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THE BORDER WATCH: A
STORY OF THE GREAT
CHIEF'S LAST STAND

Joseph Altsheler

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the Great Chief's Last Stand**

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Joseph A. Altsheler

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PREFACE

"The Border Watch" closes the series which began with "The Young Trailers," and which was continued successively in "The Forest Runners," "The Keepers of the Trail," "The Eyes of the Woods," "The Free Rangers," "The Riflemen of the Ohio," and "The Scouts of the Valley." All the eight volumes deal with the fortunes and adventures of two boys, Henry Ware and Paul Cotter, and their friends Shif'less Sol Hyde, Silent Tom Ross and Long Jim Hart, in the early days of Kentucky. The action moves over a wide area, from New Orleans in the South to Lake Superior in the North, and from the Great Plains in the West to the land of the Iroquois in the East.

It has been the aim of the author to present a picture of frontier life, and to show the immense hardships and dangers endured by our people, as they passed through the wilderness from ocean to ocean. So much of it occurred in the shadow of the forest, and so much more of it was taken as a matter of course that we, their descendants, are likely to forget the magnitude of their achievement. The conquest of the North American continent at a vast expense of life and suffering is in reality one of the world's great epics.

The author has sought to verify every statement that touches upon historical events. He has read or examined nearly all the books and pamphlets and many of the magazine articles formerly in the Astor and Lenox, now in the New York Public Library, dealing with Indian wars and customs. In numerous cases, narratives written by observers and participants have been available. He believes that all the border battles are described correctly, and the Indian songs, dances and customs are taken from the relations of witnesses.

But the great mass of material dealing with the frontier furnishes another striking illustration of the old saying that truth is stranger than fiction. No Indian story has ever told of danger and escape more marvelous than those that happened hundreds of times. The Indian character, as revealed in numerous accounts, is also a complex and interesting study. The same Indian was capable of noble actions and of unparalleled cruelty. As a forest warrior he has never been excelled. In the woods, fighting according to his ancient methods, he was the equal alike of Frenchman, Englishman and American, and often their superior. Many of the Indian chiefs were great men. They had the minds of statesmen and generals, and they prolonged, for generations, a fight that was doomed, from the beginning.

We lost more people in our Indian wars than in all the others combined, except the Civil War. More American soldiers fell at St. Clair's defeat by the Northwestern Indians than in any other battle we had ever fought until Bull Run. The British dead at Braddock's disaster in the American wilderness outnumbered the British dead at Trafalgar nearly two to one. So valiant a race has always appealed to youth, at least, as a fit subject of romance.

The long struggle with the brave and wary red men bred a type of white foresters who became fully their equals in the craft and lore of the wilderness. Such as these stood as a shield between the infant settlements and the fierce tribes, and, in this class, the author has placed his heroes.

CHAPTER I

THE PASSING FLEET

A late sun, red and vivid, cast beams of light over a dark river, flowing slowly. The stream was a full half mile from shore to shore, and the great weight of water moved on in silent majesty. Both banks were lined with heavy forest, dark green by day, but fused now into solid blackness by the approach of night.

The scene was wild and primordial. To an eye looking down it would have seemed that man had never come there, and that this was the dawn of time. The deep waters lapped the silent shore until a gentle sighing sound arose, a sound that may have gone on unheard for ages. Close to the water a file of wild ducks flew like an arrow to the north, and, in a little cove where the current came in shallow waves, a stag bent his head to drink.

The sun lingered in the west and then sank behind the vast wall of forest. The beams of red and gold lasted for a little space on the surface of the river, and then faded into the universal night. Under the great cloak of the dark, the surface of the river showed but dimly, and the rising wind blew through the forest with a chill and uncanny sound.

The ordinary soul would have been appalled by the mighty isolation of the wilderness, yet the river itself was not without the presence of human life. Close to the northern shore, where the shadow of the tall forest lay deepest, floated a long boat, containing five figures that rested easily. Two of the crew were boys, but as tall and strong as men. The other three were somewhat older. The boat carried four pairs of oars, but only one man rowed, and he merely pulled on an oar from time to time to give direction, while the current did the work. His comrades leaned comfortably against the sides of the boat, and with keen eyes, trained to the darkness, watched for a break in the black battlement of the trees.

It was Henry Ware who first saw the opening. It was nearly always he who was the first to see, and he pointed to the place where the dark line made a loop towards the north.

"It's a wide break," he said a moment or two later. "It must be the mouth of the river."

"You're shorely right, Henry," said Shif'less Sol, who sat just behind him, "an' from the looks o' the break thar, it's a good, big river, too. S'pose we pull up in it a spell afore we make a landin'."

"It seems a good idea to me," replied Henry. "What say you, Paul?"

"I'm for it," replied Paul Cotter. "I'd like to see this new river coming down from the north, and it's pretty sure, too, that we'd be safer camping on it for the night than on the Ohio."

Jim Hart had been guiding with a single oar. Now he took the pair in his hands and rowed into the mouth of the tributary stream. The smaller river, smaller only by contrast, poured a dark flood into the Ohio, and, seeing that the current was strong, the others took oars and rowed also, all except Paul, who was at the helm. Driven by powerful arms, the boat went swiftly up the new river. Henry in the prow watched with all the interest that he had for new things, and with all the need for watching that one always had in the great forests of the Ohio Valley.

The banks of this river were higher than those of the Ohio, but were clothed also in dense forests, which, from the surface of the stream no human eye could penetrate in the darkness of the night. They rowed in silence for a full hour, seeing no good place for an anchorage, and then, at a sign from Henry, came to rest on the stream. Shif'less Sol, strong of eye and mind, saw an unusual expression on the face of the leader.

"What is it, Henry?" he whispered.

"I thought I heard the sound of an incautious paddle, one that splashed water, but I'm not sure."

"Ah," said the shiftless one, "then we'll listen a little longer."

The others heard the words also, but, saying nothing, they, too, listened. Very soon all heard the splashing of the single paddle and then the swishing sound of many moved steadily in the waters by strong and practiced hands.

"It's a fleet behind us," said Henry, "and a fleet on this river can mean only Indians. Shall we pull ahead with all our might?"

"No," said Shif'less Sol. "Look how thick the bushes grow at the water's edge. We can run our boat in among them and in all this darkness, the Indians, whether Wyandot, Miami or Shawnee, will not know that we are thar. Besides, curiosity is gnawin' at me hard. I want to see what's in this Indian fleet."

"So do I," said Silent Tom Ross, speaking for the first time, and the others also gave their assent. The boat shot diagonally across the stream towards the dark mass of bushes, into which it was pushed slowly and without noise by the guiding arms of the rowers. Here it came to rest, completely hidden in the dense covert of leaves and twigs, while its occupants could see anything that passed on the surface of the river.

"They'll come soon," said Henry, as the sound of the paddles grew louder, "and I should judge that they are many."

"Maybe a hundred boats and canoes," said Shif'less Sol. "It's my guess that it's a big war party of some kind or other."

"The allied Indian nations, no doubt," said Henry thoughtfully. "Despite their defeats in the East, they are yet almost supreme here in the valley, and they hang together."

"Which means," said Shif'less Sol, a warlike tone coming into his voice, "that ef some big movement is afoot, it's our task to find out what it is an' beat it if we kin."

"Certainly," Henry whispered back. "It's what we've been doing, Sol, for the last two or three years, and we won't stop until the work is done."

The tone of the great youth was low, but it was marked by the resolution that he always showed in times of danger. He and his comrades were on the return journey to Wareville, after taking part in the campaigns of Wyoming and the Chemung, but it was scarcely the thought of any one of the five that they would travel the vast distance without interruption. Henry, as he sat in the boat in the darkness, felt that once more they were on the verge of great events. Used so long to the life of the wilderness and its countless dangers, the sudden throb of his heart told not of fear, but rather of exultation. It was the spirit rising to meet what lay before it. The same strength of soul animated his comrades, but everyone took his resolution in silence.

The boat, hidden deep in the mass of foliage, lay parallel with the current of the stream, and it tipped a little on one side, as the five leaned forward and watched eagerly for the fleet that was coming up the river. The regular and rhythmic sound of oars and paddles grew louder, and then the head of the fleet, trailing itself like a long serpent, came into view. A great canoe with many men at the paddles appeared first, and behind it, in lines of four, followed the other canoes, at least a hundred in number, bearing perhaps five hundred warriors.

The five thrilled at the sight, which was ominous and full of majesty. The moon was now coming out, and the surface of the dark stream turned to melted silver. But the high banks were still in darkness, and only the savage fleet was thrown into relief.

The paddles rose and fell in unison, and the steady swishing sound was musical. The moonlight deepened and poured its stream of silver over hundreds of savage faces, illuminating the straight black hair, the high cheek bones, and the broad chests, naked, save for the war paint. None of them spoke, but their silence made the passing of this savage array in the night all the more formidable.

Henry's attention was soon caught by a figure in the large boat that led. It was that of a man who did not use the paddle, but who sat near the prow with folded arms. The upper half of his body was so rigidly upright that in another place he might have posed for a figurehead of some old Roman galley. He was of magnificent build. Like the others, he was naked to the waist, and the moonlight

showed the great muscles upon his powerful shoulders and chest. The pose of the head expressed pride that nothing could quench.

Henry recognized the man at once. Had he not seen the face, the figure and attitude alone were sufficient to tell him that this was Timmendiquas, the great White Lightning of the Wyandots, returning from the East, where he had helped the Indians in vain, but at the head of a great force, once more in his own country.

Henry put his hand upon that of Shif'less Sol.

"I see," whispered his comrade very low. "It is Timmendiquas, an' whar he comes, big things come, too."

Henry knew in his heart that the shiftless one was right. The coming of Timmendiquas with so large an army meant great events, and it was good fortune that had placed himself and his comrades there that night that they might see. His old feeling of admiration for the chief was as strong as ever, and he felt a certain sympathy, too. Here was a man who had failed despite courage, energy and genius. His help had not been able to save the Iroquois, and his own people might some day meet the same fate.

The long line of the fleet passed on in silence, save for the musical swishing of the paddles. That sound, too, soon died away. Then all the canoes blended together like a long arrow of glittering silver, and the five in the bushes watched the arrow until it faded quite away on the surface of the stream.

Henry and his comrades did not yet come forth from their covert, but they talked frankly.

"What do you think it means?" asked the young leader.

"Another raid on Kentucky," said Tom Ross.

"But not jest yet," said the shrewd and far-seeing Shif'less Sol. "Timmendiquas will go North to gather all the warriors in the valley if he kin. He may even get help in Canada."

"I think so, too," said Paul.

"Pears likely to me," said Long Jim.

"That being the case," said Henry, "I think we ought to follow. Do you agree with me?"

"We do," said the four together, speaking with the greatest emphasis.

The decision made, nothing more was said upon the point, but they remained fully an hour longer in the covert. It would not be wise to follow yet, because a canoe or two might drop behind to serve as a rear guard. Nor was there any need to hurry.

The five were in splendid shape for a new campaign. They had enjoyed a long rest, as they floated down the Ohio, rarely using the oars. They carried a large supply of ammunition and some extra rifles and other weapons, and, used to success, they were ready to dare anything. When they thought the Indian fleet was several miles ahead, they pulled their boat from the covert and followed. But they did not take the middle of the stream. Theirs was not a large force which could move rapidly, fearing nothing. Instead, they clung close to the eastern shore, in the shadow of the bank and trees, and rowed forward at an even pace, which they slackened only at the curves, lest they plunge suddenly into a hostile force.

About midnight they heard faintly the splash of the paddles, and then they drew in again among the bushes at the bank, where they decided to remain for the rest of the night. Henry was to watch about three hours and Shif'less Sol would be on guard afterward. The four wrapped themselves in their blankets, lay down in the bottom of the boat, and were sound asleep in a few minutes. Henry, rifle across his knees, crouched in the stern. Now that he did not have the exercise of the oars, the night felt cold, and he drew his own blankets over his shoulders.

Henry expected no danger, but he watched closely, nevertheless. Nothing could have passed on the stream unnoticed by him, and every sound on the bank above would have attracted his attention at once. Despite the fact that they were about to embark upon a new task attended by many dangers, the boy felt a great peace. In the perilous life of the wilderness he had learned how to enjoy the safety and physical comfort of the moment. He looked down at his comrades and smiled to himself. They

were merely dark blurs on the bottom of the boat, sleeping soundly in their blankets. What glorious comrades they were! Surely no one ever had better.

Henry himself did not move for a long time. He leaned against the side of the boat, and the blanket remained drawn up about his neck and shoulders. The rifle across his knee was draped by the same blanket, all except the steel muzzle. Only his face was uncovered, but his eyes never ceased to watch. The wind was blowing lightly through the trees and bushes, and the current of the river murmured beside the boat, all these gentle sounds merging into one note, the song of the forest that he sometimes heard when he alone was awake—he and everything else being still.

Henry's mind was peaceful, imaginative, attentive to all the wonders of the forest, beholding wonders that others could not see, and the song went on, the gentle murmur of the river fusing and melting into the wind among the leaves. While he watched and listened, nothing escaping him, his mind traveled far, down the great rivers, through the many battles in which he had borne his share, and up to those mighty lakes of which he had often heard, but which he had never seen.

The moonlight brightened again, clothing all the forest and river in a veil of silver gauze. It was inexpressibly beautiful to Henry who, like the Indians, beheld with awe and admiration the work of Manitou.

A light sound, not in unison with the note of the forest, came from the bank above. It was very faint, nothing more than the momentary displacement of a bough, but the crouching figure in the boat moved ever so slightly, and then was still. The sound was repeated once and no more, but Henry's mind ceased to roam afar. The great river that he had seen and the great lakes that he had not seen were forgotten. With all the power of his marvelous gift he was concentrating his faculties upon the point from which the discord had come once, twice and then no more. Eye, ear and something greater—divination, almost—were bent upon it.

He listened several minutes, but the sound did not come a third time. Forest and river were singing together again, but Henry was not satisfied. He rose to his feet, laid the blanket softly in the boat, and then with a glance at the river to see that nothing was passing there, leaped lightly to the land.

The bank rose above him to a height of thirty feet, but the bushes were thick along its face, and the active youth climbed easily and without noise. Before he reached the crest he flattened himself against the earth and listened. He was quite confident that someone had been passing and was, perhaps, very near. He was too good a forester to ignore the event. He heard nothing and then drew himself up cautiously over the edge of the cliff.

He saw before him thick forest, so heavy and dark that the moon did not light it up. An ordinary scout or sentinel would have turned back, satisfied that nothing was to be found, but Henry entered the woods and proceeded carefully in the direction from which the sound had come. He soon saw faint signs of a trail, evidently running parallel with the river, and, used from time to time, by the Indians. Now Henry was satisfied that his senses had not deceived him, and he would discover who had passed. He judged by the difference between the first and second sounds that the journey was leading northward, and he followed along the trail. He had an idea that it would soon lead him to a camp, and he reckoned right, because in a few minutes he saw a red bead of light to his right.

Henry knew that the light betokened a camp-fire, and he was sure that he would find beside it the cause of the noise that he had heard. He approached with care, the woods offering an ample covert. He soon saw that the fire was of good size, and that there were at least a dozen figures around it.

"More warriors," he said to himself, "probably bound for the same place as the fleet."

But as he drew yet nearer he saw that not all the men around the camp-fire were warriors. Three, despite their faces, browned by wind and rain, belonged to the white race, and in the one nearest to him, Henry, with a leap of the heart, recognized his old enemy, Braxton Wyatt.

Wyatt, like Timmendiquas, had come back to the scene of his earlier exploits and this conjunction confirmed Henry in his belief that some great movement was intended.

Wyatt was on the far side of the fire, where the flames lighted up his face, and Henry was startled by the savagery manifested there. The renegade's face, despite his youth, was worn and lined. His black hair fell in dark locks upon his temples. He still wore the British uniform that he had adopted in the East, but sun and rain had left little of its original color. Wyatt had returned to the West unsuccessful, and Henry knew that he was in his most evil mind.

The short, thick man sitting by Wyatt was Simon Girty, the most famous of all the renegades, and just beyond him was Blackstaffe. The Indians were Shawnees.

The three white men were deep in conversation and now and then they pointed towards the north. Henry would have given much to have heard what they said, but they did not speak loudly enough. He was tempted to take a shot at the villain, Simon Girty. A single bullet would remove a scourge from the border and save hundreds of lives. The bullet sent, he might easily escape in the darkness. But he could not pull the trigger. He could not fire upon anyone from ambush, and watching a little while longer, he crept back through the forest to the boat, which he regained without trouble.

Henry awakened his comrades and told them all that he had seen. They agreed with him that it was of the utmost importance. Wyatt and Girty were, no doubt, coöperating with Timmendiquas, and somewhere to the north the great Wyandot intended to rally his forces for a supreme effort.

"This leaves us without the shadow of a pretext for going on to Wareville," said Henry.

"It shorely does," said Shif'less Sol. "It's now our business to follow the Indians an' the renegades all the way to the Great Lakes ef they go that fur."

"I hope they will," said Paul. "I'd like to see those lakes. They say you can sail on them there for days and days and keep out of sight of land. They're one of the wonders of the world."

"The trail may lead us that far," said Henry. "Who knows! But since the enemy is on both land and water, I think we'll have to hide our boat and take to the forest."

The truth of his words was obvious to them. The renegades or Indians in the woods would certainly see their boat if they continued that method of progress, but on land they could choose their way and hide whenever they wished. Reluctantly they abandoned their boat, which was staunch and strong, but they hid it as well as possible among bushes and reeds. In such a vast wilderness, the chances were twenty to one that it would remain where they had put it until they returned to claim their own. Too wise to burden themselves, they buried all their extra weapons and stores at the base of a great oak, marked well the place, and then, everyone with a blanket and light pack, started forward through the forest. They intended to go ahead of the renegades, observe the anchorage of the boats, and then withdrawing some distance from the river, let Wyatt, Girty and their friends pass them.

Although it was yet several hours until daylight, they resumed their journey along the eastern bank of the stream, Henry leading and Silent Tom Ross bringing up the rear. In this manner they advanced rapidly and just when the first beams of dawn were appearing, they saw the Indian fleet at anchor on the west shore.

They examined them at their leisure from the dense covert of the thickets, and saw that their estimate of five hundred warriors, made the night before, was correct. They also saw Timmendiquas more than once and it was evident that he was in complete command. Respect and attention followed wherever he went. Paint and dress indicated that warriors of all the tribes inhabiting the Ohio Valley were there.

The Indians seemed to be in no hurry, as they lighted fires on the bank, and cooked buffalo and deer meat, which they ate in great quantities. Many, when they had finished their breakfast, lay down on the grass and slept again. Others slept in the larger canoes.

"They are waiting for more of their friends to come up," whispered Henry to his comrades. A few minutes later, Wyatt, Girty and their party hailed the great war band from the east bank. Canoes were sent over for them, and they were taken into the Indian camp, but without much sign of rejoicing.

"We know that Timmendiquas does not like Wyatt," said Henry, "and I don't believe that he really likes any of the renegades, not even Girty."

"Red man ought to stick to red man, an' white man to white," said Shif'less Sol, sententiously. "I think that's the way Timmendiquas looks at it, an' I'd like to stan' ez high ez a white man, ez he does ez a red man."

"I kin smell that cookin' buffler an' venison all the way across the river," said Jim Hart, "an' it's makin' me pow'ful hungry."

"It'll have to be cold meat for us this time, Jim," said Henry.

They had been so engrossed in the spectacle passing before them that they had forgotten food until the savory odors came across the stream and recalled it to Jim Hart's attention. Now they took out strips of dried venison with which they were always provided, and ate it slowly. It was not particularly delicious to the taste, but it furnished sustenance and strength. All the while they were lying in a dense thicket, and the sun was steadily climbing to the zenith, touching the vast green forest with bright gold.

A shout came from a point far down the river. It was faint, but the five in the covert heard it. Someone in the fleet of Timmendiquas sent back an answering cry, a shrill piercing whoop that rose to an extraordinary pitch of intensity, and then sank away gradually in a dying note. Then the first cry came again, not so remote now, and once more it was answered in a similar way from the fleet of Timmendiquas.

"Another fleet or detachment is comm'," said Shif'less Sol, "an' its expected. That's the reason why White Lightnin' has been lingerin' here, ez ef time didn't hev no meanin' at all."

Many of the Indians, and with them Girty, Wyatt and Blackstaffe were looking down the stream. The eyes of the five followed theirs and presently they saw a fleet of thirty or forty canoes emerge into view, welcomed with loud shouts by the men of Timmendiquas. When the re-enforcement was fused into the main fleet, all took their place in line and once more started northward, the five following in the woods on shore.

Henry and his comrades kept up this odd pursuit for a week, curving back and forth, but in the main keeping a northern course. Sometimes they left the river several miles away to the left, and saved distance by making a straight line between curves, but they knew that they would always come back to the stream. Thus it was easy traveling for such capable woodsmen as they. They saw the fleet joined by three more detachments, two by water and one by land. One came on a small tributary stream flowing from the West, and the total force was now increased to nearly a thousand warriors.

On the sixth night of the parallel pursuit the five discussed it sitting in a thicket.

"We must be drawing near to a village," said Henry.

"I believe with you," said Shif'less Sol, "an' I think it likely that it's a Wyandot town."

"It's probable," said Paul, "and now for what purpose is such a great Indian force gathering? Do they mean to go South against Kentucky? Do they mean to go East against New York and Pennsylvania, or do they mean to go northward to join the British in Canada?"

"That's what we've got to find out," said Long Jim tersely.

"That's just it," said Henry. "We've got to stick to 'em until we learn what they mean to try. Then we must follow again. It's my opinion that they intend to go further northward or they wouldn't be gathering at a point two or three hundred miles above the Ohio."

"Reckon you are right, Henry," said Shif'less Sol. "Ez for me I don't care how fur north this chase takes us, even ef we come right spang up ag'in' the Great Lakes. I want to see them five wonders o' the world that Paul talks about."

"We may go to them," said Henry, "but it seems probable to me that we'll reach a big Wyandot village first."

The Indians resumed their voyage in the usual leisurely fashion the next morning, and the five on shore followed at a convenient distance. They observed that the water of the river was now shallowing fast. The Indian boats were of light draft, but they could not go much further, and the village must be near.

That evening just before sunset long cries were heard in the forest, and those in the boat replied with similar signals. Then the fleet swung to the bank, and all the warriors disembarked. Other warriors came through the woods to meet them, and leaving a guard with the boats the whole army marched away through the forest.

The five were observers of all that passed, and they knew that the Indian village was at hand—perhaps not more than three or four miles away. Still keeping their distance, they followed. The sun was now gone, and only a band of red light lingered on the horizon in the West. It, too, faded quickly as they marched through the woods, and the night came down, enveloping the forest in darkness. The five were glad that the landing had occurred at such a time, as it made their own pursuit much safer and easier.

The Indians, feeling perfectly safe, carried torches and talked and laughed with great freedom. The five in the covert had both the light and the noise to guide them, and they followed silently.

They passed over a gently rolling country, heavily wooded, and in a half hour they saw lights ahead, but yet at some distance. The lights, though scattered, were numerous, and seemed to extend along an arc of half a mile. The five knew that the Indian village now lay before them.

CHAPTER II

THE SILVER BULLET

The village, the largest belonging to the Wyandots, the smallest, but most warlike of the valley tribes, lay in a warm hollow, and it did not consist of more than a hundred and fifty skin tepees and log cabins. But it was intended to be of a permanent nature, else a part of its houses would not have been of wood. There was also about it a considerable area of cleared land where the squaws raised corn and pumpkins. A fine creek flowed at the eastern edge of the clearing. Henry and his comrades paused, where the line of forest met the open, and watched the progress of the army across the cleared ground. Everybody in the village, it seemed, was coming forward to meet the chief, the warriors first and then the old men, squaws and children, all alive with interest.

Timmendiquas strode ahead, his tall figure seeming taller in the light of the torches. But it was no triumphant return for him. Suddenly he uttered a long quavering cry which was taken up by those who followed him. Then the people in the village joined in the wail, and it came over and over again from the multitude. It was inexpressibly mournful and the dark forest gave it back in weird echoes. The procession poured on in a great horde toward the village, but the cry, full of grief and lament still came back.

"They are mournin' for the warriors lost in the East," said Tom Ross. "I reckon that after Wyomin' an' Chemung, Timmendiquas wasn't able to bring back more than half his men."

"If the Wyandots lost so many in trying to help the Iroquois, won't that fact be likely to break up the big Indian league?" asked Paul.

Tom Ross shook his head, but Henry answered in words:

"No, the Indians, especially the chiefs, are inflamed more than ever by their losses. Moreover, as Timmendiquas has seen how the allied Six Nations themselves could not hold back the white power, he will be all the more anxious to strike us hard in the valley."

"I've a notion," said Shif'less Sol, "that bands o' the Iroquois, 'specially the Mohawks, may come out here, an' try to do fur Timmendiquas what he tried to do fur them. The savages used to fight ag'in' one another, but I think they are now united ag'in' us, on an' off, all the way from the Atlantic to the Great Plains."

"Guess you're right, Sol," said Long Jim, "but ez fur me, jest now I want to sleep. We had a purty hard march to-day. Besides walkin' we had to be watchin' always to see that our scalps were still on our heads, an' that's a purty wearyin' combination."

"I speak for all, and all are with you," said Paul, so briskly that the others laughed.

"Any snug place that is well hid will do," said Henry, "and as the forest is so thick I don't think it will take us long to find it."

They turned southward, and went at least three miles through heavy woods and dense thickets. All they wanted was a fairly smooth spot with the bushes growing high above them, and, as Henry had predicted, they quickly found it—a small depression well grown with bushes and weeds, but with an open space in the center where some great animal, probably a buffalo had wallowed. They lay down in this dry sandy spot, rolled in their blankets, and felt so secure that they sought sleep without leaving anyone to watch.

Henry was the first to awake. The dawn was cold and he shivered a little when he unrolled himself from his blanket. The sun showed golden in the east, but the west was still dusky. He looked for a moment or two at his four friends, lying as still as if they were dead. Then he stretched his muscles, and beat his arms across his chest to drive away the frost of the morning that had crept into his blood. Shif'less Sol yawned and awoke and the others did likewise, one by one.

"Cold mornin' fur this time o' year," said Shif'less Sol. "Jim, light the fire an' cook breakfast an' the fust thing I want is a good hot cup o' coffee."

"Wish I could light a fire," said Long Jim, "an' then I could give you a cup shore 'nuff. I've got a little pot an' a tin cup inside an' three pounds o' ground coffee in my pack. I brought it from the boat, thinkin' you fellers would want it afore long."

"What do you say, Henry?" asked Shif'less Sol. "Coffee would be pow'ful warmin'. None o' us hez tasted anything but cold vittles for more'n a day now. Let's take the chances on it."

Henry hesitated but the chill was still in his blood and he yielded. Besides the risk was not great.

"All right," he said; "gather dead wood and we'll be as quick about it as we can."

The wood was ready in a minute. Tom Ross whittled off shavings with his knife. Shif'less Sol set fire to them with flint and steel. In a few minutes something was bubbling inside Jim Hart's coffee pot, and sending out a glorious odor.

Shif'less Sol sniffed the odor.

"I'm growin' younger," he said. "I'm at least two years younger than I wuz when I woke up. I wish to return thanks right now to the old Greek feller who invented fire. What did you say his name was, Paul?"

"Prometheus. He didn't invent fire, Sol, but according to the story he brought it down from the heavens."

"It's all the same," said the shiftless one as he looked attentively at the steaming coffee pot. "I guess it wuz about the most useful trip Promethy ever made when he brought that fire down."

Everyone in turn drank from the cup. They also heated their dried venison over the coals, and, as they ate and drank, they felt fresh strength pouring into every vein. When the pot was empty Jim put it on the ground to cool, and as he scattered the coals of fire with a kick, Henry, who was sitting about a yard away suddenly lay flat and put his ear to the earth.

"Do you hear anything, Henry?" asked Shif'less Sol, who knew the meaning of the action.

"I thought I heard the bark of a dog," replied Henry, "but I was not sure before I put my ear to the ground that it was not imagination. Now I know it's truth. I can hear the barking distinctly, and it is coming this way."

"Some o' them ornery yellow curs hev picked up our trail," said Shif'less Sol, "an' o' course the warriors will follow."

"Which, I take it, means that it is time for us to move from our present abode," said Paul.

Long Jim hastily thrust the coffee pot, not yet cold, and the cup back into his pack, and they went towards the South at a gait that was half a run and half a walk, easy but swift.

"This ain't a flight," said Shif'less Sol. "It's just a masterly retreat. But I'll tell you, boys, I don't like to run away from dogs. It humiliates me to run from a brute, an' an inferior. Hark to their barkin'."

They now heard the baying of the dogs distinctly, a long wailing cry like the howling of hounds. The note of it was most ominous to Paul's sensitive mind. In the mythology that he had read, dogs played a great rôle, nearly always as the enemy of man. There were Cerberus and the others, and flitting visions of them passed through his mind now. He was aware, too, that the reality was not greatly inferior to his fancies. The dogs could follow them anywhere, and the accidental picking-up of their trail might destroy them all.

The five went on in silence, so far as they were concerned, for a long time, but the baying behind them never ceased. It also grew louder, and Henry, glancing hastily back, expected that the dogs would soon come into sight.

"Judging from their barking, the Wyandots must love dogs of uncommon size and fierceness," he said.

"Pears likely to me," said Shif'less Sol. "We're good runners, all five o' us. We've shaken the warriors off, but not the dogs."

"It's just as you say," said Henry. "We can't run on forever, so we must shoot the trailers—that is—the dogs. Listen to them. They are not more than a couple of hundred yards away now."

They crossed a little open space, leaped a brook and then entered the woods again. But at a signal from Henry, they stopped a few yards further on.

"Now, boys," he said, "be ready with your rifles. We must stop these dogs. How many do you think they are, Tom?"

"'Bout four, I reckon."

"Then the moment they come into the open space, Tom, you and Paul and Jim shoot at those on the left, and Sol and I will take the right."

The Indian dogs sprang into the open space and five rifles cracked together. Three of them—they were four in number, as Tom had said—were killed instantly, but the fourth sprang aside into the bushes, where he remained. The five at once reloaded their rifles as they ran. Now they increased their speed, hoping to shake off their pursuers. Behind them rose a long, fierce howl, like a note of grief and revenge.

"That's the dog we did not kill," said Paul, "and he's going to hang on."

"I've heard tell," said Tom Ross, "that 'cordin' to the Indian belief, the souls o' dead warriors sometimes get into dogs an' other animals, an' it ain't fur me to say that it ain't true. Mebbe it's really a dead Injun, 'stead o' a live dog that's leadin' the warriors on."

Paul shuddered. Tom's weird theory chimed in with his own feelings. The fourth dog, the one that had hid from the bullets, was a phantom, leading the savages on to vengeance for his dead comrades. Now and then he still bayed as he kept the trail, but the fleeing five sought in vain to make him a target for their bullets. Seemingly, he had profited by the death of his comrades, as his body never showed once among the foliage. Search as they would with the sharpest of eyes, none of the five could catch the faintest glimpse of him.

"He's a ghost, shore," said Tom Ross. "No real, ordinary dog would keep under cover that way. I reckon we couldn't kill him if we hit him, 'less we had a silver bullet."

The savages themselves uttered the war cry only two or three times, but it was enough to show that with the aid of the dog they followed relentlessly. The situation of the five had become alarming to the last degree. They had intended to pursue, not to be pursued. Now they were fleeing for their lives, and there would be no escape, unless they could shake off the most terrible of all that followed—the dog. And at least one of their number, Silent Tom Ross, was convinced thoroughly that the dog could not be killed, unless they had the unobtainable—a silver bullet. In moments of danger, superstition can take a strong hold, and Paul too, felt a cold chill at his heart.

Their course now took them through a rolling country, clad heavily in forest, but without much undergrowth, and they made good speed. They came to numerous brooks, and sometimes they waded in them a little distance, but they did not have much confidence in this familiar device. It might shake off the warriors for a while, but not that terrible dog which, directed by the Indians, would run along the bank and pick up the trail again in a few seconds. Yet hope rose once. For a long time they heard neither bark nor war cry, and they paused under the branches of a great oak. They were not really tired, as they had run at an easy gait, but they were too wise to let pass a chance for rest. Henry was hopeful that in some manner they had shaken off the dog, but there was no such belief in the heart of the silent one. Tom Ross had taken out his hunting knife and with his back to the others was cutting at something. Henry gave him a quick glance, but he did not deem it wise to ask him anything. The next moment, all thought of Tom was put out of his mind by the deep baying of the dog coming down through the forest.

The single sound, rising and swelling after the long silence was uncanny and terrifying. The face of Tom Ross turned absolutely pale through the tan of many years. Henry himself could not repress a shudder.

"We must run for it again," he said. "We could stay and fight, of course, but it's likely that the Indians are in large numbers."

"If we could only shake off the hound," muttered Tom Ross. "Did you pay 'tention to his voice then, Henry? Did you notice how deep it was? I tell you that ain't no common dog."

Henry nodded and they swung once more into flight. But he and Shif'less Sol, the best two marksmen on the border, dropped to the rear.

"We must get a shot at that dog," whispered Henry. "Very likely it's a big wolf hound."

"I think so," said Shif'less Sol, "but I tell you, Henry, I don't like to hear it bayin'. It sounds to me jest ez ef it wuz sayin': 'I've got you! I've got you! I've got you!' Do you reckon there kin be anything in what Tom says?"

"Of course not. Of course not," replied Henry. "Tom's been picking up too much Indian superstition."

At that moment the deep baying note so unlike the ordinary bark of an Indian dog came again, and Henry, despite himself, felt the cold chill at his heart once more. Involuntarily he and the shiftless one glanced at each other, and each read the same in the other's eyes.

"We're bound to get that dog, hound, cur, or whatever he may be!" exclaimed Henry almost angrily.

Shif'less Sol said nothing, but he cast many backward glances at the bushes. Often he saw them move slightly in a direction contrary to the course of the wind, but he could not catch a glimpse of the body that caused them to move. Nor could Henry. Twice more they heard the war cry of the savages, coming apparently from at least a score of throats, and not more than three or four hundred yards away. Henry knew that they were depending entirely upon the dog, and his eagerness for a shot increased. He could not keep his finger away from the trigger. He longed for a shot.

"We must kill that dog," he said to Shif'less Sol; "we can't run on forever."

"No, we can't, but we kin run jest as long as the Injuns kin," returned the shiftless one, "an' while we're runnin' we may get the chance we want at the dog."

The pursuit went on for a long time. The Indians never came into view, but the occasional baying of the hound told the fleeing five that they were still there. It was not an unbroken flight. They stopped now and then for rest, but, when the voice of the hound came near again, they would resume their easy run toward the South. At every stop Tom Ross would turn his back to the others, take out his hunting knife and begin to whittle at something. But when they started again the hunting knife was back in its sheath once more, and Tom's appearance was as usual.

The sun passed slowly up the arch of the heavens. The morning coolness had gone long since from the air, but the foliage of the great forest protected them. Often, when the shade was not so dense they ran over smooth, springy turf, and they were even deliberate enough, as the hours passed, to eat a little food from their packs. Twice they knelt and drank at the brooks.

They made no attempt to conceal their trail, knowing that it was useless, but Henry and Shif'less Sol, their rifles always lying in the hollows of their arms, never failed to seek a glimpse of the relentless hound. It was fully noon when the character of the country began to change slightly. The hills were a little higher and there was more underbrush. Just as they reached a crest Henry looked back. In the far bushes, he saw a long dark form and a pointed gray head with glittering eyes. He knew that it was the great dog, a wolf hound; he was sure now, and, quick as a flash, he raised his rifle and fired at a point directly between the glittering eyes. The dog dropped out of sight and the five ran on.

"Do you think you killed him, Henry?" asked Shif'less Sol breathlessly.

"I don't know; I hope so."

Behind them rose a deep bay, the trailing note of the great dog, but now it seemed more ferocious and uncanny than ever. Shif'less Sol shuddered. Tom Ross' face turned not pale, but actually white, through its many layers of tan.

"Henry," said Shif'less Sol, "I never knowed you to miss at that range afore."

The eyes of the two met again and each asked a question of the other.

"I think I was careless, Sol," said Henry. His voice shook a little.

"I hope so," said Shif'less Sol, whose mind was veering more and more toward the belief of Tom Ross, "but I'd like pow'ful well to put a bullet through that animal myself. Them awful wolf howls o' his hit on my nerves, they do."

The chance of the shiftless one came presently. He, too, saw among the bushes the long dark body, the massive pointed head and the glittering eyes. He fired as quickly as Henry had done. Then came that silence, followed in a few minutes by the deep and sinister baying note of the great hound.

"I reckon I fired too quick, too," said Shif'less Sol. But the hands that grasped his rifle were damp and cold.

"Tain't no use," said Tom Ross in a tone of absolute conviction. "I've seen you and Henry fire afore at harder targets than that, an' hit 'em every time. You hit this one, too."

"Then why didn't we kill the brute?" exclaimed Henry.

"'Cause lead wuzn't meant to kill him. Your bullets went right through him an' never hurt him."

Henry forced a laugh.

"Pshaw, Tom," he said. "Don't talk such foolishness."

"I never talked solidier sense in my life," said Ross.

Henry and Shif'less Sol reloaded their rifles as they ran, and both were deeply troubled. In all their experience of every kind of danger they had met nothing so sinister as this, nothing so likely to turn the courage of a brave man. Twice sharpshooters who never missed had missed a good target. Or could there be anything in the words of Tom Ross?

They left the warriors some distance behind again and paused for another rest, until the terrible hound should once more bring the pursuers near. All five were much shaken, but Tom Ross as usual in these intervals turned his back upon the others, and began to work with his hunting knife. Henry, as he drew deep breaths of fresh air into his lungs, noticed that the sun was obscured. Many clouds were coming up from the southwest, and there was a damp touch in the air. The wind was rising.

"Looks as if a storm was coming," he said. "It ought to help us."

But Tom Ross solemnly shook his head.

"It might throw off the warriors," he said, "but not the dog. Hark, don't you hear him again?"

They did hear. The deep booming note, sinister to the last degree, came clearly to their ears.

"It's time to go ag'in," said Shif'less Sol, with a wry smile. "Seems to me this is about the longest footrace I ever run. Sometimes I like to run, but I like to run only when I like it, and when I don't like it I don't like for anybody to make me do it. But here goes, anyhow. I'll keep on runnin' I don't know whar."

Sol's quaint remarks cheered them a little, and their feet became somewhat lighter. But one among them was thinking with the utmost concentration. Tom Ross, convinced that something was a fact, was preparing to meet it. He would soon be ready. Meanwhile the darkness increased and the wind roared, but there was no rain. The country grew rougher. The underbrush at times was very dense, and one sharp little stony hill succeeded another. The running was hard.

Henry was growing angry. He resented this tenacious pursuit. It had been so unexpected, and the uncanny dog had been so great a weapon against them. He began to feel now that they had run long enough. They must make a stand and the difficult country would help them.

"Boys," he said, "we've run enough. I'm in favor of dropping down behind these rocks and fighting them off. What do you say?"

All were for it, and in a moment they took shelter. The heavy clouds and the forest about them made the air dim, but their eyes were so used to it that they could see anyone who approached them, and they were glad now that they had decided to put the issue to the test of battle. They lay close together, watching in front and also for a flank movement, but for a while they saw nothing. The

hound had ceased to bay, but, after a while, both Henry and Sol saw a rustling among the bushes, and they knew that the savages were at hand.

But of all the watchers at that moment Silent Tom Ross was the keenest. He also occupied himself busily for a minute or so in drawing the bullet from his rifle. Henry did not notice him until this task was almost finished.

"Why, in the name of goodness, Tom," he exclaimed, "are you unloading your rifle at such a time?"

Tom looked up. The veteran scout's eyes shone with grim fire.

"I know what I'm doin'," he said. "Mebbe I'm the only one in this crowd who knows what ought to be did. I'm not unloadin' my rifle, Henry. I'm jest takin' out one bullet an' puttin' in another in its place. See this?"

He held up a small disc that gleamed in the dim light.

"That," said Tom, "is a silver bullet. It's flat an' it ain't shaped like a bullet, but it's a bullet all the same. I've been cuttin' it out uv a silver sixpence, an' now it exactly fits my rifle. You an' Sol—an' I ain't sayin' anything ag'in' your marksmanship—could shoot at that dog all day without hurtin' him, but I'm goin' to kill him with this silver bullet."

"Don't talk foolishness, Tom," said Henry.

"You'll see," said the veteran in a tone of such absolute conviction that the others could not help being impressed. Tom curled himself up behind one rock, and in front of another. Then he watched with the full intensity that the danger and his excitement demanded. He felt that all depended upon him, his own life and the lives of those four comrades so dear to him.

Tom Ross, silent, reserved, fairly poured his soul into his task. Nothing among the bushes and trees in front of them escaped his attention. Once he saw a red feather move, but he knew that it was stuck in the hair of an Indian and he was looking for different game. He became so eager that he flattened his face against the rock and thrust forward the rifle barrel that he might lose no chance however fleeting.

Silent Tom's figure and face were so tense and eager that Henry stopped watching the bushes a moment or two to look at him. But Tom continued to search for his target. He missed nothing that human eye could see among those bushes, trees and rocks. He saw an eagle feather again, but it did not interest him. Then he heard the baying of a hound, and he quivered from head to foot, but the sound stopped in a moment, and he could not locate the long dark figure for which he looked. But he never ceased to watch, and his eagerness and intensity did not diminish a particle.

The air darkened yet more, and the moan of the wind rose in the forest. But there was no rain. The five behind the rocks scarcely moved, and there was silence in the bushes in front of them. Tom Ross, intent as ever, saw a bush move slightly and then another. His eyes fastened upon the spot. So eager was he that he seemed fairly to double his power of sight. He saw a third bush move, and then a patch of something dark appear where nothing had been before. Tom's heart beat fast. He thought of the comrades so dear to him, and he thought of the silver bullet in his rifle. The dark patch grew a little larger. He quivered all over, but the next instant he was rigid. He was watching while the dark patch still grew. He felt that he would have but a single chance, and that if ever in his life he must seize the passing moment it was now.

Tom was staring so intently that his gaze pierced the shadows, and now he saw the full figure of a huge hound stealing forward among the bushes. He saw the massive pointed head and glittering eyes, and his rifle muzzle shifted until he looked down the barrel upon a spot directly between those cruel eyes. He prayed to the God of the white man and the Manitou of the red man, who are the same, to make him steady of eye and hand in this, their moment of great need. Then he pulled the trigger.

The great dog uttered a fierce howl of pain, leaped high into the air, and fell back among the bushes. But even as he fell Tom saw that he was stiffening into death, and he exclaimed to his comrades:

"It got him! The silver bullet got him! He'll never follow us any more."

"I believe you're right," said Henry, awed for the moment despite his clear and powerful mind, "and since he's dead we'll shake off the warriors. Come, we'll run for it again."

CHAPTER III

THE HOT SPRING

Bending low, they ran again swiftly forward toward the south. A great cry rose behind them, the whoop of the warriors, a yell of rage and disappointment. A dozen shots were fired, but the bullets either flew over their heads or dropped short. The five did not take the trouble to reply. Confidence had returned to them with amazing quickness, and the most confident and joyous of all was Tom Ross.

"I had the big medicine that time," he exclaimed exultantly. "It's lucky I found the silver sixpence in my pocket, or that hound would have had the savages trailing us forever."

Henry was cooler now, but he did not argue with him about it. In fact, none of them ever did. Both he and Sol were now noting the heavens which had become more overcast. The clouds spread from the horizon to the zenith. Not a ray of sunlight showed. The wind was dropping, but far into the southwest the earth sighed.

"It's the rain," said Henry. "Let it come. It and all this blackness will help our escape."

Low thunder muttered along the western horizon. There were three or four flashes of lightning but when the rain came presently with a sweep, both thunder and lightning ceased, and they ran on clothed in a mantle of darkness.

"Let's stay close together," said Henry, "and after awhile we'll turn to the east and bear back toward the village. Nobody on earth can trail us in all this gloom, with the rain, too, washing out every trace of our footsteps."

Henry's judgment was good. Now that the hound was gone they shook off the savages with ease. The rain was coming down in a steady pour, and, as the twilight also was at hand, they were invisible to anyone fifty yards away. Hence their speed dropped to a walk, and, in accordance with their plan, they turned to the right. They walked on through dark woods, and came to a smoother country, troubled little by rocks and underbrush. The night was fully come, and the rain, that was still pouring out of a black sky, was cold. They had paid no attention to it before except for its concealment, but, as their figures relaxed after long effort, chill struck into the bone. They had kept their rifles dry with their hunting shirts, but now they took their blankets from the packs and wrapped them about their shoulders. The blankets did not bring them warmth. Their soaked clothing chilled them more and more.

They had become inured long since to all kinds of hardships, but one cannot stand everything. Now and then a spurt of hail came with the rain, and it beat in their faces, slipped between the blankets and down their necks, making them shiver. Their weariness after so much exertion made them all susceptible to the rain and cold. Finally Henry called a halt.

"We must find shelter somewhere," he said. "If we don't, we'll be so stiff in the morning we can't walk, and we'll be lucky to escape chills and pneumonia, or something of that kind."

"That's right," said Shif'less Sol. "So we'll jest go into the inn, which ain't more'n a hundred yards further on, git dry clothing, eat a big supper, have a steaming hot drink apiece of something strong an' then crawl in on feather beds with warm dry blankets over us. Oh, I'll sleep good an' long! Don't you worry about that!"

"Solomon Hyde," said Long Jim Hart indignantly, "ef you don't stop talkin' that way I'll hit you over the head with the barrel uv my rifle. I'm cold enough an' wet enough already without you conjurin' up happy dreams an' things that ain't. Them contrasts make me miserabler than ever, an' I'm likely to get wickeder too. I give you fair warning'."

"All right," replied Shif'less Sol resignedly. "I wuz jest tryin' to cheer you up, Jim, but a good man never gits any reward in this world, jest kicks. How I wish that rain would stop! I never knowed such a cold rain afore at this time o' the year."

"We must certainly find some sort of shelter," Henry repeated.

They searched for a long time, hoping for an alcove among the rocks or perhaps a thick cluster of trees, but they found nothing. Several hours passed. The rain grew lighter, and ceased, although the clouds remained, hiding the moon. But the whole forest was soaked. Water dripped from every twig and leaf, and the five steadily grew colder and more miserable. It was nearly midnight when Henry spied the gleam of water among the tree trunks.

"Another spring," he said. "What a delightful thing to see more water. I've been fairly longing for something wet."

"Yes, and the spring has been rained on so much that the steam is rising from it," said Paul.

"That's so," said Jim Hart. "Shore ez you live thar's a mist like a smoke."

But Henry looked more closely and his tone was joyous as he spoke.

"Boys," he said, "I believe we're in luck, great luck. I think that's a hot spring."

"So do I," said Shif'less Sol in the same joyous tone, "an' ef it is a hot spring, an' it ain't too almighty hot, why, we'll all take pleasant hot baths in it, go to bed an' sleep same ez ef we wuz really on them feather beds in that inn that ain't."

Sol approached and put his hand in the water which he found warm, but not too hot.

"It's all that we hoped, boys," he exclaimed joyfully. "So I'm goin' to enjoy these baths of Lucully right away. After my bath I'll wrap myself in my blanket, an' ez the rain hez stopped I'll hang out my clothes to dry."

It was really a hot spring of the kind sometimes found in the West. The water from the base of a hill formed a large pool, with a smooth bottom of stone, and then flowed away in a little brook under the trees.

It was, indeed, a great piece of luck that they should find this hot bath at a time when it was so badly needed. The teeth of both Paul and Sol were chattering, and they were the first to throw off their clothes and spring into the pool.

"Come right in and be b'iled," exclaimed the shiftless one. "Paul has bragged of the baths o' Caracally but this beats 'em."

There were three splashes as the other three hit the water at once. Then they came out, rolled themselves lightly in the warm blankets, and felt the stiffness and soreness, caused by the rain and cold, departing from their bodies. A light wind was blowing, and their clothes, hung on boughs, were beginning already to dry. An extraordinary sense of peace and ease, even of luxury, stole over them all. The contrast with what they had been suffering put them in a physical heaven.

"I didn't think I could ever be so happy, a-layin' 'roun' in the woods wrapped up in nothin' but a blanket," said Shif'less Sol. "I guess the baths o' Rome that Paul tells about wuz good in their day, which wuz a mighty long time ago, but not needin' 'em ez bad ez we did, mebbe, them Roman fellers didn't enjoy 'em ez much. What do you say to that, Paul, you champion o' the ancient times which hev gone forever?"

The only answer was a long regular breathing. Paul had fallen asleep.

"Good boy," said Shif'less Sol, sympathetically, "I hope he'll enjoy his nap."

"Hope the same fur me," said Long Jim, "'cause I'm goin' to foller him in less than two minutes."

Jim Hart made good his words. Within the prescribed time a snore, not loud nor disagreeable, but gentle and persistent, rose on the night air. One by one the others also fell asleep, all except Henry, who forced himself to keep awake, and who was also pondering the question of Timmendiquas. What were the great chief's plans? What vast scheme had been evolved from the cunning brain of that master Indian? And how were the five—only five—to defeat it, even should they discover its nature?

The light wind blew through all the rest of the night. The foliage became dry, but the earth had been soaked so thoroughly with water that it remained heavy with damp. The night was bright enough for him to observe the faces of his comrades. They were sleeping soundly and everyone was ruddy with health.

"That was certainly a wonderful hot bath," said Henry to himself, as he looked at the pool. He moved a little in his blanket, tested his muscles and found them all flexible. Then he watched until the first tinge of gray appeared in the east, keeping his eyes upon it, until it turned to silver and then to rose and gold, as the bright sun came. The day would be clear and warm, and, after waiting a little longer, he awakened the others.

"I think you'd better dress for breakfast," he said.

Their clothing was now thoroughly dry, and they clothed themselves anew, but breakfast was wholly lacking. They had eaten all the venison, and every man had an aching void.

"The country hez lots o' deer, o' course," said Shif'less Sol, "but jest when you want one most it's pretty shore that you can't find it."

"I'm not so certain about that," said Henry. "When you find a hot spring you are pretty likely to find a mineral spring or two, also, especially one of salt."

"And if it's salt," finished Paul, "we'll see the deer coming there to drink."

"Sound reasonin'," said Tom Ross.

They began the search. About a hundred yards east of the hot spring they found one of sulphur water, and, two hundred yards further, one of salt. Innumerable tracks beside it showed that it was well patronized by the wilderness people, and the five, hiding in a clump of bushes at a point where the wind would not betray them, bided their time. Some small animals came down to drink at the healing salt spring, but the five did not pull a trigger. This was not the game they wanted, and they never killed wantonly. They were waiting for a fine fat deer, and they felt sure that he would come. A great yellow panther padded down to the spring, frightening everything else away and lapped the water greedily, stopping now and then for suspicious looks at the forest. They longed to take a shot at the evil brute, and, under the circumstances, everyone of the five would have pulled the trigger, but now none did so. The panther took his time, but finally he slunk back into the forest, leaving the salt spring to better wilderness people than himself.

At last the sacrifice came, a fat and splendid stag, walking proudly and boldly down to the pool. He sniffed the morning air, but the wind was not blowing from the fire toward him, and, with no feeling of danger, he bent down his regal head to drink. The five felt regret that so noble an animal must give his life for others, but hunger was hunger and in the wilderness there was no other way. By common consent they nodded towards Henry, who was the best shot, and he raised his rifle. It reminded him of the time far back, when, under the tutelage of Tom Ross, he had shot his first stag. But now, although he did not say it to himself or even think of it, he was Tom Ross' master in all the arts of hunting, and in mind as well.

Henry pulled the trigger. The stag leaped high into the air, ran a few yards, fell and was still. They dressed his body quickly, and in a half hour Long Jim Hart, with all the skill and soul of a culinary artist was frying strips of deer meat over the coals that Shif'less Sol had kindled. There was danger of Indians, of course, but they kept a sharp watch, and as they ate, they neither saw nor heard any sign.

"It is pretty sure," said Henry, "that no savage was lingering about when I fired the rifle, because we would have heard something from him by this time."

"You are shorely right," said Shif'less Sol. "Jim, give me another strip. My appetite hez took a fresh hold ez I'm eatin' now with a free mind."

"Here you are, Sol," said Long Jim. "It's a pow'ful pleasure to me to see you eat my cookin'. The health an strength uv a lazy man like you who hez been nourished by my hand is livin' proof that I'm the best cook in the woods."

"We all give you that credit, Jim," said Shif'less Sol contentedly.

After breakfast they took with them as large a supply of the meat as they could carry with convenience and regretfully left the rest to the wolves and panthers. Then they began their journey toward the Wyandot village. Their misadventure and their long flight from the terrible hound had not

discouraged them in the least. They would return directly to the storm center and keep watch, as well as they could, upon the movements of Timmendiquas and his allies.

But they chose another and more easterly course now and traveled all day through beautiful sunshine and a dry forest. Their precautions of the night before had served them well, as the rain and cold left no trace of ill, and their spirits rose to heights.

"But thar's one thing we've got to guard ag'in'," said Shif'less Sol. "I don't want to be tracked by any more dogs. Besides bein' dangerous, it gives you a creepy uncomf'table feelin'."

"We'll keep a good watch for them," said Henry.

As they saw no reason for haste, they slept in the woods another night, and the next night thereafter they approached the Indian village. They hung about it a long time, and, at great risk, discovered that a new movement was on foot. Timmendiquas would soon depart for a journey further into the North. With him would go the famous chiefs, Yellow Panther of the Miamis, and Red Eagle of the Shawnees, and the renegades, Simon Girty, Braxton Wyatt and Blackstaffe. They would have a retinue of a hundred warriors, chosen from the different tribes, but with precedence allotted to the Wyandots. These warriors, however, were picked men of the valley nations, splendidly built, tall, lean and full of courage and ferocity. They were all armed with improved rifles, and every man carried a tomahawk and hunting knife. They were also amply supplied with ammunition and provisions.

The five having watched these preparations by night when they could come close to the village, considered them carefully as they lay in a dense covert. So far they had not been able to discover anything that would indicate the intention of Timmendiquas, except that he would march northward, and there were many guesses.

"I'm thinking that he will go to Detroit," said Henry. "That's the strongest British post in the West. The Indians get their arms and ammunition there, and most of the raids on Kentucky have been made from that point."

"Looks ez likely ez anything to me," said Shif'less Sol, "but I'm guessin' that ef Timmendiquas goes to Detroit he won't stop there. He's a big man an' he may then go westward to raise all the tribes o' the Great Lakes."

"It may be so," said Henry.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEVEN HERALDS

Henry, late the next night, was near the Wyandot village, watching it alone. They had decided to divide their work as the border watch. Part of them would sleep in the covert, while the others would scout about the village. That night it was the turn of Shif'less Sol and himself, but they had separated in order to see more. The shiftless one was now on the other side of the town, perhaps a mile away.

Henry was in a thick clump of bushes that lay to the north of the house and tepees. Dogs might stray that way or they might not. If they did, a rifle shot would silence the first that gave tongue, and he knew that alone he was too swift in flight to be overtaken by any Indian force.

Although past midnight the heavens were a fine silky blue, shot with a myriad of stars, and a full rich moon hanging low. Henry, lying almost flat upon his stomach, with his rifle by his side, was able to see far into the village. He noted that, despite the lateness of the hour, fires were burning there, and that warriors, carrying torches, were passing about. This was unusual. It was always characteristic of his mind not only to see, but to ask where, when and, above all, why? Now he was repeatedly asking why of himself, but while asking he never failed to observe the slightest movement in the village.

Presently he saw Timmendiquas walk from a large lodge and stop by one of the fires. Standing in the rays of the moon, light from above and firelight from his side falling upon him the figure of the chief was like that of some legendary Titan who had fought with the gods. A red blanket hung over his shoulder, and a single red feather rose aloft in the defiant scalp lock.

Henry saw the renegade, Simon Girty, approach, and talk with the chief for a few moments, but he was much too far away to hear what they said. Then six warriors, one of them, by his dress, a sub-chief, came from the lodges and stood before Timmendiquas, where they were joined, an instant later, by the renegade Blackstaffe. The chief took from beneath his blanket four magnificent belts of wampum, two of which he handed to the sub-chief and two to the renegade. Timmendiquas said a few words to every one of them, and, instantly leaving the village they traveled northward at the swift running walk of the Indian. They passed near Henry in single file, the sub-chief at the head and Blackstaffe in the rear, and he noticed then that they carried supplies as if for a long journey. Their faces were turned toward the Northwest.

Timmendiquas and Girty stood for a moment, watching the men, then turned back and were lost among the lodges. But Henry rose from his covert and, hidden among the bushes, came to a rapid conclusion. He knew the significance of wampum belts and he could guess why these seven men had departed so swiftly. They were heralds of war. They were on their way to the far northwest tribes, in order that they might bring them to the gathering of the savage clans for the invasion of Kentucky.

Henry felt a powerful impulse, an impulse that speedily became a conviction. Every delay and every reduction of force was a help to the white men and white women and children down below the Ohio. A week of time, or the difference of twenty warriors might be their salvation. He must turn back the messengers, and he must do it with his single hand. How he longed for the help of the brave and resourceful Shif'less Sol. But he was a mile away, somewhere in the dark woods and Henry could not delay. The seven heralds were speeding toward the Northwest, at a pace that would soon take them far beyond his reach, unless he followed at once.

Dropping his rifle in the hollow of his arm he swung in behind them. One could not pick up a trail in dense woods at night, but he had observed their general direction, and he followed them so swiftly that within a half hour he saw them, still traveling in Indian file, the chief as before at the head of the line and Blackstaffe at the rear. The moon had now faded a little, and the light over the forest turned from silver to gray. Many of the stars had withdrawn, but on sped the ghostly procession of seven. No, not of seven only, but of eight, because behind them at a distance of two hundred

yards always followed a youth of great build, and of wilderness instinct and powers that none of them could equal.

Chaska, the sub-chief, the Shawnee who led, was an eager and zealous man, filled with hatred of the white people who had invaded the hunting grounds of his race. He was anxious to bring as many warriors as he could to their mighty gathering, even if he had to travel as far as the farthest and greatest of the Great Lakes. Moreover he was swift of foot, and he did not spare himself or the others that night. He led them through bushes and weeds and grass and across the little brooks. Always the others followed, and no sound whatever came from the file of seven which was really the file of eight.

The seven heralds traveled all night and all of the next day, always through forest, and at no time was the eighth figure in the file more than four hundred yards behind them.

The Indian, through centuries of forest life, had gifts of insight and of physical faculties amounting to a sixth sense, yet the keenest among them never suspected, for an instant, that they were eight and not seven. At noon they sat down in the dry grass of a tiny prairie and ate dried deer meat. Henry, in the edge of the woods a quarter of a mile away, also ate dried deer meat. When the seven finished their food and resumed the march the eighth at the same time finished his food and resumed the march. Nothing told the seven that the eighth was there, no voice of the wood, no whisper from Manitou.

The stop had not lasted more than half an hour and the journey led on through great forests, broken only by tiny prairies. Game abounded everywhere, and Henry judged that the Indians, according to the custom among some of the more advanced tribes, had not hunted over it for several seasons, in order that it might have plenty when they came again. Ten or a dozen buffaloes were grazing on nearly every little prairie, splendid deer were in the open and in the woods, but the seven and also the eighth stopped for none of these, although they would have been sorely tempted at any other time.

Their speed was undiminished throughout the afternoon, but Henry knew that they must camp that night. They could not go on forever, and he could secure, too, the rest that he needed. It might also give him the chance to do what he wished to do. At least he would have time to plan.

In the late afternoon the character of the day changed. The sun set in a mackerel sky. A soft wind came moaning out of the Southwest, and drops of rain were borne on its edge. Darkness shut down close and heavy. No moon and no stars came out. The rain fell gently, softly, almost as if it were ashamed, and the voice of the wind was humble and low.

Chaska, Blackstaffe and their men stopped under the interlacing boughs of two giant oaks, and began to collect firewood. Henry, who had been able to come much nearer in the dark, knew then that they would remain there a long time, probably all night, and he was ready to prepare for his own rest. But he did not do anything until the seven had finished their task.

He kept at a safe distance, shifting his position from time to time, until the Indians had gathered all the firewood they needed and were sitting in a group around the heap. Chaska used the flint and steel and Henry saw the fire at last blaze up. The seven warmed their food over the fire and then sat around it in a close and silent circle, with their blankets drawn over their bodies, and their rifles covered up in their laps. Sitting thus, Blackstaffe looked like the others and no one would have known him from an Indian.

Henry had with him, carried usually in a small pack on his back, two blankets, light in weight but of closely woven fiber, shedding rain, and very warm. He crouched in a dense growth of bushes, three or four hundred yards from the Indian fire. Then he put one blanket on the ground, sat upon it, after the Indian fashion, and put the other blanket over his head and shoulders, just as the warriors had done. He locked his hands across his knees, while the barrel of the rifle which rested between his legs protruded over his shoulder and against the blanket. Some of the stronger and heavier bushes behind him supported his weight. He felt perfectly comfortable, and he knew that he would remain so, unless the rain increased greatly, and of that there was no sign.

Henry, though powerful by nature, and inured to great exertions, was tired. The seven, including the eighth, had been traveling at a great pace for more than twenty hours. While the Indians ate their food, warmed over the fire, he ate his cold from his pocket. Then the great figure began to relax. His back rested easily against the bushes. The tenseness and strain were gone from his nerves and muscles. He had not felt so comfortable, so much at peace in a long time, and yet not three hundred yards away burned a fire around which sat seven men, any one of whom would gladly have taken his life.

The clouds moved continually across the sky, blotting out the moon and every star. The soft, light rain fell without ceasing and its faint drip, drip in the woods was musical. It took the last particle of strain and anxiety from Henry's mind and muscles. This voice of the rain was like the voice of his dreams which sometimes sang to him out of the leaves. He would triumph in his present task. He was bound to do so, although he did not yet know the way.

He watched the fire with sleepy eyes. He saw it sink lower and lower. He saw the seven figures sitting around it become dim and then dimmer, until they seemed to merge into one solid circle.

As long as he looked at them he did not see a single figure move, and he knew that they were asleep. He knew that he too would soon be sleeping and he was willing. But he was resolved not to do so until the darkness was complete, that is, not until the fire had gone entirely out. He watched it until it seemed only a single spark in the night. Then it winked and was gone. At the same time the darkness blotted out the ring of seven figures.

Henry's eyelids drooped and closed. He raised them weakly once or twice, but the delicate voice of the light rain in the forest was so soothing that they stayed down, after the second attempt, and he floated peacefully to unknown shores, hidden as safely as if he were a thousand miles from the seven seated and silent figures.

He awoke about midnight and found himself a little stiff from his crouching position, but dry and rested. The rain was still falling in gentle, persistent fashion. He rolled up the blanket that had lain under him but kept the other around his shoulders. All was dark where the fire and the ring of seven had been, but he knew instinctively that they were there, bent forward with the blankets about their heads and shoulders.

He stole forward until he could see them. He was right. Not one in the circle was missing and not one had moved. Then he passed around them, and, picking his way in the darkness, went ahead. He had a plan, vague somewhat, but one which he might use, if the ground developed as he thought it would. He had noticed that, despite inequalities, the general trend of the earth was downward. The brooks also ran northward, and he believed that a river lay across their path not far ahead.

Now he prayed that the rain would cease and that the clouds would go away so that he might see, and his prayers were answered. A titanic hand dragged all the clouds off to the eastward, and dim grayish light came once more over the dripping forest. He saw forty or fifty yards ahead, and he advanced much faster. The ground continued to drop down, and his belief came true. At a point four or five miles north of the Indian camp he reached a narrow but deep river that he could cross only by swimming. But it was likely a ford could be found near and he looked swiftly for it.

He went a mile down the stream, without finding shallow water, and, then coming back, discovered the ford only a hundred yards above his original point of departure. The water here ran over rocks, and, for a space of ten or fifteen yards, it was not more than four feet deep. The Indians undoubtedly knew of this ford, and here they would attempt to cross.

He waded to the other side, rolled up the second blanket, crouched behind rocks among dense bushes, ate more cold food, and waited. His rifle lay across his knees, and, at all times, he watched the woods on the far shore. He was the hunter now, the hunter of men, the most dangerous figure in the forest, all of his wonderful five senses attuned to the utmost.

The darkness faded away, as the dawn came up, silver and then gold. Golden light poured down in a torrent on river, forest and hills. Every leaf and stem sprang out clear and sharp in the yellow blaze. The waiting youth never stirred. From his covert in the thicket behind the rocks he saw everything. He

saw a bush stir, when there was no wind, and then he saw the face of the Indian chief Chaska, appear beside the bush. After him came the remainder of the seven and they advanced toward the ford.

Henry raised his rifle and aimed at Chaska. He picked a spot on the broad and naked chest, where he could make his bullet strike with absolute certainty. Then he lowered it. He could not fire thus upon an unsuspecting enemy, although he knew that Chaska would have no such scruples about him. Pursing his lips he uttered a loud sharp whistle, a whistle full of warning and menace.

The seven sprang back among the bushes. The eighth on the other side of the river lay quite still for a little while. Then a sudden puff of wind blew aside some of the bushes and disclosed a portion of his cap. Chaska who was the farthest forward of the seven saw the cap and fired. The Indian is not usually a good marksman, and his bullet cut the bushes, but Henry, who now had no scruples, was a sharpshooter beyond compare. Chaska had raised up a little to take aim, and, before the smoke from his own weapon rose, the rifle on the other side of the river cracked. Chaska threw up his hands and died as he would have wished to die, on the field of battle, and with his face to the foe. The others shrank farther back among the bushes, daunted by the deadly shot, and the hidden foe who held the ford.

Henry reloaded quietly, and then lay very close among the bushes. Not only did he watch the forest on the other shore, but all his senses were keenly alert. For a distance of a full half mile none of the Indians could cross the river unseen by him, but, in case they went farther and made the passage he relied upon his ears to warn him of their approach.

For a time nothing stirred. Boughs, bushes and leaves were motionless and the gold on the surface of the river grew deeper under the rising sun. Blackstaffe, after the fall of Chaska, was now commander of the seven heralds, who were but six, and at his word the Indians too were lying close, for the soul of Blackstaffe, the renegade, was disturbed. The bullet that had slain Chaska had come from the rifle of a sharpshooter. Chaska had exposed himself for only an instant and yet he had been slain. Blackstaffe knew that few could fire with such swift and deadly aim, but, before this, he had come into unpleasantly close contact with some who could. His mind leaped at once to the conclusion that the famous five were in front of him, and he was much afraid.

An hour passed. The beauty of the morning deepened. The river flowed, an untarnished sheet, now of silver, now of gold as the light fell. Henry crept some distance to the right, and then an equal distance to left. He could not hear the movement of any enemy in front of him, and he believed that they were all yet in the bushes on the other side of the river. He returned to his old position and the duel of patience went on. His eyes finally fixed themselves upon a large bush, the leaves of which were moving. He took the pistol from his belt, cocked it, and put it upon the rock in front of him. Then he slowly pushed forward the muzzle of his long and beautiful Kentucky rifle.

It was certainly a duel to the death. No other name described it, and hundreds of such have been fought and forgotten in the great forests of North America. The Indian behind the bush was crafty and cunning, one of the most skillful among the Shawnees. He had marked the spot where an enemy lay, and was rising a little higher for a better look.

Henry had marked him, too, or rather the movement that was the precursor of his coming, and when the Shawnee rose in the bush he raised a little and fired. There was a terrific yell, a figure leaped up convulsively, and then falling, disappeared. Five shots were fired at Henry, or rather at the flame from his rifle, but he merely sank back a little, snatched up the pistol, and sent a second bullet, striking a brown figure which retreated with a cry to the woods. The remainder, Blackstaffe first among them, also sprang to cover.

The renegade and the four remaining Indians, one of whom was severely wounded, conferred as they lay among the trees. Blackstaffe was no coward, yet his heart was as water within him. He was absolutely sure now that the terrible five were before them. Two shots had been fired, but the others were only waiting their chance. His own force was but five now, only four of whom were effective. He

was outnumbered, and he did not know what to do. The Indians would want to carry out the important orders of Timmendiquas, but there was the river, and they did not dare to attempt the crossing.

Henry, in his old position, awaited the result with serene confidence. The seven heralds were now but five, really four, and not only the stars, but the sun, the day, time, circumstance and everything were working for him. He had reloaded his weapons, and he was quite sure now that Blackstaffe and the Indians would stay together. None of them nor any two of them would dare to go far upstream or down stream, cross and attempt to stalk him. Nevertheless he did not relax his vigilance. He was as much the hunter as ever. Every sense was keenly alert, and that superior sense or instinct, which may be the essence and flower of the five was most alert of all.

The duel of patience, which was but a phase of the duel of death, was resumed. On went the sun up the great concave arch of the heavens, pouring its beams upon the beautiful earth, but on either side of the river nothing stirred. The nerves of Blackstaffe, the renegade, were the first to yield to the strain. He began to believe that the five had gone away, and, creeping forward to see, he incautiously exposed one hand. It was only for an instant, but a bullet from the other side of the river cut a furrow all the way across the back of the hand, stinging and burning as if a red hot bar had been laid upon it.

Blackstaffe dropped almost flat upon the ground, and looked at his hand from which the blood was oozing. He knew that it was not hurt seriously, but the wound stung horribly and tears of mingled pain and mortification rose to his eyes. He suggested to the warriors that they go back, but they shook their heads. They feared the wrath of Timmendiquas and the scorn of their comrades. So Blackstaffe waited, but he was without hope. He had been miserably trapped by his belief that the five had gone. They were there, always watching, deadlier sharpshooters than ever.

It was noon now, and a Wyandot, the most zealous of the remaining Indians, lying flat on his stomach, crept almost to the water's edge, where he lay among the grass and reeds. Yet he never crept back again. He stirred the grass and weeds too much, and a bullet, fired by calculation of his movements, and not by any sight of his figure, slew him where he lay.

Then a great and terrible fear seized upon the Indians as well as Blackstaffe. Such deadly shooting as this was beyond their comprehension. The bullets from the rifles of the unseen marksmen were guided by the hand of Manitou. The Great Spirit had turned his face away from them, and helping their wounded comrade, they fled southward as fast as they could. Blackstaffe, his blazed hand burning like fire, went with them gladly.

In that journey of twenty hours' northward the seven heralds had traveled far from the Wyandot village and it was equally as far back to it. Going northward they had zeal and energy to drive them on, and going southward they had terror and superstition to drive them back. They returned as fast as they had gone, and all the time they felt that the same mysterious and deadly enemy was behind them. Once a bullet, cutting the leaves near them, hastened their footsteps. The renegade wished to abandon the wounded man, but the Indians, more humane, would not allow it.

Henry could have reduced the number of the heralds still further, but his mind rebelled at useless bloodshed and he was satisfied to let terror and superstition do their work. He followed them until they were in sight of the village, guessing the surprise and consternation that their news would cause. Then he turned aside to find his comrades in the covert and to tell them what he had done. They admired, but they were not surprised, knowing him so well.

Meanwhile they waited.

CHAPTER V

THE WYANDOT COUNCIL

Henry and his comrades, spying anew from the woods and seeing the village full of stir, thought Timmendiquas and his warriors would depart that day, but they soon gathered that some important ceremonial was at hand, and would be celebrated first. It reminded Henry of the great gathering of the Iroquois before the advance on Wyoming. He was as eager now as then to enter the village and see the rites, which it was quite evident were going to be held at night. Already the dangers of his adventure with the seven heralds were forgotten and he was ready for new risks.

"If I only had a little paint for my face and body," he said, "I could go into the place without much danger, and I'd learn a lot that would be of use to us."

No one answered, but Shif'less Sol, who had been listening attentively, stole away. The sun was then about an hour high, and, a little after twilight, the shiftless one returned with a package wrapped in a piece of deerskin. He held it aloft, and his face was triumphant.

"What have you been doing, Sol?" exclaimed Henry.

"Me? I've been stealin'. An' I tell you I've been a good thief, too, fur a lazy man. You said you wanted paint, Henry. Well, here it is an' the little brushes an' feathers with which you put it on, too. The people are all driftin' toward the center o' the village, an' without any partic'lar trouble to myself or anybody else I entered an outlyin'—an' fur the time empty—lodge an' took away this vallyble paintin' outfit."

"Good," said Henry with delight. "Now you shall paint me, Sol, and in an hour I'll be among the Wyandots. Let's see the paint."

But Shif'less Sol firmly retained his precious package.

"Takin's are keepings," he said. "These paints are mine, an' I 'low you to make use o' them on one condition only."

"What is that?"

"When I paint you, you paint me, an' then we'll go into this mighty Injun metropolis together. Mebbe you'll need me, Henry, an' I'm goin' with you anyway. You've got to agree to it."

Henry and the shiftless one looked each other squarely in the face. Henry read resolve, and also an anxious affection in the gaze of his comrade.

"All right, Sol," he said, "it's agreed. Now let's see which is the better painter."

While the others stood by and gave advice Sol painted Henry. The great youth bared himself to the skin, and Sol, with a deft hand, laid on the Wyandot colors over chest, shoulders, arms, face and hands. Then Henry painted the shiftless one in the same fashion. They also, but with more difficulty, colored their hair black. It was artistic work, and when all was done the two stood forth in the perfect likeness of two splendid Wyandot warriors.

"I think," said Henry, "that if we keep away from Timmendiquas, Wyatt, Girty and those who know us so well, nobody will suspect us."

"But don't run any unnecessary risks," said Paul anxiously. "You know how hard it will be on us waiting out here in the woods, an' if you were captured it's not likely we could save you."

"We'll take every precaution, Paul," said Henry, "and we'll rejoin you here in the morning."

"All right," said Paul, "we'll wait at this point."

They were in an exceedingly dense part of the forest about two miles from the Indian village, and Tom Ross, the phlegmatic, was already selecting a place for his blanket. The moon was not yet out and the light over the forest was dim, but Paul, Long Jim and Silent Tom could see very distinctly the two magnificent young Wyandots who stood near them, bare to the waist, painted wondrously and armed with rifle, tomahawk and knife.

"Henry," said Long Jim, "ef I didn't see your face I could swear that you wuz Timmendiquas his very self. I see Timmendiquas—his shoulders an' the way he carries himself."

"An' I guess you see somethin' gran' an' wonderful in me, too, don't you, Saplin'?" said Shif'less Sol in his most ingratiating tone.

Long Jim gazed at him in his most scornful manner, before he deigned to reply.

"No, I don't see no great chief in you, Sol Hyde," he replied. "I see nothin' but an ornery Wyandot, who's so lazy he has to be fed by squaws, an' who ef he saw a white man would run so fast he'd never stop until he hit Lake Superior an' got beyond his depth."

Shif'less Sol laughed and held out his hand.

"Put 'er thar," he said. "You wouldn't abuse me ef you didn't like me, an' ef I never come back I guess a tear or two would run down that brown face o' yours."

Long Jim returned in kind the iron grasp of his friend.

"Them words o' yours is mighty near to the truth," he said.

Both Henry and Sol said all their good-byes, and then they slid away through the thickets toward the town. As they came to its edge they saw a multitude of lights, fires burning here and there, and many torches held aloft by women and children. There was also the chatter of hundreds of voices, melting into a pleasant river of sound and the two, not even finding the Indian dogs suspicious, advanced boldly across the maize fields. Henry, remembering his size, which was the chief danger, now stooped and held himself in a shrunken position as much as possible. Thus they came to the town, and they saw that all its inhabitants were converging upon the common in the center.

Both Henry and Sol looked anxiously at the village, which was of a permanent character, containing both single and communal wigwams. The permanent wigwams were of an oblong form, built of poles interwoven with bark. Many were, as Shif'less Sol called them, double-barreled—that is, in two sections, a family to each section, but with a common hall in which the fire was built, each family sitting on its side of the fire. But all these were empty now, as men, women and children had gone to the open space in the center of the village. The communal lodges were much larger, often holding six or seven families, but with entirely distinct partitions for every family. Here in the woods was a rude germ of the modern apartment house.

Henry and Sol drew near to the common, keeping concealed within the shadow of the lodges. The open space was blazing with light from big fires and many squaws carried torches also. Within this space were grouped the guests of the Wyandots, the Shawnees and the Miamis, with their chiefs at their head. They were painted heavily, and were in the finest attire of the savage, embroidered leggings and moccasins, and red or blue blankets. From every head rose a bright feather twined in the defiant scalp lock. But the Shawnees and Miamis stood motionless, every man resting the stock of his rifle upon the ground and his hands upon the muzzle. They were guests. They were not to take any part in the ceremony, but they were deeply interested in the great rites of an allied and friendly nation, the great little tribe of the Wyandots, the woman-ruled nation, terrible in battle, the bravest of the brave the finest savage fighters the North American continent ever produced, the Mohawks not excepted. And the fact remains that they were ruled by women.

The Wyandot warriors had not yet entered the open, which was a great circular grassy space. But as Henry and Shif'less Sol leaned in the shadow of a lodge, a tall warrior painted in many colors came forth into the light of the fires, and uttered a loud cry, which he repeated twice at short intervals. Meanwhile the torches among the women and children had ceased to waver, and the Shawnees and Miamis stood immovable, their hands resting on the muzzles of their rifles. The great fires blazed up, and cast a deep red light over the whole scene. A minute or so elapsed after the last cry, and Henry and Shif'less Sol noticed the expectant hush.

Then at the far side of the circle appeared the Wyandot warriors, six abreast coming between the lodges. They were naked except for the breech cloth and moccasins, but their bodies were gorgeously painted in many colors. Mighty men were they. Few among them were less than six feet in height,

and all were splendidly built for strength, skill and endurance. They held their heads high, too, and their eyes flashed with the haughty pride of those who considered themselves first. Not in vain were the woman-ruled Wyandots the bravest of the brave.

The Wyandot people advanced and waited on the outer rim of the circle in the order of their gentes or clans. Their rank like that of all the leading North American tribes was perfect and was never violated. There were eleven clans with the following names in their language: The Bear, the Deer, the Highland Striped Turtle, the Highland Black Turtle, the Mud Turtle, the Large Smooth Turtle, the Hawk, the Beaver, the Wolf, the Snake, and the Porcupine. The rank of the sachem of the nation was inherent in the clan of the Bear, and the rank of military chief had always belonged hitherto to the clan of the Porcupine, but now the right was about to be waived and for an ample reason.

The Wyandot warriors continued to march steadily into the circle until all were there, and then a deep murmur of approval came from the watching Shawnees and Miamis.

The flower of the Wyandot nation here in its own home was all that wilderness fame had made it. At the head of the first clan, that of the Bear, stood Timmendiquas, and Henry and Shif'less Sol had never seen him appear more commanding. Many tall men were there, but he over-topped them all, and his eyes shone with a deep, bright light, half triumph and half expectancy.

Now all the Wyandots were within the circle, standing as they always camped when on the war path or the hunt. They were arranged in the form of a horseshoe. The head was on the left and the clans ran to the right in this way: The Bear, the Deer, the Highland Striped Turtle, the Highland Black Turtle, the Mud Turtle, the Large Smooth Turtle, the Hawk, the Beaver, the Wolf, the Snake and the Porcupine. These clans were also incorporated into four phratries, or larger divisions. The first phratry included the Bear, the Deer, and the Highland Striped Turtle; the second, the Highland Black Turtle, the Mud Turtle, and the Large Smooth Turtle; the third, the Hawk, the Beaver, and the Wolf, and the fourth, the Snake, and the Porcupine.

Every clan was ruled by a council of five, and of those five, four were women. The fifth, the man, was chosen by the four women from the men of their clan. The four women of the Board of Council had been selected previously by the married women or heads of families of the clans. The wife, not the husband, was the head of the family, nor did he own anything in their home except his clothes and weapons. He was merely a hunter and warrior. All property and rank descended through the female line. The lands of the village which were communal were partitioned for cultivation by the women. The clan council of five was called the Zu-wai-yu-wa, and the lone man was always deferential in the presence of the four women who had elected him. The men councilors, however, had some privilege. When it became necessary to choose the Grand Sachem of the whole nation, they alone did it. But they were compelled to heed the voices of the women who constituted the whole voting population, and who also owned all the property. There was, too, a separate military council of men who chose the military chief. Every clan had a distinctive way of painting the face, and the four women councilors and their man comrade wore on state occasions distinctive chaplets of wild flowers, leaves and grass.

Much of this lore Henry and Shif'less Sol knew already and more they learned later. Now as they watched the impressive ceremonies they often divined what was to come.

After the horseshoe was formed, forty-four women and eleven men in a compact body advanced to the inside of the circle. The women were mostly middle-aged, and they were better looking than the women of other tribes. Seen in the firelight they had primitive dignity and a wilderness majesty, that was brightened by the savage richness of their dress. They wore their hair in long dark braids, adorned by shells and small red and blue feathers. Their tunics, which fell nearly to the knee, were made of the finest dressed deerskin, fastened at the waist with belts of the same material, dyed red or blue. As they watched, the little beads on their leggings and moccasins tinkled and gave forth the colors of the firelight. The expression of all was one of great gravity and dignity. Here was the real

senatorial body of the nation. Though they might not fight nor lead in war, they were the lawmakers of the Wyandots. Great deference was paid to them as they passed.

Henry and Shif'less Sol, flattened in the dark against the side of a tepee, watched everything with eager interest. Henry, a keen observer and quick to draw inferences, had seen other but somewhat similar ceremonies among the Iroquois. Women had taken a part there also and some of them had the rank of chieftainess, but they were not predominant as they were among the Wyandots.

The council of the eleven clans stopped in the center of the circle, and a silence, broken only by the crackling of the fires and the sputtering of the torches, came once more over the great assembly. But a thousand eager faces were turned toward them. The Shawnees and Miamis apparently had not yet moved, still standing in rows, every face an impenetrable bronze mask.

The tall warrior of the clan of the Wolf who had made the signal for the ceremony now came forward again. His name was Atuetes (Long Claws) and he was at once the herald and sheriff of the nation. He superintended the erection of the Council House, and had charge of it afterwards. He called the council which met regularly on the night of the full moon, and at such other times as the Grand Sachem might direct. The present was an unusual meeting summoned for an unusual purpose, and owing to the uncommon interest in it, it was held in the open instead of in the Council House.

Timmendiquas, already by common consent and in action the Grand Sachem of the Wyandots, was now about to be formally invested with the double power of Grand Sachem and military chief. The clan of the Porcupine in which the military chieftainship was hereditary had willingly yielded it to Timmendiquas, whose surpassing fitness to meet the coming of the white man was so obvious to everybody.

Atuetes, the herald, advanced to the very center of the ring and shouted three times in loud, piercing tones:

"Timmendiquas! Timmendiquas! Timmendiquas!"

Then the whole nation, with their guests the Shawnees and Miamis, uttered the name in one great cry. After that the deep breathless silence came again and the eager brown faces were bent yet further forward. Timmendiquas standing motionless hitherto at the head of his clan, the Bear, now walked forth alone. The shout suddenly rose again, and then died as quickly as before.

Timmendiquas had thrown aside his magnificent blue blanket, and he stood bare to the waist. The totem of the bear tattooed upon his chest shone in the firelight. His figure seemed to grow in height and to broaden. Never before in all the history and legends of the Wyandots had so mighty an honor been conferred upon so young a warrior. It was all the more amazing because his predominance was so great that none challenged it, and other great warriors were there.

Among the famous chiefs who stood with the councilors or the clan were Dewatire (Lean Deer), Shayantsawat (Hard Skull), Harouyu (The Prowler), Tucae (Slow Walker), and Tadino (Always Hungry).

Timmendiquas continued to walk slowly forward to the point, where the long row of the chieftainesses stood. He would not have been human had he not felt exaltation, and an immense pride as he faced the women, with the hundreds and hundreds of admiring eyes looking on. He came presently within a few feet of them and stopped. Then Ayajinta (Spotted Fawn), the tallest and most majestic of the women, stepped forward, holding in both hands a woven chaplet of flowers and grass. The entire circle was now lighted brilliantly by the fires and torches, and Henry and Shif'less Sol, although at a distance, saw well.

Ayajinta, holding the chaplet in her outstretched hands, stood directly before Timmendiquas. She was a tall woman, but the chief towered nearly a head above her. Nevertheless her dignity was the equal of his and there was also much admiration in her looks.

"Timmendiquas," she said, in tones so clearly that everyone could hear, "you have proved yourself both a great chief and a mighty warrior. For many moons now you have led the Wyandots on the war trail, and you have also been first among them in the Council House. You have gone with

our warriors far toward the rising sun and by the side of the great kindred nation, the Iroquois, you have fought with your warriors against the Long Knives. After victory the Iroquois have seen their houses destroyed, but you and your warriors fought valiantly to defend them.

"We, the women of the Wyandots, chosen to the council by the other women, the heads of the families, look upon you and admire you for your strength, your courage and your wisdom. Seldom does Manitou give so much to a single warrior, and, when he does give, then it is not so much for him as it is for the sake of his tribe."

Ayajinta paused and the multitude uttered a deep "Hah!" which signified interest and approval. But Timmendiquas stood upright, unchanging eyes looking at her from the impenetrable brown mask.

"So," she said, "O Timmendiquas, thou hast been chosen Grand Sachem of the Wyandots, and also the leader of the war chiefs. We give you the double crown. Wear it for your own glory, and yet more for the glory of the Wyandot nation."

Timmendiquas bent his lofty head and she put upon it the great flowery crown. Then as he raised his crowned head and looked proudly around the circle, a tremendous shout burst from the multitude. Once more they cried:

"Timmendiquas! Timmendiquas! Timmendiquas!"

Before the third utterance of the name had died, fifty young girls, the fairest of the tribe, dressed in tanned deerskin adorned with beads and feathers, streamed into the inner circle and began to dance before the great chief. Meanwhile they sang:—

Behold the great Timmendiquas!
Mightiest of great chiefs,
Wisest of all in council,
He leads the warriors to battle,
He teaches the old men wisdom,
Timmendiquas, first of men.

Behold the great Timmendiquas!
As strong as the oak on the mountain,
As cunning as the wolf of the valley,
He has fought beside the great Iroquois,
The Yengees flee at the sound of his name,
Timmendiquas, first of men.

Then they joined hands and circled about him to a tune played by four men on whistles, made from the bones of eagles. The song died, and the girls flitted away so quickly through the outer ring that they were gone like shadows.

Responsive as they were to wilderness life, the scene was making a mighty impression upon Henry and Shif'less Sol. With the firelight about him and the moonlight above him, the figure of Timmendiquas was magnified in every way. Recognized long since as the most redoubtable of red champions, he showed himself more formidable than ever.

The crowd slowly dispersed, but Atuetes of the clan of the Hawk called a military council in the Council House. Timmendiquas, as became his rank, led the way, and the renegades, Simon Girty, Braxton Wyatt, and Moses Blackstaffe were admitted. Inside the Council House, which was hung with skins and which much resembled those of the Iroquois, the chiefs, after being called to order by Atuetes, the herald and sheriff, sat down in a circle, with Timmendiquas a little further forward than the others.

Atuetes took a great trumpet-shaped pipe, lighted it with a coal that was burning in a small fire in a corner, and inhaled two whiffs of smoke. He breathed out the first whiff toward the heavens and

the second toward the earth. He handed the pipe to Timmendiquas, who inhaled the smoke until his mouth was filled. Then, turning from left to right, he slowly puffed out the smoke over the heads of all the chiefs. When the circle was complete, he handed the pipe to the next chief on his left, who puffed out the smoke in the same manner. This was done gravely and in turn by every chief. Then the Grand Sachem, Timmendiquas, announced the great military subject for which they were called together, and they proceeded to discuss it.

CHAPTER VI

THE RUINED VILLAGE

The military council, presided over by Timmendiquas, sat long in the Council House, and about the moment it had concluded its labors, which was some time after midnight, Henry and Shif'less Sol skipped away from the village. Wyandot warriors had passed them several times in the darkness, but they had escaped close notice. Nevertheless, they were glad when they were once more among the trees. The forest had many dangers, but it also offered much shelter.

They rejoined their comrades, slept heavily until daylight, and when they scouted again near the Wyandot village they found that Timmendiquas and his force were gone, probably having started at the dawn and marching swiftly. But they knew that they would have no trouble in finding so large a trail, and as long as they were in proximity of the village they traveled with great care. It was nearly night when they found the broad trail through the woods, leading north slightly by east. All five were now of the belief that the destination of the savages was Detroit, the British post, which, as a depot of supplies and a rallying point for the Indians, served the same purpose as Niagara and Oswego in the East. To Detroit, Wyandots, Shawnees, Miamis, and all the others turned for weapons and ammunition. There went the renegades and there many Kentuckians, who had escaped the tomahawk or the stake, had been taken captive, including such famous men as Boone and Kenton. It was a name that inspired dread and hate on the border, but the five were full of eagerness to see it, and they hoped that the march of Timmendiquas would take them thither.

"I hear they've got big forts thar," said Shif'less Sol, "but ef we don't lose our cunnin', an' I don't think we will, we five kin spy among 'em an' read thar secrets."

"There are many white men at Detroit," said Henry, "and I've no doubt that we can slip in among them without being detected. Tories and renegades who are strangers to the British officers at Detroit must be continually arriving there. In that lies our chance."

Later in the night they approached the Wyandot camp, but they did not dare to go very close, as they saw that it was everywhere guarded carefully and that but few lights were burning. They slept in the woods two or three miles away, and the next day they followed the trail as before. Thus the northward march went on for several days, the great White Lightning of the Wyandots and his warriors moving swiftly, and Henry and his comrades keeping the same pace six or seven miles in the rear.

They advanced through country that none of the five had ever seen before, but it was a beautiful land that appealed alike to the eye and ear of the forest runner. It was not inferior to Kentucky, and in addition it had many beautiful little lakes. Game, however, was not abundant as here were the villages of the Indian tribes, and the forests were hunted more. But the five found deer and buffalo sufficient for their needs, although they took great risks when they fired. Once the shot was heard by a detachment of the Shawnees who also were after game, and they were trailed for a long time, but when night came they shook them off, and the next morning they followed Timmendiquas, as usual, though at a much greater distance.

Their escape in this instance had been so easy that they took enjoyment from it, but they prudently resolved to retain their present great distance in the rear. The trail could not be lost and the danger would be less. The course that Timmendiquas maintained also led steadily on toward Detroit, and they felt so sure now of his destination that they even debated the advisability of passing ahead of the column, in order to reach the neighborhood of Detroit before him. But they decided finally in the negative, and maintained their safe distance in the rear.

As they continued northward the Indian signs increased. Twice they crossed the trails of Indian hunting parties, and at last they came to a deserted village. Either it had been abandoned because of warfare or to escape an unhealthy location, but the five examined it with great curiosity. Many

of the lodges built of either poles or birch bark were still standing, with fragments of useless and abandoned household goods here and there. Paul found in one of the lodges a dried scalp with long straight hair, but, obeying a sensitive impulse he hid it from the others, thrusting it between two folds of the birch bark.

They also found fragments of arrows and broken bows. The path leading down to a fine spring was not yet overgrown with grass, and they inferred from it that the Indians had not been gone many months. There was also an open space showing signs of cultivation. Evidently maize and melons had grown there.

"I wonder why they went away?" said Long Jim to Shif'less Sol. "You've made two guesses—unhealthiness or danger from Injuns. Now this site looks purty good to me, an' the Injun tribes up here are generally friendly with one another."

"Them's only guesses," said Sol, "an' we'll never know why. But I take it that Delawares lived here. This is just about thar country. Mebbe they've gone North to be near Detroit, whar the arms an' supplies are."

"Likely enough," said Henry, "but suppose we populate this village for to-night. It looks as if rain were coming on, and none of us is fond of sleeping out in the wet."

"You're talkin' wisdom," said Shif'less Sol, "an' I think we kin find a place in the big wigwam over thar that looks like a Council House."

He pointed to a rough structure of bark and poles, with a dilapidated roof and walls, but in better state of preservation than any of the wigwams, probably because it had been built stronger. They entered it and found that it originally had a floor of bark, some portions of which remained, and there was enough area of sound roof and walls to shelter them from the rain. They were content and with dry bark beneath them and on all sides of them they disposed themselves for the night.

It yet lacked an hour or so of sunset, but the heavy clouds already created a twilight, and the wind began to moan through the forest, bringing with it a cold rain that made a monotonous and desolate patter on leaves and grass. The comrades were glad enough now of their shelter in the abandoned Council House. They had made at Pittsburg a purchase which conduced greatly to their comfort, that is, a pair of exceedingly light but warm blankets for everyone—something of very high quality. They always slept between these, the under blankets fending off the cold that rose from the ground.

Now they lay, dry and warm against the wall of the old Council House, and listened to the steady drip, drip of the rain on the roof, and through the holes in the roof upon the floor. But it did not reach them. They were not sleepy, and they talked of many things, but as the twilight came on and the thick clouds still hovered, the abandoned village took on a ghostly appearance. Nearly all the wall opposite that against which they lay was gone, and, as it faced the larger part of the village, they could see the ruined wigwams and the skeleton frames that had been used for drying game. Out of the forest came the long lonesome howl of a wolf, some ragged, desolate creature that had not yet found shelter with his kind. The effect upon everyone was instantaneous and the same. This flight from the Indians and the slaying of the great hound by Tom Ross with his silver bullet came back in vivid colors.

But the howl was not repeated and the steady drip of the cold rain remained unbroken. It gathered finally in little puddles on the floor not far from them, but their own corner remained dry and impervious. They noticed these things little, however, as the mystic and ghostly effect of the village was deepening. Seen through the twilight and the rain it was now but a phantom. Henry's mind, always so sensitive to the things of the forest, repeopled it. From under his drooping lids he saw the warriors coming in from the hunt or the chase, the women tanning skins or curing game, and the little Indian boys practicing with bows and arrows. He felt a sort of sympathy for them in this wild life, a life that he knew so well and that he had lived himself. But he came quickly out of his waking dream, because his acute ear had heard something not normal moving in the forest. He straightened up and his hand slid to the breech of his rifle. He listened for a few minutes and then glanced at Shif'less Sol.

"Someone comes our way," said Henry.

"Yes," said Shif'less Sol, "but it ain't more'n two or three. Thar, you kin hear the footsteps ag'in, an' their bodies brushing ag'in' the wet bushes."

"Three at the utmost," said Henry, "so we'll sit here and wait."

It was not necessary to tell them to be ready with their weapons. That was a matter of course with every borderer in such moments. So the five remained perfectly still in a sitting position, every one with his back pressed against the bark wall, a blanket wrapped around his figure, and a cocked rifle resting upon his knees. They were so quick that in the darkness and falling rain they might have passed for so many Indian mummies, had it not been for the long slender-barreled rifles and their threatening muzzles.

Yet nobody could have been more alert than they. Five pairs of trained ears listened for every sound that rose above the steady drip of the rain, five pairs of eyes, uncommonly keen in their keenness, watched the bushes whence the first faint signals of approach had come. Now they heard more distinctly that brushing of clothing against the bushes, and then a muttered oath or two. Evidently the strangers were white men, perhaps daring hunters who were not afraid to enter the very heart of the Indian country. Nevertheless the hands still remained on their rifles and the muzzles still bore on the point whence the sounds came.

Three white men, dripping with rain, emerged from the forest. They were clad in garb, half civilized and half that of the hunter. All were well armed and deeply tanned by exposure, but the attention of the five was instantly concentrated upon the first of the strangers, a young man of medium height, but of the most extraordinary ugliness. His skin, even without the tan, would have been very dark. His eyes, narrow and oblique, were almost Oriental in cast and his face was disfigured by a hideous harelip. The whole effect was sinister to the last degree, but Henry and his comrades were fair enough to credit it to a deformity of nature and not to a wicked soul behind. The two with him were a little older. They were short, thickly built, and without anything unusual in their appearance.

The three strangers were dripping with water and when they came into the abandoned village they stood for a few moments talking together. Then their eyes began to roam around in search of shelter.

"They'll be coming this way soon," whispered Henry to Paul, "because it's about the only place large enough to keep three men dry."

"Of course they'll come here," Paul whispered back; "now I wonder who and what they are."

Henry did not reply and the five remained as motionless as ever, five dusky figures in a row, sitting on the bark floor, and leaning against the bark wall. But every sense in them was acutely alive, and they watched the strangers look into one ruined lodge after another. None offered sufficient shelter and gradually they came toward the Council House. Always the man with the harelip and ugly face led. Henry watched him closely. The twilight and the rain did not allow any very clear view of him, just enough to disclose that his face was hideous and sinister. But Henry had a singularly clear mind and he tried to trace the malignant impression to the fact of physical ugliness, unwilling to do injury, even in thought merely, to anyone.

At last the eyes of the three alighted upon the old Council House, and they came forward quickly toward the open end. They were about to enter, but they saw the five figures against the wall and stopped abruptly. The man with the harelip bent forward and gazed at them. Henry soon saw by the expression of his face that he knew they were no mummies. He now thrust his rifle forward and his hand slipped down toward the trigger. Then Henry spoke.

"Come in," he said quickly; "we are white like yourselves, and we claim no exclusive rights to this Council House, which is about the only real shelter left in the Indian town. We are hunters and scouts."

"So are we," said the man with the harelip, speaking grammatically and with a fair degree of courtesy. "We are hardened to the wilderness, but we are thankful for the shelter which you seem to have found before us."

"There is room for all," said Henry. "You will observe the large dry place at the south end. The bark floor there is solid and no matter how the wind blows the rain cannot reach you."

"We'll use it," said the ugly man, and now his teeth began to chatter, "but I confess that I need more than mere shelter. The rain and cold have entered my system, and I shall suffer severely unless we have a fire. Is it not possible to build one here near the center of the Council House? The dry bark will feed it, until it is strong enough to take hold of the wet wood."

"It is the Indian country," said Henry, and yet he pitied him of the harelip.

"I know," replied the man, "I know too that all the tribes are on the war path, and that they are exceedingly bitter against us. My name is Holdsworth, and I am from Connecticut. These are my men, Fowler and Perley, also from the East. We're not altogether hunters, as we have seen service in the Eastern army, and we are now scouting toward Detroit with the intention of carrying back news about the British and Indian power there. But I feel that I must light the fire, despite all Indian danger."

He shook violently and Henry again felt sorry for him. So did the rest of the five. These three had become their comrades for the night, and it would not be fair to prevent the fire that the man so evidently needed.

"We can see that what you say is true," said Henry, "and we'll help you kindle a blaze. These friends of mine are Tom Ross, Jim Hart, Solomon Hyde, and Paul Cotter. My own name is Henry Ware."

He saw the ugly man start a little, and then smile in a way that made his disfigured lip more hideous than ever.

"I've heard the names," said the stranger. "The woods are immense, but there are not many of us, and those of marked qualities soon become known. It seems to me that I've heard you were at Wyoming and the Chemung."

"Yes," said Henry, "we were at both places. But since we're going to have a fire, it's best that we have it as soon as possible."

They fell to work with flint and steel on the dry bark. The two men, Fowler and Perley, had said nothing.

"Not especially bright," said Holdsworth to Henry in a whisper, as he nodded toward them, "but excellent foresters and very useful in the work that I have to do."

"You can't always tell a man by his looks," replied Henry in the same tone.

It was not a difficult matter to light the fire. They scraped off the inside of the bark until they accumulated a little heap of tinder. It was ignited with a few sparks of the flint and steel, and then the bark too caught fire. After that they had nothing to do but feed the flames which grew and grew, casting a luminous red glare in every corner of the old Council House. Then it was so strong that it readily burned the wet bark from the dismantled lodges near by.

The cold rain still came down steadily and the night, thick and dark, had settled over the forest. Henry and his comrades were bound to confess that the fire was a vivid core of cheer and comfort. It thrust out a grateful heat, the high flames danced, and the coals, red and yellow, fell into a great glowing heap. Holdsworth, Fowler and Perley took off nearly all their clothing, dried their bodies, and then their wet garments. Holdsworth ceased to shiver, and while Fowler and Perley still fed the fire, the five resumed their places against the wall, their rifles again lying across their knees, a forest precaution so customary that no one could take exception to it. Apparently they dozed, but they were nevertheless wide awake. Holdsworth and his men re clothed themselves in their dry raiment, and when they finished the task, Henry said:

"We've three kinds of dried meat, venison, bear and buffalo, and you can take your choice, one kind, two kinds, or all kinds."

"I thank you, sir," said Holdsworth, "but we also carry a plentiful supply of provisions in our knapsacks, and we have partaken freely of them. We are now dry, and there is nothing else for us to do but sleep."

"Then we had better put out the fire," said Henry. "As we agreed before, we're in the heart of the Indian country, and we do not wish to send up a beacon that will bring the savages down upon us."

But Holdsworth demurred.

"The Indians themselves would not be abroad on such a night," he said. "There can be no possible danger of an attack by them, and I suggest that we keep it burning. Then we will be all the stronger and warmer in the morning."

Henry was about to say something, but he changed his mind and said something else.

"Let it burn, then," he acquiesced. "The flame is hidden on three sides anyhow and, as you say, the savages themselves will keep under cover now. Perhaps, Mr. Holdsworth, as you have come from the East since we have, you can tell us about our future there."

"Not a great deal," replied the man, "but I fear that we are not prospering greatly. Our armies are weak. Although their country is ruined, war parties under Brant came down from the British forts, and ravaged the Mohawk valley anew. 'Tis said by many that the Americans cannot hold out much longer against the forces of the king."

"Your words coming from a great patriot are discouraging," said Henry.

"It is because I cannot make them otherwise," replied Holdsworth.

Henry, from under the edge of his cap, again examined him critically. Holdsworth and his men were reclining against the bark wall in the second largest dry spot, not more than ten feet away. The man was ugly, extremely ugly beyond a doubt, and in the glow of the firelight he seemed more sinister than ever. Yet the young forest runner tried once more to be fair. He recalled all of Holdsworth's good points. The man had spoken in a tone of sincerity, and he had been courteous. He had not said or done anything offensive. If he was discouraged over the patriot cause, it was because he could not help it.

While Henry studied him, there was a silence for a little space. Meantime the rain increased in volume, but it came straight down, making a steady, droning sound that was not unpleasant. The heavy darkness moved up to the very door of the old Council House, and, despite the fire, the forest beyond was invisible. Holdsworth was still awake, but the two men with him seemed to doze. Shif'less Sol was also watching Holdsworth with keen and anxious eyes, but he left the talk to his young comrade, their acknowledged leader.

"You know," said Henry at length, "that some great movement among the Indians is on foot."

Holdsworth stirred a little against the bark wall, and it seemed to Henry that a new eagerness came into his eyes. But he replied:

"No, I have not heard of it yet. You are ahead of me there. But the Indians and British at Detroit are always plotting something against us. What particular news do you have?"

"That Timmendiquas, the Wyandot, the greatest of the western chiefs, accompanied by the head chiefs of the Shawnees and Miamis, and a body of chosen warriors is marching to Detroit. We have been following them, and they are now not more than twenty-five or thirty miles ahead of us. I take it that there will be a great council at Detroit, composed of the British, the Tories, the Western Indians with Timmendiquas at their head, and perhaps also the Iroquois and other Eastern Indians with Thayendanegea leading them. The point of attack will be the settlements in Kentucky. If the allied forces are successful the tomahawk and the scalping knife will spare none. Doesn't the prospect fill you with horror, Mr. Holdsworth?"

Holdsworth shaded his face with his hand, and replied slowly:

"It does inspire fear, but perhaps the English and Indian leaders will be merciful. These are great matters of which you tell me, Mr. Ware. I had heard some vague reports, but yours are the first details to reach me. Perhaps if we work together we can obtain information that will be of great service to the settlements."

"Perhaps," said Henry, and then he relapsed into silence. Holdsworth remained silent too and gazed into the fire, but Henry saw that his thoughts were elsewhere. A long time passed and no one spoke. The fire had certainly added much to the warmth and comfort of the old house. They were all tired with long marches, and the steady droning sound of the rain, which could not reach them, was wonderfully soothing. The figures against the bark walls relaxed, and, as far as the human eye could see, they dropped asleep one by one, the five on one side and the three on the other.

The fire, well fed in the beginning, burned for two or three hours, but after awhile it begun to smolder, and sent up a long thin column of smoke. The rain came lighter and then ceased entirely. The clouds parted in the center as if they had been slashed across by a sword blade, and then rolled away to left and right. The heavens became a silky blue, and the stars sprang out in sparkling groups.

It was past midnight when Holdsworth moved slightly, like one half awakening from a deep sleep. But his elbow touched the man Fowler, and he said a few words to him in a whisper. Then he sank back into his relaxed position, and apparently was asleep again. Fowler himself did not move for at least ten minutes. Then he arose, slipped out of the Council House, and returned with a great armful of wet leaves, which he put gently upon the fire. Quickly and quietly he sank back into his old position by the wall.

Dense smoke came from the coals and heap of leaves, but it rose in a strong spire and passed out through the broken part of the roof, the great hole there creating a draught. It rose high and in the night, now clear and beautiful, it could be seen afar. Yet all the eight—five on one side and three on the other—seemed to be sound asleep once more.

The column of smoke thickened and rose higher into the sky, and presently the man Fowler was at work again. Rising and stepping, with wonderful lightness for a thick-set heavy man, he spread his open blanket over the smoke, and then quickly drew it away. He repeated the operation at least twenty times and at least twenty great coiling rings of smoke arose, sailing far up into the blue sky, and then drifting away over the forest, until they were lost in the distance.

Fowler folded the blanket again, but he did not resume his place against the wall. Holdsworth and Perley rose lightly and joined him. Then the three gazed intently at the five figures on the other side of the smoke. Not one of them stirred. So far as the three could see, the five were buried in the most profound slumber.

Holdsworth made a signal and the three, their rifles in the hollows of their arms, glided from the Council House and into the forest.

As soon as they were lost in the darkness, Henry Ware sprang to his feet, alive in every nerve and fiber, and tingling with eagerness.

"Up; up, boys!" he cried. "Those three men are Tories or English, and they are coming back with the savages. The rings of smoke made the signal to their friends. But we'll beat them at their own trick."

All were on their feet in an instant—in fact, only Jim Hart and Paul had fallen asleep—and they ran silently into the forest in a direction opposite to that which the three had chosen. But they did not go far. At Henry's whispered signal, they sank down among some dense bushes where they could lie hidden, and yet see all that passed at the Council House. The water from the bushes that they had moved dropped upon them, but they did not notice it. Nor did they care either that the spire of smoke still rose through the roof of the old Council House. Five pairs of uncommonly keen eyes were watching the forest to see their enemies come forth.

"I saw the fellow make the big smoke," said Shif'less Sol, "but I knowed that you saw, too. So I jest waited till you give the word, Henry."

"I wanted them to go through to the end with it," replied Henry. "If we had stopped the man when he was bringing in the leaves he might have made some sort of excuse, and we should have had no proof at all against them."

"Them's false names they gave o' course."

"Of course. It is likely that the man who called himself Holdsworth is somebody of importance. His manner indicated it. How ugly that harelipped fellow was!"

"How long do you think it will be before they come back?" asked Shif'less Sol.

"Not long. The Indian force could not have been more than a mile or so away, or they would not have relied on smoke signals in the night. It will be only a short wait, Sol, until we see something interesting. Now I wish I knew that harelipped man!"

Henry and his comrades could have slipped away easily in the darkness, but they had no mind to do so. Theirs was a journey of discovery, and, since here was an opportunity to do what they wished, they would not avoid it, no matter how great the risk. So they waited patiently. The forest still dripped water, but they had seldom seen the skies a brighter blue at night. The spire of smoke showed against it sharp and clear, as if it had been day. In the brilliant moonlight the ruined village assumed another ghostly phase. All the rugged outlines of half-fallen tepees were silvered and softened. Henry, with that extraordinary sensitiveness of his to nature and the wilderness, felt again the mysticism and unreality of this place, once inhabited by man and now given back to the forest. In another season or two the last remnant of bark would disappear, the footpaths would be grown up with bushes, and the wild animals would roam there unafraid.

All these thoughts passed like a succession of mental flashes through the mind of the forest dreamer—and a dreamer he was, a poet of the woods—as he waited there for what might be, and what probably would be, a tragedy. But as these visions flitted past there was no relaxation of his vigilance. It was he who first heard the slight swishing sound of the bushes on the far side of the Council House; it was he who first heard the light tread of an approaching moccasin, and it was he who first saw the ugly harelipped face of a white man appear at the forest edge. Then all saw, and slow, cold anger rose in five breasts at the treacherous trick.

Behind the harelipped man appeared Perley and Fowler, and six savage warriors, armed fully, and coated thickly with war paint. Now Henry knew that the sinister effect of Holdsworth's face was not due wholly to his harelip, and the ugliness of all his features. He was glad in a way because he had not done the man injustice.

The three white men and the six Indians waited a long time at the edge of the woods. They were using both eye and ear to tell if the five in the old Council House slept soundly. The fire now gave forth nothing but smoke, and they could not see clearly into the depths. They must come nearer if they would make sure of their victims. They advanced slowly across the open, their weapons ready. All the idealist was gone from Henry now. They had taken these three men into what was then their house; they had been warmed and dried by their fire, and now they came back to kill. He watched them slip across the open space, and he saw in the moonlight that their faces were murderous, the white as bad as the red.

The band reached the end of the Council House and looked in, uttering low cries of disappointment when they saw nothing there. None of the five ever knew whether they had waited there for the purpose of giving battle to the raiding band, but at this moment Paul moved a little in order to get a better view, and a bush rustled under his incautious moccasin. One of the savages heard it, gave a warning cry, and in an instant the whole party threw themselves flat upon the earth, with the wall of the Council House between themselves and that point in the forest from which the sound had come. Silence and invisibility followed, yet the forest battle was on.

CHAPTER VII

THE TAKING OF HENRY

"I'm sorry my foot slipped," whispered Paul.

"Don't you worry, Paul," Henry whispered back. "We're as anxious to meet them as they are to meet us. If they are willing to stay and have the argument out, we're willing to give them something to think about."

"An' I'd like to get a shot at that harelipped villain," interjected Shif'less Sol. "I'd give him somethin' he wouldn't furgit."

"Suppose we move a little to the right," said Henry. "They've noted the direction from which the sound came, and they may send a bullet into the bushes here."

They crept quietly to the right, a distance of perhaps ten yards; and they soon found the precaution to be a wise one, as a crack came from the forest, and a bullet cut the twigs where they had lately been. Shif'less Sol sent a return bullet at the flash of the rifle and they heard a suppressed cry.

"It doesn't do to be too keerless," said the shiftless one in a contented tone as he reloaded his rifle. "Whoever fired that shot ought to hev known that something would come back to him."

Several more bullets came from the forest, and now they cut the bushes close by, but the comrades lay flat upon the ground and all passed over their heads.

After Shif'less Sol's single shot they did not return the fire for the present, but continued to move slowly to the right. Thus a full half hour passed without a sign from either side. Meanwhile a wind, slowly rising, was blowing so steadily that all the trees and bushes were drying fast.

Neither Henry nor his comrades could now tell just where their enemies were, but they believed that the hostile band had also been circling about the open space in which the ruined village stood. They felt sure that the Indians and the three white men would not go away. The Indians were never keener for scalps than they were that year, and with a force of nearly two to one they would not decline a combat, even if it were not the surprise that they had expected.

"We may stay here until daylight," whispered Henry. "They are now sure we're not going to run away, and with the sunrise they may think that they will have a better chance at us."

"If the daylight finds them here, it will find us too," said Shif'less Sol. They shifted around a little further, and presently another shot was fired from a point opposite them in the forest. Henry sent a bullet in return, but there was nothing to indicate whether it had struck a foe. Then ensued another long silence which was broken at last by a shot from the interior of the old Council House. It was sent at random into the bushes, but the bullet cut the leaves within an inch of Henry's face, and they grew exceedingly cautious. Another bullet soon whistled near them, and they recognized the fact that the Indians who had succeeded in creeping into the Council House had secured an advantage.

But they succeeded in keeping themselves covered sufficiently to escape any wounds, and, turning a thought over in his mind, Henry said:

"Sol, don't you think that this wind which has been blowing for hours has dried things out a good deal?"

"It shorely has," answered Sol.

"And you have noticed, too, Sol, that we are now at a point where the old village touches the forest? You can reach out your hand and put it on that ruined wigwam, can't you?"

"I kin shorely do it, Henry."

"You have noticed also, Sol, that the wind, already pretty fair, is rising, and that it is blowing directly from us against the old Council House in which some of the savages are, and across to the forest at the point where we are certain that the rest of the enemy lie."

"Sounds like good and true reasonin' to me, an eddicated man, Henry."

"Then you and I will get to work with our flint and steel and set this old wigwam afire. It's still high enough to shelter ourselves behind it, and I think we ought to do the task in two or three minutes. Tom, you and Paul and Jim cover us with your rifles."

"Henry, you shorely hev a great head," said Sol, "an' this looks to me like payin' back to a man what belongs to him. That harelipped scoundrel and his fellows warmed by our fire in the Council House, and now we'll jest give 'em notice that thar's another warmin'."

Lying almost flat upon their faces they worked hard with the flint and steel, and in a minute or two a little spark of light leaped up. It laid hold of the thin, dry bark at the edge of the old wigwam and blazed up with extraordinary rapidity. Then the flames sprang to the next wigwam. It, too, was quickly enveloped, and the bark cracked as they ate into it. Not even the soaking given by the rain offered any effective resistance.

Henry and Shif'less Sol put away their flint and steel and quickly slipped into the bushes whence they looked with admiration at the work of their hands. The lodges were burning far faster than they had expected. All the old Indian village would soon go, and now they watched attentively the Council House where the sharpshooters lay. Meanwhile several shots were fired from the forest without effect and the five merely lay close, biding their time.

The flames made a great leap and caught the Council House. It burned so fast that it seemed to be enveloped all at once, and three men, two red and one white burst from it, rushing toward the forest. Henry and his comrades could easily have shot down all three, but Silent Tom Ross was the only one who pulled a trigger and he picked the white man. At the crack of his rifle the fugitive fell. By the flare of the flames Henry caught a glimpse of his face and saw that it was Perley. He fell just at the edge of the forest, but where the fire would not reach him.

The village was now a mass of flames. The whole open space was lighted up brilliantly, and the sparks flew in myriads. Ashes and burning fragments carried by the wind fell thickly through the forest. The vivid flare penetrated the forest itself and the five men saw their foes crouching in the bushes. They advanced, using all the skill of those to whom the wilderness is second nature and a battle from tree to tree ensued. The five were more than a match for the eight who were now against them. The man who had passed as Fowler was quickly wounded in the shoulder, the harelipped leader himself had his cap shot from his head, and one of the Indians was slain. Then they took to flight, and, after a pursuit of some distance, the five returned toward the village, where the flames were now dying down.

Paul had been flicked across the hand by a bullet and Jim Hart shook two bullets out of his clothing, but they were practically unhurt and it was their object now to see the man Perley, who had been left at the edge of the forest. By the time they reached the open where the village had stood, the day was fully come. The Council House had fallen in and the poles and fragments of bark smoked on the ground. Nothing was left of the wigwam but ashes which the wind picked up and whirled about. The wounded man lay on his side and it was quite evident that his hurt was mortal, but his look became one of terror when the five came up.

"We do not mean to hurt you," said Henry; "we will make it as easy for you as we can."

"And the others," gasped the man. "You have beaten them in the battle, and they have fled, the Colonel with them."

"Yes," replied Henry, "they are gone, and with them Colonel—?"

The man looked up and smiled faintly. At the edge of death he read Henry's mind. He knew that he wished to obtain the name of the harelipped man and, sincere enemy of his own people though Perley was, he no longer had any objection to telling.

"Prop me up against that tree trunk," he gasped.

Henry did so, and Paul brought some water from the spring in his cap. The man drank and seemed a little stronger.

"You're better to me perhaps than I'd have been to you if it had been the other way round," he said, "an' I might as well tell you that the man with the harelip was Colonel Bird, a British officer, who is most active against your settlements, and who has become a great leader among the Indians. He's arranging now with the people at Detroit to strike you somewhere."

"Then I'm sorry my bullet didn't find him instead of you," said Tom Ross.

"So am I," said the man with a faint attempt at humor.

Paul, who had been trying to remember, suddenly spoke up.

"I heard of that man when we were in the East," he said. "He fell in love with a girl at Oswego or some other of the British posts, and she rejected him because he was so ugly and had a hare lip. Then he seemed to have a sort of madness and ever since he's been leading expeditions of the Indians against our settlements."

"It's true," said Perley, "he's the man that you're talking about and he's mad about shedding blood. He's drumming up the Indian forces everywhere. His—"

Perley stopped suddenly and coughed. His face became ghastly pale, and then his head fell over sideways on his shoulders.

"He's dead," said Shif'less Sol, "an' I'm sorry, too, Tom, that your bullet didn't hit Colonel Bird 'stead o' him."

"Do you think," asked Paul, "that they are likely to come back and attack us?"

"No," replied Henry, "they've had enough. Besides they can't attack us in broad daylight. Look how open the forest is. We'd be sure to see them long before they could get within rifle shot."

"Then," said Paul, "let's bury Perley before we go on. I don't like to think of a white man lying here in the forest to be devoured by wild beasts, even if he did try to kill us."

Shif'less Sol heartily seconded Paul's suggestion, and soon it was done. They had no spades with which to dig a grave for Perley's body, but they built over him a little cairn of fallen timber, sufficient to protect him from the wolves and bears, and then prepared to march anew.

But they took a last look at the large open space in which the abandoned Indian village had stood. Nothing was left there but ashes and dying coals. Not a fragment of the place was standing. But they felt that it was better for it to be so. If man had left, then the forest should resume its complete sway. The grass and the bushes would now cover it up all the more quickly. Then they shouldered their rifles and went ahead, never looking back once.

The morning was quite cool. It was only the second week in April, the spring having come out early bringing the buds and the foliage with it, but in the variable climate of the great valley they might yet have freezing and snow. They had left Pittsburg in the winter, but they were long on the way, making stops at two or three settlements on the southern shore of the Ohio, and also going on long hunts. At another time they had been stopped two weeks by the great cold which froze the surface of the river from bank to bank. Thus it was the edge of spring and the forests were green, when they turned up the tributary river, and followed in the trail of Timmendiquas.

Now they noticed this morning as they advanced that it was growing quite cold again. They had also come so much further North that the spring was less advanced than on the Ohio. Before noon a little snow was flying, but they did not mind it. It merely whipped their blood and seemed to give them new strength for their dangerous venture. But Henry was troubled. He was sorry that they had not seen an enemy in the man Bird whose name was to become an evil one on the border. But how were they to know? It is true that he could now, with the aid of the dead man's story recall something about Bird and his love affair, his disappointment which seemed to have given him a perfect mania for bloodshed. But again how were they to know?

They pressed on with increased speed, as they knew that Timmendiquas, owing to their delay at the abandoned village must now be far ahead. The broad trail was found easily, and they also kept a sharp watch for that of Bird and his band which they felt sure would join it soon. But when night came there was no sign of Bird and his men. Doubtless they had taken another course, with another

object in view. Henry was greatly perplexed. He feared that Bird meant deep mischief, and he should have liked to have followed him, but the main task was to follow Timmendiquas, and they could not turn aside from it.

They would have traveled all that night, but the loss of sleep the night before, and the strain of the combat compelled them to take rest about the twilight hour. The night winds were sharp with chill, and they missed the bark shelter that the ruined Council House had given them. As they crouched in the bushes with their blankets about them and ate cold venison, they were bound to regret what they had lost.

"Still I like this country," said Jim Hart. "It looks kinder firm an' strong ez ef you could rely on it. Then I want to see the big lakes. We come pretty nigh to one uv them that time we went up the Genesee Valley an' burned the Iroquois towns, but we didn't quite git thar. Cur'us so much fresh water should be put here in a string uv big lakes on our continent."

"And the Canadian *voyageurs* say there are big lakes, too, away up in Canada that no white man has ever seen, but of which they hear from the Indians," said Paul.

"I reckon it's true," said Jim Hart, "'cause this is an almighty big continent, an' an almighty fine one. I ain't s'prised at nothin' now. I didn't believe thar wuz any river ez big ez the Missip, until I saw it, an' thar ain't no tellin' what thar is out beyond the Missip, all the thousands uv miles to the Pacific. I'd shorely like to live a thousand years with you fellers an' tramp 'roun' and see it all. It would be almighty fine."

"But I wouldn't like to be spendin' all that thousan' years tryin' to keep my scalp on top o' my head," said Shif'less Sol. "It would be pow'ful wearin' on a lazy man like me."

Thus they talked as the twilight deepened into the night. The feel of the North was in them all. Their minds kindled at the thought of the vast lakes that lay beyond and of the great forest, stretching, for all they knew, thousands of miles to the great ocean. The bushes and their blankets protected them from the cold winds, and it was so dark that no enemy could trail them to their lair. Moreover the five were there, intact, and they had the company of one another to cheer.

"I imagine," said Paul, "that Timmendiquas and the officers at Detroit will make this the biggest raid that they have ever yet planned against Kentucky."

"By surprise an' numbers they may win victories here an' thar," said Shif'less Sol, "but they'll never beat us. When people git rooted in the ground you jest can't drive 'em away or kill 'em out. Our people will take root here, too, an' everywhar the Injuns, the British an' the Tories will have to go."

"An' as our people ain't come up here yet, we've got to look out for our scalps before the rootin' season comes," said Tom Ross.

"An' that's as true as Gospel," said Shif'less Sol, thoughtfully.

After that they spoke little more, but they drew and matted the thick bushes over their heads in such manner that the chill winds were turned aside. Beneath were the dry leaves of last year which they had raked up into couches, and thus, every man with a blanket beneath and another above him, they did not care how the wind blew. They were as snug as bears in their lairs, but despite the darkness of the night and the exceeding improbability of anyone finding them both Henry and Tom Ross lay awake and watched. The others slept peacefully, and the two sentinels could hear their easy breathing only a few feet away.

In the night Henry began to grow uneasy. Once or twice he thought he heard cries like the hoot of the owl or the howl of the wolf, but they were so far away that he was uncertain. Both hoot and howl might be a product of the imagination. He was so alive to the wilderness, it was so full of meaning to him that his mind could create sounds when none existed. He whispered to Tom, but Ross, listening as hard as he could, heard nothing but the rustling of the leaves and twigs before the wind.

Henry was sure now that what he had heard was the product of a too vivid fancy, but a little later he was not so sure. It must be the faint cry of a wolf that he now heard or its echo. He had the

keenest ear of them all, and that Tom Ross did not hear the sound, was no proof. A vivid imagination often means a prompt and powerful man of action, and Henry acted at once.

"Tom," he whispered, "I'm going to scout in the distance from which I thought the sounds came. Don't wake the boys; I'll be back before morning."

Tom Ross nodded. He did not believe that Henry had really heard anything, and he would have remonstrated with him, but he knew that it was useless. He merely drew his blanket a little closer, and resolved that one pair of eyes should watch as well as two had watched before.

Henry folded his blankets, put them in his little pack, and in a minute was gone. It was dark, but not so dark that one used to the night could not see. The sounds that he had seemed to hear came from the southwest, and the road in the direction was easy, grown up with forest but comparatively free from undergrowth. He walked swiftly about a mile, then he heard the cry of the wolf again. Now, the last doubt was gone from his mind. It was a real sound, and it was made by Indian calling to Indian.

He corrected his course a little, and went swiftly on. He heard the cry once more, now much nearer, and, in another mile, he saw a glow among the trees. He went nearer and saw detached cones of light. Then he knew that it was a camp fire, and a camp fire built there boldly in that region, so dangerous to the Kentuckian, indicated that it was surely the Indians themselves and their allies. He did not believe that it was the force of Timmendiquas which could only have reached this spot by turning from its course, but he intended to solve the doubt.

The camp was in one of the little prairies so numerous in the old Northwest, and evidently had been pitched there in order to secure room for the fires. Henry concluded at once that it must be a large force, and his eagerness to know increased. As he crept nearer and nearer, he was amazed by the number of the fires. This was a much larger band than the one led by Timmendiquas. He also heard the sound of many voices and of footsteps. From his place among the trees he saw dark figures passing and repassing. He also caught now and then a metallic glitter from something not a rifle or a tomahawk, but which he could not clearly make out in the dark.

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