!

"Hi, Rod! Say, you fellers as hev breeches ought ter bring us in a bite ter eat. What's the good o' your foragin' if yer don't?"

"I haven't had a mouthful since last night, myself. How are you, anyway? I don't see how you men can stay here and bear it."

"Many of us wouldn't if we'd the duds ter git away in. It's a hard road ter Charlottesville fer bare feet."

"I'm beginning to feel like taking it. When we drive the British out of the Quaker City then we'll apply for a furlough, eh, Angus?"

"I'd go this minute if I could."

"I doubt it, Angus. You always were a tenacious fellow."

"What's the good o' stayin' when Congress won't provide board an' clothes? They sure are a shiftless lot."

"They might easily be improved, it would seem, but we've gone too far in this war to turn back now."

"Starvin' an' freezin' ain't goin' ter help ther cause none."

"Spring will soon be here and we'll feel better, I hope."

Spring was approaching, and never again was the American army to suffer as it did that winter at Valley Forge. Those who endured, and lived through it, won such glory as few men achieve.

Colonel Morgan rejoined his command in the spring. The enemy were beginning to show signs of animation. Rumours were about that Howe intended to leave Philadelphia, and then another to the effect that he was to be recalled.

One day a company of Rangers was sent to support Lafayette at Barren Hill, Rodney among the number. Two British generals were marching their men by different routes from Philadelphia to capture the distinguished Frenchman and his command.

"Here," thought young Allison, "is my chance," and he set his face, which had noticeably hardened during the cruel winter. No more would it look with favour on the flattering smiles of a girl; at least Rodney had so resolved.

When the charge was made in characteristic Ranger manner, Allison was in the front line and was the last to turn back, though there were several bullet holes in his clothes. Another charge, and again he was in the lead. A big redcoat was upon him before he could reload. He clubbed his rifle, knocked aside the bayonet thrust and felled his antagonist. Then, when he turned to retreat, it was too late; a flanking party was at his back, and, with several other prisoners, he was driven off to Philadelphia.

Into the Provost Prison on Walnut Street he was huddled along with others. Oh, the squalor of it! The air was foul, the food poor, and the officer in charge, Captain Cunningham, a brutal man, inflamed with drink most of the time.

How his head ached the following morning! At first he attributed it to the foul air, but surely that could not cause every bone in his body to ache, nor the parched, feverish condition of his mouth. Was he, after so long escaping the hazards of camp and battle, to die in a hole like that old prison? That had been the fate of many a man.

"Hello, Allison. I'm glad, yet sorry, to find you here."

Rodney looked up. They had just brought in Lawrence Enderwood. For a few minutes, in the pleasure of companionship, the lad forgot the fever pains, but they would not be forgotten for long.

Enderwood entreated Cunningham to send a doctor, but was gruffly told to mind his business. The next morning Rodney was delirious.

CHAPTER XXVII

A BLENDED ROSE

For weeks the Quaker City girls had been looking forward with much anticipation and great eagerness to the eighteenth day of May, 1778. On that day there was to be a most wonderful, grand and gorgeous pageant in honour of the Howes.

There was much chirping and fluttering those evenings in the homes of the Shippens, the Chews, the Achmutys, the Redmans, and others. In the midst of all this lived Elizabeth Danesford, and a very lively part of it she was.

Among all the Philadelphia beauties--and none in all this great land or the lands across the seas could excel them--Lisbeth was a peeress. About her shrine could be found as many worshippers as any of the charming queens could boast. Scions of Britain's aristocracy, favoured with a glimpse from under her dark lashes, forgot their other duties and waited upon her whims. And she, Tory though she was, delighted in seeing the haughty bend the knee to a girl from the Old Dominion.

And that graceful fellow, Andre, who had a knack for rhyme, a little skill with the brush, and could design a lady's costume with even better success than he could pen a verse, ah, he was in his seventh heaven! Time enough to sorrow bye and bye when he should step from a cart with a rope about his neck, all because of Benedict Arnold.

There was a triumphal arch erected in honour of Lord Howe, and another in honour of his brother, the general. There were pavilions to build around the arena in which gaily attired knights, mounted on richly caparisoned steeds, were to contend, knights in white and knights in black, and their reward the favours to be bestowed by the fair damsels of the "Blended Rose" or "The Burning Mountain." And there were men and women no doubt--usually there are--who would have sold their immortal souls rather than have missed an invitation to attend.

Never before had America witnessed such a brave display, the parade of floats upon the river, the fireworks, the tournaments, the dazzling costumes, the sumptuous banquet and the brilliant ball to conclude it all; and then that beautiful Italian name, "Mischianza," the title by which it should be known to future generations.

The sun was winking at the closed curtains of Lisbeth's room the next morning as she stood before her mirror for a farewell glance at her splendid attire, and that towering head-dress flashing with jewels over which the hair-dresser had worked long and marvellously. The face was fresh, the beautiful eyes undimmed, the eyes of a conqueror, flashing as she recalled Lord Howe bending low over her fair hand with unmistakable admiration in his face.

While she thus admired herself, the drums were beating and the soldiers were marching out of the city to capture Lafayette, who, it was thought, would make a suitable decoration for the glory of the Howes. Really they should take away with them something in the way of glory other than memories of an idle winter amid Philadelphia's hospitality, and of the pomp and beauty of the "Mischianza." But the poor soldiers came marching back without their prize, while the ladies were yet talking of the fête, their costumes and their conquests. Yet, as we have learned, the soldiers, missing their prize, did bring back a meagre harvest for the maw of the Provost Prison, and of that Rodney Allison was a part.

What of the poor fellow we left moaning in delirium, and Lawrence Enderwood, doing his best to quiet his friend, while he inwardly raged at their jailer's brutality? He was a very sick lad, as Lawrence could see by the morning light filtering through the dirt of the windows.

"He'll not last long in this den; they die like flies. I know, for I've seen 'em," said a haggard prisoner, who had entered the prison a hale, lusty man and was now a tottering skeleton.

Helpless to aid his friend, and forced to sit idly by and see him suffer and die, Lawrence Enderwood buried his face in his hands.

"General Howe well might know this be no place for women."

The gruff, surly tone of Cunningham was answered by one as sweet as the note of a song bird.

"But, Captain, he surely might know it would be a better place for human beings if it were."

Lawrence lifted his head and his eyes lighted, as well they might, for the girl was a refreshing picture.

"You are right, Miss Danesford. General Howe not only might, he ought to know about this villainous place."

"Ah, Mr. Enderwood--pardon, that epaulette declares you are a captain and the red facings of your blue coat indicate that you lead Virginians. Possibly, however, the Mister to you is of more value than the title of captain, since your General Washington has made himself famous with the British as a plain 'Mister.'"

"It must be very humiliating to their generals to be beaten by a plain 'Mister,' must it not? But I would not say unpleasant things, for verily your visit is most welcome, whether you came to see me or another."

"You, most assuredly. Colonel Brent was boasting yesterday of having bagged a genuine militia captain from old Virginia, and, when he told me your name, I did not thank him for his exploit."

"Believe me, I greatly appreciate your kindness. Perhaps, having been so kind to a poor Virginia captain, you may come to speak of 'our' Washington, for you are a daughter of Virginia."

Lisbeth appeared not to notice this allusion to her Tory principles, and exclaimed, as she looked with evident disgust at the squalid surroundings: "Why will men be so cruel to men? I will tell General Howe some truths that will cause his ears to burn, and--"

"And shut the door against your return. You see I am selfish enough to look for another visit, though this pestilent hole is no place for you to visit. Howe will do nothing. When he was in

command at New York our men literally rotted in the foul prison hulks lying in the harbour. It is a cheap and an easy way for killing us off."

"Now, no lectures, Captain Enderwood. Howe shall know of this, and I believe will do something to improve it. Meanwhile, here is a little basket of food cooked by our old Nancy. You always praised Nancy's cooking when you came to 'The Hall' in the old days, so you are under obligations to eat every crumb of it, even if it isn't as good as the prison fare."

"Good as the prison fare! Why, the cockroaches that crawl around here are literally starving. It's a marvel you got past old Cunningham with this basket. Nothing infuriates him so, and this morning I saw him knock on the floor a bowl of broth brought to one of the prisoners."

"Oh! I can't understand it."

"No, and you never will until you get better acquainted with men like Cunningham, which God forbid. But tell me about the 'Mis-er-'"

"'Mischianza?' Oh, it was the most delightful affair ever known. You should have seen it. The floats on the river, the parades, the arches, the battles between the knights and all! Well, Major Andre was a true prophet when he said no Roman fête would equal it. I simply can't find words to describe ever so little of it."

With you present I couldn't have realized its magnificence if I had seen it, was the thought in Enderwood's mind, but what he said was: "They tell me it was gorgeous, and you may say with the old Roman, er--how do those Latin words go? Anyhow it was to the effect that he'd been a part of the doings, quite a big part at that."

"I? Why, I was but a crumb at the banquet."

Ah, Lisbeth! Those flashing eyes, that colour such as "blended rose" never had, that lithe, rounded figure radiating vitality, bespeak too much of modesty in your words.

"Go on, Nat, old boy, faster! We must save the girl. Up and at 'em, Rangers! Cheated of promotion, and by a girl! Oh, Lisbeth, how could you do it! You knew I'd believe what you told me."

"Who is that?" The girl's face is pale and her voice trembles.

"Another victim. I was about to ask you, if possible, to have a doctor sent here. Cunningham refused it. You know him, surely you do. It's poor Rodney Allison. He'll not ride many more races, I'm thinking, such as the night he rode and overtook your horse and stopped it."

"Rodney! Don't you know me, your old playmate? Don't you know Lisbeth? How hot his head is!"

The girl sat, as one dazed, with her cool hand on the lad's forehead. He lay more quietly under her kindly touch.

"He hasn't got to suffer as long as the most of us. It will only be a question of a few days in this place," said Lawrence, bitterly.

Lisbeth looked up, and Lawrence saw that her eyes glittered and her face looked hard. She bade him adieu and was gone before he could say more.

"She come in like an angel o' mercy an' went out with a face like Jezebel's. Guess she was feared she mought ketch the fever," said one of the prisoners. Captain Enderwood swore at the poor old man, though the captain ever respected age and regarded profanity as the mark of a boor.

That night Rodney Allison slept in a clean bed in a neat room, with a doctor by his side and a nurse none other than Miss Danesford herself, while Captain Lawrence Enderwood, on parole, walked about the city and then took night watch at the side of his sick friend.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NEW VENTURES WITH OLD ACQUAINTANCES

What is more grateful to a weak, weary mortal on a hot morning than a snug seat under the shade of a tree, stirred by a gentle breeze from the river? Rodney Allison could think of nothing, and sank into the seat with a sigh of relief.

This was his first attempt at walking abroad since his illness, during which the British had left Philadelphia and returned to New York, pursued and harassed by the Americans. That morning Captain Enderwood had left him, and, when he had inquired for his bill, he was told that it had been paid. He had been dimly conscious during his illness of the presence of a nurse other than Enderwood, but when he had asked about it the captain had ignored the question and talked about something else. Surely he was indebted to some one for his life and life was very sweet this July morning.

"When d'ye leave yer grave?"

"Hello, Zeb! I was thinking about you, and wondering if we'd ever meet again."

"An' I was thinkin' the same thing when I got sight o' you an' concluded we wouldn't."

"Concluded we wouldn't?"

"Ye see, I 'lowed 'twas only yer ghost I was lookin' at. Ye've either had poor victuals or a poor appetite."

Rodney had the first hearty laugh he enjoyed for months and replied, "I've been pretty sick and am lucky to have any sort of looks left. But what are you doing in Philadelphia?"

"I'm hangin' around this town hopin' the schooner Betsy has escaped the British and will bring my wife."

"Your wife?"

"All the result o' my furlough in Boston."

"So Melicite, of whom Donald Lovell told me so much, consented. Zeb, you're a born conqueror. When you found you couldn't capture Canada you won a wife."

"More to my likin' than the whole o' Canada. Now I'm wonderin' how I'm goin' to support her. A soldier's pay for a month won't buy more'n a pinch o' salt, an' salt ain't very fillin' 'thout somethin' to go along with it."

"Well, I know where we can get a square meal, though it won't taste as good as that roast pig down in Jersey. Will you go with me?"

"Certain sure I'll go. I reckon thar be no good o' my hangin' round any longer to-day."

As they walked down Chestnut Street Rodney saw a familiar figure approaching.

"Zeb, there comes one of the greatest men in the country, Thomas Jefferson. Wonder if he'll remember me."

He was not left long in doubt. Mr. Jefferson's face was careworn and noticeably older than when Rodney had last seen him, and the lad was but a shadow of his former self, yet the man recognized him the moment they met.

"How is my young friend this morning? You've had an illness."

"I am just up from a fever. Mr. Jefferson, I want you to know my friend, one of Morgan's Rangers, Mr. Campbell, or Zeb, as we call him. He's been to me almost as good a friend as you."

"I'm always glad to meet your friends, Rodney. What are you doing here?"

"I'm waiting till I get strength enough to go back to Charlottesville. I was taken prisoner and am on parole and I think home is the best place for me."

"Charlottesville is a good place at all times, especially now that Burgoyne's troops are imprisoned there. I should think you might also find it profitable to return, for the prisoners kept there have put money in circulation and made work. By the way, I haven't seen you since you sold your horse to my overseer. I felt badly about that because I knew you didn't let him go without a sacrifice. I will give you a letter and when you get back you take it to Monticello and get the colt. You can pay me at your convenience."

This was unexpected good fortune, and Rodney felt very grateful. "I wish I had Nat here. I would start to-morrow," he remarked to Zeb as they walked on.

"Thar seems to be no such thing as complete satisfaction in this world. Now, if I had a home fer Melicite an' me to go to, well, I reckon I'd be a little easier in mind."

"Come to Charlottesville with me. You heard what Mr. Jefferson said about business being brisk there. It's only a little village, but we'll find some way to turn a dollar. You've got to come, unless you can find something better."

And so it happened that Rodney and his friend and Melicite, who arrived in due time, all found their way to Charlottesville, and also found home and opportunity.

Rodney was surprised on his first visit to the quarters of the "Convention troops," as they were called. On Colonel Harvey's estate, about five miles distant from the Court House at Charlottesville, barracks and camps had been erected for the prisoners, who were constructing a building to be used as a theatre. Many of them had vegetable gardens, one officer, it was said, having spent nearly five hundred dollars for seed to be planted by his men.

When these prisoners had arrived there the previous winter, after a march of over seven hundred miles from Massachusetts, the hillside, which now bloomed, was desolate and bleak. But few buildings had been erected, and about the only provisions obtainable were corn meal and water. All that had been changed as by magic, and many of the poor fellows had not known such comfort since leaving their homes in England, while most of the Hessians were faring better than they ever had done at home.

It will be recalled that Gates had weakly consented to terms which allowed Burgoyne's soldiers to be transported to England on condition they should not fight against America. He was so eager to secure a surrender, that he evidently did not stop to consider that these soldiers could be used in England to replace those stationed there, who in turn could be sent to America. Shrewder men were quick to see the mistake and to take advantage of any circumstance to prevent it. Such a circumstance was afforded by Burgoyne himself, who, not liking the quarters assigned to him in Massachusetts, had declared the terms of the surrender had been broken.

Moreover, when the Americans were ready to let the troops go on their arrival in Massachusetts, the British would not provide transportation, and by the time they were ready the Americans had various pretexts for not complying with the terms of the surrender. The British declared their opponents acted in bad faith. Undoubtedly many Americans believed England would act in bad faith if she could get the troops back.

Zeb's attitude on this question was that of many Americans. "I don't care to argue the matter," he said. "I can if necessary; the arguments been't all on one side."

Zeb would always be lame from his wound, in fact this had forced him to leave the army. "The Rangers aren't what they were," he told Rodney, "since Morgan was given another command. He was the king pin. He had a way o' seein' the Rangers got what belonged to 'em. They knew it, an' thar was nothin' they wouldn't do for him. I mind one day he was ridin' past whar some o' the men were at work clearin' a road. Two of 'em were tryin' to roll out a big rock an' a little squirt of a sergeant was bossin'. 'Why don't ye help the men?' Morgan shouted at him. 'I'm an officer, sir,' says the sergeant. 'Oh yes,' says Morgan. 'I didn't think o' that,' an' he jumped off his horse an' helped the men roll out the rock."

Rodney's work that fall often required him to visit the prisoners' encampment. One day, as he was passing a cabin, he heard some one call in a faint voice for help. He rushed in and found a man lying on the floor. He helped the man to his bed and as he did so saw that he was none other than his old acquaintance, the "Chevalier."

While Allison did not feel so bitter against this man as formerly, for the reason that his recent experiences had brought him knowledge of bigger rascals than he had ever supposed this man to be, yet his feelings were far from being friendly. He nevertheless ran for the camp doctor and waited until he had declared the man out of danger for the present. Rodney heard his advice to the patient, that he keep very quiet and free from excitement, as otherwise his next attack might prove fatal.

Rodney turned back into the cabin to ask if there were anything he might do, and the look in the face of the "Chevalier" startled the lad. It quickly passed, however, and the man quietly said: "Why, this is Rodney Allison, who saved my miserable existence out on the Scioto."

"Not much of an exploit to be remembered by. You'd have shot him if I hadn't."

"Why, you shot the redskin in the heel and, if I correctly recall my mythology, Paris required the assistance of the god, Apollo, before he was able to hit Achilles in a like spot."

"He only had a bow and arrow while I had one of the finest rifles in the country."

"Anyhow, it was an act worthy of a better return, as you no doubt concluded later."

This allusion to the gaming incident annoyed Rodney. He thought the least the fellow might do was to make no mention of that rascally affair.

"If I don't refer to that matter I see no reason for you to do so. Of late I've been associated with men who think that, after you've rolled a man in the dirt, it isn't necessary to rub it in."

The "Chevalier" whistled and then smilingly quoted:

"The duke, he drew out half his sword--
The guard drew out the rest."

"Can I do any more for you, sir?" Rodney spoke impatiently.

"You might tell me how are the mother and the little sister and about the home you feared the miser would get. You see I have a good memory for some things."

"They are well. They yet have the home, though I did my best to sacrifice it. If there's nothing I may do I will be going."

"You are kind, and I wish you would call again. I expected you would be in the army. As I remember, you were a lusty young rebel when I knew you."

"I served with Colonel Morgan's Rangers at the capture of Burgoyne."

It must be admitted there was a touch of malice in these words and the tone in which the lad spoke them.

"So I'm still further indebted to you. Well, as you are responsible for my being here, I hope you will feel under obligations to call again when I am better able to entertain company. By the way, did you ever know a man by the name of David Cameron? Why I ask is because you resemble a man by that name, whom I once knew."

"That was my father's name," replied Rodney, and the next instant he could have bitten his tongue. He quickly added: "My father, after coming to this country, had good reasons for taking the name of his mother's people, the Allisons, not that he had any occasion to be ashamed of the name of Cameron. Now that he is dead we shall retain the name of Allison."

"As I remember your father, he had no occasion to be ashamed of anything, except, possibly, some of his acquaintances. So David is dead."

"My father was a man who kept good company to the day of his death."

"He was a very kind-hearted man, and such cannot always keep what you term 'good company.' May I ask you to send here some worthy lawyer or trustworthy justice of the peace? I have some transactions which I wish to discuss with such a person. You, being the son of your father, I

know will do that for me."

"Where and when did you know my father?"

"More than twenty years ago in London. When did he die, Rodney?"

"He was killed at the battle of Point Pleasant at the time we were out in the Ohio country."

"Four years ago. Do you come often to the camp?"

"Frequently."

"Will it be asking too much for you to look in on me, as they say?"

"I will do as you wish."

As Rodney rode away he thought much upon the strange man he had left. Evidently he was one whom his father had befriended. And the rascal had tried to rob his benefactor's son. Probably, what with the illness and all, the fellow's conscience twinged a little. Anyhow, he should have the lawyer though it were better he should have the clergyman, thought the lad.

That night Rodney found it difficult to put thoughts of the sick man out of his mind and, when a few days later he again had occasion to visit the camp, he took along with him some delicacies which he thought might tempt the patient's appetite.

"So you didn't forget me. What's this? Something besides camp fare? Oh, yes, you are David Cameron's son, but you've got a life work ahead if you live up to his standard."

"I believe you, sir."

"Would you be willing to send this letter? I suppose it will reach Philadelphia in a few days. By the way, did your father come to Charlottesville from London?"

"No. He lived nearly eighteen years down in Prince William County. He was employed there much of the time by Squire Danesford."

"Danesford! Did he have a daughter about your own age?"

"Yes. Lisbeth. She was in Philadelphia the last I knew of her. I heard the other day that the state had seized their estate. Danesford is a bitter Tory, you know."

"Danesford died a poor man in London last April. His daughter, I understand, died about three months later. At least the person to whom that letter is addressed wrote me she couldn't live."

"Are--are you sure? I didn't even know she was sick."

The man looked keenly at his caller. "I have no reason to doubt the report. It was said she took her father's death very much to heart, and, what with not being well,--she had nursed a friend, I think,--she was taken down with a fever. You must have known her?"

"Why, she was my playmate. I--I can't realize she's dead." Then hurriedly saying good-bye he went away, seeing little and thinking much, and the "Chevalier" lay looking at the blank wall.

On arriving home Rodney went directly to his room. He shrank from telling the news to his mother. He must first think it over. The girl in the red cloak who had stamped her foot and called him a simpleton, ah, she was the one he missed, and not her who had laughed in his face that winter night and wheedled him as she laughed.

Mrs. Allison was greatly shocked. Rodney had been ashamed to tell his mother of the time Lisbeth had tricked him, and now it somehow seemed disloyal to the girl to speak of it. Well, he would forget it, and so resolving he worked as never before. There was work to do, both for himself and Zeb; moreover, it was profitable.

When he next had occasion to visit the encampment he called on the "Chevalier" as soon as he arrived. All the way to the camp the question had been in his mind: How did it happen that the man knew the Danesfords, spoke of them as persons with whom he was quite familiar? He met Angus, who said, "Ridin' back along soon?" and, on being told, replied, "I reckon I'll wait fer ye."

Rodney found the "Chevalier" unusually bright and nimble of wit. "I suppose, Allison, you think the war is over with the surrender of Burgoyne? Most of your people lose no opportunity to express that opinion. I notice, however, that the British army marches about the country pretty much as it pleases. Why, my lad, the war is just begun."

"Certainly it's a good beginning," was the lad's rather dry response.

The "Chevalier" appreciated it. There was a twinkle in his eyes. It was evident he liked to draw Rodney out. He said: "What would you people do if by some accident, for you can never hope to win unless some other powerful nation helps you, what would you do if you should win? All the colonies would be by the ears in less than a year."

"Perhaps you never heard what 'Sam' Adams told the Quakers who said they wished to obey such government as the Lord placed over them."

"What did he say?"

"He told them the Lord was providing a government."

"Don't you think this so-called government, where Congress may only humbly ask the several colonies, each to do its part, a pretty poor sort of government to lay at the Lord's door? Why, once these colonies get clear of England, they'll fight among themselves. But, even if they

didn't, the country would have a patchwork of little petty governments and nothing in common to make them strong."

"Do you remember what Gadsden said at New York at the meeting held in protest against the Stamp Act?"

"No; what was it?"

"He said: 'There ought to be no New England man, no New Yorker known on the continent; but all of us, Americans.' I well remember father speaking of that. There was a queer codger who joined the Rangers. The men, because of his long legs, named him 'Lopin' Luther,' and he once said: 'We're fightin' fer free Englishmen as well as Americans, only the darn fools don't know it.'"

"You mean, or rather he meant, the principle involved. But, from what I have learned, the more of what the people term freedom they have, the more they want."

"And why not? Whoever called you the 'Cavalier,' evidently knew why he did so."

The man's face became grave. He said: "I am not worthy of the name. I have great respect for those who were known as Cavaliers. Some of your best blood in the Old Dominion descended from them. I believe it isn't so much what people have as the way they use it. I've seen those who were getting along finely until something more was added to them, then make a failure of it. Take your hero, Morgan; what did he have but his own courage and brains and powerful body? He's made the most of what he had. Had he been born a duke he might not have done so well."

"Could he have done what he has in your country, where your dukes are born with the privilege of lording it over the Morgans?"

"Rodney, you argue well. Where did you learn? I forget your father. You are indeed his son. Must you go? Well, here is a packet, of which I wish you to take charge. When you learn that I am dead, and the doctor tells me my heart is about worn out, you are to open the packet and I am sure will do right with what you find there."

Rodney hesitated, and the man, noticing his hesitation, said, "You will not regret it. You believe me, don't you?"

Looking into the face of the man, Rodney had it not in his heart to say no. Somehow, and he was almost ashamed to admit it to himself, he did believe. This man, who, under the guise of friendliness, once had robbed him, this gambler, literally compelled his liking.

When Allison had finished the business for which he had come, and was about to leave, he noticed the camp doctor hurrying to the Chevalier's cabin. With fear in his heart he followed. The fear was realized. The man who had been known to him as the "Chevalier" was dead. Rodney helped prepare the body. He had performed similar services for friends who had died in camp. It was not a duty from which he would flinch. Yet he started back, his face was pale. The doctor noticed the agitation and sought the cause. Young Allison was staring at tattoo marks on the right arm of the body. These represented a closed hand gripping a sword. Rodney had seen the exact counterpart of that on the right arm of little Louis, who had told him, "Papa put it there!"

CHAPTER XXIX

WHAT THE PACKAGE CONTAINED

"What's the trouble here, Rodney?" asked Angus, shouldering his way in through a throng of the curious, assembled about the door of the cabin.

The hearty voice of his friend helped Rodney to collect himself. "There has been a sudden death; he was a man I knew," he replied.

"I reckon you've lost a good friend," said Angus, when he saw the face of the figure on the couch. "He certain sure did you a good turn."

Rodney's look showed that he wondered just what his friend meant. He was not aware that Angus knew the man.

Seeing that Rodney seemed puzzled, Angus said: "Why, that time he euchred old Denham. You told me then ye didn't know him."

"What do you mean? This the man who paid off the mortgage? Oh! if I had known that!"

It all came to Rodney Allison, as light comes to one who has been blind, and is made to see. This man, instead of a knave, had been his friend! He had won the money in gambling that it might be used for a right purpose. He had so used it, and taken from his own purse as well. The sense of having done an injustice is very bitter when the injured has passed beyond one's power to atone!

When everything had been done that might be, and Allison and McGregor were walking away, the latter said: "I've found a feller as is lookin' fer a good horse. He saw Nat when you rode in this mornin' an' he asked no end o' questions, whar ye lived, how ter git thar an' said he was thinkin' o' buyin'. I 'lowed as how 'twould take a tote o' money ter buy. Thar goes the identical minion o' King George, now."

Rodney looked in the direction indicated. "That knave!" he exclaimed. "I'd never sell Nat to him if I needed the money to buy bread."

"Don't like his looks, eh? Yer powerful fussy. He ain't the best lookin' feller I ever did see, but I reckon his money's good."

The other made no reply. He could not explain his antipathy to Mogridge, for it was he whom Angus had pointed out. So he's here, thought Rodney, wondering what he could want with a horse.

Allison was not an unduly inquisitive youth, but it may readily be imagined his pulse quickened when he sat down with his mother to open the package which had been given him by the "Chevalier." It almost seemed that the man had known he was about to die, though his manner had been so cheerful.

Ah! Here was money--the package had seemed heavy--nearly fifty pounds in all; and here was his gold watch and seal ring and a letter. He quickly opened the letter and read with wonderment in his eyes, and then tears.

"MY DEAR RODNEY:--The man, whose life your father once saved at risk of his own, and whom you again saved from the bullet of a savage, wishes to express his sense of obligations. Please accept the contents of this packet as such an expression, for the obligations themselves cannot be repaid; also what I have tried to provide in the will which you will find enclosed. I would suggest that you consult the lawyer whom you brought to me at my request. Rightly cared for, the inheritance will ensure your mother and sister against want and afford you the chance of which you have been deprived on account of lack of funds. I'm sure you will understand that I do not allude to 'Chance,' the fickle goddess of the gaming table, and I have been happy to learn you profited by the lesson I taught you. Had I learned a similar one at your age, that one may not obtain something for nothing and be happy in the possession, I might have been of some service in the world. Instead, my life has been a failure, and that which I am leaving to you was the fruit of the service of my forebears. May you never feel the humiliation of uselessness, of having contributed nothing to the world that was of value!

"The property is in England, and not until the war shall be ended, I presume, will it be possible for you to come into the inheritance. I am leaving no near kindred. My little son died in Canada during my absence; his name was Louis. Elizabeth Danesford's mother I knew when she was a girl and lived in London, and, for her sake, her daughter, had she lived, was to have had the half of what I'm leaving to you. The estate in England, which Louis would have inherited, reverts to a distant cousin.

"I do not know whether your father ever told of his acquaintance with me, nor what his feelings toward me may have been. Surely, there was ample cause why they should have been unpleasant, but I like to think they were kindly. He loved me despite the sore distress I so often caused him, but when I struck him down, thinking him an enemy, and fled, believing myself a murderer, he must ever after have thought I deserted him. I hope he knows better now.

"After that horrible experience I joined the army in Canada and a year later was married. Louis was born and, after six years of such happiness as one who believes himself a criminal may enjoy, my wife died and Louis went to live with her parents near Lachine. One day I met a man who recognized me and, fearing exposure, I fled to New York, later to Philadelphia and then to Virginia at the outbreak of Dunmore's war. After that I returned to Canada only to learn that Louis had died. It seemed as if a fatality pursued all I loved. I went to England, determined to give myself up to justice, but was astounded to learn that there was no evidence that a crime had been committed. I was told your father did not die but was put aboard ship for the Colonies. Believing that England, however much in fault as to administration, was right in fighting to retain her government over this country, I again entered the army. The day on which I had the serious attack of heart trouble, and called for assistance and you came, I saw that in your face which told me you must be near of kin to David Cameron. I wonder that I never had noted the resemblance. If you are like him, as I believe, you will not leave the world the poorer for having lived in it, and at the end will not, as I, feel impelled to recall these lines which that wretch Wharton wrote:

"Be kind to my remains, and oh! defend,
Against your judgment, your departed friend."

"RICHARD W. RALSTON."

"Dick Ralston! And but for him I would not have had David. The ways of Providence are past finding out, Rodney."

"Nor would we have had a home but for him, mother."

"True, I forgot that. He had a kind heart and I remember what an attractive gentleman I thought him, the day he came here. Think what he might have been!"

The day on which the remains of Ralston were laid at rest, Rodney, on returning home, found Mam in a state of agitation. She beckoned him into the house and hoarsely whispered: "Dar's a

dirty Injun in de shed. I wouldn' 'low him ter set foot in dis yar house, I wouldn', not ef he'd scalped me on de spot. He grunt, an' squat, an' 'lowed he done wouldn' stir less he seed you."

"I'll bet I know him," saying which, Rodney ran out and, as he suspected, found Conrad stolidly waiting for him.

"Where's little Louis, Conrad?"

"He vould stay mit der priest at Detroit. He say he a medicine man be himself."

As Rodney wrote the letter Conrad was to take back through the hundreds of miles of forest to the son of Richard Ralston, he thought what a pity the boy's father died without seeing him. The son should know, however, that he was loved and that his father had been a brave man and that, if he but chose to return to England, he might come into his inheritance. What would he choose, the life of the missionary with all its dangers and sacrifices, or that of a country gentleman,--rather what would his advisers choose for him?

Weeks lengthened into months and months into years, slowly so far as concerned the progress of the war, but swiftly with regard to the growth of the country. Notwithstanding Continental money was becoming almost worthless, bountiful crops were raised and the greater part of the population were engaged in work.

The surrender of Burgoyne had proved the success necessary to enable that wise old man, Benjamin Franklin, to secure recognition of the United States by France. A French fleet hovered along the coast and annoyed the British without accomplishing anything decisive. The American people seemed less inclined to make great effort, relying on French aid to secure independence for them. Corruption,--depriving the army of supplies and money,--the weakness of Congress,--unable to do more than suggest and leave to the several states to respond or not as they chose,--all served to delay the war. But for Washington, patient and wise, standing as a tower of strength about which the patriotic people might rally, the end of it all might well have been in doubt. The people of the country, however, did not doubt. The great majority of them believed their cause invincible.

Washington's army had chased Clinton's British troops from Philadelphia back to New York, and would have inflicted serious punishment upon them but for the treachery of General Charles Lee. As it was, Washington saw the hand of Providence in the fact that, after two years, his and the British army were back in their old positions with the British less confident and powerful. General Howe on returning to England had remarked: "Things go ill and will not go better."

The Wyoming massacre, perpetrated by Indians and Tories, sent a thrill of horror over the land, and the man who had been thinking the war would be ended without further assistance from him burned to fight the foe. The successes of Clark in capturing British posts west of the Alleghanies, and so laying the foundation of our claim to that vast territory, increased Rodney's restlessness.

"Zeb," he said to his friend on hearing the report, "I'm beginning to long to go West again."

"You ought to know what is thought of a man as fools with fire after havin' his fingers burned once."

"I can't help it. I know that is a wonderful country. Great work will be done there in the next few years and I want a share in it."

"I reckon I'd wait till the war is over an' the redskins are tamed."

"Well, I suppose I'll have to. But it'll be either the West or the war for me before long."

Zeb looked shrewdly at his friend, wondering why he was so restless, for he had prospered. "It's nigh two years since we licked Burgoyne an' they don't make much headway. Reckon we'll hev to go back an' show 'em how we used to do it. But, if we ain't needed, it will be too bad to leave things here just as we've got 'em into shape."

"You ought never to go to the front again, Zeb. You've done your share and, with your wound and your rheumatism, you couldn't last long in camp. You stay at home and take charge of matters and let me go. I heard yesterday that the British are having things their own way down in South Carolina, murdering and pillaging. Cornwallis evidently intends to frighten the people into submission and then invade Virginia."

"He hasn't licked 'em to a standstill yet awhile. Thar's Sumter an' Marion left, an' the boys o' the mountains,--oh! but he'll have trouble."

"I hear the Tories down there are helping the British much more than the Tories in any other part of the country have been able to do."

"Unless they do they won't help much. They were goin' ter help Burgoyne an' didn't amount to a pinch o' snuff. All they can do in the way o' fightin' is killing women an' children an' then scalpin' 'em. Anyhow, if ye can't keep contented at home any longer I'll try to look after matters here while you are away. But why not get advice from your friend at Monticello? 'Pears to me you have done your share of the fightin'."

"I don't like to bother him with my petty affairs, with his many important duties. Being governor of Virginia is enough for one man, let alone all he's doing for national affairs and for education. I wouldn't be surprised if he did something to abolish slavery; father believed he would. You know Mr. Jefferson says he trembles for the future when he thinks that God is just."

"We'll never live to see it, Rodney."

Rodney inherited his father's hatred of slavery, and his kindly feelings toward all men, but the following morning, when he went to the stable and found that Nat, together with saddle and bridle, had been stolen in the night, and thought of what Mogridge had asked Angus--well, it was fortunate for both that young Allison and Mogridge did not meet that morning.

CHAPTER XXX

RODNEY RIDES WITH THE DRAGOONS

After the battle of Camden, in which Gates was sorely defeated by Cornwallis, affairs in the South looked very dubious for the American forces. A large part of the people in South Carolina and Georgia were loyalists, and their relations with their Whig neighbours were exceedingly bitter. Except for small bands of patriots under daring leaders like Marion and Sumter, "The Carolina Gamecock," as his followers proudly called him, the British and their Tory allies held possession of Georgia and South Carolina and were planning to sweep northward into North Carolina and on into Virginia. Cornwallis' fame was in the ascendant.

Such were the conditions on that October day when Rodney Allison joined the army of Gates. Two days later came the cheering news that a force of Tories under the command of Colonel Ferguson had been almost annihilated at King's Mountain by a body of pioneer Whigs, most of whom came from the border settlements over the mountains. A number of those captured, known to be guilty of murder, were hanged and the impression made on other Tories in those states was very depressing.

The Americans now expected great assistance from the militia of those states, but the British emissaries among the Indians incited them to attack the frontier settlements, thus making it necessary for those brave fellows who had won the battle of King's Mountain to return home to protect their families from the savages.

When finally General Nathaniel Greene, at Washington's request, was sent to supersede Gates, he found an army of only about two thousand men, poorly equipped, the enemy strongly entrenched, the country swept bare of subsistence and winter approaching.

Through the influence of General Morgan, Rodney was assigned to duty with Colonel Washington's dragoons. It was a proud moment for the lad when he found himself associated with the finest body of cavalry in the army. Those daring horsemen were the terror of the Tories and young Allison rode with them on many a daring exploit, a full account of which would fill a volume. The lad had now grown to man's stature and sat his horse like a veteran. How often on those wild rides he longed to be on the back of Nat once more! Poor fellow, what had become of him? The sight of the spur-scarred, hard-ridden horses of the British cavalry filled him with fury as he thought it probable the fate of his beloved colt had been like theirs.

Finally came the day when General Morgan was to add another to the long list of his successes. Cornwallis and Colonel Tarleton, "the bloodhound," had planned to trap Morgan and annihilate his force. The latter was compelled to retreat and Tarleton was sent in pursuit. When he believed Morgan was fleeing from him he threw caution to the winds and hurried his force on to what he doubted not would be the capture of the doughty leader.

Morgan has since been criticized for hazarding a battle. His force was far inferior to Tarleton's and did not include artillery as did the latter's. Moreover, with Morgan were many raw militia who could not be depended upon to face the veterans under the British leader, knowing, as they did from sad experience, that little quarter would be granted them if defeated. But he had the veteran Marylanders who had fought so bravely at Camden, and the support of Colonel Washington's dragoons. Furthermore, shrewd leader of men that he was, he felt that the moment had come when he must fight. To continue his flight meant capture or dispersion of his forces. He believed that Tarleton would be over-confident and so run headlong into whatever trap he might set, and this was just what happened.

At a place called the Cowpens he found the position he desired. Here were two small hills, one behind the other and with a river at the rear; no place for a scared militiaman to escape, nothing to do but fight to his last gasp, because he knew that if he offered to surrender he would be ruthlessly bayoneted.

The night before the battle it is said Morgan did not sleep. His men, enraged at the cruelties inflicted upon their country by the invaders, were longing for revenge. This spirit Morgan fanned to flame. Throughout the night this big, brawny man, whose fame for success in many perilous undertakings inspired the confidence of every man who came to know him, walked among the soldiers and talked with them. His was the appearance of a man perfectly confident that the next day would bring victory and glory to American arms. He laughed and joked with them. "Just hold up your heads, boys; give 'em three fires and you are free. The Old Wagoner will crack his whip over Ben Tarleton in the morning, sure as he lives. Think of what your wives an' sweethearts will say when you go home an' tell what ye did."

Ah! How they loved and admired the big fellow who was one of them. He had stormed the

defences at Quebec after leading his men through an almost impassable wilderness; he had led his Rangers in wild charges against the regulars under Burgoyne and driven them; he would win, and they would help him, to the last drop of blood in their veins.

In that spirit of implicit confidence in their stalwart leader even the raw recruits never thought of trembling on that raw morning in the middle of January, 1781, when the outposts came riding back with the report that Tarleton was approaching. They had been placed down in front with the Marylanders at their backs to support them, and Colonel Washington's dragoons screened behind the hill waiting for the word to charge. In front of the Carolina and Georgia militia, between whom Morgan had excited a spirit of rivalry as to which body should behave with the greater bravery under fire, riflemen had been stationed.

Soon the American sharpshooters in front began firing and falling back toward the militia, who never wavered. They had been ordered to hold their fire and they obeyed implicitly.

Now the solid wall of British infantry is almost upon them, and a sheet of flame spurts out along the American line; then another and another, and those raw soldiers only retreat before overwhelming numbers when it is apparent they can resist no longer, and then, like veterans, slowly and under orders.

Over behind the hill Rodney Allison's knees grip his horse. This waiting is worse than fighting, waiting for that soul-stirring word, "Charge!" Now it rings out and echoes through the ranks, and like a whirlwind they sweep right through the lines of Tarleton's cavalry forming for a charge, and, wheeling about, come riding and slashing back through them again. Colonel Howard is skilfully handling the troops and the gallant Pickens rallying the militia. The British ranks waver and become disorganized, the Americans charge and the British throw down their arms and sue for mercy or flee from the field.

Tarleton is trying to rally his shattered horsemen when down upon them come Washington's dragoons, with Colonel Washington far ahead of his men.

Then it is that Tarleton tries to kill or capture his antagonist. Washington's sword is broken at the hilt and, but for the assistance of a boy, the brave Washington would have been struck down. Now his men are at his back and Tarleton rides away with his fleeing men as though pursued by demons.

Then come orders to pursue and the dragoons go riding out into the country after the fleeing British. Most of them choose a wrong road and only succeed in picking up a few stragglers.

Rodney had charged and wheeled and charged again. It had been his fortune to be in the thickest of the struggle from first to last. Then he joined in the pursuit.

The group of horsemen with whom Rodney was riding came to forks in the road. Rodney's training among the Indians often proved valuable and now he declared there were but two horses of the enemy on the road they had come, also that they had divided at the forks, each taking a different road. As many of the cavalry had come to the Cowpens over this road early the same morning, there was a confusion of tracks and a consequent confusion in the minds of the pursuers. Allison doggedly stuck to his conclusion and rode on alone.

Judging from the tracks, it was evident that the fleeing British cavalryman had ridden his horse at a mad gallop and Rodney urged his own to the utmost.

On either side of the road stretched a scraggly growth of trees. Suddenly his horse shied and at the same instant a pistol shot rang out. The lad's left hand relaxed its grasp of the bridle and slipped nervelessly to his side. The ball had broken his arm below the elbow. Had his horse not been frightened and shied, the ball intended for his heart probably would have hit the mark.

A British rider came crashing through the bushes. Finding there was but one pursuer, and he wounded, the fellow had decided to fight. He certainly had Allison at serious disadvantage, but the latter, slipping the half drawn pistol back into the holster, grasped the bridle with his uninjured hand and wheeled his horse sharply to meet the foe, who was almost upon him.

For an instant each stared in astonishment at the other. Then into the face of young Allison swept a savage fury. His gray eyes looked black and blazing. He dropped the bridle and drew his sword, spurring his unguided horse forward. The horse swerved and Rodney missed the blow he aimed at the head of his antagonist. The latter was a better swordsman on equal terms, and Rodney, unable to use his left hand, was at a decided disadvantage.

Soon he was at his wits' end. Twice the thrust of his antagonist had grazed his neck. Thinking he had Rodney at his mercy, the Englishman rose in his stirrups and swung his blade with evident intent to cut him down. In parrying the blow Rodney's inferior blade was broken near the hilt, which was knocked from his hand. He struck his horse a smart blow with his right spur, reached for his pistol and cried "Down, Nat!"

Mogridge, for the Englishman was none other than the one who had stolen Nat and nearly ridden him to death, again rose in his stirrups, confident of cutting down his foe. The look of malignant hate in his face changed to that of consternation; the horse under him was kneeling!

Rodney draws his pistol. The foe is wickedly spurring and yanking the bridle and cursing his horse. Every thrust of the spur into Nat's gaunt flanks pricks Rodney as well. He aims to kill and his finger is on the trigger, when, like a flash of light, he recalls Zeb's words: "Killin' even an enemy is serious, an' not pleasant to dream about."

"Dismount and surrender your arms or I'll blow out your brains," he cried.

Mogridge dared not disobey.

"You will now lead that horse back to camp. If he could ride you he should have the chance, you cur."

"There's such a thing as courtesy even in war," replied Mogridge, though he was careful to do as he was bid.

"Not with horse thieves."

"All's fair in love and war," retorted Mogridge, and then, seeing the look in Allison's face, he wisely decided to say no more.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOME AGAIN

Back at the scene of the battle Rodney found preparations were being made for the little army to march, leaving a detachment behind to dispose of the dead and care for the wounded. No one seemed to know where they were to go. Many thought, in view of the fact that the British had been defeated and Tarleton put to flight, Morgan would remain in the vicinity for reinforcements and await an attack by Cornwallis. Few realized what a daring thing he had already done.

Had Tarleton's headlong charges thrown his meagre forces into confusion they would have had little opportunity to retreat and most of them would have been cut down. Morgan afterwards was criticized by the envious for having risked a battle under the circumstances. He believed he knew that it was necessary to fight that battle and he had won against odds. The "Old Wagoner" didn't propose to wait while Cornwallis should overtake him with a superior force and recapture the prisoners and spoils and annihilate his forces. Instead, though he concealed his plans, he resolved upon making the quickest retreat possible. To do this he marched toward a ford which was nearer to Cornwallis than to him. It was a great risk but he felt he must take it.

"If you've got a home, you better get to it, my lad," the kindly doctor had said while hastily bandaging the lad's wounded arm. "This may give ye trouble, though I hope not."

"That's good advice," said Morgan, who chanced to overhear the doctor's words and recognized Rodney. "You report to Colonel Washington and tell him Morgan has ordered you home to Charlottesville. This war has eaten up too many of my Rangers already." With that parting advice he mounted his horse and rode away.

There remained for Rodney nothing to do but obey orders, though he was loath to leave. The spirit of victory was in his soul. That had been a glorious battle and the right had triumphed. The bloodhounds had put their tails between their legs and fled. He did not realize that they would rally and soon be close upon the heels of the retreating Americans, and that nothing would save the latter but the winter floods which were to fill the rivers and delay the British.

Through a land ravaged by war, over roads deep with mud, where might be found only the poorest accommodations for man or beast, Rodney Allison rode homeward. His arm gave him little trouble except the fear it might always be stiff. The nearer he came to home the more he longed to be back with the army. It troubled him to think that in the victories he was sure would follow he could not have a part.

"I'm never able to win promotion," he said to himself, rather bitterly. The picture of that winter night, the witching face of Lisbeth and her mocking laugh as she rode away, kept recurring to his mind. What a girl she had been, the best playmate even a boy might wish; always ready for a lark, daring, mischievous, with wit as keen as a blade and quick as a flash. He could not think of her as dead, and the bitterness of his heart at the trick she had played upon him troubled him now as he looked back upon it. "She didn't know what she was doing, did she, Nat, old boy?"

Nat had been plodding along but now lifted his head with some show of interest. The hard life he had led since the day Mogridge had stolen him had not quite broken his spirit, though he was gaunt and worn with cruel service.

"I've got you, Nat, if I haven't got a promotion, and of the two I'd rather have you," said his rider, patting his shoulder.

The lad was nearing his long journey's end. In the distance were the mountains. A few miles further and Monticello would be visible. Over those mountains lay what seemed to the lad a great world. The life he had lived in it seemed like another life and Ahneota, little Louis, the Indian village and all, but the fancies of a dream. Sometime he would go back there.

When he saw the familiar house a thought came to his mind, and he wondered it had not come sooner. Would he find them as he had left them, mother, and 'Omi, and Zeb, and Mam, and Thello?

For an instant he almost feared to go on. Ah, there was Mam, waddling across from house to

shed, probably going to call Thello from his favourite seat in the sunshine on the sheltered side of the building. The door opens and his mother runs out. She has seen him riding up, and she cries: "Rodney, my boy!" and throws her arms about his neck, standing on tiptoe, for he is tall.

"Only one arm left for hugging, Mother. This is the only badge I bring back from the war," and he pointed to his arm in the sling, adding, as he notes her alarm, "it's nothing serious. How are you all?"

"All well and happy now you are back, all save poor old Thello, who's very miserable, but sight of you will make him forget his aches, I'm sure. Why, Rodney, where did you find Nat? Don't you know me, Nat, or have they treated you so badly you've forgotten old friends?"

Naomi, now grown to a handsome girl, ran out and it was some minutes before quiet was restored. Then Rodney asked for Zeb.

"I sent him to Philadelphia. I learned a very dear friend of ours living there is in sore trouble, and I hope he will succeed in having her return with him."

"Any one I know?"

"Some one you are much interested in. Your friend, Captain Enderwood, who had been to Philadelphia to see her, came all the way to Charlottesville to tell us about her. He also told me how she was the one who had you released from prison and nursed you through your sickness while you were unconscious, and made herself sick in consequence."

"You don't mean--you can't mean--"

"I mean that Elizabeth Danesford is alive. The mistake came from the report that she couldn't live. Doesn't it seem too good to be true?" and Mrs. Allison watched Rodney's face as she added: "She is very poor. Captain Enderwood wished to marry her, he frankly told me so, but you know it would require more than poverty to weaken Lisbeth's resolution. The captain had heard her speak of me as her adopted aunt and he came all the way to Charlottesville to tell me about her. You see, her uncle and aunt in Philadelphia are dead and she has no kin in this country save a cousin who is not able to render her much if any assistance."

"She'll not be poor if we ever get what the 'Chevalier' left to us in his will, for half of what he gave to me, you know, he said he should have given to her."

"It may be difficult to persuade her to accept it. Enderwood, you know, offered to share his fortune with her and she refused." There was a questioning smile on Mrs. Allison's face.

Two days later Zeb returned from the Quaker City, very much downcast in appearance until he saw Rodney, when his face lighted with pleasure that was unmistakable.

"Looks how Tarleton let ye off easy."

"He was busy looking after himself. But, Zeb, it seems you failed in your errand. Is Lis--is Miss Danesford sick?"

"No. I reckon," and Zeb gave a shrewd glance at Rodney, "the wrong man was sent. She looks pale and tired. She has to work hard; she's runnin' some sort of a girls' school, an' I'd ruther train a yardful o' raw recruits."

"I'm sorry you could not persuade her to come," was all Mrs. Allison said, but she looked at her son, who remained silent.

About two weeks later he announced that he was going to Philadelphia and no one questioned him as to what his errand might be, though it was evident to Zeb that Rodney's mother was much pleased.

He had recovered from his wound, and good care and plenty to eat had restored some of Nat's good spirits, so that man and horse made a very pleasing appearance as they set forth on the long journey. Nat found his rider impatient and both were tired when at evening they reached the tavern where they were to stop for the night. After supper Rodney sat on the veranda watching the arrivals and departures, for the house was a much frequented public resort on the main thoroughfare.

CHAPTER XXXII

A REWARD GREATER THAN PROMOTION

Rodney had risen from his seat to step inside when the arrival of a coach, which bore the marks of a long journey, attracted his attention.

The light from the small paned windows shone dimly, but he saw that only two passengers alighted, one a young woman accompanied by an old man who appeared to be very feeble and leaned heavily on her. "Father and daughter," was Rodney's thought, but his words were, "May I assist," as he went to meet them.

The girl turned a white, tired face toward him, the face of Elizabeth, but, oh! so unlike that which had mocked him three years before!

"Rodney!" The girl's voice trembled.

"Aye, lass," said the old man in a weak, quavering voice. "Would the laddie were here the noo. I'm a sair burden for your frail strength."

For an instant Rodney's face was whiter than Elizabeth's.

"Father! I am here," he cried and took the tottering man in his strong young arms.

It was a strange story to which Rodney listened that evening, one of thrilling interest and unusual even in the annals of wild frontier life.

Not all Indians were grateful, especially when maddened by lust for war and vengeance. In the gray light of the dawn of the morning, after the fierce conflict at Point Pleasant, the savage who, because of his greed for scalps, had skulked behind when his fellows had crossed the river the night before, bore little resemblance in his war paint to the Indian David Allison once had warmed and fed within the walls of the stockade on a cold winter night; but he instantly recognized his benefactor. For hours David Allison had lain unconscious in the place where he had fallen. During the night he had regained consciousness, but could make no outcry louder than a moan. He had thought to drag himself toward the camp where he might attract the attention of his comrades, but had failed, and lay back against a fallen tree, his face gray and ghastly.

The morning mists hung low over the river, and, under cover of these, the savage paddled away unobserved, his captive lying in a faint on the bottom of the canoe. No prisoner ever received kinder treatment at the hands of an Indian than did David Allison. As he gradually regained his strength he yearned for home and pleaded to be taken back to Virginia, but his captor was obdurate; he wanted the man for a companion and in many ways gave evidence of affection for him.

One day, in a quarrel with another savage, the Indian was killed. Shortly after, Allison made his escape and in a canoe drifted down the Ohio. He felt unequal to attempting to work his way back as he had come and so decided to go with the current down the Ohio into the Mississippi. His utmost endurance and shrewdness were put to many severe tests before he reached a white settlement and eventually New Orleans. There, when about to take ship for Norfolk, he was taken sick with a fever which left him without strength or money.

The desire to return home, whatever might be the sacrifice, became almost a mania with him, but he would not beg his way. And so he struggled on, meeting with disappointment again and again, yet never yielding in his purpose. Then, on the threshold of success, when he landed in Philadelphia without money and without friends, he was taken seriously ill. By what seemed the merest chance Elizabeth learned of him, and it was through her efforts and sacrifices that he was spared, to enjoy in the comforts of home and family, years, scant in number but abundant in happiness.

Rodney Allison won promotion--the esteem of all who knew him--and who could wish for greater? A few years later, on the spot where had stood the lodge of Ahneota, he built a home such as he planned that night, years before, when he lay by the spring looking down on the sleeping Indian village; and Zeb was his neighbour, prosperous and respected. Some called Rodney "Colonel" Allison because of his military experience and influence, but he preferred the title of "Squire," and by this he was generally known among neighbours and friends. In the Indian wars he was serviceable in securing peace, for he was trusted alike by red people and white. Through influential friends, of whom General Morgan was one, he was able to accomplish much that was of benefit to the pioneers with whom he had cast his lot.

Soon after Benedict Arnold's treason, Rodney received a letter from Donald Lovell, then a captain in the army. "Uncle Dick," the letter said, "exclaimed when he heard of it: 'what a pity that a British bullet had not taken his life before a British bribe killed his good name!'" It became a custom for Rodney and Zeb to yearly exchange letters with Donald Lovell who, later in life, established his home down on the far-away Kennebec River.

"Squire" Allison's children were David, and Harriet, and Elizabeth, and Rupert, and Donald; and Elizabeth's eyes were very dark blue with long lashes, at times as serene as the eyes of the beautiful lady whose portrait had greeted those who came to "The Hall." At other times they flashed, as did those which her father, when a shivering soldier lad, saw looking out of the old coach and mocking him as he stood guard one bleak winter night.

THE END

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