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by T. C. Harbaugh**

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**LITTLE OSKALOO, [A]
OR,
THE WHITE WHIRLWIND.**

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.



THE TRAILERS OF THE FOREST.—See [page 4](#).

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY AND A MYSTERY.

If, in the month of July, 1794, an observing white man could have traveled unmolested from the banks of the Ohio river due north to the famous Maumee rapids, he would have been struck with the wonderful activity manifested in the various Indian villages on his route.

No signs of idleness would have greeted his eye; the young warrior did not recline in the shadow of his birchen lodge enjoying the comforts of summer life in mid forest. If his image was reflected in the clear streams, it was but for a moment, as his lithe canoe shot from bank to bank. Everything between the two rivers portended war.

Indian runners were constantly departing and arriving at the several native villages, and excited groups of Shawnees, Delawares and Wyandots discussed—not the latest deer trails nor the next moon-feast, but the approaching contest for the mastery of power.

A few years had passed away since they had met and conquered Harmar and St. Clair. Those bloody victories had rendered the Indian bold and aggressive. He believed himself invincible, and pointed with pride to the scalps taken on the ill-fated 4th of November, '91.

But a new foe had advanced from the south—treading in the tracks of St. Clair's butchered troops, but with his stern eye fixed on victory. The Indians were beginning to exhibit signs of alarm—signs first exhibited at the British posts in the "Northwestern Territory," where the powers and generalship of Wayne were known and acknowledged.

It was the impetuous, Mad Anthony who led the advancing columns through the Ohio forests. He had entered the blood-drenched territory with the victory of Stony Point to urge him on to nobler deeds, and with the firm determination of punishing the tribes, as well as of avenging the defeat of his predecessors.

Tidings of his advance spread like wildfire from village to village, and councils became the order of day and night alike.

The Indians knew the Blacksnake, as they called Wayne, and some, in their fear, counseled peace. But that was not to be thought of by the chiefs and the young Hotspurs whose first scalps had been torn from the heads of Butler's men.

Such sachems as Little Turtle, Blue Jacket, and Bockhougahelas stirred the Indian heart, and not a few words of encouragement came from the British forts on the Maumee.

Simon Girty and kindred spirits moved from tribe to tribe underrating Wayne before the august

councils, until a united cry of "war to the knife!" ascended to the skies.

The chase suddenly lost its charms to the scarlet hunter; the dandy turned from his mirror to the rifle; the very air seemed heavy with war.

The older warriors were eager to lay their plans before any one who would listen; they said that Wayne would march with St. Clair's carelessness, and affirmed that the order of Indian battle, so successful on *that* occasion, would drive the Blacksnake from the territory.

Under the Indian banner—if the plume of Little Turtle can be thus designated—the warriors of seven tribes were marshalling. There were the Miamis, the Pottawatamies, Delawares, Shawnees, Chippewas, Ottawas, and Senecas; and in the ranks of each nation stood not a few white renegades.

It was a formidable force to oppose the victor of Stony Point, and the reader of our forest romance will learn with what success the cabal met.

We have thought best to prelude our story with the glimpses at history just given, as it enables the reader to obtain an idea of the situation of affairs in the locality throughout which the incidents that follow take place.

It was near the close of a sultry day in July, 1794, that two men reached the right bank of the Maumee about ten miles below Fort Defiance, which Wayne had erected and garrisoned.

They looked like Wyandot warriors, painted for the warpath. They were athletic men, and one, as could be seen despite the profusion of paint which his face wore, was at least twenty years the other's senior.

Long-barreled rifles were trailed at their sides, and their belts carried the Indian's inseparable companions—the tomahawk and scalping knife.

"There goes the sun," said the youngest of the pair in unmistakable and melodious English. "Look at the old planet, Wolf Cap, if you want to see him before he goes to bed. These are dangerous times, and one does not know when the sun sets if he will be permitted to greet it in the morning."

"That is so, Harvey," was the reply, in the brusque tone of the rough frontiersman, and the speaker looked at the magnificent god of day whose last streaks of light were crimsoning the water. "There was a time when I didn't care if I never beheld the sun again. It was that night when I came home and found no house to shelter me; but a dead family among a heap of smoking ruins, and in a tree hard by a tomahawk buried to the handle."

"You have told me," the younger said, as if to spare his companion the pain of narrating the story of the Indian descent upon his cabin in Kentucky.

"So I have, but I never grow weary of talking about it. It makes me think of the revenge I have taken, and it nerves my arm anew. Boy," and the speaker touched the youth's shoulder with much tenderness, "boy, I was goin' to say that I hope the Indians will never do you such an injury."

"I hope not, Wolf Cap; but I hate them all the same."

The frontiersman did not reply for a moment, but looked across the river longingly and sad.

"Harvey," he said, suddenly starting up, "we have been separated for four days. Have you heard of him?"

"Of——" the young scout hesitated.

"Of Jim Girty, of course."

"No; but we may obtain some news of him in a few moments."

"In a few moments? I do not understand you."

"I will tell you. I am here by appointment," said the youth. "In a few moments I hope to meet a person who will give me valuable information concerning the hostiles. She——"

"A woman?" interrupted the oldest scout. "Boy, you must not trust these Indian girls too far."

"How do you know she is an Indian girl?" asked Harvey Catlett, starting.

"Because there are precious few white girls in these parts. Don't trust her further than you can see her, Harvey. I would like to take a squint at the dusky girl."

The youth was about replying when the dip of paddles fell upon his practiced ears, and Wolf Cap started back from the water's edge, for he, too, had caught the sound.

"Indians!" he said, and the click of his rifle was not heard six feet away, but the youth's painted hand covered the flint.

"No enemy at any rate," he whispered, looking in the scout's face. "Stay here till I return. It is Little Moccasin."

Without fear, but cautiously, Harvey Catlett, Wayne's youngest and trustiest trailer, glided to the edge of the water, where he was joined by a canoe containing a single person.

His giant companion rose, and, full of curiosity, tried to distinguish the features of the canoe's occupant, who was met with a tender welcome at the hands of the young scout.

But the sun had entirely set, and the couple formed dark silhouettes on a ghostly background.

For many minutes the conversation continued at the boat, and the impatient Wolf Cap at last began to creep forward as if upon a napping foe.

"I want to get a glimpse at that girl," he was saying to his eager self. "If I think she is soft soapin' the young feller, why, this shall be their last meetin'."

The young couple did not suspect the scout's movements, and as he crouched not twenty feet from the boat and within ear shot, he was surprised to hear Catlett say:

"I'll let you go when I have shown you to my friend. He wants to see you. Come, girl."

Wolf Cap saw a lithe, girlish figure slip nimbly from the canoe, and when the youth turned his face toward the forest, as if to speak his name, he rose.

"Here I am," he said. "Forgive me, boy, but I've been watchin' you. Couldn't help it, as you talked so long. So this is Little Moccasin?"

As the border man uttered the euphonious title he stooped, for he was almost unnaturally tall, and peered inquisitively into the girl's face.

It was a pretty face, oval and faultlessly formed. The skin was not so dark as a warrior's, and the eyes were soft and full of depth. Wolf Cap did not study the close-fitting garments, well beaded and fringed, nor did he glance at the tiny, almost fairy-like moccasins which she wore.

It was the face that enchained his attention.

All at once his hand fell from Little Moccasin's shoulder, and he started back, saying in a wild, incautious tone:

"Take that girl away, Harvey! For heaven's sake don't let her cross my path again! And if you know what is good for yourself—for Wayne and his army—you will keep out of her sight. Is she not goin'?"

The excited scout stepped forward with quivering nerves as he uttered the last words.

"Yes, sir," said the youth quickly, but throwing himself between the forest beauty and Wolf Cap. "She is going now."

"And will you promise never to see her again?"

"We'll talk about that at another time. Come."

The last word was addressed to Little Moccasin, upon whose face an expression of wonderment rested, and Harvey Catlett led her to the canoe.

For several minutes he held her hand, talking low and earnestly the while, and then saw her send her light craft into the deep shadows that hung over the water.

When the sound of her paddles had died away the young scout turned to inquire into Wolf Cap's unaccountable conduct; but to his surprise the rough borderman was not to be seen.

But Harvey Catlett was not long in catching the sound of receding footsteps, and a moment later he was hurrying forward to overtake his companion.

He soon came upon Wolf Cap walking deliberately through the forest, and hastened to address him.

"Here you are! Wolf Cap, I want to know who Little Moccasin is."

The borderman did not stop to reply, but looked over his left shoulder and said, sullenly:

"I don't know! Do you?"

Harvey Catlett was more than ever astonished; but a moment later, if it had not been for the dangerous ground which they were treading, he would have burst into a laugh.

CHAPTER II.

AN ERRAND OF MERCY.

Abner Stark, or Wolf Cap, was a man well known throughout Ohio and Kentucky in the border days of which we write. Moody and sullen, but at times possessed with a humor that seemed to reflect happier days; he was cherished as a friend by the Wetzels, Boones, and Kentons of the early west.

He had served as a scout under Harmar, St. Clair and Scott, and was among the first to offer his valuable services to General Wayne.

It is needless to say that they were eagerly accepted, and in the campaign of 1793 that witnessed the erection of forts Recovery and Defiance, he had proved of great worth to the invaders.

4

Ten years prior to the date of our story the Shawnees, led by James Girty, crossed the Ohio and fell like a pack of wolves upon Abner Stark's Kentucky home.

The settler, as we have already heard him narrate to young Catlett, was absent at the time, but returned to find his house in ashes, and the butchered remains of his family among the ruins. He believed that all had perished by the tomahawk and scalping knife.

By the hatchet buried in the tree which was wont to shade his home, he recognized the leader of the murderous band. From the awful sight he stepped upon the path of vengeance, and made his name a terror to the Indians and their white allies.

His companion on the occasion described in the foregoing chapter, was a young borderman who had distinguished himself in the unfortunate campaign of '91. Handsome, cunning in woodcraft, and courageous to no small degree, an expert swimmer and runner, Harvey Catlett united in himself all the qualities requisite for the success of his calling. He was trusted by Wayne, from whose camps he came and went at his pleasure, questioned by no one, save at times, his friend Wolf Cap.

We have said that the singular reply given by Wolf Cap to the young scout shortly after the meeting with Little Moccasin almost provoked a laugh. The situation smacked of the ridiculous to the youthful borderer, and the time and place alone prevented him from indulging his risibles.

But when he looked into the old scout's face and saw no humor there—saw nothing save an unreadable countenance, his mirth subsided, and he became serious again.

"We will not follow the subject further now," he said; "I want to talk about something else—about something which I heard to-night."

His tone impressed Abner Stark, and he came to a halt.

"Well, go on, boy," he said, his hard countenance relaxing. "If you did get any news out of *her*, tell it."

"The lives of some of our people are in danger," Catlett continued. "Several days since a family named Merriweather embarked upon the Maumee near its mouth. Their destination is Wayne's camp; they are flying to it for protection."

"Straight into the jaws of death!"

"Yes, Wolf Cap. If they have not already fallen a prey to the savages, they are struggling through the woods with their boats, which could not stem the rapids."

"How many people are in the company?" Stark asked.

"Little Moccasin says eight."

"Women and children, of course?"

"Yes."

"And is this known by the Indians?"

"Unfortunately it is."

For a moment the avenger did not reply.

He appeared to be forming a plan for the safety of the imperilled family, and the young scout watched him with much anxiety.

"I don't know the Merriweathers; never heard of them," Wolf Cap said, looking up at last. "They are in great danger. There are women and children among them. I had a family once. We must not desert the little band that is trying to get behind Mad Anthony's bayonets. God forbid that Abner Stark should refuse to protect the helpless from the tomahawk."

"And here is one who is with you!" cried Harvey Catlett. "Let us go now."

"Yes. We must not see Wayne before we have offered help to the Merriweathers. Are we not near the tree?"

"Nearer than you think. Look yonder."

The speaker pointed to a tree whose great trunk was just discernible, and the twain hastened toward it.

About six feet from the ground there was a hole large enough to admit a medium sized hand, and Wolf Cap was not long in plunging his own into its recesses.

He withdrew it a moment later with a show of disappointment.

"Nothin' from Wells and the same from Hummingbird," he said, turning to Catlett.

"We are too soon, perhaps," was the answer.

"They will be here, then. We may need their assistance. Hummingbird or Wells?"

"The first that comes."

"That will do. Write."

The young scout drew a small piece of paper from his bullet pouch, and wrote thereon with a pointed stick of lead the following message:

"To the first here:

*"We have gone down the Maumee to protect a white family flying to Wayne. Follow us.
No news."*

The message was dropped in the forest letter box, and the disguised scouts set out upon their errand of mercy and protection.

One behind the other, like the wily Indians whom they personated, they traversed the forest, now catching a glimpse of the starlit waters of the Maumee, and now wrapped in the gloom of impenetrable darkness.

Not a word was spoken. Now and then an ear was placed upon the earth to detect the approach of an enemy should any be lurking near their path. With the woodman's practiced care they gave forth no sound for listening savages, and with eager hopes continued to press on.

The tree, with its silent call for help, was soon left behind, and the scouts did not dream that the robber was near.

Not long after their departure from the spot, a figure halted at the tree, and a dark hand dropped into the letter box. With almost devilish eagerness the fingers closed upon the paper that lay at the bottom of the hole, and drew it out.

"A paper at last," said the man in triumphant tones. "I knew I would find it sometime."

The next moment the thief hurried towards the river with the scouts' message clutched tightly in his hand.

Wolf Cap and Harvey Catlett would have given much for that man's scalp, for at the time of which we write he was the dread of every woman and child in the Northwestern Territory.

His name was James Girty, and his deeds excelled in cruelty his brother Simon's.

CHAPTER III.

THE TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

Leaving the characters of our story already mentioned for a brief time, let us turn our attention to the devoted little band of fugitives who were flying through the gauntlet of death to Wayne's protecting guns.

While Harvey Catlett was conversing with Little Moccasin, watched with a jealous eye by the tall

scout, a large but light boat was nearing the foot of the famous Maumee rapids.

It kept in the center of the stream, as if its occupants believed that danger lurked along the shadowed banks, and consultation was carried on in whispers.

The boat thus slowly ascending the stream contained eight persons. Four were men, strong, active and with determined visages; the others consisted of a matron, a girl of eighteen, and two children whose ages were respectively twelve and fourteen.

Abel Merriweather, the matron's husband and the father of the interesting ones grouped about her, was the oldest person in the craft; his male companions were George Darling, his nephew, an Englishman called John Darknight, and a young American named Oscar Parton.

To Darknight the navigation of the Maumee was well known, as he had spent much time upon its bosom, and he was serving the Merriweathers in the capacity of guide.

Abel Merriweather, a little headstrong and fearful, had overruled the counsel of true friends. He believed that his family was in danger while the roof of the cabin near the mouth of the Maumee sheltered it. The muttered growls of war made him timorous, and he saw no safety anywhere save behind the bayonets of Wayne. Therefore, in company with his nephew and Oscar Parton, who was his daughter Kate's acknowledged suitor, and with John Darknight for a guide, he had embarked upon the perilous attempt of reaching Fort Defiance with his loved ones.

"Of course we cannot stem the rapids," the guide said in response to a question from young Darling. "Our portage must now begin."

As he spoke the boat began to approach the left bank of the stream.

"We are nearing the wrong bank," said Parton.

"Of course we are," the settler replied, noticing the boat's course, and he turned upon the guide:

"What does this mean?" he demanded, with his usual brusqueness.

"Nothing dangerous, sir. You see that we can best journey up the left bank of the river. The Indians are massing in the south."

"But I have been advised by the scouts of Mad Anthony to go up the right bank."

"You have?"

"Yes, sir. If I understand you, you have not been in these parts for a month, while my informants and advisers were here but a week since."

The guide did not reply for a minute, during which the boat continued toward the dusky shore, for his hand was upon the rudder.

"Pardon me, John," the settler said; "but I feel constrained to listen to the scouts, one of whom was William Wells himself."

"Wells, eh?" said Darknight, with a sneer. "Between you and I, Merriweather, I would not trust that Injun-bred fellow farther than the length of my nose."

"I consider him a true man," said Kate, the daughter, who had overheard the latter part of the conversation between her father and the guide.

"He doesn't look like a rogue, and I am sure that he would not advise us wrongly on purpose."

John Darknight did not reply to the girl's remarks; but relapsed into sullenness, and doggedly turned the prow of the boat to the other shore.

"What do you think now?" whispered George Darling in the settler's ear.

"I really do not know, George," was the reply, as an expression of fear settled over the father's face. "I trust in God; but we are on dangerous water. Do not be so suspicious, boy, for you make me tremble for the safety of my dear ones."

No further words were interchanged by uncle and nephew, and the boat touched the ghostly shore amid deep stillness of voice and tongue.

But the ceaseless song of the wild rapids fell upon the voyagers' ears, and the first stars were burnishing the dancing waves with silver.

The debarkation took place at once, and the craft was drawn from the water and prepared for the sleeping place of the settler's family. A day of hard pulling against the stream had ended, and the travelers proposed to enjoy the needed repose. The boat was large enough to contain couches for Mrs. Merriweather and the children, while the men would sleep and watch at intervals on the ground.

No fire was kindled on the bank, but a cold supper was eaten in silence, and not long thereafter the settler's household lay almost hidden in the boat. Star after star came out in the firmament above, and the gentle winds of night sighed among the leaves; now and then the plash of some amphibious animal disturbed the stillness, but excited no comment, though the noise caused an occasional lift of the head and a brief moment of silent inspection.

The camp was just over a little rise in the river bank, and the starlit water was hidden from the eyes of the watch, who, for the first part of the night, was the settler himself.

He stood against a tree, wakeful, but full of thought, keeping guard over the precious lives committed to his charge. The boat containing his family was quite near, and the forms of his three male companions looked like logs on the darkened ground.

He did not watch the latter, for suspicion never entered his head, and he did not see that one was rolling over and over, gradually leaving the bivouac, and disappearing. Immersed in thought, but quick to note a movement on the part of his sleeping family, Abel Merriweather let the hours pass over his head.

At last the plash of the muskrat no longer alarmed him; the singular cry of the night hawk that came from the woods across the stream did not cause him to cock his rifle. A bat might have flapped her wings in his face without disturbing him. Despite the peril of the moment and the great responsibility resting upon him, Abel Merriweather was asleep!

The fatigue of the past two days' voyage, and the almost sleepless nights had told upon his constitution. He had struggled against the somnolent god, but in vain; and at last passed into slumberland unconsciously and overcome.

And while he slept there was a noise in the water which was not made by a night rat. Something dark, like a great ball, was approaching the camp from the northern bank of the river, and the strong arms that propelled it gave the waves thousands of additional gleams.

It came towards the camp with the rapidity of a good swimmer, and at length a huge figure emerged like a Newfoundland dog from the water.

It was an Indian!

For a moment he stood on the bank and panted like an animal, then a low bird-call dropped from his lips, and a second form came from the shadow of a fallen tree.

The twain met at the edge of the water, and with signs of recognition.

"Oskaloo cross the river," said the savage, in the Wyandot tongue. "White guide break him promise, and land on wrong side."

"Couldn't help it," was the reply. "The old man is doing just what Wells has told him was best. I tried to run the boat over, and bless me if I don't pay 'im for his stubbornness yet."

"How many?" asked the Indian.

"Seven."

"White girl along?"

"Yes; but recollect what I have said about her."

"Oskaloo never forget."

"Is the White Whirlwind over there?" and the speaker glanced across the river.

"No; him with Little Turtle, gettin' ready to fight the Blacksnake."

"That is good. Now, Oskaloo, go back. To-morrow night at this time come when you hear the night hawk's cry."

"All come?"

"Yes, all; but meet me first."

The savage nodded and turned towards the water, and the next moment plunged almost noiselessly beneath the waves.

As he put off from the shore a hand dropped upon sleeping Abel Merriweather's arm, and roused him with a start.

"Hist!" said a voice in a warning whisper. "Father, you have been asleep. We are going to be massacred. John Darknight, our guide, is a traitor."

The settler was thoroughly awake before the last terrible sentence was completed, and he looked into the white face of his little son Carl, whom he thought was sleeping beside his mother in the

boat.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE MOCCASIN IN THE CAMP.

The settler was thoroughly aroused by his little son's startling communication, which appeared too terrible to be true.

"A traitor, Carl?" he said.

"Yes; an Indian who swam the river has been talking to him on the bank."

"It cannot be," replied the incredulous parent. "He is sleeping——"

He paused abruptly, for he made the discovery that but two forms were lying near the boat. The spot lately occupied by the guide was vacant.

Then Abel Merriweather began to believe that Carl had not been mistaken.

"Hist!" said the boy, breaking in upon his father's disturbing thoughts. "He is coming back."

"To your place in the boat—quick! Do not let him see you here."

Little Carl left his father and glided unseen to his couch in the boat, but peeped over the gunwales to watch the traitor's movements.

Slowly and without noise John Darknight came over the hill, and inaugurated a series of cat crawls toward the spot which he had lately deserted. Once or twice he glanced at the settler, whose drooping head appeared to tell him that he still slept, for he recommenced his crawls, and at last, without disturbing his sleeping companions, regained his buffalo skin.

7

But his movements had not escaped the sentry's eyes, and Carl was regarding him from the boat. The father was a prey to great perplexity; he believed that the guide's movements indicated treason, but he did not know what course to pursue. To discharge him at once might precipitate the bursting of the plot. To keep him longer and watch, seemed the better plan, and was the one which the settler felt inclined to adopt. He did not see how they could ascend the river above the rapids without Darknight's experience, for in the voyage thus far his assistance had proved invaluable.

The night was far advanced and day was no longer remote, when Abel roused Oscar Parton, whose duty it was to stand guard until daylight. He did not impart his suspicions to the impetuous young man, but told him not to close his eyes for a moment, but to watch, for life was at stake. Then, instead of lying by the boat that contained his family, he dropped upon the ground beside the suspected guide, and with a hand at the hilt of his knife, watched the man who was sleeping heavily.

A bird call from the guide's lips, or a suspicious movement, and he might have forfeited his life.

"Father doesn't want to suspect anybody," murmured the boy Carl, who was surprised to see John Darknight sleeping so soundly in the camp after his meeting with Oskaloo on the banks of the river. "I do not know how he came to undertake this trip. We might have been safe where we lived. I know we are not here. He didn't tell Oscar about the treason, for I heard every word that passed between them. May be he doesn't think I saw straight. Well, I know I wasn't very close; but I would swear that it was the guide talking to the Indian, and didn't he come up the bank after the redskin left? I have a rifle, and I am going to watch John Darknight myself!"

Having thus delivered himself of his thoughts, Carl Merriweather continued to watch in silence, and he saw that the night was wearing away.

Oscar Parton was wakeful. No sound escaped his ears, and he saw the river growing darker with the dense gloom that precedes the dawn.

Then he redoubled his vigilance, for the hour was suggestive of surprise and massacre; but the gloom gradually departed, and the first streaks of dawn silvered the flowing water.

It was a welcome sight, for the long night of anxiety had worn away, and with strength recruited by repose, the journey could be resumed.

The young sentry was watching the long arrows of light fall upon the waves, when an object startled him. It seemed to have risen from the river's unseen depths, but a second look told him that it was an Indian canoe. It skimmed over the water like a thing endowed with life, and the beholder, eager to inspect its occupant, stepped to the brow of the bank, but with the woodman's usual caution.

The light growing stronger as the day advanced, revealed the tenant of the solitary canoe to the young man, and while he gazed intently, the craft suddenly shot like an arrow to the shore.

Instinctively Oscar Parton raised his rifle, but the movement was detected by the person in the stream, and a hand gave the peace signal.

"I cannot shoot a woman!" the guard murmured, lowering the weapon. "Her coming may be our destruction, but I cannot harm her. Bless me, I believe she is a white!"

The work of a few moments sufficed to bring the canoe to the shore, and when its tenant stepped upon *terra firma*, she was confronted by the curious guard, who had come boldly down the bank.

"White family up there?" the jauntily clad girl said, pointing up the slope.

"What if they are?" said the young borderman, evasively. "Who are you?"

"Areotha," was the reply. "The white people call me Little Moccasin. See!"

With her exclamation she put a foot forward, and displayed, with innocent pride, a tiny moccasin gaily ornamented with beads.

"It is a pretty name, but what do you want here?" asked Oscar.

"Want to tell white father that Little Moccasin has seen him."

"Seen whom?"

"Don't you know—the young white spy who tracks the red men for the Blacksnake?" the girl said with surprise.

"No."

Little Moccasin was nonplussed.

"Me see him," she said at length, and her deep eyes brightened. "Him and the tall hunter come by and by, maybe."

"Assistance, eh?" said Parton, catching the import of her words. "Well, we shall not reject it. You don't hate the whites, then?"

"Little Moccasin their friend."

"But you are not an Indian. Your skin is like mine."

"Been Indian long time, though," the girl said with a smile. "Have Indian mother—the old Madgitwa—in the big Indian village."

"Don't you know where you were born, Areotha?" questioned Parton.

The girl shook her head.

"Come up to the camp. I believe that you are true to our people. We have a girl up there who will like you."

"Little Moccasin like her already," was the artless answer.

Having made her canoe fast to the bank by a rope of twisted sinews, the mysterious girl followed Oscar Parton up the slope. He led her straight to the encampment, where her unexpected appearance created much excitement, and she was immediately surrounded.

Abel Merriweather was the first to question her, and Areotha was about to reply when she caught sight of John Darknight, the guide.

The next moment every vestige of color fled from her face, and, staring at the guide, she started back.

She looked like a person who had suddenly been confronted by a spectre.

At that moment John Darknight's face assumed a bold, defiant and threatening aspect; but it was as white as Areotha's.

CHAPTER V.

A BRACE OF DESERTIONS.

With one accord the fugitives glanced from Little Moccasin to the guide. They felt that the twain had met before, and that the present encounter was unexpected and startling to each.

"What do you know about this girl?" said the settler to Darknight. "It seems to me that this is not your first encounter with her."

"I should say that it wasn't," was the reply. "I had hoped that we would reach our destination without meeting her, for her presence among white emigrants or fugitives betokens danger. She is the witch of the northwest territory, and many is the boat that she has decoyed ashore to the rifle and the tomahawk. She doubtless recognized me, for I once pitched her into the rapids of yon river, and if she had her deserts now our rifles would rid the territory of its witch, though I know it is hard to kill a woman."

"Abel, she must not stay here if she is to betray us to death," said the settler's wife, fast upon the guide's last words.

"Not so fast, mother," interrupted Kate Merriweather, with sympathy in her dark eyes for the lone girl. "Remember that we have listened to but one side of the story—Mr. Darknight's; now let us hear what she has to say in her defense."

"Oh, she's a cute one, and you'll hear the sleekest story ever told in these parts," the guide said.

But Kate Merriweather did not appear to have heard him.

"You have listened to the white man," she said to Areotha. "He has not given you an enviable reputation. Now we want to hear what you have to say for yourself."

Reassured by the white girl's kindly voice and looks, the accused maiden stepped boldly forward, and said in a tone trembling but sweet:

"The pale guide does not like to see Areotha here, for she knows him. He is more Wyandot than white man, and where is the boat he ever guided that has not bloody planks? Areotha does not know. Did he not tell the white man in his cabin that the red men would surround it and scalp his family, and then right away offer to guide him to the Blacksnake?"

Abel Merriweather started violently. How did the forest girl know that John Darknight had done this?

"This is insulting, and from a characterless girl at that!" the guide exclaimed, advancing a step.

"Hear her through," said Kate firmly. "You have had your say; she shall have hers. Now," to Areotha, "tell us if you are the witch he calls you—tell us if you have ever decoyed the boats of our people to an ambush."

"Areotha will speak boldly, though that man may repeat her words among the Wyandot lodges, and the warriors on the trail. She is the pale faces' friend. If the bee does not love to gather honey from the flower: if the Manitou does not love his white and red children, then Areotha has decoyed the boats ashore! She has spoken, and since she built the first fire for old Madgitewa, her Indian mother, her tongue has not told a lie."

Kate Merriweather looked up triumphant. She believed that Little Moccasin had told the truth, for candor was in her voice, and innocence in her soft eyes.

"There is an antagonism between your statements," Oscar Parton said, addressing John Darknight. "They do not harmonize as I would like to see them do."

"Just as if you expected to hear that cunning forest trollop——"

"Please be sparing with your epithets, Mr. Darknight. Do not forget that you are in the presence of ladies," said the young man, interrupting.

"Yes, sir," was the tart rejoinder, accompanied with a quick, angry glance at Kate. "Yes, sir! I will, for I am a gentleman; but I was saying that you seem to have expected a confirmation of my truthful charges from the accused herself. I know her but too well, and many a poor white man and his little family have tasted death in the Maumee through her treachery. But if you wish to test it, I shall not stand between. When John Darknight's words of warning can be brushed aside by the lies of a girl like that one, it is high time for him to betake himself away. You will repent soon enough. Trust the witch and get to Wayne, *if you can!*"

With the last word still quivering his lips, the guide shouldered his heavy rifle and tightened his belt, as if bent on departure.

"How do you know that we believe the girl?" asked the settler, who had not spoken for several minutes.

"How do I know anything?" was the snappish answer. "Do you suppose that I am blind, and a dunce in the bargain? Warm the viper in your bosoms, and, as you deserve perhaps, let it sting you to death."

Then the guide strode madly away, and reached the edge of the river bank before another word was uttered.

The events of the last moment had thrown consternation into the little camp, and the guide's hot words, mien, and his desertion, seemed to paralyze the tongues of the fugitives.

But Abel Merriweather, white as a sheet and with flashing eyes, called out in a tone that halted the guide on the top of the bank:

"One more word, sir!" he said. "John Darknight, I ought to shoot you. Last night an Indian swam the Maumee and you met him at the water's edge. There you proved yourself a low-bred renegade, a traitor to your own people—the plotter of the destruction of my family. I ought to kill you where you stand!"

The guide did not reply. For a moment he gazed at the speaker and heard the clicking of four rifle locks. Then he burst into a coarse, defiant laugh and sprang down the bank like a startled deer.

A few bounds brought him to the river, into which he plunged without a second's hesitation, and dived beneath the surface.

Abel Merriweather and his friends, with ready rifles, waited vengefully for his reappearance; but he came up far below and dived again before a single weapon could cover him.

The whites looked disappointedly at each other.

"I ought to have dealt with him last night," the settler said, self-upbraidingly. "He will join the Indians, and deal murderously with us. God help my family."

The party, smarting with chagrin over the traitor's escape, returned slowly to the camp, to meet a group of the whitest faces ever seen in the forest.

Helpless in the shadow of an impending evil, Abel Merriweather's family gathered around him, and for the first time since the flight from home the strong man's heart sank within him.

The other members of the party looked about for Little Moccasin, but Kate said that during the pursuit of John Darknight she had fled from the camp without an explanation of her departure.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXCITING COUNSEL.

James Girty, the white renegade, was known to the various tribes as the White Whirlwind. His brother Simon was the possessor of a few attributes of kindness, but *he* was destitute of every redeeming trait. A repulsive face surmounted an ungainly body, but the fiend was possessed of almost supernatural strength.

He was a power in the council, and the British agents stirred the Indians to resist Wayne through him.

We have witnessed his theft of the message which Wolf Cap and young Catlett left in the hollow tree prior to their departure for the assistance of the Merriweathers and their friends. It is now our purpose to follow him and witness his dealings with the warriors of the then wild northwest.

He crossed the river in a canoe which he drew from a place of concealment on the bank, and, having hid it on the opposite shore, plunged into the forest. He seemed impatient to read the contents of the paper which he had stolen, and as he reached the summit of a wooded knoll a cry of joy burst from his throat.

For some minutes prior to his arrival on the top of the declivity, certain sounds had been wafted to his ears by the night winds. They prepared him for the sight that had burst upon his vision, but still he could not repress the exclamation.

"I wonder if they are all there?" he murmured as he sprang forward and heard the forest resound with his Indian name.

Girty had come suddenly, but not unexpectedly upon an Indian council. A fire that blazed in the ring formed by five hundred painted savages, furnished the light for the forest tableau, and revealed the renegade to the gaze of all.

His quick eye swept the circle of faces as he passed through. He saw representatives of every tribe which confronted Wayne; he noticed a fair sprinkling of his own ilk, and a group of whites handsomely attired in British uniforms.

The shouts that greeted his appearance ceased when he sprang through the cordon and halted in the fire-lit arena.

The British officers exchanged significant looks, and Simon Girty moved uneasily in his position. It was evident that the arrival of James at the council was distasteful to him.

The White Whirlwind did not speak until he had mastered the contents of the stolen message in the light of the fire.

“Warriors!” he said, in the tone which had been heard above the roar of more than one forest battle, “I see that your council has been opened. I have been on the trail, and though I sought you when the sun went down, I could not get here sooner. Boldly, like a famished wolf, the Blacksnake marches through the forest; he comes to deprive the red man of his cabin, or his lodge, and to drive his children to lands where a deer track has never been seen. My brethren, tomorrow we march forth to meet this scourge of the northwestern territory. Let us be strong, and punish the venomous Blacksnake, as we punished the big soldier long ago. Be strong and fear not, for the soldiers of the king will fight among us in the common cause of all the Indians east of the Great River.”^[B]

Murmurs of approbation followed the renegade’s harangue.

A chief responded in a like strain, then another and another, until twelve had spoken for war to the knife. All this time the White Whirlwind stood near the council fire, with his massive arms folded upon his giant chest, and a look of triumph in his eye. He was in his element.

10

The absence of such chiefs as Little Turtle, Buckhongahelas, and Blue Jacket, was noticeable; but their places were supplied with savages of lesser note, but equally belligerent.

All at once there arose to address the council an Indian who created a sensation.

He came from the portion of the living ring occupied by Simon Girty, and James gave his brother a quick glance, when he recognized the chief. But Simon appeared to be composed.

“War?” cried the new speaker, who could not have passed his twenty-sixth year, “War means death to the Indian and the rule of the American throughout our hunting grounds. Parquatin is not afraid to lead his braves to battle; but where is the use? Who comes here to-night and tells us to bear our bosoms to the rifles of the Blacksnake? Does the White Whirlwind lead his braves in open fight? No! he will tell us to rush upon the Americans, while he trails some white girl through the woods; and make her build the fires in his hut. Parquatin hates the Blacksnake; but he despises the Indian who will listen to the forked words of such a pale fox as the Whirlwind. Parquatin has spoken.”

The young chief glanced defiantly around the circle of scarlet faces.

With a face blanched to ghastliness by the first sentence, James Girty heard the speaker through—heard and stood dumfounded for a moment.

The English, who had come from Fort Miami to attend the conclave, gazed with consternation into each others’ faces, and the members of the council looked startled.

In Simon Girty’s eye there was a look of triumph, for Parquatin seemed his spokesman.

“I defend myself!” the accused renegade suddenly cried. “I lead the red men when I tell them to meet the American soldiers. Parquatin, the Wyandot, is jealous; he dares to lie about me in the great council because I lead more and braver warriors than he. But the Indians know me; they spurn the lie as they hate the good-for-nothing lying dog!”

A short cry of rage followed the cutting epithet, and with flashing tomahawk Parquatin sprang forward.

“Here I am,” said Girty, drawing his own hatchet and planting himself firmly. “I am willing to kill my enemies wherever I meet ‘em!”

The seated warriors—for the participants of Indian councils are usually seated—watched the scene with interest. Parquatin, young and not strong of limb, was no match for the renegade; but he possessed the spirit of the maddened tiger, and never thought of the strength against him.

For a moment he glared at his calm antagonist, and then bounded forward. Girty received the shock with his hatchet’s iron-like handle, and by a dexterous blow in return sent Parquatin’s weapon spinning to the edge of the fire.

The young chief was now completely at his mercy, and, as James Girty seldom spared a helpless foe, his doom was as swift as terrible.

Parquatin met his fate with the red man’s famous stoicism.

With his arms folded upon his breast, he received the renegade’s blow, and without a death cry fell backward—his skull cleft by the keen-edged tomahawk.

"Now!" cried the heartless victor, swinging aloft the gory weapon, and sweeping the circle with his flashing glance, "now let the man who persuaded Parquatin to insult me in the council step forth and meet me face to face. He is here and I know him! His victim lies before me. Let him stand up and say that I lie, if he dare!"

But no voice replied, and no man rose to confront the White Whirlwind.

"Well, never mind," he said. "I would not strike him if he did rise against me. Gentlemen," to the English officers, "this is the bitterest moment of my life. Jim Girty is not callous to every affection. I bid you good night. Warriors, I will meet you before the big battle. Again I say, be strong!"

As the renegade turned and strode across the ground, the circle was respectfully broken, and he passed into the dark forest beyond.

It was a strange event for an Indian council, and was destined to decide the fate of many helpless families; but few knew it, then.

There was but one man in the council who knew why James Girty spoke as he did to the British soldiers.

CHAPTER VII.

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE.

The discovery of John Darknight's treachery and his escape filled the hearts of the fugitives with terror. The little band found themselves in the forest at the foot of the Maumee rapids, and with many miles stretching their perilous length between them and Wayne's camp.

Little Moccasin, too, had deserted without a word of explanation, and several members of the party were inclined to believe her as treacherous as the English guide.

George Darling, the nephew, was especially bitter in his denunciation of the girl, and in this he was seconded by young Carl Merriweather. The two resolved to keep on the lookout for her reappearance, and to shoot her on sight. They firmly believed that her coming to the camp had been prearranged by John Darknight himself, and saw in the desertion of both the successful working of the plot.

11

In the brief and deeply interesting council that followed the double abandonment, the fugitives resolved to prosecute their journey without delay. Of course the boat could not stem the strong rapids, therefore it would have to be transported to a point above them, and that upon the shoulders of the men.

The craft, while it was strong and capable of carrying eight or ten people, was unusually light, and when Merriweather and Oscar Parton raised it to their shoulders, they declared with joy that they could carry it all day without a rest.

The fugitives did not resume their journey until a frugal breakfast had been discussed on the scene of the night's encampment. At that meal no one seemed to be communicative; the thought of the present peril or the shadow of the impending danger appeared to seal their lips.

Abel Merriweather doubtless regretted leaving the cabin home at the mouth of the Maumee, and upbraided himself for having listened to the representations of the false guide.

In Oscar Parton's mind one particular thought was uppermost—the safety of Kate Merriweather. Now and then he coupled with it a strong desire to deal with the man who had led them into the trap.

The sun was silvering the waves of the river when the boat was lifted from the ground, and the journey resumed.

The little party kept from the stream for fear of being seen by any foes, but near enough to hear any voice which might arise from its banks.

They indulged in the fond hope of encountering some of Wayne's scouts who were known to be scouting in the vicinity, and the settler trusted that he would fall in with Wells, with whom he was intimately acquainted. But the sun approached his meridian without bringing incident or misfortune to the little band who pushed resolutely through the forest toward the distant goal.

"Are you ready to fulfill your part of the promise, George?" said Carl Merriweather to his cousin at the noonday rest held beneath the shade of a great tree.

George Darling looked up and saw the youth's face glowing with excitement. His eyes seemed to

emit sparks of fire.

"What do you mean, Carl?" he said.

"Why, what we promised one another this morning—that we would kill the first redskin we laid our eyes on."

"Yes. Where is one?"

"Come with me."

George Darling rose, and the two left the camp together.

"There be two of them," the settler's son said, "and they are at the river; I saw them not five minutes since. A good shot, George. I'll take one, you the other."

The eager couple glided toward the river, and the youth all at once pulled his cousin's sleeve and told him to halt.

"There they are!" he cried excitedly, pointing towards the stream. "Look! do you not see them in the tree top? Real Indians, George, and no mistake. What on earth can they be doing? They are up to their knees in water."

George Darling did not reply, but continued to gaze at the two persons in the tree top which lay in the water. Their skin proclaimed them savages; but they seemed to be washing—a thing which no Indian warrior ever does. Hence the spectators' perplexity.

"Come, George, we can't wait on them," said the impatient Carl. "Beside, they will miss us at the camp. Now, let us give the rascals a little lead. Remember our promise to let no Indian escape our rifles."

The young man heard his cousin, and, a partaker of his excitement, grasped his rifle.

"The little fellow on the right," Carl said without taking his eyes from the couple in the tree top. "Leave the other one for me. He is as tall as a Virginia bean-pole."

The victims of the pair were not fifty yards away. Unconscious of the presence of their enemies.

They kept on performing motions with their arms and hands, which had led Darling to believe that they were patronizing the homely art of washing.

"Ready?" whispered the boy.

"Ready!" I've covered my man was the low but distinct response.

There was a moment's silence. The word "fire" was struggling for utterance on Carl Merriweather's lips when his cousin's hand leaped from the trigger and covered the flint of his weapon.

"Look at the tall fellow," cried the young backwoodsman. "By the snows of Iceland! he's a white man."

Sure enough, one of the occupants of the tree had suddenly risen to his feet and turned his face towards the depths of the forest. The skin which had been red was white now. Water had metamorphosed him into his true character.

Carl Merriweather grew pale when he saw the transformation, and gave his companion a look which made him smile.

"Both are white!" Darling said. "The short one has washed his face. See!"

"That is true," said Carl. "A moment more, and we would have sent bullets into their brains. Who can they be? Rascally renegades, no doubt, and as such deserve our balls."

"More likely Wayne's scouts," replied the settler's nephew. "They often disguise themselves as Indians, and reassume their true character when it suits them. They are leaving the tree now."

As the young man spoke the twain emerged from the tree top, and approached the brow of the hill.

One was much taller than his companion, and his face looked sad and careworn. Both carried rifles, and tomahawks peeped above their deerskin belts.

They cut a strange figure with white hands and faces, but with shoulders copper-colored, like the Indians'. Their scanty garments were of genuine Indian manufacture, and tufts of feathers, daubed with ochre and sienna, crowned their heads.

"They mean mischief," Carl Merriweather suddenly exclaimed. "Don't let them get to camp if they are really enemies; don't let them see how weak we are."

A moment later George Darling rose and spoke to the advancing couple:

"Friends or enemies?" he cried.

The strangers executed a sudden halt, and hastily cocking their rifles, looked about for the speaker. But the young man was not easily seen, for his body was screened by a tree.

"Friends or enemies?" he repeated. "You can't advance until you have told us."

"Friends, of course," was the response by the youngest of the twain. "You belong to Abel Merriweather's family, and we are attached to Wayne's command."

"Thank God!" cried Carl Merriweather, springing from his place of concealment and hastening toward the new comers.

"You saved your lives by washing the paint from your faces. What are your names?"

"Mine is Harvey Catlett and my friend's is Abner Stark; but every where they call him Wolf Cap," was the reply.

"And you are Mad Anthony's scouts? Glory!" the overjoyed youth shouted, and then George Darling managed to get a word in.

"You are very welcome," he said. "Heaven knows that we need your assistance. Did you know we were here?"

"We did," said young Catlett, "and as we feared that you might send a bullet into the first red face that greeted you, we thought best to make ours white before making your acquaintance."

"Thank God for that," responded Darling fervently, and he shuddered when he thought how nearly he had taken the life of a succoring friend.

It was with joy that the youths led the scouts into the forest.

They felt that great assistance had been sent them from on high.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SECOND CATASTROPHE.

Harvey Catlett and his companion were received with great joy at the camp near the river bank.

The fugitives took new hope with their appearance, and seemed to think that the remainder of the journey to Wayne would be accomplished without further trouble.

Mrs. Merriweather so expressed herself, when the young woodsman shook his head and replied:

"We cannot save you in and of ourselves," he said; "but we will do all we can. The trails to Wayne's army are dark and perilous. I do not seek to keep anything back."

"That is right, sir," said the father quickly. "My wife is prone to exaggerate good fortune. I do not want her to remain deceived. I comprehend the situation, and am prepared for it."

"That is right," said Wolf Cap. "In these times one must know something about Indian affairs."

"Now that we have exchanged our guide for you gentlemen, I am sure that our fortunes will mend."

"Where is the guide of whom you have spoken?" asked Catlett, addressing the head of the family.

"Across the river, I suppose," Abel Merriweather answered with a smile.

"Deserted?"

"Yes."

"Just like the worthless guides of these days. It is a wonder that he did not get you into the Indian's power."

"He attempted to, but failed."

"Just so."

At Wolf Cap's request Merriweather related the attempt made to get the boat ashore, and the two scouts listened attentively to the recital.

"Now, how come he to leave you this morning? Let us know all, Mr. Merriweather."

The story of Little Moccasin's appearance in the camp, and John Darknight's hasty desertion was then told.

"Now what do you think of the girl?" the young scout said in a low tone to Wolf Cap.

There was a tinge of triumph in the youth's voice.

"What have I already told you about her?" was the reply. "I allow that her action is strange, but those Indian witches can outdo anything in the woods. I have my opinion, and shall stick to it. Of course you will let me do this, boy."

"Certainly, Abner. I shall do nothing to embarrass you in it; but it puzzles me because you can see no good in the girl."

"I'm sorry, boy—indeed I am. I wish I could tell you what I really think about some things; but not now, if you please. I'm going down to the river. Talk to the folks here; you know what to say. We are here to take them to Mad Anthony or die in the attempt."

Having finished, the tall scout withdrew from the little group and betook himself to the water's edge, shaded by the leafy boughs of a giant tree.

Harvey Catlett glanced over his shoulder at the retreating figure and then addressed the fugitives with a smile.

13

"He is a mystery; one of the many that inhabit the backwoods. Why, he does not place any confidence in Little Moccasin; he seems to hate her, and yet I believe she has never lifted a finger of harm against him. But we have unaccountable antagonisms, and here in the woods one finds them plentiful."

"But who can hate that dear girl?" said Kate Merriweather's musical voice. "I could easily call her sister, and live forever at her side. She is not an Indian, though she calls her mother Madgitwa. She cannot be treacherous to our people."

"Thanks," said Harvey Catlett, bowing to the fair young speaker. "I rejoice to hear you speak thus of the girl."

"I fear that Kate is thus partial because of her pretty eyes. I must confess that I do not like her. Her desertion means no good to us."

The last speaker was Carl Merriweather, ever ready to join in a conversation where any one crossed swords with his opinions.

"We will not argue the matter now," Harvey said, seeing the youth's flushed cheeks, and not liking to incur the displeasure of any of the fugitives.

"Perhaps we had best not," responded Carl with a slight sneer and a meaning glance at his friend Darling. "Let us drop the subject, nor call it up again. I have my opinion, you yours, Mr Catlett."

The young scout turned from the boy and began to talk in a confidential tone to the settler, which seemed to be a signal for a general disbanding of the group, and the two were left alone.

"It is deuced queer," Carl Merriweather hastened to say to George Darling. "He is taking her part, and I am satisfied that she is full of treachery."

"I am of the same opinion, and that he, one of Wayne's scouts, should defend her, is beyond my comprehension. She is drawing him on, and it may be that she really loves him. But it looks to me as if she were using him for a purpose. That scene between her and our guide was too theatrical to be genuine. They overdid it. It was a preconcerted affair, for it gave Darknight a chance to show his hand and get away. They are together now, my word for it."

The boy shared his companion's opinion concerning the witch of the woods, and they formed a cabal against her beneath the tree whose shadows fell upon the murmuring Maumee.

By and by Wolf Cap came up from the river and rejoined the occupants of the camp.

"He has seen something; look at his white face," whispered Abel Merriweather to his nephew.

"No ghosts, at any rate, for one does not see them at this hour," was the reply. "He will probably enlighten us."

But the scout did not do so, but talked about the journey and Wayne's army, and the pallor gradually left his face.

The noonday meal was discussed, after which the journey was resumed.

As the woods were not very clear of underbrush, the progress was of necessity quite slow, and at nightfall the party halted in a picturesque ravine through which in years gone by some woodland

stream had poured its waters into the Maumee.

Wild, luxuriant grass covered the bed of the place, and the bank on either side was clothed in that verdure which so beautifies the woods in summer. It was a fit camping place for the night, for the mouth of the ravine was hidden by a fallen tree, and a fire could not have been noticed from the river.

Darkness settled rapidly down upon the camp, and Harvey Catlett tore himself from talkative Kate Merriweather, and prepared to guard her while she slept in the boat.

He took up a position at the mouth of the ravine and near the river. Not far away Wolf Cap kept his vigils, and little Carl Merriweather, determined to be of some service, kept sentry at the old hunter's side.

Brighter and brighter grew the stars in the heavens that bent lovingly above the river, and the night winds stirred the leaves with a sweet melody.

Now and then the cry of some night bird or animal would startle the sentries, but they would soon turn therefrom and listen for more important sounds.

Harvey Catlett was on the alert, and his ears at length caught a sound that roused him. It seemed the peculiar tread of the panther, dying away like the step of the beast, and recurring no more. It was in vain that he listened for a repetition of the sound. The very silence told him that he had permitted something important to escape investigation.

"It may not be too late to follow yet," he said to himself. "I am a fool that I permitted——"

The strange cry that the night hawk sends forth when frightened from its perch, fell startlingly upon his ears, and he severed his sentence.

"That is my panther!" he said. "There is mischief afoot."

We have said that he was near the river.

The cry, or signal, as the young scout hastened to interpret the sound, seemed to emanate from a spot not forty feet away, and with the skill of the experienced trailer, he glided toward it.

The cry was repeated, then there was a response which seemed to have crossed the river, and that in turn was answered from the very shore which the daring scout was noiselessly approaching.

All at once he halted and hugged the dark ground, for the night caller was before him.

It was not a hawk, nor was it the stealthy panther that greeted young Catlett's gaze; but the figure of an Indian!

14

Ready to spring upon the redskin, the scout resolved to witness the result of the bird calls.

He expected to see several boats cross the river for an attack upon the camp; but was doomed to disappointment.

A sound to his left drew his attention in that direction.

The Indian heard it, rose and started toward the river. At the edge of the water he was joined by a figure that carried a burthen. The scout could not distinguish it in the uncertain light.

A few whispered words passed between the twain who had stepped into a boat, and Catlett was about to try the effect of a shot, when a startling shriek rose from the ravine.

It was a woman's voice!

The occupants of the boat heard it, and shoved the craft from shore. Out into the stream it shot like an arrow from a bow.

Harvey Catlett sprang to his feet and fired at the disappearing boat.

A wild cry followed the shot, and the sound was still echoing in the wood when Abel Merriweather reached his side.

It did not need the settler's white face to tell the scout what had happened. Mrs. Merriweather's shriek had already told him.

Kate was gone!

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARMS OF THE DEAD.

There was no disguising the fact that Kate Merriweather was missing.

Harvey Catlett felt that the stealthy tread which had fallen upon his ears was that of her abductor, and he upbraided himself for what he self-accusingly termed his inactivity.

It is true that the hawk cry which he construed into a preconcerted signal had roused him to action; but the boat and its occupants, one of whom was doubtless the settler's daughter, had left the shore. And he had fired into the craft without thinking that his ball might find the heart of the fair girl, and imperil his own life.

It was a startled group that surrounded the young scout, and almost uncontrollable anger flashed in Oscar Parton's eyes. Kate had been abducted during Catlett's hour on guard!

The fact was sufficient to give birth to a new and bitter forest feud. But the young borderer avoided the lover's gaze, as he did not desire to enter into a controversy which calmer moments would make appear ridiculous.

With remarkable tact and secrecy the girl had been stolen from the couch in the boat. Even Carl's wakefulness had failed to baffle the thief.

Since the scout's arrival a feeling of security had settled over the camp, and the sleep of its inmates was deeper than it had been for many nights.

The abductor probably knew this; but at any rate he had carried out his scheme at a propitious moment.

In the exciting council that followed the abduction an hundred suggestions were offered, to be rejected. Wolf Cap and his friend hardly unsealed their lips, but listened attentively to all that was said.

"Now what say you, Wolf Cap?" said Abel Merriweather, appealing to the tall man. "You have not said ten words about my dear child's peril, and we know that you are a king in these forests; and you have said that you would get us to Wayne or die in the attempt. For God's sake suggest some plan of swift rescue, for we are tortured almost beyond endurance."

Slowly Wolf Cap turned upon the settler, who held his white-faced, anguish-stricken wife to his bosom, waiting for a reply which he felt would be freighted with salvation or doom.

"Talk to the boy, there!" he said, pointing to Harvey Catlett. "He was on guard when *it* happened. What he says will be done."

All eyes fell upon the youthful scout.

"I will save her if I can," he said quickly, and with determination. "Wolf Cap must remain. You may need him. Pursue the journey; it may be death to tarry here."

"And worse than that to proceed;" Mrs. Merriweather said.

"I think not, madam. Keep stout hearts in your bosoms. Mr. Parton, will you follow me?"

"On the trail?" inquired the young man, to whom the question was unexpected.

"Certainly, sir. I see that you have been thinking pretty hard of me to-night."

Oscar Parton blushed.

"Forgive me," he said, putting out his hand. "We are apt to think unadvisedly on the spur of the moment. I trust we shall be friends, and work together in all things."

Catlett took the extended hand in a pledge of friendship, and pressed it heartily.

"Come!" he said; "we must cross the river."

Parton turned to press the hands of his friends.

"No time for that," said Wayne's scout. "In these times we must say farewell with our lips. We have lost time already."

He turned to the water's edge, and Kate's lover dropped Carl's hand to follow.

"Can you swim?" asked Catlett.

"Certainly."

"Then here we go. Keep alongside of me and swim noiselessly."

A moment later the twain glided into the water, leaving an anxious group on the shadowy shore.

Silently, so far as the form of swimming was concerned, the friends kept together and approached the northern bank of the Maumee.

"Do you know who took the girl?" Catlett asked his companion.

15

"How should I?" was the question that met his.

Wayne's scout smiled.

"I thought that you might have formed an opinion," he said.

"No;" and then came the question, "what do you know about it?"

"Not much; but if she escapes us, the terror of these woods will see her."

Oscar Parton's face became pale.

"Do you mean——"

He paused, as if afraid to utter the name.

"I mean that man!" said Catlett, as if his companion had finished his sentence. "Jim Girty has caused more anguish in this part of the world than the tomahawks and fire brands of a whole red nation. I believe that John Darknight was here to-night, and he and the White Whirlwind have been friends."

The whispered conversation grew still, for the gloomy shore was discernible, and the thought of Kate Merriweather in the hands of the greatest renegade in the northwest, was enough of itself to seal Oscar Parton's lips.

A long fringe of woodland welcomed the swimmers, and they drew themselves from the water. No noise save the plash of the ripples at their feet broke the stillness, and the sound was so musical that they could scarcely believe that the woods and the waves beautified a land of death.

Wringing the water from their garments, the scouts inaugurated a search for the trail, or, in other words, for the spot where the boat had been drawn from the water.

A line of moonshine lay along the edge of the stream, and this underwent a close examination, Harvey Catlett hunting down and his companion up the river.

While Oscar Parton was not an experienced woodman, like his friend, the mysteries of the trail were not great ones to him. He had been reared in the forests, and from the very tribes that now sought his heart's blood he had learned much of the science of tracking man and beast. He felt proud of the notice which Catlett had taken of his woodcraft in permitting him to search alone for Kate's trail, and he inwardly hoped that he would have the good fortune to find it. The circumstance would elevate him in the eyes of the young scout.

Now through the forest, and now back to the river, with its edging of moonlight, the two men crept like ghosts, letting nothing escape them.

One could not distinguish the other for the dimly lighted distance that lay between them, but preconcerted calls told from time to time that the search had not been abandoned.

Oscar Parton began to despair. He had passed beyond the line of search marked out by his companion and was on the eve of returning when he came suddenly upon a canoe with its keel just beyond the reach of the tide.

The sudden discovery startled the trail hunter, and he was about to advance upon and examine the craft, when a night owl flew by and swept its cold wings across his face, as if to keep him back. But the youth did not heed the omen of portending evil.

He crept to the seemingly stranded and abandoned craft, and peered over its side.

What did he see? A dark object lying on the bottom, a tuft of feathers, a face, deathly and covered here and there with clotted blood. He turned away, and looked again before he saw that an Indian lay beneath his gaze, rigid, as he believed, in death!

"This is the result of Catlett's shot," he said. "I thank God that his bullet did not reach Kate's heart. The other abandoned the canoe here, and Kate is with him somewhere in the forest."

As he uttered the last word he touched the Indian, and what was his surprise to see the limbs move and a flash light up the deathly eyes. Oscar Parton saw the terrible embrace that was preparing for him, and tried to avoid it; but the red arms flew up as if impelled by electric mechanism, and closed around his body.

He struggled and tried to signal his companion, but in vain; his face was pressed to his foe's, and he felt the death grip of the Wyandot crushing out his very life.

But for all that, he tried the harder to free himself from the loathsome grip. Was his young life to

be given up so ignominiously? And that, too, with Kate Merriweather's fate veiled by obscurity? The thought was awful, horrid.

Not a word fell from the Indian's lips; the young hunter did not know that the scout's ball had passed through the cheek, mangling the tongue whose words had been heard in the council and on the trail.

The struggle with the dying went on, and, as was natural, the canoe was pushed nearer the river, until the tide caught it and it was afloat! Out into the starlight went the craft with the combatants on board; down the stream toward the rapids, and each succeeding moment farther from assistance by the white scout.

All things must end, and life, like the rest, reaches the shadow of death. A sudden gurgling in the throat, a quivering of the limbs, announced to Oscar Parton that his enemy was dead. Then again he tried to escape; but the limbs did not relax; they seemed destined to hold him there forever.

"God help me!" he groaned. "Must I die now, and in the arms of a dead Indian?"

The situation was so tainted with the horrible that the youth almost gave up in despair, and the boat swept down the river.

But help reached him at the eleventh hour. The boat was checked in its course, and he heard voices above the dead arms that, like great cords of steel, held him down. He groaned to tell some one, he knew not who, that he still lived, and then he felt the Indian's arms torn apart. He was saved.

16

With an ejaculation of joy at his deliverance the young settler looked up, to start with a cry of amazement. For the canoe that lay against his own contained a brace of Indians, plumed and painted for the warpath!

From the clutches of the dead into those of the living did not seem to Oscar Parton, at that hour, a change for the better.

He could not resist, for his rifle lay on the river bank, and before he could collect his ideas he was lifted from his boat into that of his captors'.

CHAPTER X.

LITTLE MOCCASIN'S "FATHER."

Leaving Kate Merriweather in the hands of her as yet, to the reader, unknown abductor, and Oscar Parton a captive in the warriors' canoe, let us return to two characters of whom, for a while, we have lost sight.

Deep in the forest that extended to the northern bank of the Maumee, and with but few trees felled about it, stood in the year '94 and for several years afterwards, a small cabin erected after the manner of western buildings, with logs dovetailed, strong oaken doors and heavy clapboard roof.

So thickly stood the trees around it, that the keen-eyed hunter could not have perceived it at any noticeable distance.

No little patch of Indian corn grew near to indicate the home of a settler, and no honeysuckles shaded the low-browed door to tell that a woman's gentle hand and loving taste had guided them heavenward.

It really looked like the lair of a beast, for there were cleanly-picked bones before the door, beside which a fresh wolf skin had been nailed.

It was not the home of refinement; but he who often slept beneath its roof and called it his, could sway hearts and drench the land in blood.

It stood scarce ten miles from the scene of Kate Merriweather's abduction, a cabin memorable in the annals of the Northwestern Territory, for beyond its threshold the darkest treacheries of the times had been plotted.

About the hour when the fugitives beside the river discovered that one of their number had been taken from their midst, a man emerged from the forest, and stepping quickly across the space from door to tree, entered the cabin.

He did not have to stoop, as a tall person would have been compelled to do upon entering, for he was short in stature, but with a physique that denoted great strength

He was clad in the garb of a backwoodsman, and carried all the weapons borne by such a

character. His face, almost brutish in anatomy, denoted the glutton, and his first step was to the larder, from which he drew an enormous chunk of meat upon which he fell with great voracity.

"It must be eleven o'clock," he said, as he thrust the pewter plate empty into the cupboard, and went to the door as if to take observations. "He cannot be later than one, and, saying that it is eleven now, I have but two hours to wait. Can I trust the man? Haven't I trusted him for six years, and where is the time that he has played me false? I have put money into his buckskin purse, and he knows that at a sign of betrayal I would kill him as heartlessly as I slew Parquatin at the council in the hollow. That council!" and the speaker clenched his lips, and his dark eyes shot flashes of fire from their lash-fringed caves of revenge.

"They made me kill the young chief," he went on, as if speaking before a stern court in his own defense. "Or I should say that *he* made me do it. They say that I haven't got a spark of manhood left—that I am the only devil in the Northwest Territory, and hunt and dog me on every side. I *am* a bad man, the worst perhaps in these parts. The Indian is my companion, and when he can't invent new deviltry, he comes to me. But I have some good traits left. The dog that steals sheep and bites children is capable of loving his master. I have a brother, and though we have together trod the paths of iniquity from the trough cradle—though he has sought to lower me in the eyes of the tribes, I would not lift a hand against him. No, Simon Girty, your brother loves you because your mother was his; but," and the renegade paused a moment, "but even a brother may wrong too deeply. Keep from me, Simon. Devil that I am, and fiend incarnate and powerful in these woods, I am capable of loving even *you!*"

These words, though spoken in a low tone, fell upon other ears than the White Whirlwind's. Not far from his cabin door stood a great tree, gnarled and lightning-rent, and behind it, in its grotesque shadow, stood a lithe figure, girlish and graceful, and two brilliant eyes were fastened on the outlaw. The little hand that hung at the side and touched the beaded fringe of a trim frock, clutched a rifle which was cocked ready for instant use.

"He would never tell me; he may tell me now!" fell from the lips behind the tree. "He has been talking about his bad life, and may be the Manitou is smiling in his heart."

With the last word on her lips, for the voice and figure denoted that the speaker was a girl, a figure stepped from the shadows and pronounced the renegade's forest name.

Jim Girty started and retreated quickly, as if to secure a weapon, but his eye caught sight of the advancing person, and he recognized her with a strange mixture of affection and hatred in his eyes.

Areotha, or Little Moccasin, soon stood before the outlaw, looking into his repulsive face as if seeking a gleam of hope.

17

"Oh, it is you?" he said. "Well, well, I haven't seen you for a mighty long time, but I have heard of you," and his brow darkened.

"What has the White Whirlwind heard of Areotha?" the girl asked with childish artlessness, and she came very close to the man from whom many of her sex would turn with loathing.

"Why, they say that you have been spying for Mad Anthony Wayne," he said, trying to catch the change of color on her face; but he failed, for none came. "If this is true, a bullet will find your heart some of these days, for I am an Indian as much as I am a white, and you must not spy against us. I am your father, but I cannot see how you came to love the accursed people who hunt me like wolves."

He was speaking with much bitterness, and for a moment it seemed that Little Moccasin would forswear the Americans, and cleave to him. But that were impossible; the lamb cannot espouse the wolf's cause.

"My father, why do you fight the people whose skin is white?" she said, after a minute's silence. "You must have had a bad heart a long time, for when we lived in the land of the Miami's, you scalped and burned as you do now. Little Moccasin loves you, but she loves all her white skinned people—but some better than others."

The flush that came to the girl's cheeks as she finished the last sentence did not escape Girty's lightning glance.

"I suppose you have tumbled into love with some graceless fellow—some one who would shoot me just to marry an orphan. I know that you don't go to the fort enough to fall in love with the British officers, and I'll be hanged if you shall tie yourself to an American. This will never do, girl."

Her eyes fell guiltily before his flashing look, and when she looked up again it was with an altered mien.

"Areotha will hear her father if he will tell her one thing," she said.

"I'll tell you a dozen if I can," he replied. "Bless me, girl, if Jim Girty, bad as he is, doesn't think a

mighty sight of you."

He stooped, and his brawny arm swung around her waist. She did not struggle, and he looked into her eyes. The lion seemed to be making love to the gazelle.

"My father, long ago the bullet of the white man struck you down," she said. "But you ran here and fell as the wild deer falls, in the brake beyond the hunter's pursuit. Long you lay here; your head was wild and you said many things when the fever of the evil spirit was upon you. Areoetha never left you, my father. She watched, lest the palefaces should come; she shot the deer and gave you food——"

18

"And saved the worst life in God's world, didn't you, girl?" interrupted the renegade, displaying more feeling as he drew the speaker to him than he had ever been credited with.

"Areoetha did what she could," was the reply. "One night, when the wolves went howling down the forest after the fawn which Areoetha's rifle had failed to kill, the White Whirlwind said something that made his child wonder. He made her know that he took her one night when she was a little girl; took her from a burning wigwam beyond the big river. She asked him then to tell her all, but he said: 'Wait till the sickness leaves me,' and she waited. Now she is here; now she says, 'my father, tell me all, for in this war the bullet may find your heart, and Areoetha will never know. Old Madgitwa did not bring me into the world; no, my father!'"

The face and voice were so full of pleading that none but a Girty could resist.

His arm left the pliant waist, and his eyes resumed their old look.

"You are too inquisitive!" he said. "It doesn't matter where I got you. You are mine, and the man ——"

He paused as if he was about to reveal something, which he would rather keep back.

"My father, the Manitou, may send for Areoetha, and the leaves will fall upon her before she can know who her real father is. Tell her. This may be the last time that she——"

"Tell you? No!" was the harsh interruption, and all the revenge in Girty's nature seemed in his voice. "There are secrets which the stake could not force from me; this is one of them. There lives one man whom I wouldn't make happy to save my own life, and sooner than see you in his arms, I would drive this knife to your heart."

With a cry Little Moccasin started from the blade that flashed in the starlight, and threw herself on the defensive, with rifle half raised and eyes flashing angrily.

"You will not tell?" she cried.

"Never!"

The next instant she stepped toward the gnarled tree, and her rifle covered the renegade of the Maumee.

"You've got me!" he said, looking into Areoetha's face without a tremor of fear; "but I did not think that you would ever lift a rifle against the man who has been so kind to you. Kill me here, now, and the secret will be kept from you forever!"

There was a spark of hope in his voice, and all at once the girl lowered the weapon. The outlaw was spared to scourge the region of the Maumee a while longer.

Areoetha put herself into his power when she lowered the rifle. With one of those panther-like bounds for which he was famous, Girty could have sprung upon her and removed her forever from his path. But he restrained himself; he even put up the knife, and did not seek to detain her when he heard her say:

"My father, I am going!"

With a look that spoke volumes, Little Moccasin turned on her heel, and plunged into the forest, leaving the renegade to his own reflections.

"I think a mighty sight of her!" was all he said.

He might have killed her, but he would not.

CHAPTER XI.

KATE MERRIWEATHER'S PROGRESS.

Girty, the renegade, remained in his cabin door until the footsteps of Little Moccasin died away in the forest, and silence again pervaded the spot.

There was a cloud on the outlaw's brow, and the longer he listened the more impatient and perplexed he became.

The minutes resolved themselves into hours, and when he believed that the ghostly hour of one had arrived, an oath fell from his lips, and he turned into the cabin. But he soon reappeared with a short-barreled rifle, and left the hut as if bent upon hunting for some one whom he had been expecting.

"Something unlooked for may have transpired," he murmured. "Wolf Cap and that young fellow may have disarranged my plans by appearing suddenly at the camp; but I am sure that Wells will never get the message which they left in the tree."

Girty smiled as he recalled the theft of Harvey Catlett's message from the forest letter box, and congratulated himself that Wells and Hummingbird (a famous chief and spy in Wayne's employ) would find the tree empty when they should reach it. The self-congratulations still lingered in his heart when the report of a distant rifle, faint, but clear enough, nevertheless, struck his practiced ear.

He stopped suddenly and listened.

"A rifle, but no death cry," he said, addressing himself. "But too far off for that, perhaps."

Then he stooped and put his ear to the ground, in which attitude he remained for several moments. But the stillness of death brooded over the vicinity. When Girty rose it was with a perplexed look; the shot seemed to revolve itself into a mystery, to which he attached the utmost importance.

"There is one person in these parts whose bullets never make a death cry," he said; "but if she shot *him*, I don't see why, for she knows that we are friends. However, I'm going down to see what the matter is."

He started toward the river at a brisk walk. It was ten miles distant, but he knew that the mysterious shot had been fired not far away.

By and by his walk resolved itself into the dog-trot of the Indian, and he hastened through the woods as if a regular path stretched before him.

The dew lay on the grass pressed by his dingy moccasin, and, save now and then the snapping of a twig, his progress sent forth no noise.

All at once, as he reached the summit of a wooded knoll, he was brought to a stand.

At his feet, as it were, was a space of ground over which a hurricane had at some time swept with relentless fury. The results of its work, broken trees and fallen ones, were apparent to the eye. Into this place the starlight fell, and the rays of the moon, soon to bathe herself in the waters of the Maumee, penetrated like shafts of silver.

The scene that presented itself to the outlaw was enough to startle him.

He saw two figures in the light—two living ones, we mean—but not far remote, with face upturned to the stars, lay a giant form, motionless as the earth itself.

A second look told the renegade the author of the midnight shot. She stood beside a young girl, and these words in a well known voice greeted his ears:

"White girl tired, but Areotha will save her if she will go."

"Go?" cried the one addressed, and her voice sent a thrill of pleasure to the heart beating wildly on the top of the knoll. "Go, Areotha? You cannot name a place whither I will not fly with you at this hour. I wonder if they do not believe me dead already. My God! I see through the treachery of that man," and she glanced at the body on the ground. "Girl, is every one in these parts like him? He came to our home and persuaded father to fly to Wayne, offering to guide us; but he meditated treachery all the time. I see it now."

"He makes no more bloody boats on the big river," Little Moccasin said with triumph. "He was bold to steal white girl alone."

"No, no, girl. An Indian called Oskaloo assisted, but he was killed in the boat by some one on the shore—Mr. Catlett, perhaps. He was on guard."

Little Moccasin's eyes gleamed with pride at the mention of the young scout's name.

"He good hunter," she said with growing enthusiasm. "Areotha will take the white girl back to him."

"Yes, yes, and then I will find all of them. Let us go now. Some person may find us here if we tarry."

Some person? Yes; that "person" was already near, and as Kate Merriweather and her protector started to fly, Jim Girty, with a single bound, reached the foot of the hillock, and stood before them.

The twain started back with a cry of terror; but Kate's retreat was quickly checked by the renegade's hand.

"Not so fast, my beauty!" he cried with a hideous smile, a mixture of sensuality and triumph. "I am convinced that I did not arrive a moment too late. That man was playing me false!" and he nodded at the dead. "He wasn't on the trail that leads to my cabin. I suspect, miss, that he got struck with your beauty, and thought that he would outwit his employer and make you his own wife."

19

Kate Merriweather did not reply. White faced and trembling, she stood before the outlaw, whose eyes devoured her peerless beauty, and from whose clutches she longed to escape.

"John Darknight proved to be a traitor, and your companion paid him for his treachery, though I guess that she did not suspect that she was serving me when she pulled the trigger. Perhaps you do not know me," and there was a grim smile on Girty's face.

"I do not, though——"

"Though you may have heard of me, you were going to say. I fancy that my name has reached your ears. There isn't a woman in the Northwest Territory who has not heard of me. My name is Girty!"

The settler's daughter uttered a cry of mingled terror and disgust.

"Simon Girty, the renegade?"

"No! his brother James—the worse devil of the two!" said the outlaw with a sardonic grin and a glance at the bewildered Little Moccasin.

"But you are not lost to every attribute of manhood, James Girty," said the captive in a pleading tone that might have softened a heart of flint. "There are hearts that bleed for me to-night. Do not deal with me as they say you have dealt with others; but restore me to my dear ones, and win the lasting gratitude of all who love me."

Following hard upon Kate Merriweather's last word came a laugh which seemed the incarnation of fiendishness. The renegade's eyes seemed filled with the heartless merriment.

"Restore you to the boat? Let you go, after I have gone to the pains of getting John Darknight to guide you into my hands? Why, girl, you have not studied the character of Jim Girty."

Kate's hope fled away, and she looked without a word upon the forest beauty at her side.

"My father, let the white girl go," Little Moccasin said, venturing to meet the outlaw's flashing eyes. "See! I have killed the traitor. He will never betray my father again."

"You served him right; but you were going to take this girl back to the river when I came up," was the reply. "She is mine, and the hand that is raised to tear her from me will fall in death. Come, my bird."

He drew the settler's daughter toward him, and as his eyes flashed their fire upon her cheek, Kate uttered a shriek and hung senseless in his grasp.

"Now go!" he cried to the mystery, as he pointed over her shoulder into the gloom of the forest. "Do not lift your rifle against me, for then you would never know who you are. Go! and follow me not. Don't cross my path too often!"

She saw the outstretched hand that pointed her into forced exile; she noted the murderous eyes that darted from her into the depths of the tarn, and with a final pitying glance upon the unconscious girl, hanging over Girty's strong arm, she obeyed. For the second time that night he had sent her from his presence.

"No man ever baffled Jim Girty!" he said, looking down into the white face which looked like death's own in the starlight. "For this moment I have plotted. Now I can desert the tribes to their own war, for she takes away all my warlike ambition. They may not see me in the next great battle. The hand of man shall not take her from me."

Then for a moment he studied his captive's face in silence, admiring its contour and matchless loveliness.

At length he started forward and stood over John Darknight.

"Quite dead!" he said with evident satisfaction. "That young girl saved me a bit of lead and powder."

Yes, the treacherous guide was dead. From that night there would be fewer bloody boats on the Maumee, and not a soul in the Northwest Territory was to regret Little Moccasin's aim.

Leaving John Darknight where he had fallen, a prey to the vultures and the wolf, Girty turned away, and, with his still unconscious captive, hastened toward his cabin.

The outlaw had achieved another triumph; but the avenger of blood was on his trail, and on a day memorable in the history of Ohio he was to expiate the crime which we have already witnessed.

CHAPTER XII.

A THRILLING INITIATION.

Oscar Parton did not resist when his captors drew him into their boat, which was paddled into the middle of the stream.

He saw that resistance would prove futile, for his struggle with the dead warrior had wearied him.

His captors were real red athletes, with great breadth of chest, and strong arms. They regarded him with much curiosity, and did not speak until the boat began to ascend the stream.

"The Blacksnake's spy!" said one, half interrogatively, as he peered into the young man's face.

His accent told Parton that he was a Shawnee.

"I am not a spy," was the reply, "I have never trailed the Indian, with a rifle ready to take his life."

The red men exchanged significant glances, and the youngest, a youth of eighteen, spoke:

"Pale face is a Yengee."^[C]

"I am an American," Oscar said, knowing that an attempt to conceal his national identity would result in no good to him. "I have lived at the mouth of the Swift River,^[D] lifting no arm against the Indian."

20

"But why is white man here?" asked the Shawnee.

Then followed the narrative of the flight of the Merriweather family, and the story of Kate's abduction. The two Indians listened without interruption; but at certain stages of the narration they exchanged meaning looks.

It was evident that they credited the story, for the young man told it in a plain, straightforward manner, embellishing it with no rhetoric.

"White guide steal girl?" the young Indian—a Seneca—said, and the elder nodded his head in confirmation. "Him bad man. Decoys boats to the wrong side of river for the red man. Parquatoc no like him, for he makes war on women and children."

For several moments the savages conversed together in whispers, and in the Indian tongue, of which the captive caught but few words which he understood. His fate appeared to be the subject of conversation, and he waited with much anxiety and impatience for the end of the council.

Escape was not to be thought of, for his limbs were bound, and he would have sunk beneath the waves like a stone if he had thrown himself from the boat.

At last the dark heads separated, and the young settler looked into the Indian's eyes as if seeking the decision there before he should hear it from their tongues.

But he was doomed to disappointment, for the red Arabs did not speak, though the one who had called himself Parquatoc guided the boat toward the shore.

Oscar thought that the youth's eye had a kindly gleam, and tried to make himself believe that no murderous light was in the orbs of his companion.

Parquatoc sent the boat to the bank with strong, rapid strokes, and it finally struck with a dull thud that made the light craft quiver. Then he severed Oscar's leg bonds, and the settler stood erect on the shore, ten miles below the scene of his capture.

His thoughts were of Harvey Catlett, whom he had left so unceremoniously, and who might think

that he had deserted him to hunt alone for the stolen girl.

He did not quail before the uncertain fate that stared him in the face; but resolved to meet it, dread as it might be, like a man.

The boat was drawn upon the bank, and lifted into the boughs of a huge tree, which told that it was not to kiss the waves again that night.

The Shawnee deposited it there while the young Seneca guarded the settler. But such vigilance was useless, for Oscar had resolved to attempt no escape that did not offer the best signs of success.

Having deposited the boat in the tree so well that none but the keenest of eyes could have found it, the eldest savage gave his companion a look, and the next moment a knife flashed in his hand.

Oscar thought that his doom was near at hand, for Parquatoc stepped forward, his scarlet fingers encircling the buckhorn handle of the keen blade. But though the youth's eyes flashed and his well-knit figure quivered, there was no gleam of murder in his eyes.

The Shawnee looked on without a sign of interference.

"The pale face has said that he does not hate the Indian!" the youth said.

"Why should I? He has never done me harm."

"But he kills the whites, and now the Blacksnakes come among his wigwams with rifle and torch."

"True; but the Blacksnake, as you call our great soldier, would not be marching into this country if the bad whites had not stirred up the tribes by lies and rum."

The young settler spoke with great boldness, looking straight into the eyes of the pair.

"The pale face hates the king's men and the renegades?"

"He does."

There was a moment's silence.

"Does he hate the White Whirlwind?"

"He hates Jim Girty with all his heart!"

The Shawnee nodded to Parquatoc with manifest satisfaction.

"Then let the pale man bare his breast."

For the first time since the landing, a pallor swept over Oscar Parton's face.

If the savages were friends to the Girtys, and there were few Indians who would not have followed them to death, his replies had fated him to die, and the command to bare his breast seemed to settle the question of his life.

He hesitated, but not through fear.

"Is the white man afraid?" asked the boy-warrior with a sneer.

"No!" was the quick reply, and the next instant the settler's hands were lifted to obey the command; but the deer thongs that bound them prevented him.

Parquatoc smiled, and cut the bonds.

Then Oscar tore his jacket open, and exposed his flesh to the Indian's gaze.

"The white man hates the British and the white renegades. He must join our band."

Then while the last word still quivered the speaker's lips, the knife flashed across his breast and a spurt of blood told that it had left a horrid trail behind. The youth did not fall, but remained erect, while the Indians regarded the work of the blade with satisfaction.

"Listen," said Parquatoc, laying his hand on Oscar's shoulder and looking straight into his eyes. "You are one of us now and forever. There was a council the other dark (night) in the long hollow. The White Whirlwind came and raised his voice for war. Many chiefs followed him; but there were many more who were afraid to lift their voices for peace. The Indian can't fight the Blacksnake. He will sweep them from his path as the hurricane sweeps the leaves from the trees. Parquatin, our brother, rose and spoke for peace. He told the council that war meant starving squaws, desolated maize fields, and gameless hunting grounds to the Indian. He called White Whirlwind a bad man, who would desert the red man to trail a white girl through the forest. It was a talk that made the Whirlwind mad; and there in the council before the assembled braves of

seven nations, he drove his tomahawk into our brother's brain. We have raised our hands to the Manitou like the white men do when they want to make their words strong, and said that we hate the palefaces who have lied the Indian into the fight. We strike at the renegade; we trail the White Whirlwind; and he shall die for the blow which he struck at the council in the long hollow. White man, you are one of us now. You carry the sign of the brotherhood. Wherever you go you will find red brethren. No other paleface belongs to us. In danger, show the mark; our people are many, and after the next great battle, the cold white faces among the tribes will not be few. You are free; but if you go with us we will step upon the trail of the white rose stolen from you."

To the young warrior's speech, uttered in that eloquence which now and then adorns the pages of savage history, Oscar Parton listened with wonderment and strange emotions. It is true that Parquatoc's words, as he advanced, prepared him for the finale, but his transition from thoughts of doom to freedom was yet swift and startling. He found himself initiated into a cabal of Indians who had sworn to make war against certain white people—himself the sole white member of the organization.

There was a something about the young Parquatoc that made the settler admire him; and now that he knew that Jim Girty had basely slain his brother, he saw a motive for the boy-warrior's intense hatred.

He resolved to cultivate his friendship; but he did not know how soon the bonds sealed that night were to be broken.

"Come!" said Parquatoc, breaking in upon his thoughts. "The light is not very far away, and we must not be here when the white arrows fall upon the river."

"But white man no gun," said the Shawnee, speaking for the first time since the landing.

"Never mind; gun come soon enough," was the Seneca's reply.

A moment later the tree and concealed boat were left behind, and the trio hurried from the river.

Oscar Parton walked beside the boy, never dreaming of escape, though his freedom had been restored, for his new brethren had promised to aid him in his search for Kate.

He was thinking about his thrilling initiation, and wondering what would come of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LOVERS' MEETING.

The reader will recollect that we left Harvey Catlett, the young scout, searching for John Darknight's trail on the banks of the Maumee. We will now return to him.

For a long time the youth prosecuted his search with vigor, confident that he would soon be enabled to strike the trail and start in pursuit of the treacherous guide, whose hands had, he doubted not, taken Kate Merriweather from the camp. But the minutes passed without bringing him success, and he at last began to fear that the abductor had not landed at any point opposite the bivouac.

With this idea gaining strength in his mind, he resolved to rejoin his companion and suggest new operations. But Oscar Parton did not respond to his oft-repeated signals, and the young scout sought him in turn until the gray streaks of light announced the dawn of another day. He did not hear the boat that drifted past him in the night, nor catch a sound of the struggle between the living and the dead which was taking place on board.

He was inclined to charge Oscar Parton with desertion, attributing it to the young man's zeal for Kate's welfare, for whom he—Oscar—preferred perhaps to hunt alone.

"Well, let him go!" Catlett said at last, standing on the shore with the daylight in his face. "If he does not like to trail with me, I am sure that I will not lift a hand against him. He might have been a stumbling block, any way, and on the whole I am not sorry that he has rid me of himself."

Speaking thus—as the reader knows, unjustly—of Oscar Parton, the young scout started up the river. A few steps brought him to a rifle which lay on the ground. A glance told him that it belonged to the man whom he had just charged with desertion; but now he regretted his words. The discovery of the weapon told him that Parton was in trouble.

His keen eyes, used to the woods and their trails, could not show him any signs of a struggle, for the tide had removed the stranding place of the canoe, and after a long and unsuccessful search, Catlett looked mystified. He looked at the rifle, but it told no story of its owner's mishaps; it lay in his hands dumb—provokingly so.

"It beats me!" were the only audible words that escaped him, after a long silence of study and conjecture.

Then he thrust the weapon into the hollow of a tree near by, and started into the forest.

He had another mystery to solve besides Kate Merriweather's abduction—Oscar Parton's whereabouts. He felt assured, however, that the settler's daughter had fallen into Darknight's hands, and it was known to him that the guide and James Girty were staunch friends.

22

It was toward the renegade's cabin, ten miles distant, that the scout hastened. He examined the ground over which he walked, and the light growing stronger, at last penetrated the forest.

The morning was not far advanced when a young man paused suddenly in a glen where the trees had felt the fury of a hurricane, and looked into the face of a person whose clothes were damp with still glistening dew.

The cold white face was upturned to the blue sky, and in the eyes was the ghastly stare of the dead. Beside the body lay a dark-stocked rifle clutched tightly by a rigid right hand. Under the left ear was a mass of clotted blood, which proclaimed the gateway of the bullet of death.

"John Darknight!" exclaimed Harvey Catlett, stooping down to examine the dead. "Little did I think that your trail would end so suddenly, and so fatally to you. Now a new mystery begins. Where is the girl?"

An examination of the glen told the trailer that several persons besides the unfortunate guide had been there, and he was examining a track so peculiar as to attract attention, when a noise greeted his ears.

Raising his head and looking over his shoulder, he saw standing not far away the person of all others whom he would meet at that hour—Little Moccasin.

There was a smile on her face as she came forward and submitted to the kiss which he imprinted on her cheek.

"They have been talking hard of you, girl, in the camp over the river," Harvey said. "They accuse you of deserting them."

"Areotha go to follow him!" she said, and her glance wandered to the dead man in the dewy grass. "But he eluded her, and for a long time she saw him not."

"And too late you have found him. He is there."

"Areotha saw him fall with his face to the stars. He lay so still, and never groaned in his throat."

The young scout looked into the fair face, flushed with triumph.

"Did you do it, girl?"

"Areotha shot him when he was taking the white girl through the forest."

Harvey Catlett started.

"Then you rescued Kate!" he cried.

The girl shook her head.

"White girl taken from Areotha," was her answer. "Will Fair Face listen?"

"I will."

In simple language Little Moccasin detailed her trailing of John Darknight and his captive through the forest, and how in the hurricane-swept glen she had put an end to his crimes with a bullet. Then, of course, followed the account of James Girty's interference, and his subsequent flight with the settler's daughter.

The scout listened without interrupting her.

"The new trail begins here," he said, addressing the beautiful creature. "There is a ball in my rifle that may rid the Northwest Territory of its incarnate curse."

"No, no!" cried Little Moccasin, and her hand fell on his arm. "If Fair Face kills the Whirlwind, he will never tell."

Catlett looked into the forest beauty's eyes as a puzzled expression settled upon his face.

"Never—never tell!" repeated the girl, mystifying him the more.

"Never tell what, Moccasin?" exclaimed the scout, as he put his arm about her and drew her near him.

"He knows Areotha's true father."

"No!"

"He said so last night in his own cabin door, and when he said he would not tell, Areotha raised her rifle; but he told her to shoot, and never, never know, and—she let the rifle fall. My father knows, for when the wound-fever was upon him he said strange things, and made me go away when I came near."

Catlett was silent, busy with his thoughts, and when he started he saw Areotha's eyes fixed upon him.

"The brute may know," he said. "I wish I could wrest the secret from him."

"Fair Face will not kill him, then?" said the girl, pleading for the life of the scourge of the settlements. "When the right time comes he will tell."

"That time, in his opinion, will never come. When Jim Girty hates, he hates forever."

"But will Fair Face spare him?"

"I would not spare the wolf that has trailed me for years, nor would I be lenient with the hound that has spilled the blood of women and their little ones. Wolf and hound is this very man whom you have called father these many years."

"He is very bad!" the girl said, dropping her eyes. "*But he knows!*"

"Then for your sake I will not slay him, save in self defense. Otherwise on sight would I shoot the human blood-hound."

Before Harvey Catlett had ceased to speak a pair of arms encircled his neck, and he felt hot kisses on his face.

Areotha had conquered him.

"We part here," he said, gently releasing himself.

"Does Fair Face go to trail the Whirlwind?"

"I go to wrench Kate Merriweather from his grasp. This is my sole mission; then back to Mad Anthony, to fight in the battle near at hand."

"And Areotha?"

"Go to the camp over the river, and tell Wolf Cap what I have done."

A pallor of fear and distrust came over the girl's face.

"He hates Areotha, and the young men do not like her."

"Do not fear the tall hunter now," Harvey said.

"Does he like Areotha?" she cried, brightening up. "She often dreams about him, but a shadow comes between us, and in his place is the Whirlwind and his home."

"You need not fear him, though he may act strangely sometimes. He will protect you from the two young men of the party. You may be of assistance to the fugitives. Stay with them until I come. Go, little one. God bless you."

They parted in the glen, and Harvey Catlett did not stir until the wood witch had vanished from his sight.

"I believe it stronger than ever, now," he said. "I hope it may be so. Jim Girty, I have virtually sworn to spare your life—for on this trail we are bound to meet—and there is but one woman in the world who could have made me promise."

A moment later the storm swept glen was not tenanted save by the man who would never, never leave it.

Harvey Catlett, with tightened belt and ready rifle, had stepped upon a new trail, destined to be fraught with strange adventures.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN GIRTY'S CABIN.

Kate Merriweather was quite exhausted when the renegade's forest home was reached.

Her strange abduction, rescue and recapture had told upon her nature, and she crossed Girty's threshold with a sigh of despair which did not escape her companion's notice.

"Oh, you will not find Jim Girty's home so bad as your imagination has pictured it," he said with a smile. "A British officer at Fort Miami tells about a place that had over its door the words, 'who enters here leaves hope behind;' but that isn't my home."

Kate shuddered at his heartless levity, which he applauded with a coarse laugh.

She felt that the legend that blazed over the portals of Dante's hell might with propriety have been inscribed above Girty's door.

She felt like abandoning hope, and resolved not to plead with the brute into whose hands she had fallen.

But she determined to protect herself from insult while under his roof.

Of the coarse meal which the renegade sat before her Kate partook, for fatigue had rendered her hungry, and Girty eyed her triumphantly while she ate.

The breakfast was at last concluded, and Girty began to remove the remains of the matutinal meal.

While engaged in this duty a quick step alarmed him, and a lithe young Indian appeared in the door-way.

Girty stepped forward with a smile of recognition, for the youth was clad in the scanty costume of a runner, and the message which he bore was speedily delivered.

Buckhoughelas, the great sachem, and the confederate chiefs were about to advance upon Wayne, and requested the White Whirlwind's presence.

During the delivery of the dispatch an uneasiness was visible in Girty's face, which would not have escaped the notice of an older warrior. It was evident that he did not expect the news at that hour.

"What says the Whirlwind?"

"I will come. Before the end of another sleep I will be with my braves."

The runner bowed, and snatching a piece of venison from the rough table, he bounded away, eating as he ran.

"A pretty fix! a pretty fix!" muttered the renegade to himself, turning from the door and glancing at his captive. "I am one of them as much as Mataquan, the runner. I have helped on the war; I have stirred up the nations; I have made them mad and bloodthirsty. Shall I desert them now, because I have a woman on my hands? If I remained from the fight my life would not be worth a leaf, for the survivors would hunt me down."

He stepped to the table with the last word on his lips, and his hand was about to continue his work, when the door which he had closed was burst open and two Indians leaped into the room.

There were but few savages whom the renegade had reason to dread, for was he not virtually an Indian, though white-skinned and English? But he turned quickly upon the intruders, and started back when he saw their faces.

They were Parquatoc, and Sackadac, the Shawnee; the ring leaders of the cabal against his life!

James Girty, ever quick to act in the face of danger, sprang to his rifle; but before his hand could seize the trusty weapon, the Seneca youth bounded upon him and bore him to the cabin wall.

It was the work of a moment, and no giant could have withstood the terrible spring.

The outlaw recovered in an instant, and his great strength would have released him from Parquatoc's power if the Shawnee had not flown to his comrade's aid. Girty was in the hands of two men who had sworn to rid the world of his detestable shape.

He was disarmed in a moment, and found himself at the mercy of his foes, who confronted him with weapons, eager to drink his blood.

"Call white hunter," said the Seneca to his companion, and Sackadac went to the door.

At a signal from his lips a third party joined the Indians, and as he crossed the threshold a cry of joy was heard, and Kate Merriweather leaped forward to fall into his arms. It was her lover, Oscar Parton.

Girty ground his teeth as he witnessed the meeting, and fixed his eyes upon his captors.

"The blood of Parquatin is on the Whirlwind's knife!" said the Seneca. "He cut his heart because he dared to talk for peace."

"Not for that!" grated the renegade. "He called me coward, and no man calls me that and lives."

"The Whirlwind is a coward!" flashed the youth! "He kills a boy when he stands before him unarmed. Parquatin was but a boy; he was wearing his first eagle feathers, and he had never made love to a woman."

"And he never will!" said Girty with sarcasm which cut its way to the Indian brother's heart.

Parquatoc raised his rifle with a meaning glance at the Shawnee, and stepped toward the door.

"The Whirlwind has killed his last man!" the youth resumed, as the barrel crept up to a level with the renegade's breast. "He will never press the grass trails again with his moccasins, and the white women will sleep in peace with their papooses at their side. Parquatin's blood must flow over the Whirlwind's; the new moon must smile upon his carcass."

"Shoot and be done with it!" Girty said, without a quiver of the muscles. "I am in your power, and as every man can't live over the time which has been marked out for him, I am not going to play the baby here."

They say that murderers are cowards. A greater murderer than James Girty never cursed the early west; but not a single instance of cowardice stands against his record. He looked into Parquatoc's rifle without fear, and his countenance did not change when the Indian's cheek dropped upon the stock.

It was a moment fraught with the wildest interest, and in the silence the beating of hearts was heard.

But that tableau was rudely broken, and that by a white man who suddenly threw himself into the cabin and pushed the rifle of the Seneca aside.

Every eye was turned upon him, and the tomahawks of the Indians leaped from their belts.

"I hate that man with all my heart," the new comer cried, addressing the Indians as he pointed to the renegade, surprised with the rest. "I wouldn't spare his life but for a little while. He knows something which I must know; then my red brother's rifle may send the bullet to his heart."

Girty looked, stared into the speaker's face.

"Who are you?" he asked before the Indian could reply.

"My name is Catlett."

"A spy of Wayne's?"

"Yes."

The savages exchanged looks, and Parquatoc spoke:

"The Blacksnake's spy has no right to step between Parquatoc and his captive," he said.

"No!" hissed the Shawnee.

"Stand aside!" continued the Seneca, menacingly.

But Harvey Catlett did not stir.

The Indians advanced upon him.

"Hold!" cried Oscar Parton. "He will join us! He will wear the mark which you gave me."

"No white spy shall wear it!" was the reply.

Face to face with the two savages stood Wayne's young scout, composed and unyielding. He intended to kill the first savage who raised a hand against him.

But all at once James Girty moved from the wall. With one of his powerful bounds, he hurled himself upon the spy, whom he sent reeling against Parquatoc, and the next moment he was running for life through the forest.

It was in vain that Oscar Parton and the Shawnee, the first to recover, tried to cover him with their rifles. The renegade was fleet of foot, and a yell announced his escape and future revenge.

James Girty was at large again, but captiveless; for Kate Merriweather had fallen into hands that would not desert her.

Harvey Catlett turned to the Indians when he had recovered his equilibrium. He told them why he

wished to spare Girty's life—for the secret of Little Moccasin's parentage—and when he had finished, Parquatoc said:

"The Blacksnake's spy must join us. All who hate the White Whirlwind must wear the mark."

At Oscar's solicitation the young spy consented, and Parquatoc's knife cut the sign of the banded brotherhood on his breast.

"Back to the white people with their child!" the Seneca said. "The big fight is coming on."

They parted there—red and white—and Kate once more turned her face toward her relatives

CHAPTER XV.

THE FOREST WHIPPING POST.

The Merriweather family did not make rapid progress toward Wayne after Kate's abduction. A gloom had settled over the little band of fugitives, and they desired to remain near the spot which had been so fatal to one of their number.

A degree of safety returned with Wolf Cap's accession to their numbers, and the tall borderman did not cease to assure them that Harvey Catlett was an experienced scout. He firmly believed that he would restore Kate to their arms, and this quieted the parents and made them feel hopeful.

"Think of my loss," the hunter would say, when the parents murmured at the theft of their child. "Think of a man coming home and finding his cabin in ashes, and the bones of his family among them. I had one of the best wives in the world, and a little girl who was just beginning to call me 'papa.'"

25

"You have had revenge?" said Abel Merriweather.

"Ask the woods, the streams, and the Indian villages that lie between the Ohio and the Maumee if I have not glutted my thirst for vengeance. But it has not restored my family. I have killed, but the blows that I have dealt did not give back my child's kiss, my wife's embrace. No; there is no satisfaction in vengeance. Man ought to leave his wrongs to God, who punishes the guilty in the end."

Thus Wolf Cap often talked to Abel Merriweather and his family, and afterward he would relapse into a silence from which no one attempted to draw him. He would stand for hours in a reverie like a harmless lunatic, and more than once the sun which found him in this state at the meridian, saw him there at its setting.

He was the guide. Every foot of the Maumee wood was known to him, and with his eye turned to the west, he slowly but surely led the fugitives in the direction of Wayne's camp.

The sun was creeping zenithward one warm morning, when a boat left the northern shore of the Maumee and pushed out into the stream. Its single occupant was a girlish person whose face was very lovely, and whose browned hands seemed accustomed to the use of paddles.

She steered for the opposite bank, and despite the rapids, which threatened at times to capsize the frail craft, she reached her destination. With an agile bound she sprang upon shore, and made the canoe fast to a clump of bushes. Then she took a rifle from the bottom of the boat, and looked into the forest that trended to the bank which she had gained.

It was Little Moccasin.

After satisfying herself that no person had observed her movements, she moved from the shore; but a minute later the clicking of gun locks brought her to a halt, and she heard a voice that startled her.

"Don't lift your gun, or we'll drop you in your tracks."

Then the girl saw the speaker, for he had slipped from behind a tree, and beside him stood a companion.

With a cry of recognition which made Little Moccasin's eyes sparkle with delight, she started toward the twain, whose faces were darkened by scowls.

"Areotha is glad to meet her brothers," she said. "Fair Face has sent her——"

"No fixed up story!" interrupted one of the whites, who was Carl Merriweather; his companion was George Darling.

"We won't listen to you," said the latter. "We've seen enough of your sleek-tongued treachery, and by Jove, we're going to put an end to it."

The girl's face grew pale.

"Will the white men listen to Areotha?"

"No; and beside, we wouldn't believe you if we did!" said Carl. "Of course you were in league with that rascally guide, and he stole my sister. Do you know what we ought to do with you? Why, we would be serving you right if we whipped you to death right here. God knows how many boats of our people you have decoyed into the hands of the Indians. A female renegade is the meanest thing on earth."

"Areotha will talk," said the girl, who had waited with impatience for the young Hotspur to finish. "The hot-headed young men may shut their ears; but the Manitou will listen. He never turns away from the sound of his people's voice."

"Go on, then," said Darling. "Spit out the pretty story you have cooked up."

Little Moccasin gave the speaker a glance of hatred, and then said in her silvery tone:

"Areotha comes from the Blacksnake's spy. The guide is dead; he sleeps where the storm tore down the trees. Fair Face says that he will soon bring the white girl back to her people!"

"And he sent you here to say this?" said Carl Merriweather, in a tone which told that he did not believe a word which had fallen from the girl's lips.

"He told Areotha to tell the mother and the father this, that their eyes might get bright again."

"It is a pretty story, but it don't go down," Carl said.

The black eyes flashed again.

"You might as well have told us that Kate was in the camp now," said George Darling.

"That is so!"

"We believe that you are the biggest mischief-maker in these parts. Who knows how many young men you have decoyed to their doom by your smiles. And now you have another in your net—a brave young fellow, but blind enough to follow your infernal witchery to his death. Come, lay your rifle down; we want to deal with you as you deserve."

"If we let you off with a whole skin you may thank our mercy," said Carl with a smile.

Little Moccasin, finding herself completely in the power of the young men, hesitated a moment, and then dropping her rifle, surrendered herself. There was no pity in her captor's eyes, and her pale face made them laugh outright.

"A little whipping—that is all!" said George Darling, fiendishly, as he seized the girl's arm and led her to a tree that stood near by.

While Carl guarded her, his companion stripped a lynn tree of its bark covering, which he converted into ropes, and returned to the selected tree.

Blushing at the purposed indignity, the girl permitted herself to be lashed to the tree—her cheek against the bark—but with pressed lips and flashing eyes.

This operation performed, a number of keen withes were selected, and armed with several bundles which had been converted into whips as cutting as the Russian knout, the gallant young bordermen approached their captive.

"Now my forest lady," said Darling, sarcastically, "we'll give you a dressing that will not be forgotten on your dying day. Come, now, confess that you are a forest witch in league with Jim Girty and his minions, red and white."

"The Manitou knows that Areotha never lifted a hand against the American people."

"Lying to the last," said Carl. "Ten extra licks for that."

"Twenty of them," answered Darling, eager to deal the first blow.

"We should have taken off her jacket."

"No, the sticks will cut through it like a razor."

"Then let her have the whipping, George. When your arm tires, I will continue the work."

George Darling selected the longest bundle of withes, and stepped back for a terrible sweeping blow. The girl gritted her teeth and waited. Her white face seemed frozen against the tree.

With demoniac pleasure in his eye, the young man raised the whip and swung his arm back for the blow. Carl Merriweather did not cease to watch him.

The second of silence that followed was suddenly broken, but not by the sound of the sticks on Little Moccasin's back.

There came a stern voice from the right:

"Stop! I'll kill the rascal that touches that girl!"

George Darling started, and the knout fell from his hand. There were more than one white face beneath the tree.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!" said the same voice, and the would-be whippers saw Wolf Cap advancing. "It is a pretty business for two young men to be engaged in—whipping a girl in the woods. By hokey! I ought to take the whips and wear them out on your backs."

The youths were too astonished to reply. They trembled like criminals before the tall spy, and did not stir until he had cut the girl's bonds and released her.

"Go back to the camp!" he commanded. "Or hold! Apologize to this creature. Down on your knees, or by the great horn spoon, I'll cut your faces into strings with your own whips."

The tall man was in a tempest of passion, and, frightened almost out of their wits, the young men dropped upon the ground and craved forgiveness of the creature whom they had so grossly insulted.

"Areotha cannot hate the Americans," she said softly. "She will forget the bark and the whips."

Sullen and abashed, Carl Merriweather and his companion slunk away, leaving Wolf Cap and Little Moccasin at the tree.

For a long time the scout and spy looked into the girl's eyes, and all at once he covered his face with his hands and groaned.

"Every time I see her I think of that terrible night," he said.

"What does the hunter say?" said the girl, catching his words but indistinctly, for they were spoken through his great hard hands.

"Nothing," Wolf Cap answered, starting at the sound of her voice. "Nothing; don't speak to me! You make me think of a voice that I heard when I was a happy man."

As he uttered the last word, he staggered back with great emotion, and saw Little Moccasin staring strangely into his face.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BROTHERS' LAST INTERVIEW.

Meanwhile Wayne was advancing with that caution and intrepidity which had rendered him famous in wars prior to the one in which he was then engaged. His spies brought him hourly reports of the movements of the enemy, and he knew where the decisive conflict would be fought.

The allied tribes had selected as their battle ground the forest of Presqu'-Isle, a place on the left bank of the Maumee, and almost within reach of the guns of the British Fort Miami.

During the night preceding the battle, the chiefs of the different nations assembled in council, and it was proposed by some to go up and attack Wayne in his encampment. The proposition was opposed, and the council did not determine to attack him that night!

A great deal of responsibility rested upon this nocturnal council, at which the Girtys were present. Simon did not say much in the council, but held private talks with the prominent chiefs. He approved the plan of attacking the Americans in their camp, and his plan was ably seconded by Little Turtle and others.

The fate of the tribes of the Northwestern Territory hung upon the decision of the council.

"We have beaten the enemy twice under separate commanders,"^[E] said the Turtle in the council. "We cannot expect the same good fortune always to attend us."

"The Americans are now led by a chief who never sleeps. The night and day are alike to him, and during all the time he has been marching upon our villages, notwithstanding the wakefulness of our young men, we have not been able to surprise him. Think well of it. There is something

whispers to me that it would be prudent to listen to his offers of peace.”^[F]

To this speech James Girty was the first to reply. His voice was for war to the knife. He scouted at ideas of peace, when the seven tribes had sworn to stand side by side and oppose the Americans. He accused of cowardice all who talked of submission, and cast scornful glances at his brother Simon and the Turtle. Clad in the war dress which he usually wore on such occasions, and with the fitful flashes of the council fire in his face, he seemed a very demon of war and blood.

His voice went afar into the night, and startled the warriors who had been forbidden to attend the council.

“We will surely fight the Blacksnake, for the Whirlwind is talking,” they said with delight.

It was midnight when the council broke up, its participants in no good humor, for the Turtle’s speech had sown much dissension in the Indian ranks, and that night many a red man saved his life by deserting the common cause.

It was decided to fight Wayne at Presqu’-Isle.

After the adjournment of the council the several chiefs hurried to their respective legions to prepare for the conflict. James Girty wended his way toward the Miami camp. He was ill at ease, and ever and anon his hands closed and opened spasmodically, and he muttered as he went along:

“Is he tired of war? Is he going to turn gentleman? He is a coward! He is not worthy the name of Girty.”

These words fell in audible tones from the renegade’s lips. They were hissed from a heart which was a very cauldron of anger.

“James?”

At the sound of his name the outlaw stopped, and turning, recognized the speaker.

“I am tired of war; but I am not a coward.”

The renegade brothers stood face to face in the forest.

For a moment neither spoke. They stood apart, as if each had determined not to approach the other.

“You are for peace, Simon,” James said.

“I would stay the slaughter that will follow our meeting with Wayne,” was the reply.

Simon Girty trying to prevent the effusion of blood? It seemed one of the impossibilities of his nature.

A grim smile passed over the Whirlwind’s face.

“Then fly to-night,” he said bitterly. “Go to the great cities and exchange your bloody hatchet for the priests’ robes of religion. I am for war! No man shall ever say that Jim Girty turned from a chance to shed American blood. We are brothers. Simon, is it true that you are tired of slaughter?”

“I am. We have been devils long enough, James.”

“When did you experience this wonderful change?”

The speaker’s sarcasm made the solitary listener bite his lip.

“Do you know who is with Wayne?” he said.

“Two thousand men that long to drink my blood.”

“*He* is there—*they* are there!”

“Ha?”

“Abner Stark reached Wayne not long since. He brought a family of fugitives into camp. That man has been hunting you ever since you murdered his family in Kentucky. Fifty more avengers of desolated homes are with Wayne, and there are people in our own ranks who hate you. The blood of Parquatin will be avenged.”

For a moment James Girty looked searchingly into Simon’s face.

“Parquatin!” he said. “Simon, his blood is on your hands. You put him up to what he did in the council. I should have spared the boy, and killed you. Oh, what a brother you have been to me! And now with fiendish delight you tell me that I will fall to-morrow. Let it come! No man shall say

that I ever played the coward. Go your way. I am ashamed to know that I have a brother whose name is Simon!"

The last word still quivered the outlaw's lips as he turned on his heel and deliberately walked away.

Simon Girty watched him until the ghostly shadows of the trees hid him from sight, and said, as he turned toward the Indian camp:

"Simon Girty will be brotherless to-morrow night."

There was a tinge of regret in his tone, for despite their hates and jealousies, their inhumanity to one another, the renegade brothers were not devoid of every spark of brotherly affection.

And the night wore on, and at last the day came. It was the bloody and disastrous twentieth of August, 1794.

CHAPTER XVII.

FIELD OF THE FALLEN TIMBERS.

We return to other characters of our romance in order to glance at their adventures from our last dealings with them up to the night before the great fight for supremacy on the shores of the Maumee.

We left Kate Merriweather returning to her kindred with Harvey Catlett and her lover after her rescue in the cabin of James Girty.

The restoration was effected without incident worthy of record, and the girl at last found herself in her mother's arms.

The journey was then resumed, and the entire party, with the exception of Little Moccasin, who mysteriously returned to the forest, reached Mad Anthony's camp.

28

It may well be believed that Abel Merriweather breathed free again when he found his little family behind the bayonets of the American army, and he hastened to enroll himself among the ranks of bordermen led by Wells and the Choctaw chief Hummingbird.

In this legion were also found Oscar Parton, George Darling, and little, but fearless Carl Merriweather. Harvey Catlett was unattached, and Wolf Cap given the liberty of the field.

Around and upon the Hill of Presqu'Isle the Indian forces had posted themselves, having their left secured by the river, and their front by a kind of breastwork of fallen timbers which rendered it impracticable for cavalry to advance. It was a position admirably chosen, but useless, as history tells.

Impatiently the allied tribes awaited the American army. The chiefs, with few exceptions, were confident, for had they not beaten Harmar and St. Clair?

The Girtys had not shirked the battle, but there was a restlessness about Simon's movements that attracted attention. James, on the contrary, was firm and boastful. Wherever he went he encouraged the Indians to stand firm, promising them victory and its tempting spoils. But there were keen eyes fixed upon him.

In the scarlet ranks were many who carried a long scar on their breasts—the mark of the brotherhood to whom Parquatin's blood cried for vengeance.

In two splendid columns, with trailed arms, Wayne's army advanced upon the savages. A terrible fire greeted the onslaught, and the General soon discovered that the enemy were in full force and endeavoring, with some show of success, to turn his left flank. Then came the tug of war, and for hours the carnival of battle raged among the fallen timbers and around the base of the hill.

"At last! look Harvey!"

Wolf Cap pointed through an opening, and Harvey Catlett, the spy, saw the sight to which his attention was called.

There, in a little space made by the death of a forest tree, stood a man whose face was begrimed with powder. His half savage uniform was torn and blackened by the battle, and he seemed debating whether to fly or plunge again into the fight.

"It is he!" said the young spy, looking up into Wolf Cap's face. "It is Jim Girty."

"The man who darkened all my life!" was the hissed reply. "For years I have hunted him. Now he

is mine!"

Quick to the speaker's shoulder leaped the deadly rifle, and his cheek dropped upon the stock for aim.

Harvey Catlett watched the renegade, unconscious of his swiftly approaching doom.

All at once James Girty bounded into the air, and with a death cry that sounded above the roar of battle, fell on his face, and stretched his brawny arms in the agony of death.

Wolf Cap lowered his rifle and wheeled upon the spy.

"Did you shoot?" he cried.

"No."

"Then who did? Some one has cheated me of my revenge!"

As he spoke, he glanced to the right and saw a young Indian reloading his rifle.

"It is Parquatoc!" said Harvey Catlett.

With a maddened cry the tall hunter sprang forward; but the Seneca youth eluded him, and disappeared in the twinkling of an eye.

"Come! The battle rolls towards the British fort!" the young spy said, rousing Wolf Cap, who had relapsed into one of his singular reveries.

"Yes, yes; we will go. But let us see whether he is dead."

The twain hurried to the spot where James Girty had fallen. Wolf Cap turned him over, and saw the eyes start at sight of him.

"The butcherer still lives!" the trailer said, as his hand grasped the handle of his tomahawk. "Harvey, I can yet revenge the murdered ones."

But the youth's hand fell restrainingly on Wolf Cap's arm.

"No. He is dying, Abner. Let us keep our hands in this hour. Get down and hear what he says."

The two knelt beside the dreaded scourge of the Northwest, powerless now to harm a babe. Words were falling from his lips, and his eyes remained fixed upon Abner Stark.

"They did it!" he said. "It was a redskin's bullet, and Parquatoc's. No more battles for Jim Girty. Listen, Abner Stark, for I know you. You have hunted me a long time, to find me dying. Where is the girl?"

Wolf Cap started, and glanced at the spy.

"He talks about some girl, Harvey."

"Is the girl here?" asked the outlaw in a louder voice. "No? Must I die without seeing her? Well, let it be so. Abner Stark, when she comes, take her in your arms and call her your child, for such she is. I saved her from Indian fury that night, and I have tried to be good to her, bad as I am. I thought I would never tell you this."

"This is all true, Girty?" cried Stark, scarcely able to credit the revelation.

"On the word of the dying, Abner Stark. Why should I lie now?"

Then Wolf Cap raised his eyes towards heaven, and poured out the gratitude of a father's soul.

When he looked again at the prostrate outlaw, it was to say:

"I am glad I did not shoot you."

Girty smiled, and tried to speak; but the effort proved a failure, and the head fell back.

It was all over. The White Whirlwind was dead, and the flowers which his restless feet had pressed to earth, lifted their heads and smiled.

"Come, Abner!" said Catlett.

The hunter obeyed, but, as he rose, he caught sight of a rapidly approaching figure, and stood still.

The next moment Little Moccasin came up, and Wolf Cap lifted her from the ground, and in his embrace covered her face with kisses.

He held her there until the sound of battle died away, and when he released her, she glided to

Harvey Catlett's side and put her hands in his.

"Areatha is glad, Fair Face," she said, her eyes sparkling with joy. "The real father is found, and he will be happy until the Manitou sends for all of us."

There, on the bloody battlefield of the Fallen Timbers, Wolf Cap had found his child. It was a reunion impossible to describe, but many a heart beat in unison with the father's in the bivouac that night.

Of course, Little Moccasin left the woods and became Harvey Catlett's bride, while the backwoods preacher made Oscar Parton and the settler's daughter one.

Thus, with Wayne's decisive victory over the allied tribes, end the trails which we have followed through the summer woods of the Maumee.

THE END.

- [A] Changed from LITTLE MOCCASIN.
- [B] The Mississippi.
- [C] Yankee or American.
- [D] The Maumee. So called on account of its rapids.
- [E] Harmar and St. Clair.
- [F] Historical.

TREED BY A BEAR.

30

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

We were gathered around the fire at grandfather's, one winter evening, cracking butternuts and drinking cider, when one of the boys called out for a story, and proposed that grandfather should be the one to tell it.

"Yes, do tell us a story; please," spoke up half a dozen voices; "you haven't told us a story in a long time, grandfather."

"I don't believe I can think of anything new," said grandfather; "I told you all my stories a long time ago."

"Tell us the one about your being treed by a bear," suggested the prospective hunter of the party; "you haven't told that to all of us."

"Oh, yes, tell us that one," cried the children in chorus, and grandfather began:

"When your grandmother and I moved into the country, it didn't look much as it does now. There were no clearings of more than three or four acres in extent, and the settlers were scattered here and there through the woods, two or three miles apart. I came on before your grandmother did, and put up a rough shanty of logs, with a bark roof, and a floor of split pieces of basswood. You may be sure of one thing, children, and that is, we didn't have things very nice and handy in those days; but we were just beginning, and we had to do the best we could, and what we couldn't help we had to put up with.

"I built a little stable for our cow, which I left with your grandmother in the settlement where you find a city to-day, until I got ready to move my family and all my earthly possessions into the woods where I was making my new home. I cleared off a little patch of ground and got it ready for a garden, and then went after your grandmother and our household goods.

"It was a two days' drive to this place from the settlement then. I hired a man to bring your grandmother and our things, while I drove old Brindle. I shall never forget our first few days in our new home. We couldn't get used to it for some reason. Everything was so rough, and clumsy and awkward, I suppose.

"Your grandmother got homesick, and didn't want me to leave her alone a minute. She was afraid of bears and Indians, and she remembered all the fearful stories she had ever heard or read, of the terrible things that happened to settlers in the backwoods.

"As I was busy at work in clearing up a piece of ground round the shanty, I didn't have to leave her alone except when I went after old Brindle nights. The feed in the woods was so plenty that

the old cow didn't care whether she came home or not, and I had to lock her up every night as regular as night came. Sometimes I found her close by home, and sometimes two or three miles off. She wore a little bell which I could hear some distance off from where she was, and it wasn't very hard work to find her.

"I almost always took my gun with me when I went after the old cow, and hardly ever missed bringing home a partridge or a squirrel, which your grandmother would cook for our dinner next day. We had plenty of game in those days, and it was splendid hunting any where you took a notion to go. The woods were full of deer and all kinds of fowl, and so far as that kind of food was concerned, we lived on the fat of the land.

"One night, after we had been here about a month, I started to hunt up the cow, and forgot my gun until I had got so far that I concluded I wouldn't go back after it. I went on through the woods in the direction I had seen old Brindle go in the morning when I let her out of the stable, but I could hear no bell. I wandered round and round through the woods until it got to be quite dark. I must have got 'turned round,' as we used to say in those days when we got bewildered, and couldn't tell which way was north or south, for when I gave up hunting for the cow and concluded to go home I didn't know which way to go.

"However, I started in the direction I thought most likely led towards home. I had been going straight ahead, as I supposed, for ten or fifteen minutes, when I heard something coming toward me with a heavy tread, and pretty soon I heard a growl. Then I knew what it was. I had never seen a bear in the woods, and I had no idea about what sort of fellows they were to meet.

"If I had had my gun along I should have stood my ground, but without any kind of weapon I thought it best to look out for any possible danger, and made for a tree which stood near me. I was a good climber, and in a minute I was stowed away safely in the branches. But I had hardly reached my position when the bear came running up to the tree, and began walking round and round it, stopping every few seconds to raise himself up on his hind feet and take a look at me, or else stretching up against the tree as far as he could reach, as if he hesitated climbing up after me.

31

"I had a jack-knife with me, and I cut off a limb, which I trimmed into something like a club, to defend myself with if he concluded to come up and make a visit. Whenever he showed a desire to do so, by reaching up his great black paws and tearing away at the bark with his claws, I pounded my club against the body of the tree as far down as I could reach toward him, and that frightened him enough to keep him from climbing.

"But I couldn't frighten him away. He kept walking round and round the tree growling and whining very much like a dog, and I made up my mind that he had concluded to wait for me to come down. But I had no notion of doing that yet a while.

"Two or three hours went by. I wondered what your grandmother would think had happened to me. I knew she would be frightened almost to death, and that worried me, but I saw no way of getting out of the difficulty I had got into, and concluded I should have to spend the night in the tree.

"By and by the moon came up. I could see him distinctly then, as he kept up his march around me. He was an enormous fellow, and a man would have stood but little chance for his life with him unless he had been well armed.

"Well, he kept watch of me all night. He got tired of walking, by and by, and laid down close to the tree. Whenever I stirred, he would rouse up and resume his walk. Neither of us slept. You may be sure it was a long night to me. I couldn't help thinking of your poor grandmother, and wondering what she was doing.

"At last morning came. I thought the bear would be sure to take his departure then, but he evidently had made up his mind to see the thing out, for he made no effort to leave.

"It must have been about seven o'clock when I heard some one hallooing not far off, and, peering through the branches, I saw your grandmother, with my gun on her shoulder. She had started out to look for me. I saw that the bear had not discovered her, and I shouted:

"Don't come any nearer, Susan. I'm up the hickory tree, and there's a big bear at the foot of it. If he sees you there'll be trouble. You'd better go back to the house, and I'll come as soon as I can.'

"I saw her stop and look toward us very earnestly, and I knew she was thinking whether she could help me out of my difficulty. Pretty soon I saw her rest the gun over a little sapling and take sight at the bear, who had squatted down a few feet from the foot of the tree, and sat there looking up at me as if he was trying to make out what I was shouting so for.

"I was just going to tell your grandmother not to shoot, for I never once supposed she could hit the animal, when, bang! went the gun, and the bear gave a growl and a leap into the air, where he spun around like a top, and then dropped flat on the ground, and never stirred but once or twice afterward.

"You've killed him!' I shouted, and slid down from my rather uncomfortable quarters, just as

your grandmother came running up, pale as a ghost, and almost frightened at what she had dared to do. The minute she realized there was no danger, she drooped into my arms, and began to cry.

"We cut up the bear and took most of it to the house. It kept us in meat for a long time, and we used the skin for a carpet. I didn't forget my gun after that when I went after old Brindle, you may be quite sure.

"Your grandmother had never fired off a gun before, but when she found out that they weren't such terrible things after all as she had supposed they must be, she practiced with my rifle until she could shoot as well as I could, and after that she used to keep us in partridge and such game, while I cleared off land for crops. That first shot of hers was the best one she ever made, however."

"And so grandmother really killed a bear!" cried the children, and straightway the pleasant-faced, smiling grandmother became a heroine in their estimation, as they thought over the story grandfather had told.

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Transcriber's Note

Spelling errors include:

Page 4, "Shawness" changed to "Shawnees".
Page 6, "stubbornness" changed to "stubbornness".
Page 6, "abrubtly" changed to "abruptly".
Page 7, "does'nt" changed to "doesn't" twice.
Page 7, "did'nt" changed to "didn't" twice.
Page 7, "was'nt" changed to "wasn't".
Page 8, "was'nt" changed to "wasn't".
Page 9, "harrangue" changed to "harangue".
Page 10, "beligerent" changed to "belligerent".
Page 10, "dispises" changed to "despises".
Page 10, "participants" changed to "participants".
Page 10, "Parqatin" changed to "Parquatin" for consistency.
Page 11, "she" changed to "the".
Page 14, "secresy" changed to "secrecy".
Page 15, "abandonnd" changed to "abandoned".
Page 16, "statue" changed to "stature".
Page 16, "cubboard" changed to "cupboard".
Page 21, "Paquatoc" changed to "Parquatoc" for consistency.
Page 22, "ceasd" changed to "ceased".
Page 24, "saddenly" changed to "suddenly".
Page 27, "Moocasin" changed to "Moccasin".
Page 28, "begrimmed" changed to "begrimed".
Page 28, "approaching" changed to "approaching".
Page 28, "settlment" changed to "settlement".
Page 32, "Briming" changed to "Brimming".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE OSKALOO; OR, THE WHITE WHIRLWIND ***

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