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THE RIFLEMEN OF THE
OHIO: A STORY OF THE
EARLY DAYS ALONG "THE
BEAUTIFUL RIVER"

Joseph Altsheler

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along "The Beautiful River"**

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Joseph A. Altsheler

The Riflemen of the Ohio: A Story of the Early Days along «The Beautiful River»

CHAPTER I

THE EYE OF THE FLEET

The fleet of boats and canoes bearing supplies for the far east turned from the Mississippi into the wide mouth of the Ohio, and it seemed, for a time, that they had come into a larger river instead of a tributary. The splendid stream, called by the Indians "The Beautiful River," flowed silently, a huge flood between high banks, and there was not one among the voyagers who did not feel instinctively the depths beneath him.

A single impulse caused every paddle and oar to lie at rest a few moments, and, while they swung gently with the slow current just beyond the point where one merged into the other, they looked at the two mighty rivers, the Mississippi, coming from the vast unknown depths of the northwest, rising no man knew where, and the Ohio, trailing its easy length a thousand miles through thick forests haunted by the most warlike tribes of North America. The smaller river—small only by comparison—bore the greater dangers, and they knew it.

It was the fleet of Adam Colfax, and the five who had gone to New Orleans and who had come back, triumphing over so many dangers in the coming and the going, were still with him. Henry Ware, Paul Cotter, and Shif'less Sol Hyde sat in the foremost boat, and the one just behind them contained Silent Tom Ross and Long Jim Hart. After the great battle on the Lower Mississippi in which they defeated the Indians and desperadoes under Alvarez, the voyage had remained peaceful as they pulled up to the Ohio.

"It's our own river again, Henry," said Paul. Both felt a sort of proprietary interest in the Ohio.

"It's so, and I'm glad to look on it again," replied Henry, "but the Shawnees, the Miamis, the Wyandots, and others will never let us by without a fight."

He spoke with gravity. But a boy in years, the many stern scenes through which he had passed and his natural instinct for the wilderness made him see far. He was thinking of the thousand miles, every one with its dangers, that they must travel before they could unload their supplies at Pittsburgh for the struggling colonists.

No concern of the future troubled the soul of Long Jim Hart. He was once more in the region that he loved. He looked at one river and then at the other, and his eyes glowed.

"Ain't it fine, Henry?" he said. "These two pow'ful big streams! Back uv them the firm, solid country that you kin tread on without the fear uv breakin' through, an' then the cool steadyin' airs that are blowin' on our faces!"

"Yes, it is fine, Jim!" said Henry with emphasis.

He, too, ceased to think, for the moment, of the future, and paid more attention to the meeting of the rivers. The Ohio, at that point, although the tributary, was wider than the Mississippi, and for some distance up its stream was deeper. Its banks, sloping and high, were clothed in dense forest and underbrush to the water's edge. Nothing broke this expanse of dark green. It was lone and desolate, save for the wild fowl that circled over it before they darted toward the water. The note of everything was size, silence, and majesty.

"We begin the second stage of our great journey," said Adam Colfax to Henry.

Then the leader raised his hand as a signal, hundreds of oars and paddles struck the water, the fleet leaped into life again, and boats and canoes, driven by strong arms, swung forward against the

slow current of the Ohio. Some rower in a leading boat struck up a wild song of love and war, mostly war, and others joined, the chorus swelling to twenty, fifty, then a hundred voices. It was a haunting air, and forest and water gave back the volume of sound in far, weird echoes.

But fleet and song merely heightened the effect of the wilderness. Nobody saw them. Nobody heard them. Desolation was always before them, and, as they passed, closed in again behind them. But the men themselves felt neither lonely nor afraid. Used to victory over hardship and danger, their spirits rose high as they began the ascent of the second river, the last half of their journey.

Adam Colfax, stern New England man that he was, felt the glow, and Paul, the imaginative boy, felt it, too.

"I don't see how such an expedition as this can fail to get through to Pittsburgh," he said.

"I'd like to go on jest ez we're goin' all the time," said Shif'less Sol with lazy content. "I could curl up under a rail and lay thar fur a thousand miles. Jest think what a rest that would be, Paul!"

Henry Ware said nothing. The Mississippi had now dropped out of sight, and before them stretched only the river that hugged the Dark and Bloody Ground in its curves. He knew too much to trust to solitude and silence. He never ceased to search the forests and thickets on either shore with his trained eyes. He looked for little things, a bough or a bush that might bend slightly against the gentle wind that was blowing, or the faintest glimpse of a feather on a far hill, but he saw nothing that was not in perfect accord with nature. The boughs and the bushes bent as they should bend. If his eye found a feather it was on the back of the scarlet tanager or the blue jay. Before him flowed the river, a sheet of molten gold in the sun, current meeting boat. All was as it should be.

But Henry continued to watch. He, more than any other, was the eye of the fleet, will and use helping the gift of nature, and, as he knew, they had come to depend upon him. He was doing the work expected of him as well as the work that he loved, and he meant that he should not fail.

The song, mellow, haunting, and full of echoes, went on, now rising in volume, then falling to a softer note, and then swelling again. They finished the last verse and bar, and began a new one, tuned to the stroke of oar and paddle, and the fleet went forward swiftly, smoothly, apparently in a world that contained only peace.

Jim Hart turned his face to the cooling airs that began to blow a little stronger. Paul was rapt far away among the rosy clouds of the future. Shif'less Sol, who held neither oar nor paddle, closed his eyes and leaned luxuriously against a mast, but Henry sat immovable, watching, always watching.

The hours, one by one, dropped behind them. The sun swung toward the zenith and stood poised in the center of the skies, a vast globe of reddish gold in a circling sea of blue. The light from the high heavens was so brilliant that Henry could see small objects on either shore, although they were in the center of a stream, a mile wide. He saw nothing that did not belong there, but still he watched.

"Noon!" called Adam Colfax. "And we'll land and eat!"

Rowers and paddlers must have food and plenty of it, and there was a joyous shout as the leader turned the prow of his boat toward a cove in the northern shore.

"See anything that looks hostile in there, Henry?" asked Adam Colfax.

He spoke rather lightly. Despite his cautious nature and long experience, he had begun to believe that the danger was small. His was a powerful party. The Northern Indians would hear of the great defeat sustained by their Southern brethren, and would avoid a foe whom they could not conquer. He looked for an easy and quiet journey up the Ohio.

"I don't see anything but the ground and the trees," replied Henry, smiling, but continuing, nevertheless, to search the forest with those wonderfully keen eyes of his.

"Perhaps we can find game, too," added Adam Colfax. "We need fresh supplies, and a country deserted like this should be swarming with deer and buffalo."

"Perhaps," said Henry.

When their boat touched the bank, Henry and Shif'less Sol sprang ashore, and slid silently into the forest. There they made a wide curve about the cove that had served as a landing, but found no

signs of life except the tracks of game. After a while they sat down on a log and listened, but heard nothing save the usual sounds of the forest.

"What do you think of it, Sol?" asked Henry.

"O' course, Henry," replied the shiftless one judiciously, "we've got to expect trouble sometime or other, but I ain't lookin' fur it yet awhile. We can't have no dealin's with it till it comes."

Henry shook his head. He believed that the instinct of Shif'less Sol, usually so alert, was now sleeping. They were sitting in the very thickest of the forest, and he looked up at the roof of green leaves, here so dense that only slim triangles of blue sky showed between. The leaves stirred a little. There was a flash of flame against the green, but it was only a scarlet tanager that shot past, then a flash of blue, but it was only a blue jay. Around them, clustering close to the trees, was the dense undergrowth, and they could not see twenty yards away.

The faint, idle breeze died of languor. The bushes stood up straight. The leaves hung motionless. The forest, which was always to Henry a live thing, seemed no longer to breathe. A leaf could have been heard had it fallen. Then out of that deadly stillness came a sudden note, a strange, wild song that Henry alone heard. He looked up, but he saw no bird, no singer of the woods. Yet the leaves were rippling. The wind had risen again, and it was playing upon the leaves in a mystic, solemn way, calling words that he knew or seemed to know. He glanced at Shif'less Sol, but his comrade heard only the wind, raising his head a little higher that its cool breath might fan his face.

To Henry, always attuned to the wilderness and its spirit, this sudden voice out of the ominous silence was full of meaning. He started at the first trill. It was not a vain and idle song. A strange shiver ran down his spine, and the hair on his head felt alive.

The great youth raised his head. The shiver was still in his spine. All his nerves and muscles were tense and drawn. The wind still sang on the leaves, but it was a warning note to Henry, and he understood. He sat rigid and alert, in the attitude of one who is ready to spring, and his eyes, as he looked up as if to seek the invisible hand among the green leaves, were full of fire and meaning.

Chance made the shiftless one glance at his comrade, and he was startled.

"What is it, Henry?" he asked.

"I was hearing something."

"I hear nothin' but the wind."

"I hear that—and much more."

Shif'less Sol glanced again at his comrade, but Henry's face said nothing, and the shiftless one was not a man to ask many questions. He was silent, and Henry listened attentively to the melodious breath of the wind, so gay, so light to one whose spirit was attuned only to the obvious, but so full of warning to him. He looked up, but he could see nothing. Nevertheless, the penetrating note came forth, never ceasing, drumming incessantly upon the boy's brain.

"I think we'd better go back to the camp, Sol," he said presently.

"So do I," said Shif'less Sol, "an' report that thar's nothin' to be found."

Henry made no reply as they plunged into the green thicket, treading soundlessly on soft moccasins and moving with such skill that leaves and boughs failed to rustle as they passed. But the note of the wind among the leaves pursued the boy. He heard it long after the glade in which they had sat was lost to sight, fainter and fainter, but full of warning, and then only an echo, but a warning still.

The feelings color what the eyes see. Shif'less Sol beheld only a splendid green forest that contained nothing but game for their hunting, deer, bear, buffalo, wild turkey, and other things good, but Henry saw over all the green an ominous, reddish tint. Game might be in those woods—no doubt it was swarming there—but he felt another presence, far more deadly than bear or panther.

The boy saw a small object on the ground, almost hidden in the grass, and, without slackening his speed, he stooped and picked it up so silently and deftly that Shif'less Sol, who was a little in advance, neither saw nor heard him.

It was the feather of an eagle, one that might have dropped from the wing of some soaring bird, but the quick eye of the boy saw that the quill had been cut with a knife, as the feather of a goose used to be sharpened for a pen.

He suppressed the sharp exclamation that rose to his lips, and thrust the feather into the bosom of his buckskin hunting shirt. The last echo of the warning note came to him and then died away in the forest.

They were at the camp fifteen minutes later, and the eyes of Shif'less Sol beamed at the joyous sight. In all their long journey they had found no more pleasant anchorage, a sheltered cove of the Ohio, and firm ground, clear of undergrowth, sloping gently to the water's edge. The boats were tied in a great curve about the beach, and nearly all the men were ashore, glad to feel once more the freedom of the land. Some still sung the wild songs they had picked up in the West Indies or on the Spanish Main, others were feeding fires that crackled merrily and that flung great bands of red flame against the glowing yellow curtain of the sunlight. Pleasant odors arose from pots and kettles. The air of frolic was pervasive. The whole company was like so many boys with leave to play.

Henry left Shif'less Sol and approached Adam Colfax, who was sitting alone on the exposed root of a big tree.

"You found nothing, of course?" said Adam Colfax, who shared the easy feelings of his men.

"I found this," replied the boy, drawing the eagle feather from his breast.

"What is that? Merely the feather of some wild bird."

"The feather of an eagle."

"I fancy that many an eagle drops a feather now and then in this wilderness."

"This feather was dropped last from the head of an Indian warrior."

"How do you know it?"

"See, the quill has been trimmed off a little with a knife. It was part of a decoration."

"It may have fallen many weeks ago."

"It could not be so. The plumage everywhere is smooth and even. It has been lying on the ground only a little while. Otherwise it would be bedraggled by the rain or be roughened by the wind blowing it about among the bushes."

"Then the feather indicates the presence of hostile Indians?" said Adam Colfax thoughtfully. "I know by your manner that you think so."

"I am sure of it," said Henry with great emphasis.

"You're right, no doubt. You always are. But look how strong our force is, men tried in toil and battle, and they are many! What have we to fear?"

He looked over his light-hearted host, and his blue eyes, usually so cold, kindled with warmth. One might search the world over, and not find a hardier band. Truly, what had he to fear?

Henry saw that the leader was not convinced, and he was not one to waste words. After all, what did he have to offer but a stray feather, carried by the wind?

"Dismiss your fears, my boy," said Adam Colfax cheerfully. "Think about something else. I want to send out a hunting party this afternoon. Will you lead it?"

"Of course," said Henry loyally. "I'll be ready whenever the others are."

"In a half hour or so," said Adam Colfax with satisfaction. "I knew you wouldn't fail."

Henry went to the fire, by the side of which his four comrades sat eating their noonday meal, and took his place with them. He said not a word after his brief salute, and Paul presently noticed his silence and look of preoccupation.

"What is the matter, Henry?" he asked.

"I'm going with a little party this afternoon," replied Henry, "to hunt for buffalo and deer. Mr. Colfax wishes me to do it. He thinks we need fresh supplies, and I've agreed to help. I want you boys to promise, if I don't come back, that you'll go on with the fleet."

Paul sat up, rigid with astonishment. Shif'less Sol turned a lazy but curious eye on the boy.

"Now, what under the sun do you mean, Henry?" he asked. "I've heard you talk a good many times, but never like that before. Not comin' back? Is this the Henry Ware that we've knowed so long?"

Henry laughed, despite himself.

"I'm just the same," he said, "and I do feel, Sol, that I'm not coming back from this hunt. I don't mean that I'll never come back, but it will be a long time. So I want you fellows to go on with the fleet and help it all you can."

"Henry, you're plum' foolish," said taciturn Tom Ross. "Are you out uv your head?"

Henry laughed again.

"It does sound foolish," he admitted, "and I don't understand why I think I'm not coming back. I just feel it."

"I notice that them things mostly come contrariwise," said Shif'less Sol. "When I know that I'm goin' to hev hard luck it's gen'ally good. We'll look for you, Henry, at sundown."

But Paul, youthful and imaginative, was impressed, and he regarded Henry with silent sympathy.

CHAPTER II

THE WYANDOT CHIEF

Henry rose quickly from the noonday refreshment and, with a nod to his comrades, entered the forest at the head of the little band of hunters. Shif'less Sol and Tom Ross would have gone, too, but Adam Colfax wanted them to keep watch about the camp, and they were too loyal to insist upon having their own way when it was opposed to that of the leader.

Five men were with Henry, fairly good hunters on the whole, but more at home in the far south than in the woods of the Ohio. One, a big fellow named Larkin, had an undue pride in his skill, and another, a Frenchman, Pierre Cazotte, was a brave fellow, but uncommonly reckless. The remaining three were not of marked individuality.

Henry examined them all with swift glances, and decided at once that Larkin and Cazotte, full of overweening confidence, would want their way, but he said nothing, merely leading the band into the mass of dense green foliage that rimmed the camp around. He looked back but once, and saw his four faithful comrades sitting by the fire, it seemed to him, in an attitude of dejection. Then he went forward swiftly, and in another minute the forest shut out camp fire and comrades.

"What's your notion, Henry?" asked Larkin. "Have you seen signs of deer or buffalo near?"

"Both," replied Henry. "There are good springs and little open places in the woods not more than a couple of miles away. We're pretty sure to find deer there."

"Why not buffalo?" exclaimed Larkin. "I've shot more deer than I could ever count, but I've never killed a buffalo. It's the first time that I've been in this part of the country."

"Nor have I," said Cazotte. "We have many people to feed, and ze buffalo ees beeg. Ze deer ees too leetle for all ze mouths back there."

"Right you are, Frenchy," exclaimed Larkin jovially. "We'll pass the deer by an' go for buffalo if we have to travel six or seven miles further. What this gang wants is buffalo, an' buffalo it will have."

"I don't think we ought to go very far from the camp," said Henry. "These woods from here to the lakes are the hunting grounds of the most warlike tribes, and bands may be near us now."

Larkin laughed again his big jovial laugh.

"You're thinkin' a lot about Indians," he said, "You're brave—everybody knows it—but a fellow can put his mind on 'em so hard that he can see 'em where they ain't."

Henry laughed, too. He knew no offense was intended, but he was confirmed in his belief that Larkin meant to have his own way. He saw, too, that Cazotte and the others were ready to back him up. But he would not yield without a protest.

"It's true, I am thinking a lot about Indians," he said earnestly, "and I think I have cause to do so. They're here in these woods now. I'm sure of it, and they know of the presence of our fleet. We ought to be very cautious."

Larkin laughed again, and his laugh contained the slightest touch of irony.

"I'll wager there ain't an Indian within fifty miles," he exclaimed, "an' if there was one he wouldn't keep us from our buffalo, would he, Pierre, old fellow?"

He slapped the Frenchman on the back, and Cazotte returned the laugh.

"Not a hundred Indians could keep us from heem," he replied. "I taste the steaks of that mighty buffalo now. Ah, they so good!"

Henry flushed through his tan. He did not like even that slight touch of irony. He had held in mind a tiny prairie not more than two miles away where they were almost absolutely sure to find deer feeding, but he abandoned the idea and thought of another and larger prairie, of which he and Shif'less Sol had caught a glimpse three or four miles further on. It was quite likely that buffalo would be found grazing there.

"Very well," he said, "if you're bound to have it that way I'll lead you. Come."

He led swiftly to the northeast, and Larkin, Cazotte, and the others, already tasting their hunting triumph, followed. The undergrowth thinned, but the trees grew larger, spreading away like a magnificent park—maples, oak, beech, hickory and elm. Henry was glad to see the bushes disappear, but for the second time that day the sound that made the chill run down his spine came to his ear, the warning note of the wind among the leaves. It soon passed, and he did not hear it again.

The open woods ceased, and the bushes began once more, thicker than ever. They were compelled to go much more slowly, and Henry, risking another laugh at himself, told them to make as little noise as possible.

"Anyway, if Indians are about they'll hear us shootin' our buffaloes," said Larkin. "So we needn't mind a little snappin' an' cracklin' of the bushes."

"It's a good plan in the woods never to make any noise, when you can help it," said Henry.

The others heeded him for a few moments, but soon relapsed into their slovenly ways. It sounded to Henry's sensitive ear as if an army were passing. But he would not speak again of the need of caution, knowing how soon another warning would be disregarded. Meanwhile he kept a wary watch in behalf of his careless comrades, searching the thickets with eye and ear, and trying to guard them from their own neglect.

Another mile passed, the third since they had left the camp, and they came to a little brook. As Henry crossed it he distinctly saw the impression of a moccasined foot in the soft soil of the bank. It could not be more than an hour old.

"Look there!" he said to Larkin and Cazotte. "See the proof of what I have told you. An Indian has passed here this very afternoon."

Larkin glanced at the trace in the soft earth and shook his head dubiously.

"Do you call that the footprint of a man?" he asked. "It may be, but I can't make it out. It might have been put there by some animal."

Henry frowned. These men would not be convinced. But he said nothing more and continued to lead the way. Before him lay a stretch of thick wood with matted undergrowth, and beyond this, as he had discovered when scouting with Shif'less Sol in the morning, was the prairie on which they might find the buffalo.

This thicket opened and received them, the bushes closing up behind them in such compact order that nothing could be seen ten yards away. But Henry's eyes caught the glimpse of something to their right. It was the feather of an eagle, the second that he had seen that day, but it was thrust upright, and it adorned the head of a living warrior.

"Down! Down at once!" he cried, and, seizing the careless Larkin, he fairly hurled him to the earth. At the same instant a dozen rifles crackled among the bushes. The light-hearted Frenchman fell stone dead, a bullet through his head, and two more men were wounded. A bullet had grazed Larkin's shoulder, burning like the sting of a hornet, and, wild with pain and anger, he sprang again to his feet.

Henry had felt all along that the party was in his care, and he was resolved to save Larkin from his own folly. He also sprang up, seized the big man and dragged him down a second time. But as he sank into the concealment of the bushes he felt a blow upon the side of his head. It was like the light tap of a hammer, and for a second or two he thought nothing of it. Then his knees grew weak and his sight dim, and he knew that he was hit badly.

"Run, run!" he cried to Larkin. "The way by which we came is yet open and we may escape! It's the only chance!"

Larkin glanced back. He had been foolish, but he was no coward.

"You're hit and we won't leave you!" he exclaimed.

"Go on! go on!" cried Henry, summoning up his energy with a great effort of the will. "I'll look out for myself! Run!"

His tone was so compelling that Larkin and the others sprang up and made at top speed for the camp, the bullets whistling about them as they went. Henry tried to follow, but that extraordinary weakness in his knees increased, and it was growing quite dark. He had risen to his feet, but he sank down despite every effort of the will, and he saw a dim world whirling about him. A dozen dusky figures shot out of the obscurity. One raised a tomahawk aloft, but another stopped the arm in its descent.

He was conscious that the dusky figures stood about him in a ring, looking at him intently. But he was fast growing dizzier, and his eyelids were uncommonly heavy. He gave back their looks with defiance, and then he sank to the ground, unconscious.

Henry revived in a half hour. Some one had thrown water on his face, and he found himself sitting up, but with his hands tied securely behind his back. His head ached terribly, and he felt that his hair was thick with blood. But he knew at once that it was only a glancing wound, and that the effects, caused by the impact of the bullet upon the skull, were passing.

He was a prisoner, but all his alertness and powers were returning. He was not one ever to give up hope, and a single glance was enough to tell him the whole situation. A half dozen warriors stood about him, eight or ten more were returning, evidently from a chase, and one bore a ghastly trophy at his belt. Then three had escaped! It was perhaps more than he had hoped. He knew that another hideous decoration was in the belt of some warrior near him, but he closed his eyes to it, nor would he look at the body of the fallen Frenchman.

"You come with us," said a warrior in fairly good English.

Henry looked at the speaker and recognized at once a chief, a young man of uncommon appearance, great in stature and with a fierce and lofty countenance, like that of the ancient Roman, sometimes found in the North American Indian. He was a truly impressive figure, his head clean-shaven except for the defiant scalp lock which stood aloft intertwined with small eagle feathers, a gorgeous red blanket from some Canadian trading post thrown carelessly about his shoulders after the fashion of a toga, a fine long-barreled Kentucky rifle lying in the hollow of his arm, and a tomahawk and knife at his belt.

Henry felt instinctively that he was in the presence of a great man, a great chief of the woods. He recognized here a spirit akin to his own, and for a full minute the two, boy and man, gazed intently at each other. Then the chief turned away with a slight laugh. He made no sound, but the prisoner knew from the motion of his lips that he laughed.

Henry looked again at the group of warriors, and now it was an examining glance. They were not Shawnees or Miamis, but certain features of paint and dress showed him that they were Wyandots, a small tribe, but the bravest that white men ever faced on the North American Continent. It became an axiom in the Ohio Valley that a Wyandot might be killed in battle, but he could not be taken prisoner. Thirteen Wyandot chiefs were in the allied Indian army that was beaten by Wayne at the Fallen Timbers; the bodies of twelve were found on the field.

Henry fully understood the character of the Wyandots, their great enterprise and desperate courage, and he knew that their presence here, west of their own country, portended some great movement. His eyes came back to the chief, who repeated his statement or rather command:

"You go with us!"

"I have no other choice," replied the youth with a tinge of irony. Then he added, with some curiosity: "You are a chief, I see that. Will you tell me your name?"

"I am called White Lightning in your tongue," replied the young man, making at the same time a movement of his head, very slight, but full of indescribable pride.

Henry's gaze showed an increase of interest. He had heard that name, White Lightning. Before he went south to New Orleans it was beginning to have ominous significance on the border. White Lightning had fought in the great battle when the emigrant train was saved at the crossing of the river, but it was only since then that he had become a head chief, with the opportunity to display his terrible

talents. An intensity of purpose and action like the fire that burns white had caused men to give to him the name, White Lightning, in English, but in his own Wyandot tongue he was Timmendiquas, which means The Lightning.

Henry had risen to his feet, and as they stood eye to eye each felt that the other was a worthy opponent. The chief marked the great proportions and lofty bearing of the captive youth, and a glint of approval appeared in his eyes.

"The Wyandots are happy to have taken such a prisoner," he said, "and now we will go."

He made a gesture, and instantly the group fell into single file, as he led the way through the forest. Henry was the fourth man in the file. All his strength had come back, but he was far too wise to attempt escape. His hands were bound behind him, and he would have no chance with such woodsmen. He must bide his time, and he marched without protest.

When they had gone about a mile all stopped at a signal from White Lightning. The chief dropped back to a subordinate place in the line, although his was still the air and actual manner of command, and his place at the head of the file was taken by a heavy, middle-aged warrior who carried at his belt one of the hideous trophies at which Henry would not look. But he understood Indian custom well enough to know the cause of this change. The middle-aged warrior had taken the first scalp in battle, and therefore it was his honor to lead the party back in triumph to their village or camp.

White Lightning remained but a moment or two in his place. Then he stepped forth, while the others stood rigid, and drew a medicine bag from beneath the folds of his blanket. He held the bag for a moment poised in his hand, as if it were a sacred object, which, in fact, it was to the Wyandots, while the warriors regarded it with reverential eyes.

Then every warrior took his totem from some secure place next to his body where it had been tied. The totems were small objects various in kind, such as the skin of a snake, a piece of the tail of a buffalo, a part of the horn of a buck, or a little packet of feathers. But every totem was sacred, and it was handled with worshipful care. The chief put them one by one into the medicine bag, which he handed to the temporary leader, the first scalp-taker, who would bear it in triumph home.

Henry watched the proceeding with interested eyes. He knew the Indian way. In his early captivity he had seen the entire rite, which was practically sacred. He knew that before these Wyandots had started on the war-path every man had put his totem in the bag, and then White Lightning had carried it bound securely to his body. Whenever they halted the bag was laid down in front, and no one might pass it. The warriors, now on the war-path, were not allowed to talk of home, wife, or sweetheart, lest it weaken their hearts and turn them to water. When they camped at night the heart of whatever animal they had killed in the course of the day was cut into small pieces and burned. During the burning no man was allowed to step across the fire, but must walk around it in the direction of the sun. When they laid the ambush, and the enemy came into sight, the chief gave back his totem to every man, and he wore it on his body in the conflict as a protection given by Manitou.

Henry noticed the rapt, worshipful air with which every man regarded his totem before it was replaced in the medicine bag. He was a child of the forest and the wilderness himself, and, while he knew that this was superstition, he could not find it in his heart to criticize it. It was their simple belief, the best that they knew, and here was the proof of its power. They had suffered no loss in the ambush, while they had slain two and taken one.

The elderly warrior who now bore the medicine bag and who was to lead them back home preserved a stoical face while the brief ceremonies were going on, but Henry knew that his heart was swollen with pride. He had achieved one of the greatest triumphs of an Indian's life, and the memory of it would remain with his tribe as long as he lived.

"You are now our leader, O Anue (Bear)," said the young chief in Wyandot to the successful warrior.

"I take the trust, O Timmendiquas (Lightning)," replied Anue as he stepped back to the head of the line.

But the spirit and authority of Timmendiquas were still omnipotent, despite the formal leadership of Anue, and he turned to the prisoner, regarding him a moment or two with his piercing glance.

"You have come with the great white force up Yandawezue?" he said interrogatively.

"Yandawezue?" repeated Henry, who was not familiar with the Wyandot tongue.

"The great river," repeated Timmendiquas, waving his hand toward the southwest.

"Ah, I understand," said Henry. "You mean the Mississippi. Yes, we have come up it all the way from New Orleans, and we have a strong force, many men with many rifles and with cannon. We had a great battle far down the river, and we defeated all the Indians and white men, their renegade allies."

Timmendiquas, the White Lightning of the whites, the great young chief of the Wyandots, drew himself up in all the majesty of a perfectly proportioned six feet three, and the fierce, Roman-like features contracted into a scornful smile.

"No Wyandots were there," he said. "But they are here, and with them their allies, the Miamis, the Shawnees, the Ottawas, the Delawares, and the Illinois. You may be many, you may have cannon, and you may be brave, and you have come up Yandawezue, but you will find Ohezuhyeandawa" (the Ohio—in the Wyandot tongue, "something great") "closed to you."

"Ohezu—do you mean the Ohio?" asked Henry.

"In your language, the Ohio," replied the young chief with dignity, "but the Wyandots had given it its right name, Ohezuhyeandawa, long before the white people came."

"I suppose you're right in that," said Henry reflectively, "but your name for it is too long. Ohio is better. As for our fleet, I think, in spite of what you say, that it will make its way up the Ohio to Pittsburgh, although I do admit that the dangers are great."

White Lightning merely shook his head. His dignity would not permit him to argue further with a prisoner. Henry regarded him with secret admiration. He did not believe that the chief could be over twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, but his great qualities were so obvious that it seemed natural for him to lead and command.

The chief stepped back into the line, Anue gave the signal, and the band resumed its rapid march toward the northeast. So swift, indeed, was the pace of the warriors that none but the forest-bred could have maintained it. They never stopped for a moment, striding on over the ground with a long, easy step that was like the trot of a horse, and almost as fast. Nor did they make any sound. It was like the passing of so many ghostly forms, phantoms flitting through the wilderness.

Henry noticed by and by that the pace increased. The legs of the warrior in front of him worked with the speed and regularity of machinery. But no perspiration appeared upon the bare brown neck, there was no evidence of fatigue, and Henry was sure that all the others were moving with the same ease and vigor. He wondered at first at this new speed, and then he divined the cause. It was to test him, and he was sure that some sort of signal had passed between Timmendiquas and Anue.

This was a picked band of warriors, there was not a man in it under six feet in height, and all were lean, but muscled powerfully and with great shoulders and chests. They had an intense pride in physical strength and prowess, such necessary qualities to them, and they would show the white prisoner, large as he was and strong as he looked, how much inferior he was to the chosen warriors of the Wyandots.

Henry accepted the challenge. They did not know his natural powers and the perfection of his training. He answered them, stride for stride. He filled his lungs with the fresh air of the woods, but he kept his breathing steady and regular. No gasp, no quick breath should ever show that he was not a match for them, one and all. His own pace increased. He almost trod upon the man in front of him, a warrior whom he had heard Timmendiquas address as Hainteroh (The Raccoon).

Hainteroh said nothing and did not look back, but he felt the strong step that narrowly missed his heels, the step of a white youth, a prisoner, and he moved faster—a great Wyandot warrior could not suffer such an indignity as to be crowded by a captive, one whom he had regarded as a physical

inferior. Those in front moved faster, also, and now the second increase in speed had been caused by the prisoner himself.

Henry had become for the time as primitive, as much a child of the wilderness as they. An ironical spirit laid hold of him. They would test him! Well, he would test them! The inside of his chest bubbled with malicious laughter. Once more Hainteroh, great warrior of the Wyandots, mighty hunter, taker of scalps, fearless among men, felt the planting of that vigorous step at his very heels, almost upon him. It would not be pleasant to have so much weight come down upon them, and it would be a disgrace in the tribe to have been trodden upon by a white prisoner.

A third time the line increased its speed, and a second time it was the captive youth who caused it. They fairly fled through the forest now, but the breathing of every man was yet steady and regular.

They came to a wide brook, almost a creek. Anue never paused for an instant, but took it with a light leap, nor pausing an instant on the other side, sped on. The second man took it in the same way, then Hainteroh, and Henry, so close behind that the moccasins of the Wyandot were scarcely twinkling in the air before the feet of Henry were resting where his had been.

Henry heard the light sound of the others behind him as one by one they leaped into his place, but he never looked back. He was still pushing the Raccoon hard, and a terrible fear was slowly eating its way to the heart of the redoubtable Hainteroh, chosen warrior of the Wyandots, the bravest of all races. Sooner or later this demon white youth would tread upon his heels. He could feel already the scrape of his moccasins, the ineffable disgrace. He shuddered from head to foot. Such a thing could not be endured. He fairly leaped through the air, and once more a new impulse was communicated to the line.

The way now became rougher, leading over stony hills, but there was no slackening of speed, the line remaining as even and regular as the links of a chain, Timmendiwas from his position in seventh place looking now and then with admiration over the heads of the men in front of him at the captive.

They crossed the hills, entered the deep and tangled woods again, and sped on as few war parties had ever traveled. The miles fell swiftly behind them, no one spoke, they heard nothing but the regular breathing of one another, and Henry did not yet see the drops of perspiration on the bare brown back in front of him. The sun passed far down the western arch. Shadowy twilight was already creeping up, the distant waves of the forest were clothed in darkening mists, but they did not stop. Anue gave no word, and Timmendiwas, for the time, would wait upon the formal leader.

Henry, always keenly sensitive to everything about him, noticed that the air was changing. It was growing heavier, and it had in it a touch of damp, but so slight that an ordinary person would not have observed it. There was, too, a faint circle of mist about the sun, and he believed that the beautiful weather was passing.

His mind returned to the broad bare back in front of him. The figure of Hainteroh was still working like a perfect machine, but the keen eyes of the youth saw the sight for which he had long been looking. Squarely in the middle of that brown surface a silver bead was forming. The yellow light of the low sun struck upon it, revealing clearly its nature and growth. Nor did it remain long alone. Brothers and sisters and cousins, near and then distant, gathered around it, and the great brown back of Hainteroh was wide enough for them all.

Henry enjoyed the sight. It appealed to the powerful, primitive instincts in his nature, and again the inside of his chest bubbled with silent laughter. His wicked delight increased when a slight wheezing sound came to his ears. Hainteroh's breath was growing short. Now the wheeze at intervals became something dangerously resembling a gasp, and there could be no doubt that Hainteroh, mass of muscle and mighty warrior of the Wyandots, was growing tired, while the prisoner, the white youth just behind him, seemed still fresh and strong, and would step in Hainteroh's tracks before the latter was fairly clear of them.

Henry heard the same slight wheezing sound behind him, and took one quick glance over his shoulder. The face of the warrior next to him was bedewed, but that of Timmendiwas was as cool

and calm as his own. It seemed to him that just the touch of a smile appeared in the eyes of the chief, as if he understood and appreciated, and the fleeting look of Henry was not too brief to give back the smile. A singular bond of mutual respect was established in quick time between White Lightning and himself.

On sped the dusky line. The sun sank in a cloud of mist and vapors. Thick night crept up, broken only when heat lightning flared on the far horizon, but Anue, bearer of the medicine bag, taker of the first scalp, honored among warriors, still led.

CHAPTER III

THE SONG OF THE LEAVES

The night had come a full hour when Anue stopped in a little glade hemmed in by mighty oaks and beeches. The heat lightning flared again at that moment, and Henry saw that every one besides Timmendiquas and himself was panting. Enduring as were all Wyandots, they were glad that Anue had stopped, and they were generous enough to cast looks of approval at the captive who stood among them still calm and still breathing regularly. Timmendiquas did more. He stepped into the circle, put one hand on Henry's shoulder, and looked him directly in the eyes.

"You are strong," he said gravely, "stronger even than most Wyandots, and your soul is that of the eagle. If the boy is what he is, what will the man be?"

Henry knew that the words were meant, and he felt pride, but his modesty would not let him show it.

"I thank you, White Lightning," he replied with a similar gravity. "Your Manitou was kind enough to give me a strong body, and I, like you, have lived in the woods."

"As I see," said the chief sententiously. "Now I tell you this. We will take the bonds from your arms if you promise us not to seek to escape to-night. Else you must lie among us bound, hand and foot, to a warrior on either side. See, we are willing to take your word."

Henry felt pride again. These Wyandots, mortal enemies, who had never seen him before, would believe what he said, putting absolute faith in their reading of his character. He looked up at the dusky sky, in which not a single star twinkled, and then at the black forest that circled about them. Bound, and with a lightly sleeping Wyandot at either elbow, he would have a slender chance, indeed, of escape, and he could well bide his time.

"I give the promise and with it my thanks, White Lightning," he said.

White Lightning cut the thongs with one sweep of his knife, and Henry's arms fell free. Sharp pains shot through them as the circulation began to flow with its old freedom, but he refused to wince. He had chosen a policy, the one that he thought best fitted to his present condition, and he would abide by it through all things. He merely stepped a little to one side and watched while they made the camp.

The task was quickly done. Three or four warriors gathered fallen brushwood and set it on fire with flint and steel. Then they cooked over it strips of venison from their pouches, giving several strips to Henry, which he ate with no appearance of haste or eagerness, although he was quite hungry.

It was growing very dark, and the lightning on the horizon became vivid and intense. The air was heavy and oppressive. The fire burned with a languid drooping flame, and the forest was absolutely still, except when the thunder grumbled like the low, ominous mutter of a distant cannonade.

"A storm comes," said Timmendiquas, glancing at the lowering skies.

"It will be here soon," said Henry, who knew that the words were spoken to him.

Every warrior carried a blanket, which he now wrapped closely about his body, but Henry asked for nothing. He would not depart from his policy.

He stood in the center of the glade listening, although there was yet nothing to hear. But it was this extraordinary breathless silence that impressed him most. He felt as he breathed the heavy air that it was the sign of impending danger. The warning of the wind among the leaves had not been more distinct.

A long, rolling crash came from their right. "Heno (Thunder)!" said White Lightning. He did not mean to say the obvious, but his emphasis indicated that it was very loud thunder.

The thunder sank away in a low, distant note that echoed grimly, and then the breathless silence came again. A minute later the whole forest swam in a glare of light so dazzling that Henry was

compelled to close his eyes. It passed in an instant, and the wilderness was all black, but out of the southwest came a low, moaning sound.

"Iruquas (The wind)!" said the chief in the same sententious tone.

The groan became a rumble, and then, as the vanguard of the wind, came great drops of rain that pattered like hail stones.

"Inaunduse (It rains)," said the chief.

But it was merely a brief shower like a volley from withdrawing skirmishers, and then the rumble of the wind gave way to a crash which rose in a moment to a terrible roar.

"A hurricane!" exclaimed Henry. As he spoke a huge compressed ball of air which can be likened only to a thunderbolt struck them.

Strong as he was, Henry was thrown to the ground, and he saw the chief go down beside him. Then everything was blotted out in pitchy blackness, but his ears were filled with many sounds, all terrible, the fierce screaming of the wind as if in wrath and pain, the whistling of boughs and brushwood, swept over his head, and the crash of great oaks and beeches as they fell, snapped through at the trunk by the immense force of the hurricane.

Henry seized some of the bushes and held on for his life. How thankful he was now that he had given his promise to the chief, and that his hands were free! A shiver swept over him from head to foot. Any moment one of the trees might fall upon him, but he was near the center of the glade, the safest place, and he did not seek to move.

He was conscious, as he clung to the bushes, of two kinds of movement. He was being pulled forward and he was being whirled about. The ball of air as it shot from southwest to northeast revolved, also, with incredible rapidity. The double motion was so violent that it required all of Henry's great strength to keep from being wrenched loose from his bushes.

The hurricane, in its full intensity, lasted scarcely a minute. Then with a tremendous rush and scream it swept off to the northeast, tearing a track through the forest like a tongue of flame in dry grass. Then the rain, pouring from heavy black clouds, came in its wake, and the lightning, which had ceased while the thunderbolt was passing, began to flash fitfully.

Henry had seen hurricanes in the great Ohio Valley before, but never one so fierce and violent as this, nor so tremendous in its manifestations. Awe and weirdness followed in the trail of that cannon ball of wind. The rumble of thunder, far and echoing, was almost perpetual. Blackest darkness alternated with broad sheets of lightning so intense in tint that the forest would swim for a moment in a reddish glare before the blackness came. Meanwhile the rain poured as if the bottom had dropped out of every cloud.

Henry struggled to his feet and stood erect. He could have easily darted away in the confusion and darkness among the woods, but such a thought did not occur to him. He had given his promise, and he would keep it despite the unexpected opportunity that was offered. He remained at the edge of the circle, while Timmendiquas, the real leader, hastily gathered his men and took count of them as best he could.

The chief, by the flare of the lightning, saw Henry, upright, motionless, and facing him. A singular flash of understanding quicker than the lightning itself passed between the two. Then Timmendiquas spoke in the darkness:

"You could have gone, but you did not go."

"I gave my promise to stay, and I stayed," replied Henry in the same tone.

The lightning flared again, and once more Henry saw the eyes of the chief. They seemed to him to express approval and satisfaction. Then Timmendiquas resumed his task with his men. Hainteroth of the broad back had been dashed against a sapling, and his left arm was broken. Another man had been knocked senseless by a piece of brushwood, but was sitting up now. Three or four more were suffering from severe bruises, but not one uttered a complaint. They merely stood at attention while

the chief made his rapid inspection. Every man had wrapped his rifle in his blanket to protect it from the rain, but their bodies were drenched, and they made no effort now to protect themselves.

Hainteroh pointed to his broken arm. The chief examined it critically, running his hand lightly over the fracture. Then he signaled to Anue, and the two, seizing the arm, set the broken bone in place. Hainteroh never winced or uttered a word. Splints, which White Lightning cut from a sapling, and strips of deerskin were bound tightly around the arm, a sling was made of more deerskin from their own scanty garb, and nature would soon do the rest for such a strong, healthy man as Hainteroh.

They stood about an hour in the glade until the lightning and thunder ceased, and the rain was falling only in moderation. Then they took up the march again, going by the side of the hurricane's path. It was impossible for them to sleep on the earth, which was fairly running water, and Henry was glad that they had started. It was turning much colder, as it usually does in the great valley after such storms, and the raw, wet chill was striking into his marrow.

The line was re-formed just as it had been before, with Anue leading, and they went swiftly despite the darkness, which, however, was not so dense as that immediately preceding and following the hurricane. The trained eyes of the Wyandot and of the prisoner could now easily see the way.

The coldness increased, and the diminishing rain now felt almost like hail stones, but the clouds were floating away toward the northeast, and the skies steadily lightened. Henry felt the warming and strengthening influence of the vigorous exercise. His clothing was a wet roll about him, but the blood began to flow in a vigorous stream through his veins, and his muscles became elastic.

They followed by the side of the hurricane's track for several miles, and Henry was astonished at the damage that it had done. Its path was not more than two hundred yards wide, but within that narrow space little had been able to resist it. Trees were piled in tangled masses. Sometimes the revolving ball had thrown them forward and sometimes it had thrown them, caught in the other whirl, backward.

They turned at last from this windrow of trees, and presently entered a little prairie, where there was nothing to obstruct them. The rain was now entirely gone, and the clouds were retreating far down in the southwest. Timmendiwas looked up.

"Washuntyaandeshra (The Moon)," he said.

Henry guessed that this very long name in Wyandot meant the moon, because there it was, coming out from the vapors, and throwing a fleecy light over the soaked and dripping forest. It was a pleasing sight, a friendly one to him, and he now felt unawed and unafraid. The wilderness itself had no terrors for him, and he felt that somehow he would slip through the hands of the Wyandots. He had escaped so many times from great dangers that it seemed to him a matter of course that he should do so once more.

They made greater speed on the prairie, which was covered only with long grass and an occasional clump of bushes. But near its center something rose up from one of the clumps, and disappeared in a streak of brown.

"Oughscanoto (Deer)," said the chief.

But Henry had known already. His eyes were as quick as those of Timmendiwas.

They crossed the prairie and entering the woods again went on without speaking. The moonlight faded, midnight passed, when Anue suddenly stopped at the entrance to a rocky hollow, almost a cave, the inner extension of which had escaped the sweep of the storm.

"We rest here," said White Lightning to Henry. "Do you still give your promise?"

"Until I awake," replied the youth with a little laugh.

He entered the hollow, noticed that the dry leaves lay in abundance by the rocky rear wall, threw himself down among them, and in a few moments was asleep, while his clothes dried upon him. All the warriors quickly followed his example except Timmendiwas and Anue, who sat down at the entrance of the hollow, with their rifles across their knees, and watched. Neither spoke and neither moved. They were like bronze statues, set there long ago.

Henry awoke at the mystical hour when the night is going and the dawn has not yet come. He did not move, he merely opened his eyes, and he remembered everything at once, his capture, the flight through the forest, and the hurricane. He was conscious of peace and rest. His clothes had dried upon him, and he had taken no harm. He felt neither the weight of the present nor fear for the future. He saw the dusky figures of the Wyandots lying in the leaves about him sound asleep, and the two bronze statues at the front of the stony alcove.

Clear as was Henry's recollection, a vague, dreamy feeling was mingled with it. The wilderness always awoke all the primitive springs within him. When he was alone in the woods—and he was alone now—he was in touch with the nymphs and the fauns and the satyrs of whom he had scarcely ever heard. Like the old Greeks, he peopled the forest with the creatures of his imagination, and he personified nearly everything.

Now a clear sweet note came to his half-dreaming ear and soothed him with its melody. He closed his eyes and let its sweetness pierce his brain. It was the same song among the leaves that he had heard when he was out with the shiftless one, the mysterious wind with its invisible hand playing the persistent and haunting measure on the leaves and twigs.

It was definite and clear to Henry. It was there, the rhythmic note ran through it all the time, and for him it contained all the expression of a human voice, the rise, the fall, the cadence, and the shade.

But its note was different now. It was not solemn, ominous, full of warning. It was filled with hope and promise, and he took its meaning to himself. He would escape, he would rejoin his comrades, and the great expedition would end in complete success.

Stronger and fuller swelled the song, the mysterious haunting note that was played upon the leaves, and Henry's heart bounded in response. He was still in that vague, dreamy state in which things unseen look large and certain, and this was a call intended for him. He glanced at the brown statues. If they, too, heard, they made no sign. He glanced at the leaves, and he saw them moving gently as they were played by the unseen hand.

Henry closed his eyes again and listened to the note of hope, sweeter and more penetrating than ever. A great satisfaction suffused him, and he did not open his eyes again. The dreamy state grew, and presently he floated off again into a deep, restful slumber.

When Henry awoke the glade was flooded with brilliant sunlight. A warm west wind was blowing and trees and grass were drying. Several of the Wyandots were, like himself, just rising from sleep, but it was evident that others had been up far before, because at the edge of the glade lay a part of the body of a deer, recently killed and dressed. Other Wyandots were broiling strips of the flesh on sharpened twigs over a fire built in the center of the glade. The pleasant savor came to Henry's nostrils, and he sat up. Just at that moment a Wyandot, who had evidently been hunting, returned to the glade, carrying on his arm a large bird with beautiful bronze feathers.

"Daightontah," said Timmendiquas.

"I suppose that word means turkey," said Henry, who, of course, recognized the bird at once. The chief nodded.

"Turkey is fine," said Henry, "but, as it won't be ready for some time, would you mind giving me a few strips of Oughscanoto, which I think is what you called it last night."

The young chief smiled.

"You learn fast," he said. "You make good Wyandot."

Henry seemed to see a significance in the tone and words, and he looked sharply at White Lightning. A Spaniard, Francisco Alvarez, had tried to tempt him once from his people, but the attempt was open and abrupt. The approach of the chief was far different, gentle and delicate. Moreover, he liked White Lightning, and, as Henry believed, the chief was much the better man of the two. But here as before there was only one answer.

The chief nodded at one of the men, who handed the broiled strips, and the boy ate, not with haste and greediness, but slowly and with dignity. He saw that his conduct in the night and the storm

had made an impression upon his captors, and he meant to deepen it. He knew the Indian and his modes of thought. All the ways of his life in the northwestern tribe readily came back to him, and he did the things that were of highest esteem in the Indian code.

Henry showed no anxiety of any kind. He looked about him contentedly, as if place and situation alike pleased him more than any other in the world. But this was merely an approving, not an inquiring look. He did not seem to be interested in anything beyond the glade. He was not searching for any way of escape. He was content with the present, ignoring the future. When the time came for them to go he approached White Lightning and held out his hands.

"I am ready to be bound," he said.

A low murmur of approval came from two or three of the Wyandots who stood near.

"Let the promise go another day?" said White Lightning with a rising inflection.

"If you wish," said Henry. He saw no reason why he should not give such a promise. He knew that the Wyandots would watch him far too well to allow a chance of escape, and another such opportunity as the storm was not to be expected.

The chief said not another word, but merely motioned to Henry, who took his old place as fourth in the line with Anue at the head. Then the march was resumed, and they went steadily toward the northeast, moving in swiftness and silence. Henry made no further effort to embarrass Hainteroh, who again was just before him. His reasons were two—the Wyandot now had a broken arm, and the boy had already proved his quality.

The day was beautiful after the storm. The sky had been washed clean by wind and rain, and now it was a clear, silky blue. The country, an alternation of forest and little prairies, was of surpassing fertility. The pure air, scented with a thousand miles of unsullied wilderness, was heaven to the nostrils, and Henry took deep and long breaths of it. He had suffered no harm from the night before. His vigorous young frame threw off cold and stiffness, and he felt only the pleasure of abounding physical life. Although the wind was blowing, he did not hear that human note among the leaves again. It was only when his mind was thoroughly attuned and clothed about in a mystical atmosphere that it made a response. But his absolute belief that he would escape remained.

Henry was troubled somewhat by the thought of his comrades. He was afraid, despite his warning to them, that they would leave the fleet and search for him when he did not return, and he knew that Adam Colfax needed them sorely. This was the country that they knew best, the country Adam Colfax and his men knew least. It was best for another reason that they did not seek him. So wary a foe as the Wyandot could keep away help from the outside, and, if he escaped, he must escape alone.

They traveled swiftly and almost without a word until noon, when they stopped for a half hour and ate. They did not light any fire, but took cold food from their pouches, of which they had a variety, and once more Timmendiwas was most hospitable.

"Oghtaeh (Squirrel)," he said, holding up a piece.

"Yes, thank you," replied the boy, who thought he recognized the flesh.

"Yuingeh (Duck)?" said the chief, holding up another piece.

"I'll take that, too," replied Henry.

"Sootae (Beaver)?" said the chief, producing a third.

"I'll risk that, too," replied Henry. "It looks good."

"Yungenah (Dog)?" said the hospitable Timmendiwas, offering a fourth fragment of meat.

Henry looked at it suspiciously.

"Yungenah?" he said. "Now, Chief, would you tell me what Yungenah means?"

"Dog," replied the Wyandot sententiously.

"No, no!" exclaimed Henry. "Take it away."

Timmendiwas smiled benevolently.

"Dog good," he said, "but not make you eat it. Wyandot glad enough to get it."

They continued the journey throughout the afternoon, and did not stop until after sunset. Henry's promise was renewed for the second time, and he slept quietly within the circle of the Wyandots. He awakened once far in the night, and he saw that the watch was most vigilant. White Lightning was awake and sitting up, as also were three warriors. The night was clear and bright save for a few small harmless clouds. Henry saw that he had made no mistake in renewing his promise. The chance of escape had not yet come.

White Lightning noticed that his captive's eyes were open and he walked over to him. This youth, so strong and so skillful, so brave and so frank, appealed to the young chief. He would regret the necessity of putting him to death. A way of escaping it would be welcome.

"It is not like last night," he said pleasantly.

"No," said Henry. "There is no chance of another storm."

"Oghtserah," said the chief, pointing to the small, harmless clouds.

"But they are too little to mean anything," said Henry, guessing from the chief's gesture that "Oghtserah" meant clouds.

"You learn Wyandot," said the chief in the same pleasant tone. "You learn fast. See Tegshe." He glanced up.

"Stars?" guessed Henry.

The chief smiled again.

"It is right," he said. "You stay long with us, you learn to talk to Wyandot. Look!"

He held up one finger.

"Scat," he said.

He held up two.

"Tindee," he said.

He held up three.

"Shaight," he said.

He held up four. "Andaught."

Five—"Weeish."

Six—"Washaw."

Seven—"Sootare."

Eight—"Acetarai."

Nine—"Aintru."

Ten—"Aughsah."

"Now you count ten," he said somewhat in the tone of a schoolmaster to Henry.

"All right," said Henry tractably. "Here goes: Scat, Tindee, Shaight, Andaught, Weeish, Washaw, Sootare, Acetarai, Aintru, Aughsah."

The chief's smile deepened.

"You good memory," he said. "You learn very fast." Then he added after a moment's hesitation: "You make good Wyandot. Wyandots small nation, but bravest, most cunning and most enduring of all. Wyandot being burned at the stake calls for his pipe and smokes it peacefully while he dies in the fire."

"I don't doubt it," said Henry, who had heard of such cases.

The chief glanced at him and concluded that he said enough on that point. Once more he looked up.

"Washuntyaandeshra."

"The moon," said Henry. "Yes, it's bright."

"You learn. You remember," said the chief. "Now you sleep again."

He walked away, and Henry closed his eyes, but did not go to sleep just yet. He had understood Timmendiwas perfectly, and it troubled him. He liked the young chief, but white he was and white he would remain. He resolutely forced the question out of his mind, and soon he was fast asleep again.

CHAPTER IV

THE FOREST VILLAGE

They traveled another day and another, always rapidly. Henry continued his policy and asked no questions. He divined, however, that the Wyandots were on the way to a village of theirs, either permanent or temporary, probably the latter, as they were far west of the country conceded by the other Indians to be Wyandot.

He surmised, also, that the red alliance against the white vanguard had been enlarged until it included all the tribes of the Ohio Valley north of the river. He knew very well how all these tribes were situated, their great villages at Chillicothe, Piqua, and other places, whence it was easy for them to make raids upon the settlements south of the Ohio and then retreat into the vast wilderness north of it, where it was exceedingly dangerous to follow them. Should he escape, he would not be sorry to have been a prisoner, since he might learn all their plans, knowledge as precious as diamonds.

On the fourth day they checked their speed, and a lithe young Indian whom Henry heard called Thraintonto, which means in Wyandot The Fox, stripped himself of his breech clout, gave his long and defiant scalp lock a somewhat fiercer curl, and darted ahead of the band.

He was the swiftest runner in the war party, chosen specially by Timmendiquas for an important duty, and Henry knew very well the nature of his errand. The Wyandot village now lay not far away, and Thraintonto sped ahead, a messenger, to tell that the war party had achieved victory, and was approaching with the proof of it.

He watched the figure of Thraintonto dart away and then disappear, a flash of brown in the green wilderness. He knew that The Fox was filled with the importance of his mission. None could be more welcome to an Indian.

The band resumed its march after the brief stop, now proceeding in leisurely fashion through a beautiful country, magnificently wooded and abounding in game. Little brooks of clear fresh water, the characteristic of the Ohio Valley, abounded everywhere. They were never a half mile from one, and now and then they came to a large creek. Henry was quite sure that they would soon reach the river that received all these creeks.

They stopped two or three hours later, and went through a solemn rite. Brushes and paint were produced—everything had been arranged for in advance—and all the members of the band were painted grotesquely. Red, blue, and yellow figures were depicted upon their faces, shoulders, and chests. Not a square inch of exposed skin was left without its pictorial treatment. Then every man put on a beautiful headdress of white feathers taken from different birds, and, when all was done, they formed in single file again, with Timmendiquas, in place of Anue, now at their head. The chief himself would lead the victorious band to the village, which was certainly near at hand.

The advance was resumed. It was not merely a return. It partook in its nature of a triumphal progress, like some old festival of the Greeks or Ph[oe]nicians. They came presently to a cedar tree, and from this White Lightning broke a branch, upon which he hung the two scalps that they had taken. Then, bearing the branch conspicuously in his right hand, he advanced and began a slow monotonous chant. All the warriors took up the chant, which had little change save the rising and falling of the note, and which, like most songs of savages, was plaintive and melancholy.

Henry, who, as usual, followed the broad brown back of Hainteroh, observed everything with the keenest attention. He was all eyes and ears, knowing that any detail learned now might be of value to him later.

They crossed the crest of a low hill, and he caught sight of lodges, a hundred perhaps in number, set in a warm valley, by the side of the small clear river that he had surmised was near. The lodges of buffalo or deerskin stood in a cluster, and, as it was a full quarter mile on every side to the woods,

there was no chance for a lurking foe to lie in ambush. Henry noticed at once that there were no fields for maize or beans, and he was confirmed in his opinion that the village was temporary. He noticed, too, that the site of the place was chosen with great judgment. It lay in the angle of the river, which formed an elbow here, flowing between high banks, and on the other two sides rows of fallen logs formed an admirable defense in forest warfare.

The band paused a few moments at the crest of the hill, and began to chant more loudly. In front of the village was a concourse of warriors, women, and children, who joined in the song, and who opened out to receive the victors as they came marching on.

The chant swelled in volume, and its joyous note was now marked. But not one of the marching warriors relaxed a particle from his dignity. White Lightning strode majestically, a magnificent figure of savage man, and led the way to a war pole in the center of the village, in front of a council house built of poles. Near the foot of this pole a fire was burning.

Henry stepped from the line when they came to the war pole, and the warriors, secretly admiring their splendid trophy, closed in about him, cutting off all chance of escape, should he try it. But he had no thought of making such an attempt. His attention was centered now on the ceremonies.

The war band formed in a group, the war pole in the center. Then two warriors fastened two blocks of wood on a kind of rude ark that lay near the war pole. This wooden ark, carved like a totem, was the most sacred of all objects to the Wyandots.

All the returned warriors sat down upon the ground, and the great young chief, Timmendiquas, inquired gravely whether his lodge was ready for him. An old man replied that it had been swept clean and prepared by the women, and Timmendiquas and his warriors, rising from the ground, uttered a tremendous whoop. Then they marched gravely in a circle about the pole, after which they took up the ark and carried it solemnly to the council house. When they entered the council house, bearing the ark with them, they closed the door behind them.

The whole population of the village was packed densely in front of the council house, and when the door was shut upon the victorious war band all the female kin of the warriors within, except those too young or too old to take part, advanced, while the crowd swung back to give them room, and arranged themselves in two parallel lines, facing each other on either side of the door of the council house.

These women were dressed in all their barbaric finery. They wore beautiful headdresses of feathers, red and white and blue and yellow. Their faces were painted, but not so glaringly as those of the warriors. Even here in the wilderness woman's taste, to a certain extent, prevailed. They wore tunics of finely dressed deerskins, or, in some cases, bright red and blue shawls, bought at British posts, deerskin leggings, and moccasins. Much work had been lavished upon the moccasins, which were of the finest skin, delicately tanned and ornamented with hundreds of little beads, red, yellow, blue, green and every other color.

Many of the younger women, not yet wrinkled or bent by hard work, were quite pretty. They were slim and graceful, and they had the lightness and freedom of wild things. Henry was impressed by the open and bold bearing of them all, women as well as men. He had heard much of the Wyandots, the flower of all the western tribes, and now at close range he saw that all he had heard was true, and more.

As soon as the two lines were formed, and they were arranged with the greatest exactitude and evenness, the women, as they faced one another, began a slow monotonous chant, which, however, lasted only a minute. At the end of this minute there was profound silence for ten minutes. The women, trained for these ceremonies, stood so perfectly still that Henry could not see a body quiver. At the end of the ten minutes there was another minute of chanting, and then ten more minutes of silence, and thus, in this proportion of ten minutes of silence to one minute of song, the alternation would be kept up all day and all night.

Once every three hours Timmendiquas would come forth at the head of his warriors, raise the war whoop, pass around the war pole, bearing aloft a branch of cedar, and then return to the council house, closing the door firmly as before.

Meanwhile Henry's attention was taken from the ceremonies by a most significant thing. He had been conscious for a while that some one in the closely packed ring of Wyandot spectators was watching him. He had a sort of feeling as of cold upon the back of his neck, and he shivered a little. He knew, therefore, that the look directed upon him was evil, but pride kept him from showing undue curiosity before the Wyandots, who were trained to repress every emotion. He too, had, in these respects, instincts kindred with those of the Wyandots.

Presently he turned slowly and carelessly, and found that he was looking into the savage, sneering eyes of Braxton Wyatt, the young renegade, who more than once had sought the destruction of Henry and his comrades. Although they could not find his body, he had hoped that Wyatt had perished in the great battle on the Lower Mississippi, because it might save the border much, but, now that he was alive and here, Henry refused to show surprise, alarm, or any other emotion. He merely shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly, and his glance passed on. But he knew that Braxton Wyatt was swelling with malignant triumph. Fortune had changed her face, and it was his day to smile. Henry Ware was there, a prisoner among the Wyandots—and a prisoner of the Wyandots seldom escaped—while he, Braxton Wyatt, could exult over him and see him die. Truly, it was an amazing turn of the wheel, and Henry felt all the bitterness of it, although his expression did not alter a particle.

The boy's eyes roamed back again, and he saw that Braxton Wyatt's was not the only white face in the crowd. Five men stood near him, and, tanned and browned as they were, it was obvious that they belonged to the white race. He surmised readily by their air of perfect confidence and freedom that they were renegades, also, and he was not wrong. As he was soon to learn, they were Simon Girty, name of incredible infamy on the border, Moses Blackstaffe, but little his inferior in cunning and cruelty, and McKee, Eliot and Quarles. So Braxton Wyatt, white youth among the Indians, was not alone. He had found men of his race as bad as himself, and Henry knew that he would thrive in such company.

Henry guessed that the renegade who stood a little in front of the others, who seemed by his manner and bearing to consider himself their leader, was the terrible Girty, a man who left behind him an almost unbelievable record for cruelty and treachery to his own race. He was partly in Indian, partly in white dress, and when his glance fell upon Henry it was full of most inhuman mockery. The boy's wrath flamed up. He did not seek now to practice the Indian stoicism and repress his feelings. His eyes, blazing with indignation, looked straight into those of Girty, with a gaze so stern and accusing and so full of contempt that the renegade, unable to withstand it, lowered his own eyes.

Braxton Wyatt had seen this little passage, and Henry's triumph of the moment increased his hatred. He longed to say something, to taunt him with his position, something that his ignoble soul was not above, but he did not dare to do it just then. He and his fellow renegades wished to sway the Wyandots to a purpose of theirs, and any interruption now of the ceremonies, which, in fact, were a sacred rite, would bring fierce anger down upon his head.

Henry remained about four hours in the crowd, and then, an old man, whose dignity and bearing showed that he held a chief's rank, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Come," he said in fair English, "I am Heno, and you are our prisoner."

Henry had learned already that Heno in Wyandot meant Thunder, and he answered cheerfully.

"Very well, my good Thunder, lead on, and I'll follow."

The old chief gravely led the way, and the throng opened out to let them pass. Henry glanced back at the two swaying lines of women, now engaged in one of their minute-long chants, and he wondered at the illimitable patience of the red race, to whom time seemed nothing.

Unless some great movement, like a sudden attack by an enemy or the necessity of a forced march, interfered, the warriors would go in and out of the council house for three days, when all

except the leader and one attendant warrior would go forth to their lodges, which would be swept clean for them, and which would be decorated with twigs of cedar or pieces of scalps to satisfy the ghosts of departed friends. But Timmendiquas and his attendant would remain three more days and nights in the council house to complete their purification. When they emerged the medicine bag would be hung before the lodge door of Timmendiquas. Unless the village was removed, it would hang there a month, and the people would sing and dance before it at intervals.

As Henry passed through the throng, following close behind old Heno, many admiring glances were bent upon him by the great little red nation of the Wyandots. These children of the wilderness knew the value of a tall, straight figure, powerful shoulders, a splendid chest and limbs that seemed to be made of woven wire. Here was one, already mighty among his kind, although but a boy.

Heno led the way to a bark lodge in the center of the village, and motioned to Henry to enter.

"I must bind you," he said, "because if I did not you are so strong and so swift that you might escape from us. If you will not suffer me to tie the cords I shall call the help of other warriors."

"There is no need of a fight about it, Thunder," said Henry genially. "I know you can bring in enough warriors to overpower anybody, so go ahead."

He held out his hands, and the old chief looked somewhat embarrassed at the willingness and cheerfulness of the captive. Nevertheless, he produced deerskin cords and bound the boy's wrists, not so tightly that the cords hurt, but with ingenious lacings that Henry knew he could neither slip nor break. Then, as the captive sat down on a rush mat and leaned against the bark wall of the lodge, old Heno regarded him attentively.

Thunder, old but brave warrior of the Wyandots, was a judge of promising youth, and he thought that in his sixty years of life he had never seen another so satisfactory as this prisoner, save perhaps the mighty young chief, known to his own people as Timmendiquas and to the settlers as White Lightning. He looked at the length of limb and the grand development of shoulders and chest, and he sighed ever so gently. He sighed because in his opinion Manitou should have bestowed such great gifts upon a Wyandot, and not upon a member of the white race. Yet Heno did not actually hate the prisoner. Coiled at the bottom of his heart, like a tiny spring in a watch, was a little hope, and this little hope, like the tiny spring, set all the machinery of his mind in motion.

"You no like being captive, held in lodge, with arms tied?" he said gently.

Henry smiled.

"No, I don't enjoy it," he replied. "It's not the situation that I should choose for myself."

"You like to be free," continued old Heno with the same gentle gravity. "You like to be out in the forest with Whoraminta?"

"Yes," replied Henry, "I'd like to be free, and I'd like to be out in the forest, but I don't know about Whoraminta. I'm not acquainted with him, and he might not be a pleasant comrade."

"Whoraminta! Whoraminta!" repeated Heno. "Cannot think of your word for it. It is this!"

He threw himself into a firm attitude, held out one hand far, extended the other about half so far, shut his left eye, and looked with the right intently along the level of his two hands. Henry understood the pantomime perfectly.

"I know," he said. "Whoraminta is a rifle. You're right, Thunder, I'd like mighty well to be out in the forest with my Whoraminta, one of the trustiest and best comrades I ever had."

Heno's smile answered that of the captive.

"And with plenty of Teghsto?" he said.

"Teghsto?" said Henry. "That's new to me. Can't you think of the English word for it?"

Heno shook his head, but closed his right hand until it formed approximately the shape of a horn, then elevated it and held it as if he were pouring something into the open palm of his left hand.

"Use in Whoraminta," he said.

"That's not hard," said Henry. "Powder you mean."

"That right," said Heno, smiling again. "Teghsto go in Whoraminta, and Yeatara go in Whoraminta, too. You want plenty of Yeatara."

"Lead! bullets!" said Henry at a guess.

"Yes. That it. Yeatara is lead, and you snap with Taweghschera; fire spark jump out flash! bang! You want Taweghschera, too."

"Taweghschera must be flint," said Henry, and old Heno nodded. "Yes, Thunder, I'd want the flint, too, or I couldn't do anything at all with Whoraminta, Teghsto and Yeatara. I'll remember those words, my friend. Thanks for your free teaching."

"You learn fast. You make good Wyandot," said Heno in the most friendly manner. "You have your arms, your feet free, Whoraminta with you, you go with the warriors on great hunt, you gone many moons, you kill the deer, buffalo, bear, panther, you have no care, no sorrow, you live. I, too, was a young hunter and warrior once."

Old Heno slowly drew his figure up at the glorious picture that he had painted. His nostrils were distended, and the fire of his youth came back into his eyes. He saw the buffaloes trampling down the grass, and heard the shout of his enemies in the forest combat.

"I'm thinking, Heno," said Henry sincerely, "that you're yet a good deal of a young hunter and warrior."

"You not only make good warrior, but you make good chief, too. You know how to talk," said Heno.

Nevertheless, he was pleased, and he was still smiling when he left a few moments later. Nobody else came for a day and night, old Heno bringing him his food and water. He did not suffer any actual physical pain, as his bonds permitted him to move a little and the circulation was not impeded, but he chafed terribly. The picture that Heno had drawn of the great forest and the great hunt was most alluring. He longed for freedom and his "Whoraminta."

A visitor came on the second morning. The lodge door was opened and a thick figure filled it a moment as a man entered. Henry was sitting on a mat at the farthest part of the lodge, and he could see the man very clearly. The stranger was young, twenty-seven or twenty-eight perhaps, thick set and powerful, tanned to the brownness of an Indian by sun, wind and rain, but the features obviously were those of the white race. It was an evil face, but a strong one. Henry felt a shiver of repulsion. He felt that something demoniac had entered the lodge, because he knew that this was Simon Girty, the terrible renegade, now fully launched upon the career that made his name infamous throughout the Ohio Valley to this day.

But after the little shiver, Henry was without motion of expression. Show apprehension in the presence of such a man! He would rather die. Girty laughed and sat down on the mat on the other side of the lodge. But it was a small lodge, and their faces were not more than four feet apart. Henry read in the eyes of Girty a satisfaction that he did not seek to conceal.

"It isn't so pleasant to be trussed up in that fashion, is it?" he asked.

Henry refused to answer.

Girty laughed again.

"You needn't speak unless you feel like it," he said. "I can do the talking for both of us. You're tied up, it's true, but you're treated better than most prisoners. I've been hearing a good deal about you. A particular friend of yours, one Braxton Wyatt, a most promising lad, has told me a lot of stories in which you have a part."

"I know Braxton Wyatt very well," said Henry, "and I'm glad to say that I've helped to defeat some of his designs. He has a great ambition."

"What is that?" asked Girty.

"To become as bad a man as you are."

But Girty was not taken aback at all. His lips twisted into a peculiar grin of cruel satisfaction.

"They do fear me," he said, "and they'll fear me more before long. I've joined the Indians, I like them and their ways, and I'm going to make myself a great man among them."

"At the expense of your own kind?"

"Of course. What is that to me. I'm going to get all the tribes together, and sweep the whites out of the Ohio Valley forever."

"I've heard that these same Indians with whom you're so thick burned your step-father at the stake?" said Henry.

"That's true," replied the renegade without the slightest feeling. "That was when I was a little child, and they captured our family. But they didn't burn me. So what have I to complain of?"

Henry could not repress a shudder, but Girty remained as cool as ice.

"Why shouldn't I be a great man among the Indians?" he said. "I know the tricks of both white and red now. The Continentals, as they call themselves—rebels I call them—held McKee, Eliot and myself prisoners at Fort Pitt, the place they call Pittsburgh, but we escaped and here we are. We've been joined by Blackstaffe, Quarles, and the boy, Braxton Wyatt. The Indians trust us and listen to us; we're going to draw all the valley Indians together—Shawnees, Miamis, Wyandots, Ottawas, Delawares and Illinois—and we'll light such a flame on both sides of the river that no white man will ever be able to put it out."

"You've got to reckon with some brave men first," said Henry.

"Yes, I know that the settlers have good woodsmen, Boone and Kenton—Simon Kenton was my comrade once—but they are too few, and as for this expedition to which you belonged, that is coming up the river, we're going to cut that off, too, not only because we'll be glad to wipe out those people, but because we want the rifles, the ammunition, the stores, and, above all, the cannon that your fleet carries. What will the wooden walls in Kentucky be to us when we get those big guns?"

"When you get them!" said Henry defiantly. This man inspired increasing horror and repulsion. The exulting way in which he talked of destroying his own people would have been incredible, had Henry merely heard of it from others. But the man was here before his face, glorying in the deeds that he expected to commit.

"Oh, we'll get them," said Girty confidently. "You think you can help to keep us from it, but you won't be there when it's done. Two things are going to be offered to you, and you'll have to choose between them."

"What are they?" asked Henry, who had resumed his calm, at least, so far as looks went.

"It's what I mainly came here to talk to you about. Timmendiquas is young, but he's a mighty man among the Wyandots. All the older chiefs are willing to step aside in his favor, and when men do that without being made to do it, there's something great in the one that's favored, something that everybody is bound to see. He's first among the Wyandots, and you know what that means when I tell you that the last of the Wyandots are as good as the first of most people."

"Why do you talk to me about Timmendiquas?" asked Henry. "I've seen him, I've been with him for days, I know what he is."

"I'm coming to it. Timmendiquas likes you. He thinks you're fitted for the forest and a life like the one he leads. Other Wyandots who have observed you agree with him, and to tell you the truth I think so, too, myself."

"Well!" said Henry. He now divined what Girty was going to reveal, but he wished the renegade to tell it himself.

"Timmendiquas will be in the council house several days longer, purifying himself, but when he does come out, they'll say to you: 'Be a Wyandot or die.' They'll put it to you plain, just as it has been put to white men before you."

Henry stirred a little. Certainly he did not wish to die, nor did he expect to die, but he would risk the alternative.

"Girty," he said, slowly, "an offer something like this was made to me once before. It was made by a Spaniard far down in the south. You never knew him—he's dead now—but your friend, Braxton Wyatt did—but the other thing wasn't death, nor did he ask me, if I took his offer, to make war upon the settlements in Kentucky. Before I'd turn Indian like you and Braxton Wyatt and the others, and murder my own people, you infamous renegade, I'd be torn to pieces or burned at the stake a dozen times over!"

The words were hurled out by passion and feeling as the flash of powder sends forth the bullet. The renegade shrank back, and rose to his feet, his eyes aflame, but in a moment or two he sank down again, laughing a little.

"That's what I knew you'd say," he said, "and I came here to hear you say it. I wanted to force the hand of Timmendiquas, and I've done it. I don't want you to join us, and I'll tell you why. I intend to be first here, first among the white leaders of the Indians, but if you were to come with us you'd be first yourself in three or four years, and I'd be only second. See how much I think of your powers."

"I don't thank you for your compliment," said Henry boldly, "but I'll thank you if you'll get out of this lodge. I think you're the worst man I've ever seen."

Simon Girty frowned again, and raised his hand as if to strike the bound youth, but refrained.

"We don't see things alike," he said, and abruptly left the lodge.

Henry felt his evil presence long after he had gone, as if some foul animal had entered the lodge, and presently, when old Heno came, he asked him as a great favor to leave the door open for a while. When the cool, fresh air rushed in he breathed it in great draughts and felt relieved. He admired Timmendiquas. He respected the Wyandots. He could not blame the Indian who fought for his hunting grounds, but, with all the strength of his strong nature, he despised and hated every renegade.

That evening, after old Heno had gone, he sought for the first time to slip or break his bonds. He wanted to get away. He wanted to rejoin his comrades and the fleet. He wanted to help them prepare for the new dangers. But strain as he might with all his great strength, and twist as he would with all his ingenuity, he could not get free. He gave it up after a while and lay on his rush mat in a state of deep depression. It seemed that the Wyandots, cunning and agile, flower of the red men, would give him no chance.

He had asked Heno to leave the door of the lodge partly open a while longer that he might have plenty of fresh air, and the old warrior had done so. He heard faint noises from the village, but by and by they ceased, and Henry at last fell asleep.

Deep in the night he heard a musical sound, a small note but clear and sweet. It reached him easily, although it seemed to come from the forest four or five hundred yards away, and it spoke in almost audible tones, telling him to be of good faith, that what he wished would come to pass. It was the wind among the leaves again, something mystical but almost human to him. It was the third time that it had sung to him, once in warning, twice in hope, and the depression that he had felt when he laid down vanished utterly. A deep sense of peace and content pervaded his whole being. It was a peace of the senses and mind alike, driving away all trouble either for the present or the future.

He was called to deeper rest. The voice of the forest still sang to him, becoming softer and softer and fainter and fainter, and the feeling of absolute content was overwhelming. He did not seek to move, but permitted himself, as if under an opiate, to drift away into a far slumberland, while the note from the forest sank to nothing.

When he awoke the next morning he did not know whether he had really heard or had merely dreamed.

CHAPTER V

PLAY AND COUNCIL

Henry was still a prisoner in the lodge when the purification of Timmendiwas was finished. He had been permitted to go forth now and then under a strong guard, but, no matter how closely he watched, not the slightest chance of escape presented itself. He saw the renegades about, Braxton Wyatt among them, but none of these men spoke to him. It was evident to him, however, from the respectful manner in which the Wyandots treated Girty that he had great influence among them.

The warriors seemed to be in no hurry about anything. The hunters were bringing in plenty of game, and the village life went forward merrily. But Henry judged that they were merely waiting. It was inconceivable that the Wyandots should remain there long in peace while the Indian world of all that great valley was seething with movement.

Timmendiwas came to see him at the end of the sixth day of purification, and treated him with the courtesy due from a great chief to a distinguished prisoner.

"Have our warriors been kind to you?" he asked.

"They have done everything except let me slip away," replied Henry.

Timmendiwas smiled.

"That is the one thing that we do not wish," he said. "They think as I do that you are fit to be a Wyandot. Come, I will loose your hands, and together we will see our young men and young women play ball."

Henry was not at all averse. Both his nature and his long but friendly captivity in a far northwestern tribe made him have a keen sympathy with many traits in the Indian character. He could understand and like their sports.

"I'll go gladly, White Lightning," he said. "I don't think you need ask me to give any promise not to escape. I won't find any such chance."

The chief smiled with pleasure at the compliment, undid the bonds, and the two walked out into the brilliant sunshine. Henry felt at once that the village was tingling with excitement. All were hurrying toward a wide grassy meadow just at the outskirts of the village, and the majority of them, especially the young of either sex, laughed and chattered volubly. There was no restraint. Here among themselves the Indian repression was thrown aside.

Henry, with the shadow of great suffering and death over him, felt their thrill and excitement. The day was uncommonly fine, and the setting of the forest scene was perfect. There was the village, trim and neat in its barbaric way, which in the sunshine was not an unpleasant way, with the rich meadows about it, and beyond the great wilderness of heavy, circling dark green.

All were now gathered at the edge of the meadow, still laughing, chattering, and full of delight. Even the great Timmendiwas, red knight, champion and far-famed hero at twenty-five, unbent and speculated with keen interest on the result of the ball game, now about to be played. Henry felt his own interest increasing, and he rubbed shoulders with his old friends, Heno the Thunder, Anue the Bear, and Hainteroh the Raccoon. The gallant Raccoon still carried his arm in a sling, but he was such a healthy man that it would be well in an incredibly brief period, and meantime it did not interfere at all with his enjoyment of a ball game.

The meadow was about a hundred yards wide and a hundred and fifty yards long. The grass upon it was thick, but nowhere more than three or four inches in height. All along the edges of the longer sides, facing each other, stakes had been driven at intervals of six feet, and amid great cheering the players formed up on either side next to the line of the stakes.

But all the players on one side were women, mostly young, strong, and lithe, and all the players on the other side were men, also mostly young, strong and lithe. They wore no superfluous garments,

although enough was left to save modesty, and young braves and young squaws alike were alert and eager, their eyes flushing with excitement. There were at least one hundred players on each side, and it seemed a most unequal match, but an important proviso was to come.

Timmendiquas advanced to the edge of the meadow and held up his hand. Instantly all shouting, cheering, and talking ceased, and there was perfect silence. Then old Heno, holding in his hand a ball much larger than the modern baseball, but much smaller than the modern football, advanced gravely and solemnly into the meadow. The eyes of two hundred players, young warriors and young girls were intent upon him.

Old Thunder, despite his years, was a good sport and felt the importance of his duty. While all were watching him, and the multitude did no more than breathe, he walked gingerly over the grass, and with a keen old eye picked out a point that was equally distant from the long and short sides of the parallelogram. Here he stood gravely for a few moments, as if to confirm himself in the opinion that this was the proper place, and extended his right arm with the big ball lying in the open palm.

There was a long breath of excitement from players and spectators alike, but Big Thunder was a man of experience and deliberation who was not to be hurried. He still held his right arm extended with the big ball lying in the open palm, and then sent a warning look to each hundred, first to the men and then to the women. These two sides were already bent far over, waiting to jump.

The stakes, the field, the positions of the players were remarkably like the modern game of football, although this was wholly original with the Indians.

The eyes of old Heno came back from the players to the ball lying in the palm of his right hand and regarded it contemplatively a moment or two. Then the fingers suddenly contracted like lightning upon the ball, and he threw it high, perfectly straight up in the air, at the same time uttering a piercing shout.

Henry saw that the ball would fall almost where Heno stood, but the old warrior ran swiftly away, and the opposing sides, men and women, made a dash for it before it fell. The multitude, thrilled with the excitement, uttered a great shout, and bent forward in eagerness. But no one—not a player—encroached upon the meadow. Warriors as guards stalked up and down, but they were not needed. The discipline was perfect. Henry by the side of Timmendiquas shared in the general interest, and he, too, bent forward. The chief bent with him.

Young warriors and young girls who made a dash for the ball were about equal in speed. Wyandot women were not hampered by skirts, and forest life made them lithe and sinewy. Both were near the ball, but Henry yet saw nothing to tell which would reach it first. Suddenly a slim brown figure shot out from the ranks of the women, and, with a leap, reached the ball, when the nearest warrior was yet a yard away.

There was a great cry of applause, as the girl, straightening up, attempted to run with the ball through the ranks of the men, and throw it between the stakes at their side of the field. Two warriors promptly intercepted her, and now Henry saw why the match between girls and warriors was not so unequal as it had appeared at first. When the warriors intercepted the girl she threw the ball over their heads and as far as she could toward the coveted goal posts. Three warriors ran for it, but the one who reached it kicked it with all his might back toward the goal posts of the girls. It fell into a dense throng there, and a girl promptly threw it back, where it was met by the returning kick of a warrior. The men were allowed to use only their feet, the girls could use both hands and feet. If any warrior touched the ball with his hands he was promptly put off the field by the umpires, and the ball was restored to its original position.

The match, well balanced, hotly contested, swayed back and forth. Now the ball was carried toward the women's goal, and then toward the men. Now all the two hundred players would be in a dense throng in the center, and then they would open out as some swift hand or foot sent the ball flying. Often the agile young squaws were knocked down in the hurly burly, but always they sprang up laughing.

All around the field the people cheered and laughed, and many began to bet, the wagers being mostly of skins, lead, powder or bright trinkets bought at the British posts.

For over a half hour the ball flew back and forth, and so far as Henry could see, neither had gained any advantage. Presently they were all packed once more in a dense throng in the center of the field, and the ball was invisible somewhere in the middle of the group. While the crowd watched for its reappearance all the shouting and cheering ceased.

The ball suddenly flew from the group and shot toward the goal posts on the side of the women and a stalwart warrior, giving it another kick, sent it within ten yards of victory for the men.

"Ah, the warriors are too strong for them," said White Lightning.

But he spoke too soon. There was a brown streak across the grass, and the same girl who had first seized the ball darted ahead of the warrior. She picked up the ball while it was yet rolling and ran swiftly back with it. A warrior planted himself in her way, but, agile as a deer, she darted around him, escaped a second and a third in the same way, and continued her flight toward the winning posts.

The crowd gave a single great shout, subsiding after it into a breathless silence.

"The Dove runs well," murmured Timmendiquas in English.

Henry's sympathies were with her, but could the Dove evade all the warriors? They could not touch the ball, but they might seize the girl herself and shake her until the ball fell from her hands. This, in fact, was what happened when an agile young warrior succeeded in grasping her by the shoulder. The ball fell to the ground, but as he loosed her and prepared to kick it she made a quick dive and seized it. The warrior's foot swung in the empty air, and then he set out after the flying Dove.

Only one other guard was left, and it was seen that he would intercept her, but she stopped short, her arm swung out in a curve, and she threw the ball with all her might toward the goal posts. The warrior leaped high to catch it, but it passed six inches above his outstretched fingers, sailed on through the air, cleared the goal posts, and fell ten feet on the other side. The Dove had won the game for her side.

The crowd swarmed over the field and congratulated the victorious girls, particularly the fleet-footed Dove, while the beaten warriors drew off in a crestfallen group. Timmendiquas, with Henry at his side, was among the first to give approval, but the renegades remained in their little group at the edge of the field. Girty was not at all pleased at the time consumed by the Wyandots in this game. He had other plans that he wished to urge.

"But it's no use for me to argue with them," he said to Braxton Wyatt. "They're as set in their ways as any white people that ever lived."

"That's so," said Wyatt, "you're always right, Mr. Girty, I've noticed, too, since I've been among the Indians that you can't interfere with any of their rites and ceremonies."

He spoke in a deferential tone, as if he acknowledged his master in treachery and villainy, and Girty received it as his due. He was certainly first in this group of six, and the older ones, Blackstaffe, McKee, Eliot, and Quarles, recognized the fact as willingly as did Braxton Wyatt.

The crowd, the game finished, was dissolving, and Girty at the head of his comrades strolled toward Timmendiquas, who still had Henry at his side.

"Timmendiquas," he said in Wyandot, "beware of this prisoner. Although but a boy in years, he has strength, courage and skill that few men, white or red, can equal."

The eyes of the young chief, full of somber fire, were turned upon the renegade.

"Since when, Girty," he asked, "have the Wyandots become old women? Since when have they become both weak and ignorant?"

Girty, bold as he was, shrank a little at the stern tone and obvious wrath of the chief.

"I meant nothing wrong, Timmendiquas," he said. "The world knows that the Wyandots are both brave and wise."

White Lightning shrugged his shoulders, and turned away with his prisoner. Henry could understand only a word or two of what they said, but he guessed its import. Already skilled in

forest diplomacy, he knew that it was wisdom for him to say nothing, and he walked on with White Lightning. He watched the chief with sharp side glances and saw that he was troubled. Two or three times he seemed on the point of saying something, but always remained silent. Yet his bearing towards Henry was most friendly, and it gave the captive boy a pang. He knew the hope that was in the mind of White Lightning, but he knew that hope could never come true.

"We do not wish to make you suffer, Ware," he said, when they came to the door of Henry's prison lodge, "until we decide what we are to do with you, and before then much water must flow down Ohezuhyeandawa (The Ohio)."

"I do not ask you to do anything that is outside your customs," said Henry quietly.

"We must bind you as before," said Timmendiquas, "but we bind you in a way that does not hurt, and Heno will bring you food and water. But this is a day of rejoicing with us, and this afternoon our young men and young maids dance. You shall come forth and see it."

Henry was re-bound, and a half hour later old Heno appeared with food, meat of the deer and wild turkey, bread of maize, and a large gourd filled with pure cold water. After he had loosened Henry's wrists that he might eat and drink he sat by and talked. Thunder, with further acquaintance, was disclosing signs of volubility.

"How you like ball game?" he asked.

"Good! very good!" said Henry sincerely, "and I don't see, Thunder, how you could throw that ball so straight up in the air that it would come down where you stood."

"Much practice, long practice," said the old man modestly. "Heno been throwing up balls longer by twice than you have lived."

When the boy had finished eating, old Heno told him to come with him as the dance was now about to begin, and Henry was glad enough to escape again from the close prison lodge.

The dancers were already forming on the meadow where the ball game had been played, and there was the same interest and excitement, although now it was less noisy. Henry guessed from their manner that the dance would not only be an amusement, but would also have something of the nature of a rite.

All the dancers were young, young warriors and girls, and they faced each other in two lines, warriors in one and girls in the other. As in the ball game, each line numbered about a hundred, but now they were in their brightest and most elaborate raiment. The two lines were perfectly even, as straight as an arrow, the toe of no moccasin out of line, and they were about a rod apart.

At the far end of the men's line a warrior raised in his right hand a dry gourd which contained beads and pebbles, and began to rattle it in a not unmusical way. To the sound of the rattle he started a grave and solemn chant, in which all joined. Then the two lines, still keeping their straightness and evenness, danced toward each other slowly and rhythmically. All the time the song went on, the usual monotonous Indian beat, merely a rising and falling of the note with scarcely any variation.

The two lines, still dancing, came close together, and then both bent forward until the head of every warrior touched the head of the girl opposite him. They remained in this position a full half minute, and a young warrior often whispered sweet words in the ear of the girl whose head touched him. This, as Henry learned later, was the wooing or courting dance of the Wyandots.

Both sides suddenly straightened up, uttered a series of loud shouts, and began to dance back toward their original position, at the same time resuming the rising and falling chant. When the full distance was reached they danced up, bowed, and touched heads again, and this approaching or retreating was kept up for four hours, or until the sun set. It became to Henry extremely monotonous, but the Indians seemed never to tire of it, and when they stopped at darkness the eyes of all the dancers were glowing with pleasure and excitement.

It was quite dark when Henry returned to the lodge for the second time that day, but this time old Heno instead of Timmendiquas was his escort back to prison.

"Play over now," said Heno. "Great work begin to-morrow."

The old man seemed to be full of the importance of what he knew, and Henry, anxious to know, too, played adroitly upon his vanity.

"If any big thing is to be done, I'm sure that you would know of it, Heno," he said. "So they are to begin to-morrow, are they?"

"Yes," replied Heno, supposing from Henry's words that he had already received a hint from Timmendiwas. "Great chiefs reach here to-night. Hold council to-morrow."

"Ah, they come from all the tribes, do they not?" said Henry, guessing shrewdly.

"From all between Ohezuhyeandawa (The Ohio) and the Great Lakes and from the mountains to Yandawezue (The Mississippi)."

"Illinois, Ottawas, Miamis, Shawnees, and Delawares?" said Henry.

"Yes," said Heno, "Illinois, Ottawas, Miamis, Shawnees, and Delawares. All come to smoke pipes with the Wyandots and hear what we have to say. We small nation, but mighty warriors. No Wyandot ever coward."

"That is true," said Henry sincerely. "I've never heard of a Wyandot who flinched in battle. My people think that where one Wyandot warrior walks it takes two warriors of any other tribe to fill his footprints."

Old Heno smiled broadly.

"Maybe you be at council to-morrow," he said. "You make good Wyandot."

"Maybe I could," said Henry to himself, "but it's certain that I never will."

Old Heno withdrew, still smiling, and Henry was left alone in the darkness of the prison lodge, full of interest over what was to occur on the morrow, and anxious that he might be present to see. He knew that the conference of the chiefs would be concerning the new war on Kentucky, and now he was not so anxious to escape at once. A week later would be better, and then if the chance came—he never faltered in his belief that it would come—he could carry with him news worth the while. The young chief, Timmendiwas, was a man whom he admired, but, nevertheless, he would prove a formidable leader of such a coalition, the most dangerous to the white people that could be found.

Henry listened again for the song among the leaves that had the power to fill him with hope, but he did not hear it. Nevertheless, his courage did not depart, and he felt that the longer the Wyandots waited to dispose of him the better were his chances.

Heno came the next morning with his breakfast and announced that all the chiefs of the Ohio Valley had arrived and were now in conference in the council house.

"They talk later outside," he said, "and maybe Timmendiwas let you come and hear wise words that great chiefs say."

"I'd like to hear," said Henry. "I know that the Indians are great orators."

Heno did not reply, but Henry had divined that he was susceptible to flattery. He understood, too, that it was the policy of White Lightning to impress him with the skill and power of the tribes. So he waited patiently.

Meanwhile fifty famous chiefs representing all the great nations of the Ohio Valley sat in the temporary council house of the Wyandots, the smallest but the wisest and bravest tribe of them all. They were mostly men of middle age or older, although two or three were nearly, but not quite, as young as Timmendiwas himself. This chief was at once the youngest, the tallest, and the handsomest man present. They sat in rows, but where he sat was the head of the council. All looked toward him.

Every chief was in his finest dress, moccasins, leggings, and hunting coat of beautifully tanned deerskin, with blanket of bright color looped gracefully over the shoulder. In one of the rows in a group sat the six renegades, Girty, Blackstaffe, McKee, Eliot, Quarles, and Braxton Wyatt. Every man was bent forward in the stooped formal attitude of one who listens, and every one had the stem of a pipe in his mouth.

In one group sat the chiefs of the Ottawas, the most distant of the tribes, dwellers on the far shores of Lake Huron, sometimes fish-eaters, and fugitives at an earlier day from the valley of the

Ottawa River in Canada, whence they took their name. The word "Ottawa" in their language meant "trader," and they had received it in their ancient home because they had ideas of barter and had been the "go betweens" for other tribes. They worshiped the sun first and the stars second. Often they held festivals to the sun, and asked his aid in fishing and hunting. They occupied a secondary position in the Ohio Valley because they were newer and were not as fierce and tenacious in war as the older tribes. Ottawa chiefs did not thrust themselves forward, and when they spoke it was in a deprecatory way.

Next to the Wyandots were the Illinois, who lived in the valley of the Illinois and who were not numerous. They had been beaten often in tribal wars, until their spirit lacked that fine exaltation which means victory. Like the Ottawas, they felt that they should not say much, but should listen intently to the words of the chiefs who sat with them, and who represented great warrior nations.

Next to the Illinois were the Delawares, or, in their own language, the Lenni Lenape, who also were an immigrant race. Once they had dwelt much farther east, even beyond the mountains, but many warlike tribes, including the great league of the Iroquois, the Six Nations, had made war upon them, had reduced their numbers, and had steadily pushed them westward and further westward, until they reached the region now called Ohio. Here their great uncles, the Wyandots, received them with kindness, told them to rest in peace and gave them extensive lands, fine for hunting, along the Muskingum River.

The Lenni Lenape thrived in the new land and became powerful again. But never in their darkest days, when the world seemed to be slipping beneath their feet, had they lost the keen edge of their spirit. The warrior of the Lenni Lenape had always been willing to laugh in the face of flames and the stake, and now, as their chiefs sat in the council, they spoke often and they spoke boldly. They feared to look no one in the face, not even the far-famed Timmendiquas himself. They were of three clans: Unamis, which is the Turtle; Unaluchtgo, which is the Turkey; and Minsi, the Wolf. Minsi was the most warlike and always led the Lenni Lenape in battle. Chiefs of all three clans were present.

Next to the Lenni Lenape were the valiant Shawnees, who held all the valley of the Scioto as far west as the Little Miami or Mud River. They had a record for skill and courage that went far back into the mists of the past, and of all the tribes, it was the Shawnees who hated the whites most. Their hostility was undying. No Shawnee would ever listen to any talk of peace with them. It must be war until the white vanguard was destroyed or driven back over the mountains. So fearless were the Shawnees that once a great band of them, detaching from the main tribe, had crossed the Ohio and had wandered all the way through the southern country, fighting Chickasaws, Creeks, and Choctaws, until they reached the sea, more than a thousand miles from their old home. A cunning chief, Black Hoof, who could boast that he had bathed his feet in the salt water, had led them safely back more than twenty years before, and now this same Black Hoof sat here in the council house of the Wyandots, old and wrinkled, but keen of eye, eagle-beaked, and as shrewd and daring as ever, the man who had led in an almost unknown border exploit, as dangerous and romantic as the Retreat of the Ten Thousand.

The Shawnees claimed—and the legend was one that would never die among them—that they originated in a far, very far, land, and that they were divided into 12 tribes or sub-tribes. For some cause which they had forgotten the whole nation marched away in search of a new home. They came to a wide water that was bitter and salt to the taste. They had no canoes, but the sea parted before them, and then the twelve tribes, each with its leader at its head, marched on the ocean bottom with the wall of waters on either side of them until they reached a great land which was America. It is this persistent legend, so remarkable in its similarity to the flight of the children of Israel from Egypt, even to the number of the tribes, that has caused one or two earlier western writers to claim that the Shawnees were in reality the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

Next to the Shawnees were the Miamis, more numerous perhaps, but not more warlike. They lived along the rivers Miami and Maumee and were subdivided into three clans, the Twigtees, the

Weas, and the Piankeshaws. Chiefs of all three clans were present, and they could control many hundreds of warriors.

The Wyandots, who lived to the eastward in Ohio, held themselves back modestly. They were a small tribe, but the others often called them "The Nation-That-Never-Knew-a-Coward," and there was no reason for them to push themselves forward. When the time came for a Wyandot chief to speak the time would come for the others to listen. They did speak, and throughout that morning the great question was argued back and forth. Girty and Blackstaffe, the second of the renegades in influence, sometimes participated, and they were listened to with varying degrees of respect, according to the character of the advice they gave. These white men, with their cunning and knowledge of their own people, were of value, but once or twice when they spoke the lips of some of the younger chiefs, always including Timmendiquas, curled with scorn.

At noon they came forth from the council house, and Timmendiquas, accompanied by Heno, went to the lodge in which Henry was confined. Heno carried particularly tempting food to Henry. Besides venison and turkey, he brought maple sugar and hominy with a dressing of bear's oil and sugar.

Henry had become used to Indian food long since, and he ate with relish. Timmendiquas stood by, regarding him attentively.

"You are a strong and valiant foe, Ware," he said at length. "I fight against the white people, but I do not dislike you. I wish, then, that you would come forth and see the great council of the allied tribes in the meadow. The council of the chiefs was held this morning. This afternoon we lay the matter before all the warriors."

"I'll come gladly," said Henry.

CHAPTER VI

THE GANTLET

Timmendiquas and Heno left the lodge, but in about ten minutes Heno returned, bringing with him Hainteroh.

"Well, how's your arm, Raccoon?" said Henry, wishing to be friendly.

Raccoon did not know his English words, but he understood Henry's glance, and he smiled and touched his arm. Then he said something in Wyandot.

"He say arm soon be well," said old Heno. "Now you come out and see council, great talk, me on one side of you, Hainteroh on the other."

"Yes, I know you've got to guard me," said Henry, "but I won't try to run."

They loosed his bonds, and he stepped out with them, once more to see all the people pouring toward the meadow as they had done at the time of the ball game. The crowd was greatly increased in numbers, and Henry surmised at once that many warriors had come with the chiefs from the other tribes. But he noticed, also, that the utmost concord seemed to exist among them.

When they reached the meadow they stopped at the edge, and Heno and Hainteroh stood on either side of him. The people were gathered all about, four square, and the chiefs stood on the meadow enclosed by the square.

"Now they speak to the Wyandot nation and the visiting warriors," said Heno.

A chief of ripe years but of tall and erect figure arose and stood gravely regarding the multitude.

"That Kogieschquanohel of the clan of the Minsi of the tribe of the Lenni Lenape," said Heno, the herald. "His name long time ago Hopocan, but he change it to Kogieschquanohel, which mean in language of the Yengees Maker of Daylight. He man you call Captain Pipe."

"So that is Captain Pipe, is it?" said Henry.

Captain Pipe, as the whites called him, because his later Indian name was too long to be pronounced, was a Delaware chief, greatly celebrated in his day, and Henry regarded him with interest.

"Who is that by the side of Captain Pipe?" he asked, indicating another chief of about the same height and age.

"That Koquethagaaehlon, what you call Captain White Eyes," replied Heno. "He great Delaware chief, too, and great friend of Captain Pipe."

Henry's eyes roamed on and he saw two other chiefs whom he knew well. They were Yellow Panther, head chief of the Miamis, and Red Eagle, head chief of the Shawnees. He had no doubt that Braxton Wyatt would tell them who he was, and he knew that he could expect no mercy of any kind from them. Timmendiquas stood not far away, and in a group, as usual, were the renegades.

Captain Pipe stretched forth a long arm, and the multitude became silent. Then he spoke with much strong simile drawn from the phenomena of nature, and Henry, although he knew little of what he said, knew that he was speaking with eloquence. He learned later that Captain Pipe was urging with zeal and fire the immediate marching of all the tribes against the white people. They must cut off this fleet on the river, and then go in far greater force than ever against the white settlements in Kain-tuck-ee.

He spoke for half an hour with great vigor, and when he sat down he was applauded just as a white speaker would be, who had said what the listeners wished to hear.

His friend, Captain White Eyes, followed, and the gist of his speech, also, Henry learned somewhat later from Heno. He was sorry to differ from his friend, Captain Pipe. He thought they ought to wait a little, to be more cautious, they had already suffered greatly from two expeditions into

Kain-tuck-ee, the white men fought well, and the allied tribes, besides losing many good warriors, might fail, also, unless they chose their time when all the conditions were favorable.

The speech of Captain White Eyes was not received with favor. The Wyandots and nearly all the visiting warriors wanted war. They were confident, despite their previous failures, that they could succeed and preserve their hunting grounds to themselves forever. Other speeches, all in the vein of Captain Pipe, followed, and then Girty, the renegade, spoke. He proclaimed his fealty to the Indians. He said that he was one of them; their ways were his ways; he had shown it in the council and on the battle field; the whites would surely hang him if they caught him, and hence no red man could doubt his faith. The tribes should strike now before the enemy grew too strong.

Great applause greeted Girty. Henry saw that he stood high in the esteem of the warriors. He told them what they wished to hear, and he was of value to them. The boy's teeth pressed down hard on his lips. How could a white man fight thus against his own people, even to using the torch and the stake upon them?

When Girty sat down, Timmendi-quas himself stood up. His was the noblest figure by far that had faced the crowd. Young, tall, splendid, and obviously a born leader, he drew many looks and murmurs of approval and admiration. He made a speech of great grace and eloquence, full of fire and conviction. He, too, favored an immediate renewal of the war, and he showed by physical demonstration how the tribes ought to strike.

He spread a great roll of elm bark upon the ground, extending it by means of four large stones, one of which he laid upon each corner. Then with his scalping knife he drew upon it a complete map of the white settlements in Kain-tuck-ee and of the rivers, creeks, hills, and trails. He did this with great knowledge and skill, and when he held it up it was so complete that Henry, who could see it as well as the others, was compelled to admire. He recognized Wareville and its river perfectly, and Marlowe, too.

"We know where they are and we know how to reach them," said Timmendi-quas in the Wyandot tongue, "and we must fall upon them in the night and slay. We must send at once to Tahtarara (Chillicothe, the greatest of the Indian towns in the Ohio Valley) for more warriors, and then we must wait for this fleet. Tuentahahewaghta (the site of Cincinnati, meaning the landing place, where the road leads to the river) would suit well, or if you do not choose to wait that late we might strike them where Ohezuhyeandawa (the Ohio) foams into white and runs down the slope (the site of Louisville). This fleet must be destroyed first and then the settlements, or the buffalo, the deer and the forest will go. And when the buffalo, the deer, and the forest go, we go, too."

Great applause greeted the speech of Timmendi-quas, and the question was decided. Captain White Eyes, who had a melancholy gift of foresight, was in a minority consisting of himself only, and swift runners were dispatched at once to the other tribes, telling the decision. Meanwhile, a great feast was prepared for the visiting chiefs that they might receive all honor from the Wyandots.

Escorted by Heno and Haintero-h, Henry went back to his prison lodge, sad and apprehensive. This was, in truth, a formidable league, and it could have no more formidable leader than Timmendi-quas. He had seen, too, the boastful faces of the renegades, and he was not willing that Braxton Wyatt or any of them should have a chance to exult over their own people.

Timmendi-quas came to him the next morning and addressed him with gravity, Henry seeing at once that he had words of great importance to utter.

"I was willing for you to see the council yesterday, Ware," said White Lightning, "because I wished you to know how strong we are, and with what spirit we will go forth against your people. I have seen, too, that many of our ways are your ways. You love the forest and the hunt, and you would make a great Wyandot."

He paused a moment, as if he would wait for Henry to speak, but the boy remained silent.

"You are also a great warrior for one so young," resumed Timmendi-quas. "The white youth, Wyatt, says that it is so, and the great chiefs, Yellow Panther of the Miamis, and Red Eagle of the

Shawnees, tell of your deeds. They are eager to see you die, but the Wyandots admire a brave young warrior, and they would make you an offer."

"What is your offer, Chief?" asked Henry, knowing well that, whatever the offer might be, Timmendiquas was the head and front of it—and despite his question he could surmise its nature.

"It is this. You are our prisoner. You are one of our enemies, and we took you in battle. Your life belongs to us, and by our laws you would surely die in torture. But you are at the beginning of life. Manitou has been good to you. He has given you the eye of the eagle, the courage of the Wyandot, and the strength of the panther. You could be a hunter and a warrior more moons than I can count, until you are older than Black Hoof, who led the Shawnees before you were born, to the salt water and back again.

"Is death sweet to you, just when you are becoming a great warrior? There is one way, and one only to escape it. If a prisoner, strong and brave like you, wishes to join us, shave his head and be a Wyandot, sometimes we take him. That question was laid before the chiefs last night. The white men, Girty, Blackstaffe, Wyatt, and the others, were against it, but I, wishing to save your life and see you my brother in arms, favored it, and there were others who helped me. We have had our wish, and so I say to you: 'Be a Wyandot and live, refuse and die.'"

It was put plainly, tersely, but Henry had expected it, and his answer was ready. His resolution had been taken and could not be altered.

"I choose death," he said, adopting the Wyandot's epigrammatic manner.

A shade of sadness appeared for a moment on the face of Timmendiquas.

"You cannot change?" he asked.

"No," replied Henry. "I belong to my own people. I cannot desert them and go against them even to escape death. Such a temptation was placed in my way once before, Timmendiquas, but I had to refuse it."

"I would save your life," said the chief.

"I know it, and I thank you. I tell you, too, that I have no fancy for fire and the stake, but the price that you ask is too much."

"I cannot ask any other."

"I know it, but I have made my choice and I hope, Timmendiquas, that if I must go to the happy hunting grounds I shall meet you there some day, and that we shall hunt together."

The eyes of the chief gleamed for a moment, and, turning abruptly, he left the lodge.

There was joy among the renegades when the decision of Henry was made known, and now he was guarded more closely than ever. Meanwhile, all the boys about to become warriors were being initiated, and the customs of the Ohio Valley Indians in this particular were very different from the ways of those who inhabited the Great Plains.

Every boy, when he attained the age of eight, was left alone in the forest for half a day with his face blackened. He was compelled to fast throughout the time, and he must behave like a brave man, showing no fear of the loneliness and silence. As he grew older these periods of solitary fasting were increased in length, and now, at eighteen, several boys in the Wyandot village had reached the last blackening and fasting. The black paint was spread over the neophyte's face, and he was led by his father far from the village to a solitary cabin or tent, where he was left without weapons or food. It was known from his previous fasting about how long he could stand it, and now the utmost test would be applied.

The father, in some cases, would not return for three days, and then the exhausted boy was taken back to the village, where his face was washed, his head shaved, excepting the scalp lock, and plentiful food was put before him. A small looking-glass, a bag of paint, and the rifle, tomahawk, and knife of a warrior were given to him.

While these ceremonies were going on Henry lay in the prison lodge, and he could not see the remotest chance of escape. He listened at night for the friendly voice among the leaves, but he did

not hear it. Timmendiquas did not come again, and two old squaws, in place of Heno, brought him his food and drink. He had no hope that the Wyandots would spare him after his refusal to leave his own people and become an Indian. He knew that their chivalry made no such demand upon them. The hardest part of it all was to lie there and wait. He was like a man condemned, but with no date set for the execution. He did not know when they would come for him. But he believed that it would be soon, because the Wyandots must leave presently to march on the great foray.

The fourth morning after the visit of Timmendiquas the young chief returned. He was accompanied by Heno and Hainteroh, and the three regarded the youth with great gravity. Henry, keen of intuition and a reader of faces, knew that his time had come. What they had prepared for him he did not know, but it must be something terrible. A shiver that was of the spirit, but not of the muscles, ran through him. Torture and death were no pleasant prospect to him who was so young and so strong, and who felt so keenly every hour of his life the delight of living, but he would face them with all the pride of race and wilderness training.

"Well, Timmendiquas," he said, "I suppose that you have come for me!"

"It is true," replied Timmendiquas steadily, "but we would first prepare you. It shall not be said of the Wyandots that they brought to the ordeal a broken prisoner, one whose blood did not flow freely in his veins."

Henry's bonds were loosened, and he stood up. Although he had been bound securely, his thongs had always allowed him a little movement, and he had sought in the days of his captivity to keep his physical condition perfect. He would stretch his limbs and tense his muscles for an hour at a time. It was not much, it was not like the freedom of the forest, but pursued by one as tenacious and forethoughtful as he, it kept his muscles hard, his lungs strong, and his blood sparkling. Now, as he stood up, he had all his strength, and his body was flexible and alert.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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