

Scouting Dave

The Trail Hunter Black Hawk Wars

by James Jackson, 1842-1919

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Chapter I

David Barring.

The scene opens in the Far West. In the forest the evening's gloom already was settling, though here and there, through some narrow vista, a rich ray of sunlight poured its golden flood far into the shadowy depths. The place was lonely and drear, yet wild and grand. Approaching civilization had driven out the red-man, while his place had not, as yet, been filled by the spreading white. Deep silence reigned, disturbed only by the myriad sounds of animal and insect life, called forth by the rare beauties of the evening. The sights and sounds of civilization were not there; and yet, we should, perhaps, make a single exception.

Stealing cautiously along, with a tread as light as that of a shade, was one of that famed and daring class, met nowhere save on the advance of American settlements—the border scouts, who, born to danger and inured to hardship, become, as a race, the very embodiment of bravery, endurance, strategy and recklessness. These are the ruling characteristics of the class, though as varied in individuals as are the personalities of “citizens of the world.”

The person to whom we have referred was a worthy specimen of his class. Tall, erect and graceful in every motion, with eyes and ears from which not the slightest sign or sound could escape, David Barring, or “Davy the Scout,” as he was often called, was fitted, both by nature and education, for the rough life which he was

called upon to lead. Though taller than the average of men, his compact frame and symmetrical proportions served, in a great measure, to disguise his real height.

His dress was in keeping with his life and habits. Bearskin cap, deerskin leggings, and Indian moccasins, in addition to the ordinary hunting suit, tended to enhance the wild character of his person.

There was little necessity for the extreme caution which David still continued to exercise. It sprung more from habit and long practice than from any present danger. That the scout was deeply agitated, might readily be gathered from the manner in which he mused, half aloud, as he proceeded:

"Four years, since I've travelled through this place. But it's bad news I bring 'em this time, so it is. Wouldn't blame 'em if they didn't believe me, not a bit; but 'twould be bad times for 'em if they shouldn't. Them as knows Davy Barrington won't doubt his word in Injin matters, not by a long shot. Wonder, though, how the settlers will like the idee o' runnin' away from these four tribes of heathens, with old Black Hawk and all his crew yellin' round their ears? Blame me if I don't wish there were a hundred or two men jis' like myself, to rally here and give 'em a warmin'! Wouldn't there be a skittish time, though? But there isn't; so we may as well take things as they come. Maybe, arter all, the reds will strike another way, and give these folks a chance to take the back track. But it does come hard to give up all a man's done for six or ten years, and leave it to such ornery villains. It's a consolation there isn't as many o' the redskins as there would have been if Davy Barrington hadn't been born; and it's sure there'll be less yet, if nothin' happens to Mister Davy, and his old rifle don't miss fire."

The scout spoke with an air which showed his sincerity and determination. Indeed, the mission upon which he was engaged was one of no ordinary moment. Scouting upon the western shore of the Mississippi, then unsettled by white men, he had learned the intent of the savages, who, under Black Hawk, their renowned chief, had determined to repossess themselves on the soil from which they had been driven. Justly concerned for the fate of his friends, David at once had set out to warn them.

"I wonder how the Hinton family will receive this news?" he mused, as he stole along. "It may be they have moved away, though I presume not. However, it's not more'n five miles further to their cabin, and then I can satisfy myself. Pretty Emily Hinton! A sweeter girl than she never crossed the path of a mortal man. If I ever hoped to wed, there's no other woman I ever saw that would take my fancy like her. But that can't be. I never could give up this kind o' life, and it's no life for a woman to share. I always hoped that Charles Markley and Emily would come together. But that is none of my business."

The scout paused and looked around. The sun had been for some time below the horizon, and darkness had spread itself over the forest depths. David had travelled a long way. He was hungry and weary. For some moments he stood irresolute.

"It will be three hours before the moon rises," he said, at length, "and I can do no better than to wait for it. Perhaps I could find the cabin in the dark; but more likely I'd miss it, seein' I haven't been over the ground in so long. Leastwise, I'll reach it sooner to wait till the old maid overhead gets up a little, and I shall have

to use all my strength in time to come. So I'll couch here, and may be get an hour or two of sleep."

The scout felt no sense of danger, believing that his foes had not yet left the Mississippi's banks. Wearied by the severe exertions of the past few days, he was soon unconscious in profound sleep.

How long he had slept, David could not have determined. He was suddenly awakened by that ever-present instinct which warns the trained forester of danger.

It was not the moon which had lifted the weight from his eyelids. Something of life and motion had been the means of arousing him. Instead of starting quickly up, he remained perfectly silent. The moon was not yet sufficiently above the horizon to lighten the forest to any considerable degree. Still, the acute vision of the scout at once enabled him to define his disturber.

Bending over him, and peering intently down upon the spot where he lay, was the dusky form and burning eyes of a savage! David could see more than this. Grasped in the right hand of the Indian, ready for instant use, was a heavy tomahawk, clearly defined against the pale sky above him.

The savage form bending above him, and the careless tramp of many feet around him, revealed but too plainly to the startled scout that the invaders were upon him—even between himself and the friends he would have warned.

The warrior, in carelessly passing the sleeping scout, had struck his foot against the prostrate form, and, being sensible that something unusual was in his path, grasped his weapon, and peered cautiously down upon the object beneath him. Observing the slight start of Barring, the unsuspecting Indian bent still closer, bringing his head within a foot of the scout's face. That was the moment for action.

With a motion like lightning, and a grasp like steel, the scout clutched the savage by the throat, and, before the astonished barbarian could collect himself, he was thrown violently to the earth. The quickness of the motion hurled the tomahawk many yards away, while the supple white threw himself full upon his gasping victim. Exerting all his fearful strength, David compressed his grasp, until it seemed the very fingers would meet through the neck of the writhing savage.

The utmost efforts of the strangling Indian proved insufficient to warn his fellows, and thus summon assistance. Finding it impossible to effect this, he adopted another method. Ceasing to struggle, he lay gasping and immovable. But the wary scout was not thrown from his guard. Tightening his hold with the left hand, he cautiously moved his right to where the haft of his knife protruded from his belt. In another moment the blade had done its work. There was one convulsive effort of the tawny frame, then a deep, long shudder, and the scout rose from the still form of his dead adversary.

A moment's close observation gave Barring a clear perception of his surroundings. Fortunately, he was not in the direct path of the savage horde, who were sweeping past him to the northward and eastward. He perceived that it was a large party—perhaps, indeed, the main body of the warriors.

The savages were marching in the direct line toward the cabin of the Hinton family; hence it was a matter of doubt if the scout could reach the place before it was too late. But he was not the man to hesitate, and he set forth at once.

The distance to the cabin was nearly passed, yet the anxious man had not succeeded in outstripping his foes. The cautious and circuitous route he had of necessity pursued, and neutralized his superior speed and skill. Suddenly the horde paused, and, dividing into separate parties, moved rapidly to the right and left. Too well the scout knew the meaning of this movement, and the clenched hand and compressed lips showed the stern thoughts which moved him.

"I've been a fool!" was his earnest mental ejaculation, as he worked himself free from the presence of his enemies; "and jest by my own laziness, is not comin' on when I might have given the alarm, now I shall have to stand by and see all my friends murdered! There was time enough; but, fool I was, I must take it for sleep. But it's done, and now I'll stand by and see if I ken render any sarvice; may be some lucky chance will happen. After all, it's a wondrous pity that Davy Barring has been outwitted and outtramped by a lot o' these confounded human tigers."

A few rods more brought the party into the little clearing surrounding the cabin of the Hintons. If David had before felt a hope that the invaders would pass the cabin, it was doomed now to an utter extinguishment. Favoured by the darkness, the hostile warriors glided into the clearing, and in a moment the devoted habitation was surrounded by hundreds of the red fiends, eager for the blood of innocence.

The pain and anxiety of the scout can be well imagined.

For some minutes David awaited, with anxiety, the expected onset. Still, all was silent. Filled with vague apprehensions, he crawled nearer, to gain a more extensive view. Finding himself unopposed, he worked his way into the clearing, and scanned the prospect before him. Between the dwelling and its present position, several smaller cabins had been erected, shutting the former from his view. He could perceive a large number of savages about the buildings. To gain a point from which to make another observation, he must move some thirty rods to the eastward, and, as the quickest mode of reaching the place, he returned at once to the wood. Here he met no restraint, and had nearly reached the coveted position, when he espied a crouching figure directly in his path.

The first thought of the scout was to spring to cover; but, before he had time to execute it, the query which broke from the savage, in his authoritative tones, changed the purpose.

"My brave! Where goest thou?" was the demand of the Indian, in the dialect of the Winnebagoes.

The question revealed to David two important facts! The person before him was a chief, unaware of the character of the scout. They were within two yards of each other at the moment, and David cared not to waste time. With a peculiar motion, he glided a pace nearer the waiting chief, and, with a movement like the rapid sweep of thought, whirled his rifle through the air, bringing its heavy breech full upon the painted scalp of the Indian. Without a sound, he fell to the earth, his skull cloven in twain.

"One imp the less, to gloat over the poor women and children they will murder. I hate to spill blood, but that's what they're here for, and they must reap what they sow. But it's uncommon curious what keeps them so still."

Glancing around, to make sure he was not running into an ambuscade, a few rapid steps carried him forward to the point selected for his reconnaissance. Here

it was soon apparent what had kept the savages so silent. Large piles of rubbish had been gathered about the principal cabin, to which fire had been applied in many places. The scout gazed silently upon the spectacle, while his clenched hands and fierce expression showed how terrible was the rage within that bosom.

“Oh, my poor friends!” he mused. “I am to blame for all this—I who might have saved you. But, burn on! There shall be a fearful recompense.”

At this moment the few savages who had remained standing, threw themselves prone upon the earth.

Chapter II

The Hinton Family and their Fate.

Eight years before the opening of our story, Elisha Hinton, removing from his New England home, with his wife and three children, had located in the western land of promise. Being frugal and industrious, a few years found the happy family comfortably settled, surrounded by all the abundant blessings conferred by the productive soil and the ancient forest.

But to them, as all others, bitter was mixed with the sweet. The pet of the family—little Ella—the youngest daughter, sickened. All the medical skill of the region round about was resorted to, but in vain. Day by day she wasted away, becoming paler and thinner, until it was fully apparent to the sorrowing friends that she could not long survive. And, while they hung grief-stricken about her couch, she clasped those little transparent hands, murmured fondly of the bright home above, and passed away.

Shortly after this bereavement, the settlement in which Elisha resided became involved in factious quarrels and divisions. Nothing was further from the character of the man, and, as the last alternative, he resolved to remove to the very verge of civilization. Here, far from all disturbing causes, Mr. Hinton had passed five years, devoting his time to the instruction of his remaining children, George and Emily. The latter, especially, was it the delight of her parents to instruct and prepare for the life before her. Emily proved an apt scholar—far exceeding educational acquirements others of her position.

One year, before this tale opens, the wife and mother had suddenly sickened and died. With breaking hearts they made her a grave beneath the wide-spreading branches of an old oak, and here consigned her to that unbroken rest where there should be no more of sorrow or pain.

The afternoon which initiates this story had been the first mournful anniversary of the day when she was laid to rest. As the sun sunk from sight, the family group gathered about the cabin door. Elisha Hinton, as was his wont, took from its rest the worn family Bible, and read from its pages the words of hope and consolation: “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet, a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye shall see me; because I live, ye shall live also.” With moving pathos the words fell from the lips of the father, and, as the last sound

floated upon the calm evening air, he closed the book, and bowed his head upon his hands.

"My children," he said, after a slight pause, "this is to me a solemn day. One year since your dear mother passed away, leaving us weary pilgrims to follow, and meet her in the fullness of time in a happier land. I know not why it should be so, but, it has seemed to me to-day that her spirit was near, whispering me to hasten and meet her in that blissful land, where partings are unknown. There sin and suffering never come, and turmoil and dissensions are never known!"

The simple worshippers sat thus, conversing of topics most closely connected with their present, till darkness settled about them; then, with a cheerful good-night, they separated, each seeking their quiet cots.

Little did they dream of the impending fate so soon to burst upon them. The father and daughter were ere long wrapped in quiet slumber, but George remained awake. He could not sleep. He listened to the chirping cricket, the quiet breathing of his father, and the gentle sighing of the winds without. Gradually he lost that keen consciousness, and from a state of indistinctness and confusion, sunk into a pleasant sleep.

Soon wild fancies obtruded into his brain, and after rolling from side to side under their influence for some time, he suddenly awoke, as fully as at noonday. For a moment he wondered *what* had awakened him. He listened. Surely there could be no mistaking that sound! The sharp crackling of a fire fell upon his ear.

Directly above his couch was a narrow aperture, which had been constructed for a loop-hole, but which had thus far been used only for the purpose of ventilation. He rose quickly, and applied his eye to the opening, but a fierce current of heat and smoke caused him to recoil instantly. Leaping from his couch he found that the room was filled with smoke. The mystery was then solved. The house was on fire!

Springing quickly to the cot of his father, the startled young man aroused him, and briefly communicating his discovery, hastened to awake his sister. Then he turned to a window and endeavoured to gaze out. Vain effort! The smoke whirled past it in dark masses, while alternate jets of flame mingled with the dusky clouds. By this time both Emily and her father had thrown on their garments, and before George could unbar the door they were at his back, white with alarm and anxiety. The father had seized his rifle, but the young man did not pause for weapons. He threw open the door, and the entire party stepped quickly forth.

For a moment they were blinded by the whirling smoke, but, passing beyond it, they turned to view the extent of the conflagration. Simultaneously, the yells of a hundred savage throats burst upon their horrified ears—the rapid reports of a score of rifles followed—and father and son sunk to the earth, pierced by many bullets. Although Emily felt the garments she wore cut and torn by the whistling shots, she was uninjured by the deadly shower. She saw her father and brother fall, knew that they were killed, and, with a terrible heart-sickness of horror, she sunk upon the ground, almost unconscious of the dread scene around her.

Emily was barely conscious that a yelling warrior rushed upon her—that a gleaming hatchet was raised above her head. She hoped and expected that her last moment had come, but it was not to be so. A rough voice interposed, and the blow was stayed. Then all became blank unconsciousness.

Despite her terrible surroundings, it was but a brief time that Emily remained insensible. The faint light of the moon, in concert with the glare of flames, rendered objects quite distinct, and the poor girl at once saw that she was a close prisoner.

She looked up at her captors. Nothing could she gather from those grim, exultant guards. To her entreaties they gave not even the slightest heed, scarce removing their gaze from the wild scene of the burning cabin. A dull pain at her ankles caused her to look down. A deeper pang went to her sensitive heart as she saw that her limbs were securely bound with thongs of dried deerskin. This, indeed, seemed to unloose the fountain of her tears, and, bowing her head upon her hands, she gave way to violent and heart-breaking sobs.

Now that her sorrow was unloosed, she wept long and violently, utterly oblivious of all around her. She did not heed the guttural "Ugh" with which one of her dusky guards directed the attention of his comrades to some interesting movement. A nondescript figure emerged from the throng and came toward the group, leading a horse, saddled and equipped for a lady rider. Though dressed in the costume, and affecting the manners of the savages, and flowing black hair, beard of the same hue, and general contour of the features, proclaimed him unmistakably a white.

Chapter III

The Renegade.

William Ashbey or "Wild Bill," as he was usually called, was a reckless, dissipated fellow, who had fully followed out the likes and dislikes of his lawless disposition. Even while a mere youth, wild stories were related concerning his character, as caused all law-loving citizens to shun and despise him. Thus debarred from honourable society, he more readily sought that congenial to his nature. Gamblers, horse-thieves, and blacklegs—with which the settlements were always cursed—became his associates and confidants, and he became at once an object of hatred and fear among the more quiet settlers.

The man who offended Ashbey was sure, sooner or later, to suffer from some despicable revenge.

Chance frequently threw hardened characters in the way of the Hinton family, and the young reprobate soon discovered that he loved the fair Emily. So far as his nature admitted, Ashbey was no doubt sincere in his attachment. But his *love* was a base, selfish passion, totally unworthy the name.

Acting with his usual impulse, young Ashbey lost no time in declaring his suit, and pressing it with all his power of persuasion, not only to the father but daughter also. Finding himself totally unsuccessful, and every overture mildly but firmly rejected, the suitor broke into a burst of passion which finally ended in his expulsion from the house of Mr. Hinton. Vowing a fearful revenge, he left them.

Time passed away, and Wild Bill was nearly forgotten. True, there were reports that he had become dissatisfied with civilized life, and had joined the Indians in

their forest haunts; but as peace prevailed, little was thought of the rumour. Men inured to danger pay but little heed to rumours, and if Wild Bill was really removed from their vicinity, the settlers were quite willing to let him rest, among savages or elsewhere.

Such was the person who now strode carelessly into the midst of the grim band. Quickly placing the rein of the horse he led in the hand of a brave, he then approached the maiden, with a look of infernal exultation lighting up his features.

The sound of the approaching party had aroused Emily, and she looked up at his advance. By the dim light she could discern the features of the person, and inspired by the thought a white man was near, she lifted her hands toward him, exclaiming:

“Oh, sir, you will save me! You—”

“Yis, my leddy, I’ll save ye,” he sneered, with brutal exultation. “I crossed the big drink to save ye—tuk ye from the Winnebago what was goin’ ter lift yer hair—got yer hoss, with yer own trappin’s onter him, an’ I jist kalkelate I’ll save ye, so no baby-face’ll git ye away from Wild Bill, arter all. I’d like ter save yer old dad, an’ little Georgy, but the boys got thar’ idees up, an’ I couldn’t do it.”

What wonder that the maid recoiled as from a loathsome serpent?

Wild Bill folded his arms upon his broad chest, and regarded the maiden for some time in silence. Then he bent nearer, and broke forth:

“So, my purty, it seems yer not satisfied kase I saved yer life, an’ took all these ’ere pains for your sake. I like to see gratitude once in a while, I does; but, no matter. Maybe you’ve forgot the time when I cum an’ begged for yer hand, an’ told ye how I loved ye; an’ how I was kicked from the house for it—yis, kicked from the house!” he repeated, in savage tones. “Ye kinder liked little spooney-faced Charley Markley, but now I hope ye’ve had his company long enough, so ye can change hands a bit.”

“Oh, monster, monster! why do you come in this fearful manner to drag me from my home, and murder my father and brother? Do you not know that vengeance will overtake you, and your wretched life pay the forfeit?”

“Ha, my lady! Now we begin to talk o’ vengeance! Well, that’s rich! Jest look around ye, my fine bird. Winnybagies, Sacs and Foxes, Pottywattimies—all led by old Black Hawk, and all the chiefs o’ the tribes. Maybe ye think we come over here jist for yer purty carkiss; but I’ll tell ye, Illinoy belongs to these here Injins, an’ they’ll hev’ it, too, afore two moons, as sure as I’ll hev’ you.”

“Oh, spare me, spare me this, and my eternal gratitude shall be yours.”

“Sorry I couldn’t do it, my rosy. But these ’ere sufferin’ Injins would tommyhawk ye in less’n no time. Seems to me ye’re mighty ungrateful, seein’ as I saved yer from ’em jest a bit agoe.”

“Let me go now, and if I must fall a prey to their ferocity, so be it. Anything is preferable—even death itself.”

“Couldn’t possibly listen to any such thing, not even to ’commode my sweetheart. My heart’s tender, an’ I couldn’t bear to see your purty head chopped in two pieces by the red-men. All I cum over for was to find ye, an’ take ye home with me. Maybe I’ll make it in my way to wipe out that baby-face what’s been enjoyin’ the smiles I coveted all this time. I’d be really happy to oblige ye, but the fact is, ye’re a little down in the mouth to-day, and will fell better when ye come to

think it all over; when ye find Charley don't mourn for the absence of his mistress."

"Oh, you cannot—you will not harm Charles Markley," the suffering girl pleaded. "He has never done anything to harm you."

"I tell you, gal," broke in the renegade, fiercely, "he has done enough. If nothin' more, he's stood in my way—he's enjoyed the smiles I was a-dyin' for—he couldn't walk on the ground where my shadder had passed, because I's a little wild; but he's played with a whirlwind, an' he must take the shock of it."

The dark man turned partly away as he ceased speaking, and stood for some moments regarding the fiery scene before him. Dreadful had been the first misery of the maiden, now it seemed a thousand times enhanced. Father, brother, self—all were swallowed up in anxiety for the fate of another—one even dearer than life itself. Oh, that she could fly to him, and warn him of the danger that would soon burst upon his devoted head. Reason seemed giving away beneath the dread accumulation of misery. Soon she was aroused by the rough voice of her persecutor.

"I don't suppose ye'll feel like trampin' far to-night, if ye have yer own hoss to ride on. I may as well tell ye, ye're goin' back to my snug little home across the great river; when ye get there ye'll have all that heart can crave, an' a good, lovin' husband besides. You're not goin' to be forced along as fast as the red legs o' these braves can carry 'em. Ye'll be took along easy, an' used like a queen, if ye mind how to talk. To-night ye'll go out a mile or two, an' camp. In the mornin' ye can move ahead slowly. You see I hev' arranged everything for yer comfort. Probably they're anxious to be off; so, if ye'll mount, I'll help ye!"

He stooped and unbound the thong, and, raising her in his arms as if a mere child, placed her upon the saddle. Emily did not resist. She knew it would be in vain, and only subject her to fresh indignities.

"Now, my fine Emily," he said, as the dusky guard gathered about her, "I must bid you good-bye for a few days. I'm goin' with old Black Hawk to settle up a few scores what have stood out too long already, an' then I'm back to yer side again."

Addressing a few words in their own tongue to the Winnebagoes, which she did not understand, Wild Bill moved away, and was soon mixed with the savages, who were now gathering for fresh scenes of violence.

No eye, save that above—saw the dark, tall figure which glided within a yard of some of the savages, and plunged rapidly into the forest. Could Wild Bill have seen that figure he might have felt less at ease. As the renegade disappeared, the party acting under his command moved cautiously from the spot, carrying the suffering Emily to a fate ten thousand times worse than death.

Chapter IV

Markley.

Another scene opens, upon the same afternoon, in the wide-spread forest, some miles from the cabin of the Hinton family. Around the rude but strong cabin of a settler, several acres of the primitive forest had been felled, allowing the full sunlight to kiss the dark-brown cheek of the sleeping earth. Wild fields were there, into which the seed already had been placed, to germinate and fructify during the coming season.

Upon the borders of this clearing stood a young man, busily engaged in felling one of the forest monarchs. Although not above the medium height, his broad chest and muscular development proclaimed him a true son of the border. The heavy axe he wielded rose and fell with regular strokes, sending showers of chips flying merrily through the air. Already the work was half done, and, resting his axe upon the ground, Charles Markley threw his bearskin cap beside it; then, drawing a worn handkerchief from his pocket, he wiped the beaded sweat which stood in great drops upon his brow. Throwing the handkerchief upon the cap, the youth changed his position, and opened another shower of blows, which rung merrily through the old wood.

At length the giant trembled beneath the steady strokes; then wavered and toppled for a moment, as if in uncertainty. Once, twice, thrice the axe was planted heavily, and, with a steady sweep, like that of a rushing cloud, the old oak thundered to the ground.

The young man regarded his work for a moment in a satisfied manner, then glanced at the sinking sun—picked up the neglected cap, and seated himself upon the large trunk. For some moments he remained in a reverie.

"I'd like to see Emily," he mused, "but I think I'd better not go over to-night. 'Tis just a year to-day since her poor mother died, and it must be a sad recurrence to them. Poor Emily; it was a terribly hard blow to her, and the sorrow it caused is not all effaced yet. But she will soon be my wife; then, I feel sure she will forget those old sorrows in her new joys."

Rising from his seat, the young man gazed about him for a moment; then, throwing his axe upon one shoulder, he turned toward the cabin which stood in the centre of the clearing.

The scene within the cabin, an hour later, was pleasant, and characteristic of the settler's surroundings. The evening meal was over, the duties of the different parties had been duly attended to, and, while a ruddy fire glowed upon the hearth, a delicious feeling of comfort spread itself around. The four persons composing the household sat in a group around the fireside. There was the father—a sturdy, deep-chested backwoodsman; the mother—a pleasant woman of forty-five, and the two vigorous athletes, whom the father invariably designated as "the boys!" Such was the group.

Philip Markley was a man of fifty winters; and, though time showed its marks upon his brow, he was still hale and vigorous. Hester Markley, the mother, was a whole-souled Christian, a good wife, and an exemplary parent. Around her household no shadow ever was allowed to fall, which a cheerful face or pleasant words could drive away. Alfred, the younger of the brothers, was now twenty-two years of age—frank, handsome, and manly; possessing a great deal of fire and energy, though well tempered with discretion. He was somewhat taller than

Charles, erect and finely-formed, with an eye like that of an eagle, and a strong arm to execute the promptings of his brave heart.

Philip and his younger son sat beside the wide chimney, sending huge clouds of tobacco-smoke up the dark passage. After the pipes were exhausted, each sat for some time in silence; then the father rose, and took his rifle from the peg upon which it hung.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed, ruefully, as he turned the weapon in his hand, "I had no idea my poor gun was so badly neglected. I haven't burned a charge of powder in it since last fall. I don't take the pleasure with a rifle that I used to. Game is plenty enough, but my eyes are not as clear, or my hand as steady as it once was."

Lifting down the small box which contained the many belongings to the weapon, he set himself to the work of rejuvenating its appearance. Alfred now watched the movements of his father for a short time, then arose, and taking his own piece, proceeded to a minute inspection of condition.

"What is the matter?" laughed Charles, laying down the well-known volume which had been engrossing his attention. "One would think you expected an attack from Indians. But, I may as well join the circle."

Reaching for his own rifle, the young man set about the task. With rifle-cleaning, bullet-molding, and conversation, the evening passed quickly away. Then arms and ammunition all in order—though little dreaming of the fearful use for which it would be required—the family at length retired.

Profound slumber was upon the inmates of the cabin, and their pleasant breathing fell in regular cadence upon the still night air. No thought of danger was there to disturb the quiet serenity. Midnight was at hand—all was hushed.

Suddenly there sounded without a springing footstep, and a heavy blow upon the door, repeated, as if given by the stock of a rifle. The four sleepers heard the noise, but could not readily determine from whence it sprung. Again came the summons, and, as the sound died away, a strong voice called aloud for the sleepers to awake. In a moment the four persons were astir, and hastily preparing themselves for any emergency. Again the same summons, calling upon them to hasten, as they valued life.

"Coming—wait a moment," exclaimed the father, half impatiently, half wonderingly.

"Hurry—hurry! minutes are years, now," responded the voice. "If ye care for yer scalps, be speedy."

Philip Markley had produced a light by this time, and, satisfying himself that but one person was at the door, hastily unbarred it. Surely he knew that tall form, with that jet hair and sparkling eyes. Four years had passed since they met, yet the recognition was instantaneous.

"David Barring!—Scouting Davy!" were the exclamations which greeted the newcomer, as he crossed the threshold.

"Stop!" he exclaimed, authoritatively; "it's me, an' I'm all right yet; but ye must hurry if ye want to save yer hair. The Injins are upon us!"

"Indians!"

Three horrified voices repeated that fearful word. Charles Markley felt too deeply for words. At the first mention of that—to him—horrible word, his thoughts ran

back to the little cabin which contained Emily Hinton, and a feeling of dismay fell upon him. A host of questions were being showered upon the scout, but he raised his hand, and all paused before his voice sounded.

"Stop, don't interrupt me; there's no time to lose," he vociferated. "Several hundred Injins have crossed the river, and are on their way to murder and destroy. They are sworn to gain possession of all this State. It's pretty sure they'll have things their own way for a time. You have horses?"

A silent assent.

"Then you, Mr. Markley, and Alf, jist put in yer best licks, and harness up. And mind—not a minute is ter lose."

"Can we fight them till assistance arrives?" asked Mr. Markley.

The scout shook his head.

"If fight war' possible, Davy is the last one what would say 'run.' But it isn't. In half-an-hour at most, hundreds of 'em will be here, with old Black Hawk and that devil's own pup, Wild Bill Ashbey, at their head. There's nothin' in this part to stop 'em, so jist hurry. And you, Miss Markley, jist scratch up yer choicest things, and what ye've got in the house that'll do to eat."

In a moment the three persons were busy at their appointed tasks, for they felt the leading mind of the scout—knowing that when he directed, they had but to perform. Charles had pressed near the scout, but, as yet, he found no opportunity to speak. Now, the scout placed a hand upon the shoulder of the young man, and drew him apace nearer himself.

"Young man," he said, "I've somethin' to tell ye."

The fear which the young man had felt now deepened. His face grew fearfully pallid, and his voice trembled.

"Is it of—of Emily you would speak?" he gasped.

"Well, you're right. An' now, unless you're the gritty chap you should be, you can never see her again."

"Good Heaven! she is not—not—"

"She's safe in body, young man; but let me tell ye all. The first thing the Injins did was to burn out the Hintons. They set fire to the cabin, an' when the poor men rushed out, shot 'em down like dogs. Emily was saved, an' is a prisoner now."

"My Emily a prisoner among the Indians! Oh, God!"

"She's among them, but not in their power. Wild Bill, that most ornery villain, has her in his own power, and sent her off under a lot of his imps to his nest, over there."

"Bill Ashbey? Impossible! Do you speak truly?"

The manner of Charles was excited, and he grasped the scout by the arm with a force which would have caused most men to writhe with pain.

"True? Of course I do, young man. But it's better than if the Injins had her, for then she'd be tortured to death, sartin. Now, if you ain't afraid of a few bullets, an' hev no particular objection to knockin' the brains out o' two or three of 'em, why, your Emily can be yours still. I'll go with ye, and help to git her back."

"Oh, will you? Shall we then thwart them, and rescue Emily?"

"Nothin' surer. As soon as I see yer father and mother on the way to safety, I'm off on the trail."

"I am with you, my friend, to the end. May Heaven reward you for your noble efforts."

"Don't want any reward of that kind. If I can help to git back an angel like Emily, that's enough."

"She is an angel, David, you may well say that," remarked the youth, impulsively. "But why may we not away at once?"

"No occasion for a hurry," coolly replied the scout. "We must stay an' see the old folks on their way, for they will have hot work, most likely. Then we will take the trail."

"Then you are quite sure Mr. Hinton and George were both killed?" asked Charles, with a tear in his eye.

"Yes," the scout returned. "They were both killed. I fixed a couple o' the reds, one of 'em a chief at that, but I couldn't save the poor men. However, it's time we were movin', so jist collect the rifles and traps, then hurry the rest up. I'll go an' see if there's any signs o' Injins."

As David spoke he passed through the door, and was quickly in the depths of the forest. Philip and his son had not lost a moment, and soon the span of noble bays were attached to the strong wagon, and driven around to the door. Even then the red light from the burning cabin of the Hintons could be seen glaring above the tree-tops. Charles was just driving home the bullet in the rifle, and the little stock of articles which had been selected was soon placed on the vehicle.

At that moment a shadowy form appeared crossing the fields, but it was soon apparent that it was none other than the scout.

"Into the wagon, quick!" he exclaimed, as he drew near. "The red-skins are comin'."

The persons in waiting needed no second bidding, but hastily scrambled into the vehicle. With a bound, like that of a panther, the scout followed them.

"Are yer shootin'-irons all right?" he asked, hurriedly.

An answer was given in the affirmative.

"Then drive ahead, for the cut-throats are close to us," he commanded.

The horses sprung lightly forward under the direction of Alfred, who held the reins.

Chapter V

The Wagon Tussle and the Trail Hunters.

A road had been cut from the settlement of the Markley family to a point, several miles distant, where it intersected a regularly beaten wagon trail, leading to the nearest trading-post. After leaving the cabin, it led through the depths of the wood for some two miles, beyond which point the way was more open.

The parties who were unacquainted with the details of the massacre now turned to the scout, and, in answer to their questions, David related the scene as it had transpired. He spoke more especially of Emily, and the compact entered into

between himself and Charles. Neither of the parents spoke, for the danger to which their son and the brave scout were about to subject themselves, seemed stupendous in their eyes, but they shuddered when Alfred chimed in:

"Count me in for that expedition, Charley; I'm with you there."

"Good fer yer pluck, boy," rejoined the scout, well pleased. "But there's some things ye must remember afore ye set out. Ye'll have hundreds of miles to tramp, right in the midst of Injins, and danger of every description to look out for. I'm used to it, an' don't mind bruisin'; you are young, and tender-like."

"What of that?" broke in the youth, impatiently. "I can learn, and now is as good a time as I shall ever have."

"There is times," returned the scout, "where one man can do what three can't. But it's oftener three can do more than two; so, if yer in earnest, we'll call it settled, for I like yer grit right well."

"Then settled it is," the young man frankly exclaimed, as he grasped the extended hand of the scout.

As the scout relinquished the hand of the youth, he peered for a moment very earnestly into the gloom before them. Quickly exclaiming:

"Down all of ye!" he raised his rifle and fired.

Following the report of David's rifle, a wild yell of rage broke from the forest, and half-a-dozen musket-shots followed. No one was injured, as the savages had fired wildly. With a second yell they dashed for the vehicle. As it required the entire skill of Alfred to manage the plunging steeds, he was almost entirely unaware of the state of things behind him.

The scout sprung up as the scattering shots ceased, but he had no time to reload his rifle. Casting it in the bottom of the wagon, he drew a pistol in each hand, and, with a word to the others, turned to meet the foe. Three Indians sprung toward the vehicle upon one side, two of whom succeeded in grasping the sides, while the third, falling beneath the heavy wheels, never knew the result of the conflict. The foremost of the twain received the contents of a pistol full in his face, and fell back, but the second weapon missed fire, and the yelling Indian sprung into the midst of the little party, whirling his hatchet aloft.

Another moment would have seen the last of David, but for his ready tact and skill. Dropping quickly, and springing to one side, he confused the savage, who, with suspended tomahawk, awaited the moment when he might deliver his blow with a sure aim. Without pausing to gratify his foe, the scout gave him a fearful kick, full in the provision basket, which sent him floundering and howling out of the box. As his own coast was now clear, David turned to assist his friends.

They had been equally fortunate.

"Rather a bold undertakin'," he exclaimed. "I wonder they tried to board a craft under full sail; they must have know'd they'd fall; though they did show good grit."

"But why," queried Mr. Markley, "did they not commence their attack upon the horses. Had they but killed them, we should have been at their mercy."

"All policy, sir, as the lawyers say. Ye see they wanted hosses worse nor scalps, and so we saved our hair."

"I have no doubt," returned the elder Markley. "But I tell you, David, it seems hard for me to shoot a human being, even in self-defense. To think that I have

lived for fifty years, and to-night, for the first time, have been necessitated to take human life."

"Jest so," returned David. "But you mustn't git squeamish over it. I well remember the first time I had to kill a human, an' how I felt, but that's no use. When it's got to be done, why let fly, that's all!"

At length they reached a more open portion of the wood, and here David proposed to part company. The wagon was stopped, hasty but affectionate farewells spoken, strong hands pressed in a last fond grasp. Then the young men leaped from the vehicle and quickly left the road, while the father took the reins, and the wagon then rattled swiftly on its way to security. Davy stood watching it until lost to view.

"Now, boys," he said, in a cautious voice, "we're in for it in earnest. There's no back down now. The first thing we've got to do is to git behind the Injins. Then there'll be but little danger, unless we have to go clear back to Wild Bill's settlement. Now, before we start, there's one or two things ye want to always observe. Never fire a gun when ye can help it, unless yer in a safe place or in a mighty tight one. Then be careful of the trail. Make as little as possible, and walk in Injin file when ye can. The first thing we've got to do, is to git back, as I said, and the red-skins are so sharp on trail we must throw 'em off a little. Of course they think we all went off in that wagon, but they'll find their mistake. So long as our tracks points toward the risin' sun, they'll not mind 'em much. By goin' right ahead a quarter of a mile, we'll strike the creek. There we'll take to the water and come back till we see fit to leave it."

The scout shouldered his rifle and pushed forward, his companions following his example. The way was clear, and they were aware if anything was accomplished under cover of the night, it must be speedily done. The stream was quite shallow, and assuring themselves that the foe was not upon them, the party stepped quickly in. Some time passed in complete silence; the only sound to be heard was the light ripple of the waters, as the men pressed cautiously forward. Finally the scout paused, and bent his head in a listening attitude.

"It's as I thought, boys," he said. "We are gettin' too near the mahogany villains."

The young men listened. They could hear the distinct tumult of warriors, and it was evident the stream would take them too near the sanguinary foe. The scout listened again.

"You had better stay here," he said, "until I go ahead and investigate a bit."

So saying, he disappeared in the bushes.

A long time it seemed to them Dave was absent, and many fears of disaster began to beset them. What if he had fallen into the hands of savages? Without his directing mind they were no better than a ship without a rudder, in the midst of breakers. To be sure, they were expert woodsmen, unerring shots, healthy and vigorous. Yet, never before this night had they seen an Indian upon the war-path, or listened to their blood-curdling whoops. Nearly an hour had passed, and the anxiety of Alfred had reached a decisive pitch.

"I tell you, Charley," he said, energetically, "I'm going to see if I can find Dave. Maybe he's in hot-water, and I can help him. You had better remain here."

But Charles would not remain and let his brother go alone; so, together they set forth upon their doubtful mission. They had proceeded some fifty yards when a

slight rustling ahead startled them. Both prepared for the worst, but suspense changed to joy when a tall figure, which could not be mistaken, stepped into view. In a moment the scout was with them. A satisfied expression lighted up his features, as he said:

"It's what I suspected, boys; the reds are tired out, and buildin' fires all 'round. Most likely they'll not move again till mornin', and afore that time we'll have 'em outwitted as easy as robbin' a roost. We'll jest pass around toward the south, and git beyond 'em; then, if we can strike the trail of them chaps what carried Miss Emily off, like enough we'll overhal 'em afore daylight."

Suddenly the leader stopped, and bent his ear to listen.

"To cover, boys, quick!" he whispered, "they're comin' this way."

Without waiting a moment, he darted from view, and crept noiselessly away. The brothers followed his example, and the Indians, who a moment later had passed over the ground, had no suspicion that a white man was within miles of them. From their coverts the borderers counted sixteen, who passed in their usual file, each treading in the footsteps of his leader.

In a minute they had passed, and our party of adventurers again stood together. There were no sounds to indicate the presence of other foes, so they again set forward.

Before the trail-hunters suspected it, they saw, upon glancing toward the eastern horizon, that the stars were paling, and the light-blue tinge, which foreshadows the dawn, already pervaded the sky. As they were now comparatively safe, the three pushed forward with all speed. In half-an-hour the early light of dawn was upon them, and the scout commenced looking about for the trail of the party they sought. To render the search more effectual the friends separated, pushing forward within signaling distance of each other.

The dawn was becoming every moment more full, when the brothers heard the signal from Davy. Not doubting that he had discovered the foe, they nerved themselves for conflict. They were surprised to find the scout standing erect, his eyes fixed upon the ground before him. Coming nearer they saw the smouldering remains of a fire, from which small jets of smoke still ascended. It had been a large fire, as much of the wood, partially burned, still remained.

"Well, boys, our game's gone!" the scout remarked, as the others came up. "Here's where the rascals stopped and took lunch, but forgot the sleepin' part of it. Bloody murder! why couldn't we have cum up while they war' eatin'? Maybe we wouldn't have gi'n 'em a warm dish."

"Are you sure this is the work of the party we seek?" asked Charles, willing to grasp any hope.

"Of course I'm sure," he returned, half displeased at the question. "An' if ye were more skilled in yer business ye'd know it without askin' questions."

"One thing ye must l'arn, boys," the scout remarked, as he quietly rose to his feet. "That is, allus tew be cool. Take things as they come, and when ye hev a chance tew eat, do it, by all means. I l'arnt that long ago, and ye'll soon find it the best way. You wouldn't mind goin' without anythin' to eat for a day or two, now, but mind you, ye'd feel it afore this tramp is over with."

Then strapping on his wallet, and looking at the priming of his rifle, Davy once more led the way forward.

The trail was broad, for no care had been taken to conceal it—the party having the prisoner in charge feeling no apprehension that any pursuit would take place. They were now obliged to proceed with the utmost caution, as their position was very unfavourable. A secure place having been selected as a rendezvous, Davy departed to reconnoiter the river. The hours dragged wearily away, but it was not till late in the afternoon that he returned. His easy and unconcerned manner at once quieted their anxious fears, while they gathered around, and impatiently inquired the cause of his delay.

“Wait till supper’s over, boys, and I hev time tew think. I’m jist a bit puzzled myself, this time.”

The pipes were at length exhausted, and after a long silence, the leader raised his eyes toward the sinking sun. Carelessly he remarked:

“Well, boys, there’s three or four hours afore ye can move, so the best use to make on’t is to lie down an’ sleep. Maybe a long while afore ye’ll find another sich place. I’ll keep watch, an’ see ’at no red-skins disturb ye.”

Thus admonished the young men threw themselves upon the ground. Although nothing was further from their thoughts than sleep, but a few minutes passed before both were buried in a refreshing slumber.

Davy regarded the sleepers attentively for a few moments, then turning away, he muttered:

“The boys are hevin’ a comfortable doze, so I’ll jist take a turn around, an’ see if all promises favourably. Blame me, though, if they don’t promise well for greenhorns. If they stick to this bisness they’ll make the toughest kind o’ scouts; maybe they’ll think sometime how they took their first lesson in Injin-craft of Davy Barring; maybe they will. I wonder how the red-skins would like the idee of leavin’ Davy behind ’em. Blame me, if I don’t think I kin work ’em some mischief, and these two boys with me. *They’ll* burn and murder to their hearts’ content, but can’t have it all their own way, jist yit.”

The worthy scout moved about in the direction of the party upon the river’s bank, till satisfied there was no danger to his confederates in that quarter; then he struck into the forest beyond. In an hour he returned. His companions were still sleeping soundly. With a quiet glance about him the hardy fellow sunk upon the ground, and lay for some time. A slight rustling at length aroused him, and looking around he saw that Charles had risen to his feet. Perceiving that David was awake, the young man approached, and inquired:

“How long before we set out?”

“The sooner the better; it is sufficiently dark.”

A beaming light broke over the face of the youth, for he was all impatience to be away.

“I am anxious to be off, that this fearful suspense may be at an end. It is dreadful to think of the position of that dear girl, thus dragged away—her father and brother inhumanly butchered, and all the suspense which must be hers!”

“Partly right and partly wrong! You must remember that now yer comparatively safe. We’re between tew bodies o’ the inemy, an’ when we move either way we go into danger. But rouse Alf, and we’ll off.”

The sleeper was awakened, rifles and pistols made ready for instant use, and soon the adventurers were quietly stealing through the forest. The direction they

took was south-westerly, diverging from the course hitherto kept. The way was clear, and, by the dusky light, they could barely discern the form of the leader as he stole silently along in advance.

At length the scout seemed to proceed with more caution as the forest grew less dense. A few rods more, and like so many shadows they stood upon the banks of the Mississippi. For the first time the brothers felt how lonely was their position. Before them rolled the broad, silent waters, around them spread the wide, dark forest. Foes were upon every hand—savage, blood-thirsty, triumphant! Their friends—those who still lived—were flying from the rabble.

For a moment they stood thus, realizing the utter loneliness of their situation; then the scout whispered:

“You will keep shady here till I come down to you in a dug-out. If anything makes its appearance, keep the shadier. If ye hev tew fite, yew know how. These I’ll leave here”—depositing rifle, pistols, and powder-horn—“’cause I can’t use ’em. Now, be cautious as foxes and wise as weasels.”

With these words he left them—left them alone in the darkness.

David Barring had laid his plans with much deliberation. He had carefully noted the position of the canoes; and the disposition of the party left to guard them.

The rapid steps of the scout soon brought him to the vicinity of his swarthy foes. Now it became necessary for him to pursue his way with the utmost caution. For this purpose he crawled cautiously up until he reached a small eminence, which gave a distinct view of the scene below. A single large fire had been built, and around this at least half the savages were lazily reclining, smoking or eating. The remainder were scattered carelessly about, while the light of the fire revealed many a dusky form crouching in the boats.

The canoes had been drawn high up on the bank, while the larger boats had been left floating, being merely secured to the shore. There were many of the lighter craft floating also, and, so far as the keen eye of David could determine, the latter were unoccupied.

Even while the scout gazed he noticed that many of the savages were seeking their blankets for sleep, and he waited for a time in the hope that a general retiring might take place. In this he was not gratified; and, as delay might be dangerous, he carefully retreated, and moved away to the accomplishment of his design. Yet the cautiousness he was forced to observe required time, and it was a long while before he reached the margin of the stream.

At length he reached the uppermost of the flotilla, and beneath the deep shadow of a canoe he raised himself partially from the water, and drew a long breath of relief and pleasure. His heart gave a happy throb at his success.

The next task would be to select the proper boat. The one he grasped was too large for his purpose, the second too small. He dropped down till his hand rested upon the one he desired. He ran his hand and eye over it, felt the depth and capacity, assured himself no one was within, and at once pronounced it his own. Yet David was doomed to disappointment.

Cautiously moving near the middle of the boat, his foot struck something which a gentle pressure assured him was firm. Thinking it might be the ground, he rested upon it, and continued his onward movement. As ill-luck would have it, instead of stepping upon the river-bottom, the scout had planted his feet upon a

large log, which had become partially imbedded there. He was not aware of the mistake until his foot slipped from the slimy wood, and, with a "*plash*," he fell into the disturbed flood.

Quickly recovering his equilibrium, the swimmer glided from the spot, and reached the shadow of one of the large boats. Scarcely had he disappeared when a dusky visage might have been seen peering over the edge of a canoe near by. A single guttural exclamation soon brought half a dozen companions, who proceeded to a careful survey of the craft and water about.

Luckily the Indians were not deeply interested, merely supposing the disturbance caused by some aquatic animal, of which they sought traces only from idle curiosity. Finding nothing to reward their search, the savages seated themselves in the neighbouring boat, to await the reappearance of the nocturnal disturber. A stealthy glance revealed to David the new position of his foes, and assured him that all further operations in that quarter were utterly impracticable.

It was a hundred yards or more to the further end of the flotilla, and, as attraction now tended this way, it was but reasonable to suppose he might succeed there. Sinking beneath the waters David swam a long distance, till compelled to come to the surface for air. He was gratified to find that he had passed more than half the distance, and was beyond the line of vision of the savages.

Striking out in an oblique direction he approached the boats. This time he moved with redoubled caution, and, as the deep shadow was in his favour, he soon selected a promising craft. In a few minutes he had cut the rope, towed it into the current, and was floating it gently downward.

No sooner was the scout satisfied of his security, than he threw himself into the boat, and groped about for the paddles. His heart gave a great leap—then stood still. *He had no means of propelling or guiding his boat!*

For a moment David was confounded; then his natural daring came to his aid. Leaping at once into the water, he gave the boat a vigorous push down the stream. Then he turned and paddled hastily toward the flotilla. Again he reached it unobserved, and selected a second boat, very similar to the other in size and construction.

Assuring himself that this contained the requisite number of paddles, he cut it loose and was soon drifting down the current as before.

It was not a pleasant thought to the brothers, that of their isolated condition and their peril, which would force itself upon them, after the departure of the scout. As time passed, and the possibility that he might have failed, even in his moment of confidence, would force itself upon them, they realized how much their fate was bound up in his—how very essential his welfare and success were to their own.

At length Alfred, who stood upon the brink of the river, earnestly listening for the approach of the scout, saw something which bore a resemblance to the expected boat. It was gliding gently along, and was quite near before he had discerned it. Satisfying himself as to its character, he addressed his brother. In a moment Charles was beside him.

"Look there?" whispered Alfred, pointing in the direction of the boat; "Davy is coming, at length."

To their surprise, the object continued upon its course, and passed the point upon which they were standing. The young men looked at each other in mute surprise. Alfred was the first to speak.

"Can it be that he has mistaken the place where he left us?" he whispered.

Charles shook his head perplexedly.

In a moment more the strange object had passed from view.

"What does it mean?" asked the younger.

"It is all a mystery to me," replied the other. "I am almost sure it can not be Davy. He would hardly have mistaken the rendezvous."

"Indians?" suggested Alfred, in a tone which spoke more than the word itself implied.

"Hardly; though if it be so we shall soon hear from them. I could see no person in the craft, nor did its motions seem to indicate that it was loaded."

"It can not be that the scout has been—"

"Hist! Do not even mention that—it is too horrible for thought! Heaven only knows what our position would be, should harm come to him."

Charles moved back to his former position, a few yards in the rear of his brother, to keep watch that no foe should steal upon them from that direction. The mind of each was filled with the most stirring apprehensions, and every moment they really expected to see their murderous foes stealing upon them, or hear their horrid yells.

Some minutes passed, when Alfred fancied he saw something move above them. His heart gave a great bound of joy, as he thought that the scout might be coming, and then a thrill of excitement passed over his frame, as he reflected that it might be their savage foes. He listened intently. This time the regular "dip" of paddles gave assurance that something of life was within the canoe. Signaling his brother, they silently awaited the approach of the floating object. They were not long in suspense.

The boat was quite near the shore, and heading directly toward the point upon which they stood. As it came nearer they could discern an upright figure, guiding it toward the land. In another moment it grated upon the sand, and David sprung out.

"Give me my tools," he hastily exclaimed. "There's not a minnit tew lose. I sarcumvented the devils, but they're arter me; so be lively."

He grasped his weapons as he spoke, and in another moment the three were seated in the boat. One vigorous push and it was afloat upon the dark waters.

"Lay her straight acrost the river," exclaimed David, the Markleys having taken the oars to allow the taxed muscles of the scout to relax.

"Seems I didn't git much start on 'em," he added, "for they set up a yellin' an' started arter me with another boat. They gi'n me a race down the river, but that don't matter—they can't overhaul us!"

Bending his head over the side of the canoe, he listened intently. Suddenly he started up with energy.

"We don't gain any," he said, "but are holdin' our own, good. Ladle the water with a will, boys, and we'll weather 'em, for every stroke now counts *one!*"

The brothers realized the importance of their exertions, and, with ceaseless sweeps, sent the boat skimming forward. The scout was still leaning over the side, listening, when suddenly he started, as though struck by a rifle-shot.

"Hold up a moment; let me listen!" he remarked, in a tone of mingled impatience and alarm.

They obeyed. What sound was that which sent the blood back in cold streams to the hearts of the brothers? At no great distance in advance of them, could be heard the confused murmur of voices, and splashing of paddles? No wonder the scout's cheek momentarily blanched, and his eyes seemed starting from the sockets, in the vain effort to penetrate the gloom. Much as the darkness obscured the vision, it was all that saved David Barrington now.

Bending close to the brothers, and speaking in that calm tone which marked the man during seasons of greatest danger, he said:

"Turn her down-stream, boys, and row fer yer lives. We're runnin' square into a nest of the human hornets. Paddle lively; fer, if the moon rises, we're goners—that's all!"

The brothers comprehended only too well their peril to hesitate for a moment. The canoe was turned in the required direction; but, ere this was accomplished, they could distinctly hear the rapid approach of the Indian flotilla. So soon as the new direction was taken, they laboured with a determination which almost threw the craft from the water at each successive stroke; but a cruel fate was against them.

"It's no use," the scout at length whispered; "we can't pass 'em in that way! All we kin dew, is to turn back, and run the resk of these red fiends behind us!"

It was a hazardous course, but the only one left open to the fugitives.

The result was highly fortunate for the adventurers. The pursuers had been guided only by the sound of oars, and, when these ceased to be heard distinctly, they paused, assured that the flotilla could not miss the refugees. Of course, the pursuers soon met the others, and instituted inquiries for the run-away boat. As no such object had been seen, the pursuers were placed in a suspicious light, and gladly turned to accompany their friends to the Illinois shore.

Meanwhile, Davy and his companions were making the most of every moment. Finding they were not likely to encounter the boat which had kept so closely in their wake, they bent every effort toward making good their escape. Almost before the party were aware of it, they shot in near the eastern shore of the river. Already the full light of the moon fell in gentle floods upon the water. The flotilla was thus fully revealed—every boat being brought out in dark outline upon the smooth surface of the river.

Considerable of the eastern side was shadow, rendered even darker by the gentle light falling around. In this broad belt of blackness our friends now lay, concealed from the sharp eyes of the approaching savages.

"I tell you, boys," the scout observed, "if we'd run intew that neest, we'd stood a smart chance of havin' our ha'r lifted afore this. It's a lucky move we've made, this time, and now we'll keep down in this 'ere shadder, till we git well out o' their way."

The party again bent themselves to their tasks, though panting and wearied, keeping the boat well within the deep shadow cast by the forest. They pulled

silently down, until the scout, who had taken to the paddle, bent low, and peered across the river.

"Near's I kin make out," he remarked, "we're about opposite one o' the purtiest little hidin'-places that the good Lord ever made. Thar's a little 'dentation, in the shore, what's been washed out till it makes the neatest kind of a place. I kin hide a boat thare, so an Injin would step right over it forty times, an' never think any thing was under him. If we kin git thare, 'twill be jist *the* place we want!"

The canoe was again turned across the Mississippi. The men it contained were still in the best of spirits, for, although they had met with trial and danger, it had only stimulated them to greater exertions.

As they reached the opposite shore, the scout ceased paddling, and motioned Charles to do the same.

"Blame me, if I kin hardly tell whar' that place is," he muttered, half perplexed. "It's more'n two years since I had occasion tew use it, and may be 'twill bother me some to find it. But it may be of use to us, so I'll ferret it out."

They floated cautiously down for a few rods, when David uttered a quick exclamation of joy.

"There it is!"

"Can't ye diskiver it?" he asked.

"I confess," returned Charles, "that I should never suspect the existence of any hidden retreat here."

The scout laughed, quietly.

"Nater made the place rayther secure," he said; "and, if yer young eyes don't suspect it, I guess there's little danger o' the red-skins spyin' it out."

Turning the head of the canoe shoreward, David carefully parted the bushes with his oar, and a dark retreat was revealed. With little effort, the canoe was pushed within the haven; the bushes closed behind them, effectually securing them from observation. Charles and Alfred glanced around, in the endeavour to discover the extent and surroundings of the place. The effort was futile. Overhanging masses of bushes shut out all rays of light, leaving the place clothed in deepest darkness.

The scout seemed perfectly at home. Turning the head of the canoe to the right, he gave a vigorous push, and, as the bottom of the boat struck the shore, grasped his rifle and leaped forth. As soon as the brothers could determine upon his whereabouts, they followed.

"Remove the paddles," he said, cheerily, "and then we will attend to hidin' the canoe!"

This was done, when the scout set about concealing the craft. Rocking it, until partially filled with water, he stepped into the river, and, with a strong motion, pushed it completely beneath the overhanging bank. It wedged in firmly, and, securing the oars, David once more stood upon the bank.

"I call this good fortin'!" he commenced, as they left the place. "We're acrost the Missippy, the canoe stowed away, an' nary a red the wiser for't. To be sure, the wust is tew come! But most of the imps are acrost the river, an' that'll be a great 'vantage tew us. I know where Emily is—poor girl! We'll git thar' in good time, an', when we do, we'll make our presence known."

"That we will!" exclaimed Charles, with enthusiasm. "But tell me, Davy, do you think Ashbey will be there soon? Do you think he will torture Emily with his detested presence before we can reach and save her?"

"I can't tell," the scout replied. "I hardly think he will cross the river ag'in for some days, unless he suspects where we're gone tew. But we're here fust, and kin 'tend tew him when he comes."

Chapter VII

The Captive.

But what of the captive maid? When she found herself alone with her red guards, and realized that Ashbey had indeed left her for a time, a sense of relief followed. There was something in his presence which seemed to poison the very air about her. Scarcely did she heed that her horse was led from the fatal spot; hardly was she conscious that they were striking into the forest, and taking a direct course toward the Mississippi. She had little thought, feeling or care for herself. What was life to her now?

Her father—the fond, doting parent, to whom she had been the bright sunshine of existence, and whom she had loved with all the devotion of her filial heart, was dead—inhumanly butchered by the ferocious foes, who had thus remorselessly destroyed the peaceful home-circle of hearts. The fiery George, whom she had loved and guided with the fond sister's care, had met an untimely fate in the morning of his bright life.

And she thought of another, for whom her fondest, holiest love had gone forth; and oh! what an agony of suspense was there. What was his fate? What a fierce enemy upon his track—a man so far below the savage that the very brute might shun his company—she could only picture to herself a fate so fearful that the very thought of it seemed to check the life-current in her veins. Oh! that she could fly to him—could warn and save him. Could it be that she should ever again hear his voice? It was a fearful thought, yet she could only faintly hope against it.

No word escaped the lips of the stern warrior guard who surrounded her, and Emily felt glad that it was so, for she was in no mood to talk. As one devoid of life, she sat upon her horse—the bitterest anguish surging over her soul like a destroying flood.

How long they had journeyed thus she could not have determined; indeed, she made no effort to recall the distance or time. She was only sensible that the party had stopped, and a muscular brave had lifted her from the horse to the ground. Not till this done was she really aware of what was passing about her.

The Indian relaxed his hold, and she sunk to the earth, feeling too exhausted to stand. The brave then produced a thong of deerskin, and stooped as if to find her ankles. With a gesture so appealing that even the heart of the fierce savage was touched, she besought him not to bind her. The Indian, a tall, muscular brave, raised his eyes and gazed for a moment upon the pain-marked features of the

maiden. He looked irresolute, and a touch of kindness seemed overspreading his tawny features.

"White squaw run away," he remarked, with tolerable pronunciation.

"Why should I attempt that?" she asked. "Where would my feeble limbs serve to carry me?"

"Suppose Injin brave no tie White Bird?" he asked, in a still more kindly manner.

"I will thank him," was the brief reply.

"Red Wing will leave White Bird free," he remarked, looking hastily round to see if his movements were observed.

The others were all busily employed in collecting wood, preparing meat for roasting, and the various duties of a bivouac. The Indian noticed this, and leaned idly against a tree, while Emily again relapsed into a sorrowful reverie.

The savages soon had a large fire, and were seated around it, employed according to their fancies or appetites. One of them approached the prisoner, and offered her a liberal slice of well-roasted venison. She refused it, for she could not eat, and the brave, with a scowl of anger, returned to his seat beside the fire.

Indolently squatted around the fire, smoking or dozing, the party remained for an hour, when the signal was given, and they began to prepare for the continuation of their journey. The braves were in the worst possible humour, for they disliked the idea of being sent back with a single captive, when they had expected to remain and take part in the work of destruction and bloodshed.

The horse Emily had ridden was tied to a sapling near by, and the Indian she had previously displeased, now unfastened and led it to her side. A sullen scowl was upon his features, as he seized the maiden by the arm with a grasp which caused her to cry out with pain. Red Wing, who had been standing near Emily, was upon the point of lighting his pipe at the fire. Hearing the outcry, he turned quickly, and with fierce displeasure upon his features, sprung at once to the scene. With a powerful grasp upon the arm of the offending savage, he hurled him back, and stood like a tower of strength before the affrighted maiden.

"Why does Red Wing place his hand thus upon another brave?" demanded the incensed savage, his very utterance almost choked with passion.

"Why does the Dark Cloud seek to harm the pale-face maiden?" retorted Red Wing.

"Does Red Wing think to take the pale-face to his own lodge, that he is thus careful of her?" was the sarcastic response.

"The White Bird speaks kindly to the Red Wing; he will not forget," was the sententious rejoinder.

For a time the two stood looking at each other; then the Dark Cloud stepped to one side and attempted to pass his opponent. But the latter divined his intention, and, grasping him by the throat, hurled him backward with such force that he was almost thrown to the ground. Furious now past all control, Dark Cloud drew his knife, and prepared to rush upon his foe. Red Wing seized his hatchet, and awaited the onset. Others of the party, seeing they were likely to lose at least one of their most chivalrous braves, interposed to stay the conflict.

"Why will not the red braves learn wisdom?" demanded the chief of the party, with a voice of authority. "Why will they war upon each other? The blood of the pale-faces only should flow at their hands."

By threats and persuasion a reconciliation was effected. The two braves returned their weapons and moved moodily from the spot, while the journey was at once resumed.

On they tramped, mile after mile, through the forest, until at length morning broke over the earth. But the dawn brought no relief to the prisoner. As the light increased, the dusky features of her attendants were brought more fully to view, with all their horror of war-paint and inhuman ferocity.

At length the party emerged upon the banks of the Mississippi. The guards, who were loitering about the flotilla, flocked around the fair prisoner with the greatest expressions of curiosity and satisfaction. A huge dug-out, capable of carrying the entire party, was launched, and they set forth across the stream.

Poor Emily gazed into the yellow waters of the mighty river. How calmly they flowed. Oh! that she could rest beneath them. Then all sorrow would end, and she could join those loved ones gone before. She would make the attempt, and God forgive her if she came unbidden to his presence. It was a fearful resolve, but she was unable to reason. Only wishing to rid herself of a life which could bring naught but misery, she awaited the propitious moment to carry out her plan.

It came at length. No eye seemed upon her. Rising, she closed her eyes, and with a desperate leap plunged, not into the water, but into the strong arms of the watchful Red Wing. Seating her upon the thwart from which she had risen, he said, in tones of kindness:

"White Bird must not die. Great chief love White Bird, and make her very happy. Pale-face must live for pale-face."

Emily did not reply. She sunk down with a bursting heart, and wept the bitterest tears of her life.

Soon the boat reached the shore, and the party hastily clambered out. No sooner did Emily step forth than the savages set forward, without waiting for her to mount. But they soon stopped and made preparations for lighting a fire. Around this they stretched themselves, and soon were dozing. The maiden was securely bound, and left without a guard.

For a long time she sat and watched the lazy motions of the barbarians, until all except the outlying guards were asleep. Then she, too, sunk into a disturbed slumber. Strange visions and dreams were hers, as she lay thus, with the bare earth for a couch, her arm for a pillow, the leafy trees and blue sky for a covering. Her sleep of innocence was soothing and strengthening to her overtasked frame.

She was awakened by a hand upon her shoulder, and a guttural voice in her ear, speaking in incomprehensible tones. The savage spoke no English, but pointed to his comrades, now about to resume their journey. He unbound the thongs and raised her to her feet.

The brief slumber which the poor girl had enjoyed had been of infinite service to her. She felt more calm and self-possessed; a sense of resignation she had not before felt, took possession of her heart. Could it be that in her sleep some fond spirit had hovered near, and whispered words of cheer and consolation?

The sun sunk low. Many miles had been passed. Here and there she had seen hurrying groups of warriors, as well as of women and children passing toward the river. Only too well she knew that they were hastening on to swell that horde which was already spreading death and desolation through the settlements.

Finally, the party again halted, and most deeply was the poor prisoner rejoiced. Weary, faint and hungry, she longed for rest and repose. She was to be gratified. The Indians had shot a fine buck, and from the savory meat they regaled themselves sumptuously. Emily, after her long fast, partook gladly of the game.

When the meal was concluded, the Indians smoked for a time, as usual, and then, securely binding the prisoner, all stretched themselves to sleep. It was not until morning that the sleepers were aroused. Now and then during the night, one would awake, assure himself that the prisoner was safe, and then return to sleep the more lustily.

With the first beam of morning the party was astir. Emily felt unpleasantly from the constrained manner in which she had passed the night, but a little exercise soon dispelled the feeling. A breakfast was prepared, and then the party set forward once more. Red Wing walked beside Emily. Feeling assured of his kindness, she bent nearer him, and asked:

“Will not Red Wing tell the White Bird when their journey will end?”

The Indian paused a moment, then indicating the sun with his outstretched arm, slowly raised it until it pointed to the zenith.

“Then,” he said, briefly.

The maiden understood him, and bowed her thanks.

Noon came, and Emily began to grow despondent. She was fatigued, and longed for rest. Still there were no signs of stopping, and she began to doubt if there had been a perfect understanding between herself and Red Wing. She could see that the sun had passed the point indicated, but still they kept on.

Suddenly the loud barking of an Indian dog startled her. In less than a minute a group of filthy, squalid women and children appeared, curious to discover the cause of the outbreak. They seemed very much astonished, and, while a few ran to spread the tidings, the remainder clustered about the party. Emily looked upon the wretched creatures for a moment, then turned from them, overcome with feelings of shame and disgust.

In a few minutes they arrived in sight of a small Indian village, and this Emily felt was to be the scene of her captivity. She regarded it with eager interest.

A collection of rude huts were scattered along the banks of a small stream. There was no taste or regularity there, every thing being in disorder, and fearfully filthy and repulsive. It seemed the tidings had already reached the place, as women and children were huddled along the way. Like those Emily had seen before, all were disgustingly repulsive in appearance. It would have been but human, had all the fortitude of the poor girl deserted her now. But, she closed her eyes to shut out the spectacle, and nerved herself to bear all.

The party took its way into the village, and, surrounded by a motley throng, proceeded up the street, till near the upper end of the place. Here they stopped, and the prisoner was allowed to alight. The throng now gathered more closely about, and a living circle of faces peered curiously upon the captive. They were allowed to gaze for some minutes, when a word from the chief dispersed them, and

they retreated, apparently dissatisfied that they were not to have the luxury of seeing the fair prisoner tortured.

There remained but one woman in her presence. Emily saw with horror that she was a white woman like herself, though dressed in Indian costume, and like them in appearance. She stood a little apart from the braves, and was regarding our heroine with a curious scrutiny. When the horde dispersed, the chief of the warriors approached the woman indicated, and conversed earnestly with her for some minutes in the Winnebago dialect.

"So, ma'am," the woman said, in a coarse voice, as she approached, "you air the new bird o' Mister Ashbey, be you!"

Emily remained silent, while the other continued:

"Wal, yer don't dispute it, so I s'pose 'tis so. Thar's nothin' bad about it, on'y Billy is a leetle wild, that's all. But, come with me, fer they tell me I'm ter tek keer o' ye till yer husban' comes."

Mechanically, Emily followed the wild-looking creature, while an Indian walked upon either side of her.

Chapter VIII

Affairs at the Village.

They stopped before a low, dismal-looking hut, and Emily shuddered with horror as her eyes took in the disagreeable prospect. She entered after her conductor, while the savages followed closely. The hut was constructed of logs, miserably laid together, and the numerous yawning interstices filled with mud, which, having become hard and dry, answered its purpose quite well.

Within, it was divided into two rude compartments by a curtain formed principally of skins, extending from side to side.

The apartment which they entered was much the larger, containing a small, wooden chimney, a rude table, three or four blocks, answering the purpose of chairs, and two rude couches of skins. A few reminiscences of civilization were scattered around, while against the walls hung various weapons and trophies.

The maid noticed this with a quick eye, and, as the door was closed and barred by the Indians, she sunk upon one of the blocks. She needed not to be told where she was, for every thing about her bespoke the renegade's home. Strange and uncouth as was the place, it really seemed to her that it was not complete without his hideous presence.

The object which most attracted Emily's attention, was the strange woman who had preceded her. So far as Emily could judge, she was twenty-five, or might have been thirty years of age. Her hair, which was long, black and matted, hung in wild disorder; if it ever had made the acquaintance of comb or brush, it was evident they had long been strangers. Her eyes were black and flashing, and, as Emily saw their cold look, she beheld only harshness and cruelty depicted there. The features

were quite regular, but the beauty they might once have boasted had faded, and given way to dark passion-marks.

"Wal, ma'am, as this is tew be yer hoam now, I s'pose ye'd like tee know it, I didn't hev' much tew notify me ye's comin' or I'd had things lookin' a little purtyer 'round here. Ye see this 'ere is the 'kitchin,' and threw yender's our room; I'll show it tew ye."

The woman rose and passed from the room, jabbering a few words to one of the Indians. Lifting a heavy bear-skin, she motioned for Emily to pass through. It was very narrow, scarcely six feet in width, though perhaps twice that length. The only relief to the mud-bedaubed walls, consisted of two piles of skins for couches, and a couple of blocks, like those without. Emily shuddered as she took in the whole of the narrow apartment at a glance.

"Thare, ma'am," the creature said, with a tone of officiousness, "this is our room. The men foaks sleep out there"—indicating the apartment they had just left. "Ye see I think this is a real purty room, don't you, Miss—?"

Emily did not heed the implied question, but inquired whom she styled the "men-folks."

"Why, Mister Ashbey, when he's here, and the Injin-men; thar's two on 'em stays here most o' the time. But, while they were gone I had the hull house tew myself. I suppose, miss, so long as we kalkerlait tew be reum-mates, ye'll hev' no objection tew tellin' me yer name, all in confidence, ye know."

"Certainly," Emily replied, with forced composure. "I have no reason to conceal my name. I am called Emily Hinton—my father was Elisha Hinton."

"Lishur Hinton!" the other responded, somewhat surprised. "Why, I used tew know your foaks, and maybe yew've hearn o' me. My name is Sall Simms—I used tew live in the settlements, years ago."

Emily had heard of "Sall Simms." For the first time she now recollected having heard that Wild Bill had married her, and taken her home to his Indian settlement. She stated as much to the woman herself.

"Oh yis," was the ready response. "Me an' Billy could not live without each other; so when he 'cluded tew move this way, we jist hitched, and cum with him. But, I didn't change my name 'cos I didn't see any use on't."

Sall soon excused herself to attend to household duties, while Emily sunk upon one of the piles of skins. From the painful reverie into which she fell, our heroine was soon aroused by the harsh voice of Sally, calling her to dinner.

Reluctantly Emily arose, and made her way into the outer room, where the not over-prepossessing meal was placed upon the table. Sally and the two Indians were awaiting the appearance of their guest. Her entrance was the signal for a general attack upon the meal. Sally wheeled herself into position, and opened a charge upon the edibles, while the Indians, seizing such portions as best suited their palates, squatted upon the ground, and swallowed rather than ate the food. Emily shrunk from the spectacle, yet seated herself upon the block placed for her, and managed to swallow a small quantity of the roasted meat. Romantic Sall, meanwhile, entertained her guest with a most incessant flow of conversation, until Emily arose, and sought the other apartment, hoping to remain for a time undisturbed. Her solitude was of short duration. Sally, having performed her few

duties, soon entered, and her flow of coarse remarks burst in an agonizing torrent upon the devoted head of Emily.

Another dreary meal, very like the preceding, and the shades of evening were falling upon the earth. She was rejoiced now, and, stealing away as soon as possible, ensconced herself in the skins, to quiet her sorrows in slumber.

Once she awoke, and feeling a sense of curiosity, raised her head to listen. She heard the heavy breathing of Sally in the other bed, and, satisfied that she slept, Emily arose, and cautiously lifted the bear-skin which separated the apartments. A bright fire blazed in the rough chimney. One of the savages slept, while the second leaned sleepily against the wall. The slight noise made by the raising of the skins startled the guard, and, looking up he saw the face of Emily peering through the aperture. With a guttural exclamation, he left his post and moved that way.

With a little cry of alarm, she sprung from the place, and, sinking into her bed, lay shivering with fear. The Indian opened the skins, thrust his tawny face through, and gazed until satisfied all was quiet, when, with a grunt like that of a satisfied grizzly bear, he turned away.

It was morning, and the sun was just rising above the trees, when the captive again awoke to be startled by a wild outcry without. She was not long in determining that something unusual had happened, as the village was a perfect bedlam of cries and vociferations. Women and children were abroad hurrying about in the greatest excitement. What could it mean? Emily's first thought was that the renegade had returned, but a moment's reflection convinced her this could not be the case. She looked around for her companion. Sally had gone, and as she was probably in the outer room, our heroine took her way thither.

Just outside the door, she was met by one of the Indian braves, who, taking her quickly by the arm, led her into the apartment she had just left.

"The White Bird must not leave her nest," he said, and stood guarding the entrance, in a manner which showed his determination.

"But, tell me," she ventured, "what it is that causes this commotion among your people?"

"The White Bird can not know," he returned, sternly. "Make her young heart heavy."

The poor captive sunk down upon her bed of skins, and the savage left the apartment to gaze on the spectacle without. As soon as he was gone, the tumult without seemed to increase, as did, also, the anxiety of Emily. She examined the wall over her couch, and, finding a small aperture, she soon succeeded in enlarging it, so as to afford quite a view.

Men, women and children soon appeared, in one brawling, yelling mass, gathered around an object of common interest in the centre. Just as they were opposite her prison-house, an opening in the throng revealed to her anxious gaze the cause of all the excitement. It was a white prisoner—his arms pinioned behind him, and guarded by savage braves. Women and children pressed around him, hooting, taunting and belabouring him with fists and clubs.

Surely, she knew that tall form—those handsome features, and backwoods garb! It was, indeed, Alfred Markley, who stood thus in the midst of cruel captors. Her head swam, while a thousand questions and conjectures rushed through her

brain. Where was the brother of the prisoner? Was he also a captive? She could no longer think that he was dead.

A long scene of commotion ensued without, which Emily dared not attempt to witness. At length it ceased, and, with yells of triumph, the throng moved away. Shortly afterward, Sally Simms entered the apartment. The maiden felt sure this person could enlighten her, if she would, so she remarked as unconcernedly as possible:

"I heard quite a commotion without, but could not learn the cause."

"Yas," was the answer, "the Injins has got a white prisoner, and was puttin' him through the exercises. He's a smart-lookin' young chap, and should known better'n to come so near Billy Ashbey's place. His scouts are a deal too smart for white hunters."

"Was the prisoner taken near this place?" Emily questioned, her interest becoming still greater.

"Not fur away, I should tek' it!" was the reply. "A party set out tew jine the people acrost the river, an', in about tew hours, cum' back with this chap. I'm kind o' sorry fer him; but he orter l'arn wisdom, an' I guess he will when he gits out o' this."

"But how came he to be so near? What was he doing on this side of the river?" Emily asked, her suspense overcoming all other feelings.

The woman noticed the anxiety of the maiden, and all communicativeness was at an end.

"I don't know," she replied, abruptly. "I believe he had one or two companions, what got shot; but that's all I knows. Breakfast's ready."

Poor Emily! She wished for nothing to eat; so, merely saying that she desired none, she was left alone with all her fearful doubts and surmises. She knew not that Sally had fabricated the last portion of her story, merely to add to the poor captive's sufferings!

Chapter IX

A Taste of the Sticks.

As early morning broke over the earth, two persons stood upon an eminence which overlooked the Indian village where Ashbey had taken up his residence. So close were they, that scarce two hundred yards separated them from the very cabin which contained Emily. These persons were none other than David Barring and his ally, Charles Markley. The former was pointing out to his companion the cabin of the renegade, and they were anxiously watching for any sign which should assure them that the one they sought was a prisoner within.

Was she there! If so, how long before they could rescue her? For the thought of failure never entered the lover's heart. Suddenly, from every hut and wigwam, poured forth a host of savages, young, old, and heterogeneous, taking their noisy way toward the lower portion of the village.

As the three whites had approached the village, Alfred Markley had preferred an earnest request that he might be allowed to make the circuit of it, hoping to discover something of advantage to himself and companions. To this request, the scout had granted a ready consent—really supposing but little danger would exist at an hour so early.

Alfred set out joyously, fully confident of rejoining his companions within an hour. He had found the way more rough and obstructed than anticipated; so that, in order to keep the village in view, and exercise due caution, he was obliged to proceed very slowly. For this he cared but little, rather preferring to await the time when the people would be astir, as the sanguine fellow more than half fancied he would thus be enabled to see the prisoner.

A war-party of Indians, eager for the trail, had left the village a few moments before the three adventurers reached the vicinity. No sooner were they beyond the reach of other eyes, than their ardour cooled, and the entire party loitered about, until the light footfall of Alfred fell upon their keen ears. Without the least commotion, they instantly glided into cover.

All unsuspecting of danger, Alfred walked directly into the trap. He had been obliged to make a slight *detour*, in order to avoid some obstacles in his way. This had taken him more deeply into the forest. The first premonitions he felt of danger, was upon noticing some dusky form glide from tree to tree. What it was, he could not tell; but, knowing he was in danger, he darted behind another tree, only to find himself face to face with a hideously-painted savage!

Alfred was not the man to be tamely caught. His rifle was in his hand, and, darting back a pace, he delivered the astonished native a blow which ended his war-path forever, and transplanted him at once to the happy hunting-grounds of his forefathers. Scarcely had the blow descended, when three or four athletic braves hurled themselves upon the youth. Dropping his rifle as he fell, Alfred drew his hunting-knife, and, as an assailant exposed his breast, it was buried in his bosom.

A despairing yell arose from the Indians, as a third received a severe cut, and the remaining two, who were hurrying toward the scene, paused, dismayed. Putting forth all his strength, the youth shook himself from those who held him, and stood, for a moment, free. Ere he could realize the fact, a heavy blow from behind felled him to the ground, and, in a moment, he was bound, hand and foot.

Leaving their slain companions, the Indians made their way into the village, sending the wounded brave before them to bear the joyful tidings. As the clamorous multitude rushed about him, Alfred nerved himself for the worst.

As the word was given, he set his teeth, braced his nerves, and bounded forward like a deer. The young settler was strong of limb, and very active. None were fleet of foot than he, and the speed with which he set forth, fairly astonished the warriors themselves. Nearly half the line was passed before the blows seemed to touch him. Then, as they came with more effect, he staggered beneath their weight. His strength proved sufficient, however, and he reached the end of the line, smarting and bruised, yet with a spirit unbroken. A yell from the Indians showed their appreciation of the sport, as the prisoner was led away to a place of security.

Upon the outskirts of the village was a strong, dark old cabin, built of logs, and covered with bark. The structure was clumsily formed, but solid, and the door so constructed as to bar heavily upon the outside.

This above-ground dungeon was opened, and Alfred, securely bound, was thrust in. The savages took a hasty survey, and, finding the place secure, set a guard and departed.

The prisoner's arms and shoulders were bruised and swollen, while his head throbbed and ached fearfully. He endeavoured to think calmly of himself and companions, but the effort was too much, and he bowed his head with a groan.

* * * * *

"I'm afeard they've got Alf," said David, with a shake of the head.

Charles feared the same, but he could not bear the thought.

A few moments confirmed their worst suspicions, and revealed the fact that the daring youth was really a prisoner. With a gasp of pain, Charles clutched the arm of the scout, whispering:

"Good Heaven! it *is* Alfred."

"It's certainly him," returned Dave, in a collected manner; "an' I afeard he's got us all into a scrape this time. But we can't help it now. Thar's one advantage; it'll show us what force the reds have got here, an' we can calculate accordin'ly."

"But may there not be danger for Alfred?" asked Charles. "I fear they may sacrifice him, at once, in their excitement and rage."

"Not a bit o' danger there," responded David, with the utmost coolness. "Yer see, Bill has control of all that's done in this village, and the red reptiles 'd no more dare take the life of a prisoner, than jest nothin' at all. They'll save him till their cruel leader gits home—then'll be the danger."

It was a hard task to witness the preparations for torturing the poor fellow, but it could not be helped, and they were forced to be spectators of what seemed, to Charles especially, so cruel.

"Good, good!" vociferated the scout, ardently, yet in a careful manner; "but Alf did that capitally. He went in like a regular Injin-fighter, born and bred to it."

The scout chuckled as he witnessed the sight.

"I knew they didn't catch the boy nappin'," was the satisfied exclamation which followed. "Two o' the scamps got fixed, an' more of 'em got to follow. I've been in Wild Bill's pen once; but he didn't keep me, nor he can't keep Alf."

As nothing more could now be accomplished, the party drew cautiously away, to await the coming of night. David had counted sixteen warriors, and he judged, rightly enough, that there were others keeping a strict watch over the other prisoner—the fair Emily Hinton. In all, probably twenty warriors. It seemed a fearful odds—twenty against two; but the scout was not a man to hesitate. The thought of abandoning a friend or comrade never entered his noble heart.

Chapter X

The Invincible Vincible.

To Charles was given the task of liberating Alfred. The scout having instructed him thoroughly in all points, the utmost assurance was felt that the mission would be successful. For himself David reserved the more difficult task of discovering the whereabouts of Emily. Each enterprise was fraught with danger, yet there was no drawback to such brave hearts.

He had perceived, before setting out, that the easiest mode of reaching the hut which he believed held the maiden, would be by striking several of the nearest wigwams. As he fancied little danger from approaching so closely, he glided into the deep shade of one, and stole noiselessly along. Human ears could scarce have detected the presence of the man, but brute instinct was to achieve what human faculties could not accomplish. The project of the scout came very near being summarily defeated, in an unforeseen manner.

He had passed the first hut, and reached the rear of the second, when a lean, half-starved Indian dog came yelping and bounding furiously from some unknown covert. He paused when he came near the scout, and stopped his barking.

David recoiled and sunk close to the earth, awaiting with anxiety the result. He soon became satisfied that the short outcry had created no alarm. The brute now stood with his sharp nose pointing toward the scout, sniffing the air in a most unmistakable manner.

"I've got it now," he thought, taking from his wallet a piece of freshly-roasted meat; "the dog is about starved to death, and two to one I'll make a compromise with the brute. If this won't do it, something else will," and he sought the handle of his knife.

The dog had scented the meat at first, and, prompted by hunger, it approached the scout, lapped its jaws gleefully. David tossed the dog a portion of the meat, which was greedily swallowed. Throwing it the remainder, the scout prepared for action. Placing his keen knife between his teeth, he sprung upon the beast, with a grasp which would have strangled a giant. Throwing it upon its back, he almost severed the head from the body, and raising his rifle as soon as the struggle ceased, pursued his way.

No disturbance had resulted, and David continued his way, slowly but surely. In a short time he reached the rear of the hut he sought. No sound greeted his ears, and, moving nearer, he applied his eye to a crevice where the mud had fallen from the logs. By a small fire which was burning, the interior was quite distinctly illuminated. Four Indians were in the apartment, three of whom were stretched upon the ground, while the fourth sat dozing upon one of the rude blocks. David noticed the partition of skins.

"That says Emily," he mused, drawing back to breathe. "I'll go and see what I can make out."

Acting upon the thought, he moved stealthily to the end occupied by the maiden. He readily found an aperture, but all was dark within, and he could make nothing out. For once his eagerness got the better of discretion, and applying his mouth to the crevice, he softly whispered:

"Emily!"

There was no response, and he repeated the summons a trifle more distinctly. As fortune willed, Emily was soundly sleeping, while Sall Simms was wide awake. The latter heard the voice of the scout, and, approaching the place softly whispered:

“What and who is it?”

“Davy Barring—come to get ye away from this.”

Sally started when she heard the name of the bold scout, spoken by his own voice.

“Hist!” she softly whispered.

“Someone is coming,” she added; “be silent for a moment.”

Listening to be sure that David had taken the bait, she glided from the apartment. In another instant she had communicated all she knew to the savage guard still awake. He uttered a grunt of satisfaction, and proceeded to arouse his companions, while Sally hastened back to the scout.

“David!” came gently to his expectant ears. He raised himself, and inquired if all was right.

“Yis, the Injin guard is gone,” she whispered, in a tone much louder than previously used.

“Hush, not too loud,” cautioned the scout, fearing she might betray the presence of a stranger.

“Wal, I’ll be careful,” she whispered, in a slightly-modulated key. “But whar’s yer comrades? Ye didn’t come alone?”

“That don’t sound much like Emily,” the scout thought to himself. “Maybe she’s dropped that polite way she used to have o’ speakin’. Though I did like to hear such words from her purty lips.”

“I’m alone here,” he whispered; “though Charles Markley—”

Before David could proceed further he became aware that his presence was discovered. The four Indians had stolen cautiously from the hut, and were silently approaching, when one of their number stepped upon a round stick, which came near throwing him to the ground. Seeing their movements were discovered the savages gave a yell, and rushed forward.

Quick as thought the scout’s rifle flew to his shoulder, while its tongue of flame arrested one savage midway.

But he was not to escape this time. The Indian with the hatchet hurled it furiously, and although the blade passed harmlessly, the handle struck just above David’s ear, knocking him senseless to the earth. At the same moment the others fired their rifles, but the bullets passed harmlessly by. His fall had saved him.

Great, indeed, was their rejoicing when they found how mighty was the foe that had been conquered. Their savage exultation seemed to know no bounds. Many were anxious that he might at once be put to torture, but the brave who held command during the absence of Ashbey ordered the prisoner to be put in confinement, to await the return of his superior. As no one dared dispute his authority, the prisoner was led away toward the place where Alfred was already confined.

They were within some fifty yards of the prison, when a loud yell, quickly followed by the report of a musket, broke upon the group. The ringing crack of a

rifle followed a moment after, while a more fearful yell told that some victim had fallen.

Too well the scout knew the meaning of all this. Charles had, in some manner, been discovered. The warriors of the party, leaving a force to guard the prisoner, started in the direction of the reports. Just as they reached the prison-door, a more distant rifle-shot, followed by another yell of pain, told that the fugitive was still free.

But David could see no more.

Could it be that Charles had succeeded in freeing his brother? The thought was full of pleasure, but it seemed hardly probable. He called aloud:

"Alf, my boy!"

"Here!" was the answer. "And you, my brave friend, here too?"

"Yis, my boy," the hunter responded, in as cheerful tones as he could assume; "though it's mighty against my will, that's true as ye live. But I've bin in worse places nor this, an' even in this very hole once afore. We'll make our way out, no kind o' danger about that. Charley would have let you loose afore this, only the red rascals got wind o' what he's at."

David had by this time found the whereabouts of the young man, and bending closer, he whispered in his ear:

"We're not so destitute as you may suppose. I've two pistols under my coat which the dogs overlooked, and they may come in good play if either of us gets a hand loose."

The knowledge that they had weapons seemed instantly to raise the drooping spirits of Alfred.

Chapter XI

Wild Bill Tries an Experiment.

It was some hours after the capture of the scout, and the warriors had returned from the unavailing pursuit of Charles Markley. Five had fallen during the day, nearly a third of their number. Although two daring foes were in their power, one at least still wandered through the forest. Adverse fate seemed upon them, and they were moody and silent. The villagers were still astir, as the exciting events precluded the possibility of sleep, even from Indian braves. They feared some dire retribution breaking upon them, and mourning and lamentations were rife.

A solitary figure approached the village, casting anxious and suspicious glances about him. The disturbed manner of the inhabitants, who seemed scarcely to notice his presence, filled him with vague wonder and alarm. As he observed the unusual disorder, the renegade, for it was no other, gave vent to his feelings in sundry mutterings and ejaculations.

"I wonder what in the name o' Satan has been goin' on here to-night? Needn't tell Bill Ashbey that all's right and tight, not by any means. Thank my good fortin' I'm come home, and can soon find out what all this rumpus is about."

He sprang up to the door of his cabin, and raised the wooden latch, but it was barred upon the inside. Giving a peculiar whistle, it was opened, and the savage stood aside with a grunt of welcome for his superior to enter. The renegade strode into the room, and looked about with a searching gaze. Two other savages were within, who had started to their feet at his approach. Giving them a simple stare of recognition, he turned to the one who had admitted him.

"Wal," he growled, "you've got home, I see. What luck? Is the gal safe?"

The Indian known as Dark Cloud paused a moment, then slowly replied:

"White Bird sleep there," indicating the apartment beyond. "Pale-face no cross trail of red-man. Pale brave come after; try to steal White Bird from her chief."

"So that's it, is it?" He spoke carelessly, as if to inspire himself with courage. "Some fool's come to steal away the gal! But d'ye know these pale-faces? Have you ever seen them before?"

"Pale-Face Long-Leg kill *one* brave," the Indian returned, holding up one finger by way of emphasis. "Leg no long enough to run 'way! Me throw tomahawk—knock him down—"

A movement upon the part of the renegade broke off the communication.

"So Davy Barrington has got into my hands again!" hissed the renegade. "We'll see if he'll git away slick as he did afore. I'll have Sall up an' git my supper. While that's cookin' I'll over and look at the birds."

Unbarring the door, the three passed quietly in. The scout rose upon their entrance. For a few momenta those two men, so opposite in character and disposition, stood regarding each other in silence.

"Well, old Davy, I'm glad to see you again," Ashbey exclaimed.

"I can't say I'm glad to see ye," the scout returned, gazing steadily in the eye of the other; "but if any person on the face o' the earth's got to be cussed by the sight o' yer miserable face, why, it may as well be Davy Barrington as anybody."

He bit his lip, to check the words which would have followed, while the other ground his teeth with rage.

"That's bold talk for a man what's got to die to-morrow!" the scoundrel muttered. "You may forget that yer in my hands now, and ye shall die like a dog? You've took too many liberties with me and mine for me to forget it. The day of reckonin' has now come, and we will bring all these things out right."

He paused to note the effect of his words, but the scout calmly replied:

"It may be Davy Barrington dies to-morrow; thar's certain about life but death, and maybe my time has come. I do not fear death, Bill Ashbey; I kin meet it if necessary; can you say the same?"

"You'd better tell that to someone else," returned the renegade, endeavouring to assume a careless tone. "You needn't tell Bill Ashbey you ain't afraid to die, for I know better."

"You kin only judge me by yourself," said David, in a calm voice. "If ye're not ready to meet yer Maker, I advise you, as a friend would, if ye had any friends, to git ready. Maybe that I shall die to-morrow, or it may be not; but, I can tell you, Bill Ashbey, I shall see your body a corpse long afore my own hour comes. *I know that—mind you!*"

The renegade turned pale, and shivered with a mortal terror.

"So-ho!" he exclaimed, with an attempt at bravado; "you think to scare me, old chap. To try your skill, suppose I have your head cut off at once; it will save the trouble of roasting ye, and a host of other inconveniences."

"If you are ready to die, I'll not object," was the calm reply. "It were enough for one life to rid the earth of such a cuss as you!"

Ashbey gazed upon the man for a few moments in silence, then turned to Alfred. Bending upon the young man a look of contempt, he said:

"So, young puppy-face, you came out here, eh? Wal, I don't wonder. I s'pose ye got so scart ye run any way. But ye'll make a good roasting-piece, and my braves will like the fun o' toasting yer lamb's carcass!"

"You can roast me if you choose," the young man calmly replied; "but I think your braves will remember me for some time to come."

"Of course, we're glad to say ye did somethin' afore ye died; but we don't intend ye'll ever harm us any more. But it seems you two weren't alone; I hear thar's another what run for't."

He waited some moments before either spoke. His manner gave them the assurance that Charles was still at large, and unharmed.

"I advise yer not ter pry into that," David said, at length, in a decided manner; "ye'll find out soon enough about it. Ye may think ye're safe, now ye've got us two; I hope ye do; but ye kin remember what I told ye, an' when yer last hour's come, I hope ye'll find yer conscience free, and go without any sorrow for what ye've done."

The renegade turned and walked away, for he could not bear to hear such language, it touched him in a vulnerable spot. He came back, however, and added, in a tone of intense determination:

"Ye kin have the rest o' the night to say yer prayers in; for when the sun gits up to-morrow mornin', ye'll come out, Davy Barrington, and ye never'll see that sun set again."

Going to the door he called two of the Indian guards within, bidding them to keep a strict watch over the prisoners till morning.

* * * * *

Morning came at length. The prisoners had conversed most of the night, having slept but very little after the departure of Ashbey. A commotion without the door was audible, and each looked with expectation.

"Are they coming?" asked Alfred, apprehensively.

"So it seems," replied the scout. "I suppose they think I have lived long enough, and if it must come, I know not that it matters how soon."

"Oh, my friend!" Alfred began, but his emotion choked him, and he could proceed no further.

"Be a man!" the scout returned. "If they are ready for me, I am prepared. Keep up courage; I may sarcomvent the serpents after all."

The door was now opened, and two braves entered. Without a word they grasped the scout by the arms, and led him forth. The braves who had remained within followed; the door was shut and barred. Alfred was left alone to his own gloomy thoughts and fears.

It cost the scout an effort to maintain his composure, but he looked calmly around upon the crowd of exulting savages. David's first thought was of the

renegade, and he looked around to find him. He stood a little apart from the tawny throng, his arms folded, and a look of fiendish pleasure upon his features. He muttered a few words in the Indian tongue as the party passed him, and David was taken at once to the place of torture—the open place in front of the renegade's cabin.

As usual, the gauntlet was first to be run. At a word from the renegade, the party formed themselves in two lines, prepared to shower vengeance upon the head and shoulders of the doomed scout. Two guards held him firmly by the arms, while a third proceeded to cut the bonds which held his hands.

"Now or never," thought the scout, as his arms fell by his side.

David had noted carefully his surroundings. All had dropped their guns, save the two guards, who now held his arms. The nearest building was distant nearly twenty paces. If he could reach that, he might, under its cover, gain the forest, when he would care little for those who might pursue.

With his plans well and coolly formed, David twisted himself instantly from the grasp of his foes. Springing quickly aside, he drew forth his pistols, which had been, strangely enough, overlooked, and stood for a moment confronting them. The two Indians who had guns raised them, but the scout was too quick. Before they could fire, both his pistols belched forth their contents, sending death to the nearest, and severely wounding the other.

The sudden and unexpected movement caused a momentary consternation, and seizing one of the Indian's guns, David sprung toward the hut. He reached it in safety, and, only turning his head, sped onward to the forest.

"Shoot him! Fire after the dog; you never can catch him!" bawled Ashbey.

In obedience to the peremptory order, the Indians stopped and fired away at random, no mark being in view. David had heard the order, and seeking the cover of a large tree waited till the scattering shots ceased. Then cautiously levelling the musket, he fired at the head of his most mortal enemy. The bullet missed its mark. It passed within an inch of Ashbey's head, and killed a savage beyond. At the same moment a second shot followed, from no great distance, and a second brave rolled upon the ground. The survivors paused for a moment in confusion, then turned and fled frantically back to the cover of their village.

Foaming with anger, and almost wild with disappointment, Bill Ashbey turned his excited steps toward his own cabin. The prisoner had fled. Dumfounded, he stood for a moment, unable to speak or move.

Then his self-possession seemed to return. He had forgotten that Emily was left without a guard while they had joined in the pursuit of David. Such was the fact, and one which Emily in her fear had not been slow to discover. Sall Simms was absent, and, hardly realizing what she did, the maid stole from the hut, and took her way toward the forest with all speed.

The renegade readily comprehended these facts, and he knew that the maiden could have been gone but a moment. It was easily to find her trail, and he at once assembled his remaining braves. Ten of the number had been killed or disabled; eight only remained. Of these two must be left to guard the prison, and, as Wild Bill took the trail, a feeling of fear passed over him. What if they should again meet the scout? Well he knew a mortal terror possessed his few remaining braves, and but the appearance of their dread foe would send them back in utter affright.

Yet his savage heart knew no relenting, and nothing but death itself could shake his villainous resolves. In an hour they came upon the fleeing maiden. She had sunk upon a log, unable to continue her weary flight. At sight of her cruel pursuers, she started to her feet, and endeavoured to flee, but with yells of delight, the savages intercepted her.

"Ye needn't try tew run any further," howled the miscreant, as he bounded toward her. "Ye've led me a good chase out here intew the woods, an' I'll jist take ye back, an' maybe ye'll git another chance o' runnin' away. *Maybe* ye will!" he added with emphasis.

"*Remember what I told ye!*" broke in a loud voice at no great distance.

Before any one could move, there came the sharp report of a rifle—the dull "thud" of a bullet, and the renegade fell back, motionless, to the earth. The warriors gazed around in horror, but, before they could form any idea of the danger which threatened them, two more reports followed, and two warriors fell beneath the deadly aim of the borderers.

With wild yells three athletic figures dashed from a cover near by, and, with clubbed rifles, rushed upon the fleeing natives. David Barrington was foremost, and, with a sweep of his ponderous weapon one unlucky Indian measured his length upon the earth. The remainder flew with fear-given speed over the ground, and Charles and Alfred soon returned from the pursuit.

We need not describe the fond meeting between the lovers. No pen could do justice to the emotions of those happy hearts. After the first fond greeting was given, the maiden turned to Alfred.

"How did you escape?" she asked. "I supposed you still imprisoned."

"It was very cleverly managed," Alfred returned. "No sooner was David led forth, than a knife was slipped into my prison, with which I soon severed my bonds. To work my way through the roof during the excitement elsewhere was but a short task—when I at once took my way to the forest. There I was provided with a rifle, taken from the Indians. We saw the party which started in pursuit of you, and even gathered from their conversation their object. We followed them, and here we are."

"Oh! my dear friends!" the maiden sobbed; "how can I ever, ever repay you?"

"Don't talk of that, my girl," broke in David. "Thar's not one of us but would be glad tew die for yer sake, and as fer reward, ye kin fix the matter with Charley, here, when we git tew the settlements."

Emily blushed at the honestly meant insinuation, while the brothers turned to the body of Ashbey. He was dead, the bullet having passed directly through his heart. So sudden, indeed, had been his transit, that the expression of his features still remained unchanged.

They turned from the spectacle with a shudder of horror.

"Let us leave this place," said Emily, placing a hand upon the arm of Charles. "This is too dreadful!"

They moved from the spot, and slowly took their way through the forest, toward the distant river.

Days passed. The Mississippi was reached, the boat hidden by the scout was drawn forth, and the party launched upon the wide waters. Rowing by night, hiding and sleeping by day, their weary journey was continued.

It is not our purpose to follow them through the many trials and adventures which it was their lot to encounter. After many days and nights, they reached a place of safety, where the father and mother of the Markleys were anxiously awaiting them.

The subsequent history of the war is well known. At its conclusion our adventurers returned to their former possessions. Desolate, indeed, seemed the lone ruins of the Hinton cabin, but, under the energetic efforts of Charles, now the husband of Emily, the place soon resumed its pleasant aspect. Happiness and love reigned there, and only the remembrance of one fearful chain of events in the past, ever called a tear to the eye of the young and happy wife.
