THE
BOY HUNTERS
OF KENTUCKY

BY

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CHAPTER I

A YOUNG PIONEER

There was no happier boy in all Kentucky than Jack Gedney on the morning that completed the first twelve years of his life, for on that day his father presented him with a fine rifle.

Now, you must know that some of the best riflemen in the world have been born and reared in Kentucky, where the early settlers had to fight not only the wild beasts, but the fierce red men. The battles between the Indians and pioneers were so many that Kentucky came to be known as the Dark and Bloody Ground.

Some of you may have heard that the most famous pioneer in American history was Daniel Boone, who entered all alone the vast

wilderness south of the Ohio, and spent many months there before the Revolution broke out. The emigrants began flocking thither as soon as it became known that the soil of Kentucky was rich, and that the woods abounded with game.

Among those who went thither, towards the close of the last century, were Thomas Gedney and his wife Abigail. With a dozen other families, they floated down the Ohio in a flat boat, until a short distance below the mouth of the Licking, when they landed, and, taking the boat apart, used the material in building their cabins.

It happened at that period that there was less trouble than usual with the red men. Some of the settlers believed that the Indians, finding themselves unable to stay the tide of immigration that was pouring over the west, would move deeper into the solitudes which stretched beyond the Mississippi. Instead of putting up their cabins close together, a part of the pioneers pushed farther into the woods, and began their houses where they found better sites. Most of them were near natural "clearings," where the fertile soil was easily made ready for the corn and vegetables, without the hard work of cutting down the trees and clearing out the stumps.

Thomas Gedney and his wife were among those who went farther than the spot where they landed from the flat boat. Indeed, they pushed deeper into the woods than any one else who helped to found the little settlement that was planted a hundred years ago on the southern bank of the Ohio. Their nearest neighbors were the members of the Burton family, who lived a mile to the eastward, while a mile farther in that direction were the little group of cabins that marked the beginning of one of the most prosperous towns of today in Kentucky.

Mr. Gedney was fortunate enough to find a clearing of an acre in extent, with a small stream running near. Since he had helped his neighbors to put up their cabins, they in return gave him such aid that in a few days he had a strong, comfortable structure of logs, into which he moved with his wife and only child, Jack, then but six years old.

The sturdy men who built their homes in the depths of the wilderness a century ago were never in such haste that they forgot to make them strong and secure. The red men might be peaceful, and might make promises to molest the white people no more, but the pioneers knew better than to trust to such promises. There are no more treacherous

people in the whole world than the American Indians, and no man is wise who places much faith in their pledges.

But I have not started to tell you the history of the pioneers who came down the Ohio in the flat boat, but to give an account of some strange adventures that befell Jack Gedney, shortly after his rifle was given to him by his father. Jack had been trained in sighting and firing a gun as soon as he could learn to close his left eye while he kept the other open. His father's rifle was too heavy for him to aim off-hand, but kneeling behind a fallen tree, or a stump, or rock, his keen vision was able to direct the little bullet with such precision, that Daniel Boone himself, who one day watched the little fellow, gave him much praise.

In those days there was nothing in which a Kentuckian took more pride than in his skill with his rifle. Thomas Gedney had never met his superior, and he meant that if his boy Jack lived, the same should be said of him. And so, while the mother gave the boy instruction in reading and writing, the father took many long tramps with him through the woods, and taught him how to become a great hunter. He showed him the difference between the tracks of the

various game, and told him of the peculiar habits of the wild animals and the best method of outwitting them. More than all, he did his best to teach Jack how to guard against his most dangerous of all foes—man himself.

Mr. Gedney was a man who took great precautions when constructing his cabin. He built it just as strongly as it was possible to make it. The windows were so narrow that no grown person could force his body through, the roof was so steep that the most agile red man could not climb it, and the heavy door, when closed and barred inside, was really as stout as the solid walls of logs themselves.

I have not time to tell you about several incidents that proved his wisdom in taking so much pains to guard himself and family against their dusky foes the Indians, but the time came when the woodcraft thus taught to the boy proved of the greatest value to him.

Among the important rules laid down by the father for the son's guidance was that the very first thing to be done after firing his rifle was to re-load it; that in tramping through the woods he should bear in mind that he was *always* in danger, and that he

must look not only in front but beside and behind him; that he must take all pains to hide his trail whenever there was the least cause to fear the red men; that he must use the utmost precaution when lying down to sleep for the night; that in communicating with his friends he must do so by means of signals that a foe could not understand; that he must always be on the watch for signs of an enemy's presence, and that, when brought face to face with a foe, he must remember that a second's forgetfulness or mpatience was almost certain to give the other the decisive advantage over him.

These were but a few of the rules that were impressed upon Jack by his father, who, as I have already told you, spent many hours with him in the woods, the two afterwards coming back to the cabin laden with game that kept the family well provided with food for many days.

Mr. Gedney had sent eastward for the gun which he gave to his son on his birthday. It was a fine make and somewhat lighter than his own, for several years must pass before Jack would be strong enough to handle a man's weap:n. The piece would not have been looked upon in these days as of much account, for it was a muzzle-loader

with a flint-lock. When Jack wished to load it, he emptied the charge from his powder-horn into the palm of his hand; this was carefully poured into the muzzle of his gun, and then the round bullet, enclosed in a piece of greased cloth or a damp bit of paper, was rammed down upon it. The ramrod was afterwards pushed back in place on the under-side of the barrel, and, raising the clumsy hammer, which clasped the piece of yellow flint, the pan beneath was filled with powder, connecting by means of a touch-hole with the powder in the barrel behind the bullet.

The hammer was let down so as to hold the powder in place. When the owner wished to fire the gun he drew back the hammer, sighted, and pulled the trigger. The flint nipped against a piece of steel, giving out a spark of fire which set off the grains in the pan, the latter also touching off the powder in the breech of the barrel, which drove out the bullet.

CHAPTER II

TRAINING A KENTUCKY RIFLEMAN

I really think that if Jack Gedney had not known of the present his father meant to make him he would have been too delighted to act like a sensible boy. As it was, he could hardly keep from hugging the handsome little gun when his father placed it in his hands, and told him that it was his so long as he proved that he knew how to use it, and that he had enough sense to be trusted alone in the woods.

Unwilling to accept Jack's promises, his father took down his own weapon from the deer's antlers over the broad fireplace, and went a short distance with him to test the new piece. On the edge of the clearing he paused until the lad loaded the weapon with powder and ball (for, of course, the cow's horn and bullet pouch went with the present), and then, looking among the branches overhead, where several grey squirrels were whisking along the limbs, he told Jack he might take his choice. During the few seconds that the boy was darting his quick glances at the lively creatures his father quietly cut a piece of hickory as thick

as his thumb, and three or four feet long. Jack looked askance at him; he knew awell what it meant.

Since the youth had not yet fired his new gun, he decided to make his task as light as he could. He raised his piece and sighted at a squirrel less than a hundred feet away, but before he could make his aim sure his father spoke sharply—

"Take the black one on the tree beyond."

It was a long and difficult shot, but Jack's nerves were steady, and a few seconds after he raised his rifle he pressed the trigger. The gun "hung fire" scarcely a moment, when a jet of flame shot from the muzzle, and Mr. Gedney, who had his eyes fixed on the squirrel, saw it vanish over the limb, and then come tumbling and overturning through the branches to the ground.

"Fetch it here," commanded his father.

Without moving a step, Jack deliberately began re-loading his piece, never pausing until the powder was poured in the pan and the hammer let down in place. The father half smiled, for he had expected his boy to forget in his natural excitement the rule about re-charging his gun.

Having finished, Jack walked forward to the foot of the tree, picked up the small furry

body where it lay among the leaves, and brought it to his parent. The latter took it from his hand, glanced down, and then flung it aside, tossing the hickory after it.

Shall I tell you why he cut that stick just before his boy fired at the squirrel? When he looked at the little animal he saw that its head had been shot off. Had the bullet missed the head and struck any other part of the body he would have plied that stick about the legs and back of his boy until he yelled for mercy. He had done it more than once, and he, like many another Kentuckian, considered that that was the right way to train his child how to shoot.

"Bark that one up there," said Mr. Gedney, pointing at another of the creatures that was skurrying along one of the upper limbs, its bushy tail spread out like an angry cat.

Crack!

As the sharp report rang out among the trees the squirrel at which the boy fired flew up nearly a foot above the limb along which it was running, as though thrown aloft by a steel spring, and then it dropped through the limbs and leaves to the ground, where it lay stone dead.

An examination showed no wound upon it. The bullet had been sent directly beneath the

body so as to chip off some of the bark, which flew against the squirrel with such force as to knock the life out of it. This is called "barking," and is sometimes practiced for the fun of the thing by skillful marksmen.

Having viewed the work of his boy, Mr. Gedney could find no fault. Indeed, he did not expect him to do so well, knowing his agitation over his present. He did not seem to think it worth while to praise Jack, but, with a twinkle of his eye, he merely said—

"You'll do; off with you!"

And without another word, Mr. Gedney, with his heavy rifle slung over his shoulder, strode off to his cabin, leaving his boy to spend the day as he chose, well knowing how he would pass it.

As I have told you, the nearest neighbors to Mr. Gedney were the Burton family, who lived about a mile to the eastward. Mr. Burton was more fortunate than Mr. Gedney in the way of children, for he had two boys, William and George, the one a year younger and the other a year older than Jack, while Ruth, the daughter, was a sweet girl of seven years.

It was natural that the two families should become fond of each other, and that there should be much visiting on the part of the

parents as well as by the children. There was hardly a night that Jack was not at the Burton cabin, or his friends were not at his own home. They did a good deal of hunting together, and the Burton boys were skillful with their guns, each one owning a weapon light enough to be handled by its youthful owner. I must add, however, that neither of them was the equal of Jack, as was proven in many contests between them.

Now Will and George Burton had known for several weeks of the present that was to be made to Jack, and they were as pleased as they could be over his coming good fortune. What could be more natural, therefore, than that Jack should set out for the home of his young friends, that they might rejoice with him over the prize that had fallen to his lot?

It was a bright sunshiny day in October when the proud boy set out over the winding but well-worn path that led to the cabin of the Burtons a mile away. The leaves on the trees were beginning to turn yellow and red before, aflame, with the beauties of autumn, they fluttered to the ground. It was a royal time for hunting, for the deer, bears, buffaloes, and indeed all kinds of game, were in prime condition. The heart of the boy beat high with the thought that many of these prizes

must fall before that splendid weapon of which he had just become the owner.

I am sure you would have said that Jack Gedney was a fine fellow, could you have seen him as he strode along the path through the Kentucky forest a hundred years ago. In the first place, he was rather large for his years, and erect, sturdy, and strong. His brown eyes sparkled with high health, and his round cheeks glowed like the pulpy fullness of a red apple. The life that the young pioneers led was one that was sure to make them strong, rugged, and vigorous.

If you had met Jack in the streets of London or New York you would have been struck by his dress. His cap was formed by the deft fingers of his mother. It was of brown thick cloth without any forepiece, soft, warm, and able to stand a great deal of wear. Its make and pattern were such that no matter how it was put on its head, it was in place.

His coat was of the same material, and it was intended to last a good long time. In some respects it resembled the suits often worn by bicyclists of the present day, having a band that enclosed the body just below the waist, while the skirt was only a few inches in length. The coat was buttoned down the front, and contained several pockets within.

Underneath the coat was the homespun shirt, made by the spinning-wheel, under the guidance of his mother.

The resemblance of the dress to the bicycle suit of today was made more striking by the trousers ending at the knee, below which were the thick woolen stockings and heavy shoes. During very cold weather the stockings were protected by leggings, reaching from the knee to the shoes. I suppose you know that the fashion of the trousers worn by you was altogether unknown during the days of your great-parents.

Now, I am sure that none of us can blame Jack if, on this beautiful October morning, when he slung his pretty rifle over his shoulder, he threw his head a little farther back than usual, and stepped off with a prouder step than he had ever shown when carrying the heavy gun of his father.

"Ain't she a beauty?" he asked himself, stopping short and bringing the weapon round in front, so that he could admire it. "Father thought when I aimed at that first squirrel that I couldn't knock his head off, and," he added, with a smile, "I had some doubt myself, but I noticed that he cut a bigger stick than usual, and I didn't want it swinging round my legs. I never clipped off a squirrel's

head more neatly, though I barked the next one just as well. I wouldn't mind now if I should meet a bear or a deer."

He had resumed his walk, and he looked sharply to the right and left among the trees but no game worthy of drawing his fire was to be seen, and he kept on along the path, as alert and vigilant as ever.

About half-way between Jack's home and the cabin of his friends the path descended into a slight hollow, through the bottom of which wound a brook or small creek. It was some ten feet in width, and hardly half as deep. For a short time after a violent rainfall this stream was swollen to three or four times its ordinary volume, but for a number of years it had not risen high enough to carry away the bridge by which people crossed the stream.

This bridge was simply the trunk of a tree which had been felled so as to lie with the stump across the stream. While this could not give as secure a footing as you would like in passing over it, yet it was all that was wanted by those who had to use it. Had the means and all the necessary materials been at their command, they would probably not have taken the trouble to put up a better one.

CHAPTER III

THE MEETING ON THE BRIDGE

Jack Gedney walked down the slight descent, and stepping upon the fallen tree, moved to the other bank. As he came up again to the general level, he still looked around for some game, but nothing met his eye.

"There's one thing certain" he added: "I'm not going any farther without shooting off this gun."

A hundred yards ahead he saw the whitish trunk of a spreading beech which grew near the path. A patch of the bark about as big as his hand was stained a darker color than the rest, as though some object had rubbed against and soiled it. The target was a good one, and he took a quick aim and fired.

"That makes three times that I have tried her," he said, with a glow of pleasure, as he examined the tree and saw the bullet embedded in the center of the spot, "and she hit the eye every time."

He now walked at a more rapid pace than before, and it was not long before he reached the log cabin of the Burton family. The two

or three acres of natural and artificial clearing had been well cultivated, and Mr. Burton and his two boys were busy gathering corn and the produce that yet were left out of doors. Mrs. Burton and Ruth were busy within.

As soon as Jack appeared, Mr. Burton and his boys gathered around him to examine and praise the present, which, it may be said, they saw the moment the owner came in sight.

"Tomorrow," said Mr. Burton, "you must come over and go with the boys on a hunt; that will be the best test for your gun."

"I had hopes that Will and George could go with me today," remarked Jack, reading aright the wistful looks of his friends.

"No," was the kind but decisive reply of the father; "there is enough work to keep them busy until dark."

The boys knew better than to plead with their father after he had once given his decision, so, like the manly fellow that he was, Jack leaned his rifle against a tree, and fell to work with the boys to help in the task.

The work was finished just as the sun was setting, and Jack, declining to stay to supper, once more slung his gun over his shoulder and set out for home, promising his young friends that he would be ready at daylight

the next morning to join them in a big hunt.

"It's a pity I didn't get a chance to use her today," thought Jack, as he turned his face homeward, little dreaming how soon he would be forced to call upon the weapon to help him out of a peril that threatened his very life.

It was the season of the year when the days were quite short, and Jack knew that the night would be fully come before he could reach his home. He cared nothing, however, for that. He had gone over the trail (or path) many a time when the hour was much later, and it may be said that he knew it so well that he could have walked the entire length with his eyes shut.

The youth had advanced only a little way when he noticed that the darkness had closed in, and, though the moon was shining above the thick branches, the gloom was so deep in most portions of the forest that he could see only a short distance along the path, even when it took a straight course; which was not often the case.

You must not think that our young friend had any such emotion as fear. Most boys who have spent their lives in the city would shrink from such a journey after nightfall, for it was a fact that Jack Gedney was walking through a stretch of woods in which not

only wild animals abounded, but through which the fierce red men hunted, and he was liable to meet both the former and the latter; but he had no more hesitation than he would have felt in climbing from the lower floor of his cabin home to the loft where he slept every night.

You must not forget, too, that he carried his new rifle, and that made him feel secure.

A youngster in the situation of Jack may do a good deal of thinking as he walks briskly along, but, if he has been rightly trained he always keeps his wits about him. So it was that his eyes and ears were always open. He stepped as lightly as an Indian, peering as far ahead as he could in the gloom, glancing from side to side and behind him, and now and then halting for a moment to catch any sound that might fall on his ear.

In this manner he had gone a third of th distance when he became sure that something was following him. He stopped several times and looked back, but could see nothing. His quick ear, however, had caught the soft footfall in the trail, which left no doubt that either a man or an animal was dogging his footsteps.

It is hard to think of a more trying situation than that of Jack Gedney, for, aware as he was that some danger threatened, he did not know its nature.

His first belief was that it was an Indian who was trying to steal upon him. The stealth which marked its movements led him to think so, for few would have been as quick as the lad to learn its presence.

But, whatever it might be, the young hunter determined that it should not find him unprepared. He brought his gun around in front where he could grasp it with both hands, softly raised the hammer, and then stood for a full minute as rigid as the trunk of one of the trees beside him. His head was turned sideways, so that he could look in both directions. He neither saw nor heard anything.

Then he ran lightly and rapidly for full a hundred feet, stopping short again, and using his eyes and ears to the utmost. This time he not only heard, but saw something.

The same soft "pit-a-pat" struck his ear, but to his amazement it came from a point in front. While he was looking he caught the shadowy glimpse of some animal as it whisked over a part of the trail where a few rays of moonlight struck its body.

It was as large as a big dog, with a longer body and a sweeping tail. It was trotting not towards, but away from Jack, who decided at once that it was the wild beast known in the American forests as a panther, but called on the frontier a "painter."

There could be no doubt that he meant to make a supper off the young Kentuckian, for there are not many meals more tempting to such a creature than a plump boy about a dozen years old.

"If you capture me you've got to have a fight," muttered sturdy Jack Gedney, pressing his lips together and shaking his head; "but I wish the sun was shining, so that I could have a fair chance at you."

The panther was circling around the lad, gradually drawing nearer, and on the watch to leap upon him as soon as he dared to approach close enough to make the spring. The boy knew all about the treacherous animals, for he had been with his father when they were killed, and he had shot one within the preceding three months. But on all those occasions they had the daylight to help make their aim certain.

"He may get pretty close to me before I know it," thought Jack, "though he will have hard work to do it; but I don't think he can land on my shoulders at the first jump."

The boy now walked as lightly and as fast as he could. He varied his gait, for if he advanced at a regular pace the panther would have less trouble in securing his intended victim. Jack therefore advanced slowly, then

stopped, and then ran with all the speed he could for fifty or sixty steps.

When he paused the third time after such a spurt, he had reached the log lying across the stream in the little hollow of which I have already spoken. Here the trees were so scant that the whole space was lit up by the moonlight, and a small object could be seen quite clearly.

You may be sure that before stepping upon the rude bridge Jack peered long and earnestly in every direction. The tall columns of trees rose to view on each side of the stream, whose soft murmur mingled with the deep moaning of the woods, which comes to us in the night like the hollow roar of the distant ocean.

"Well, I don't mean to wait here all night," concluded Jack, stepping on the smaller end of the trunk, and beginning to pick his way to the other side; "I am ready to meet the painter whenever he wants to see me, but—"

The boy had advanced only three steps when the beast trotted rapidly from the gloom on the other shore, sprang upon the trunk of the tree which supported Jack Gedney, and lashing his tail and growling savagely, came straight towards him.

The panther did not trot after landing on the trunk, but crouched low, and moved slowly like a cat when about to spring on it prey.

Instead of retreating, as Jack was inclined at first to do, in order to get a more secure footing he brought his gun to his shoulder, and aiming at a point midway between the glaring eye balls, let fly at the instant the panther gathered his muscles for the leap meant to land him on the shoulders of the lad.

As it was, the beast did leave the log, but instead of bounding forward, he went straight up in the air, to a height as it seemed of six or eight feet, with a resounding screech, falling across the trunk, from which, after scratching, and clawing, and snarling for a few seconds, he rolled with a splash into the water, still struggling furiously, and scattering the spray upon both shores.

"I don't think you'll try to stop any more peaceable Kentucky boys on their way home at night——"

The lad had no more than spoken these words when a warning growl caused him to turn his head. There, no more than a dozen feet distant, and stealthily approaching, was a second panther—no doubt the mate of the first. And poor Jack Gedney's new rifle was empty!

CHAPTER IV

THE HOME OF JACK

While Jack Gedney stood on the fallen tree which spanned the stream, watching the panther's dying struggles in the water below, he suddenly learned that its mate was creeping upon him from the rear.

Jack did not stand still, but the next instant ran acrooss the log to the solid ground on the other side. There he faced about, and began re-loading his rifle with the utmost haste, for you will admit that he had no time to lose.

The young hunter did not lose sight of the brute for a moment while hurrying the charge into the barrel of his weapon. He expected to be attacked before he could ram the bullet home, and he meant in such an event to club his gun, and using the butt once on the skull of his foe, draw his hunting knife from his inner pocket, and then have it out with him.

You will conclude that this was a big contract for a boy only twelve years old. So it was indeed, but, like a young pioneer, he had learned to depend on Heaven and himself,

and he awaited the trial with as much coolness as his father could have done, even though he knew that the chances were ten to one against winning in a fight against such a muscular and ferocious beast.

The panther came forward on its slow, soft walk, until one paw rested on the log along which the lad had run only a moment before.

The animal formed an interesting figure as, placing the second paw beside the other on the log, he pushed his head forward, so as to peer over at the dark body drifting down stream. The action of the beast lifted his front so that his back sloped down toward his tail, which for a moment was motionless. The shoulder-blades were shoved in two lumps above the line of the neck, which, because of the nose thrust forward, looked unusually long.

Jack Gedney poured the powder from his horn into the palm of his left hand at the moment the panther rested both paws on the log. He noted the pause of the beast, and his heart leaped with hope that there was a possibility of getting his gun loaded in time. Leaning his rifle far over, so as to make an inclined plane, he rapidly brought it up to the perpendicular as the black, sand-like particles streamed down the barrel.

Next he whipped out a bullet and the little

square piece of greased cloth, shoving both into the muzzle of the weapon. Still the panther peered over the log at his lifeless mate.

As the loading of the weapon progressed Jack could hardly control his excitement. He snatched out the ramrod with such violence that it fell from his hand. Like a flash he stooped, caught it up, and began shoving the bullet down the tight-fitting bore of his gun.

He saw the panther move. With a fierce jamb the bullet was stopped by the thimbleful of powder nestling at the bottom of the barrel. Jack made sure the ball was pressed home when he snatched out the ramrod and let it fall to the ground; no time now to put it back in its place.

Only one more step—to pour the priming into the pan of his weapon. Jack's hands trembled as he drew back the iron jaw which gripped the flint, and dashed some powder into the cavity prepared for it. He was overrunning with hope.

The panther, as if satisfied with the last sight of his mate drifting down stream, turned his head and looked at the sturdy boy at the other end of the log. He slowly lashed his tail, and growled savagely, his looks and manners seeming to say—

"So you're the young gentleman who has

just shot my mate! Such being the case, it is my duty to put it out of your power ever to do anything of the kind again. I am now going to eat you!"

All four feet were on the bridge, and the frightful beast took a couple of steps towards his victim. Then a resounding screech broke the stillness of the night, and the animal, leaping straight up in air, rolled back into the water, hardly making another struggle, for the second bullet of Jack Gedney had entered his neck and passed straight through his heart.

Stooping to the ground the youth picked up his ramrod, and, without moving from the spot, re-charged his weapon. He did so with as much coolness as when firing a match with Mr. Burton and his boys.

"I don't think there are any more painters near," was his thought; "but I am ready for them if they will come one at a time, and far enough apart to give me a chance to load up."

And resting his gun on his shoulder, he took to the path, and walked steadily homeward.

His father and mother had just sat down to the supper table as he entered. The table was of the simplest make, and was without any cloth covering. Several pine boards rested on four legs—one at each corner—but it was

as clean as it could be, and the pewter tea pot and few dishes shone brightly enough to serve for mirrors. The bread was of dark color, but sweet and light, and the bacon might not suit delicate palates, but those who ate of it did so with a relish as great as though it were roast turkey.

Mr. Gedney took turns with his wife and boy in asking a blessing upon each meal of which they partook. He nodded to Jack to signify that it was his turn, and the boy, closing his eyes, and reverently bending his head, begged in a few simple words the blessings of God upon the bounty which He had given them.

"Well," said the father in his cheery voice, as the meal began, "have you and the boys left any game in the woods for other folk?"

"Will and George had some work to do to-day, and their father could not spare them. But they promised to go with me on a hunt to-morrow."

"How have you spent the day?" asked the mother.

"I helped the boys until near night, and then started for home."

"Then you haven't had much chance to try your gun?" was the inquiring remark of the father.

"Not as much as I hoped, but we had a shooting match after dinner."

"A shooting match? How did you succeed?"

"Mr. Burton beat me."

"He is one of the finest shots in the West; he has actually beaten *me* once or twice! How about the boys?"

"They have *never* beaten me." was the smiling answer of Jack.

"Nor must they or any one else beat you," added Mr. Gedney, with a warning shake of his head. "But haven't you brought down any game?"

"Well, I shot a couple of painters on my way home," replied Jack, in the most indifferent manner, as he buried his big sound teeth into a slice of bread and butter.

"Did you kill them both?" asked the mother between her sips of tea.

"Both are so dead that they couldn't be any deader," was the reply of Jack.

"After supper you can tell us about it," said the father, showing no more interest than if they were talking about the "barking" of a couple of squirrels.

Now, brave and cool as was Jack Gedney, he felt some pride in his exploit, for it is not often that one is able to kill two such fierce animals as the American panther without

receiving a scratch himself. But he was not the boy to force his story upon his friends, and so he finished his meal, and finally sat down by the broad, cheerful fireplace.

Opposite to him was his father, smoking his pipe, and his mother, having cleared away the supper things, took up her knitting for the evening. The only light came from the blazing logs on the hearth. This was enough to fill the large room, and render a candle or lamp unnecessary. The plain calico curtains were not drawn across the narrow windows, and the latch string was left hanging outside, so that any one who chose could enter without knocking.

Jack waited until asked by his father to tell how it was he came to kill two "painters." Then he gave the story as it has been given to you.

The mother did not stop her knitting during the narration, nor did the father cease to smoke in his deliberate way, nor ask a question until it was finished. Then he made some natural inquiries, and remarked that he did not see how Jack could have done better than he did.

After this the conversation took a general turn, and lasted perhaps a couple of hours.

Finally, the latchstring was drawn in, a chapter read from the Bible, prayer offered up by the father, after which the little family went to bed.

CHAPTER V

THE YOUNG WYANDOT

The next morning was a perfect day for the young hunters. The sun shone brightly from the unclouded sky, and the air was crisp and keen with the breath of autumn. The experienced eye of the farmer told him that there was not likely to be any change very soon, and in his mild way he congratulated his son on the prospects of the pleasant hunt that was before him and his young friends.

The agreement with the latter was that they were to wait at their home for Jack, when the three would start into the interior on a hunt that was likely to last two, if not more, days. Mr. Gedney was not one of those who thought his boy was too young to work. There were always a number of small jobs known in the West as "chores," which it was the duty of Jack to attend to, and which he dared not slight.

Thus it came about that, although the boy rose at an unusually early hour, and his mother hurried his morning meal for him, yet when he started eastward along the path

leading to his friends, the sun was creeping above the horizon.

The preparations for the journey were few. All the bullets that were likely to be needed had been made by Mr. Gedney himself several days before; the powder-horn was filled, and nothing was lacking in that line. Then Jack, like his father, always carried a flint and steel with him, so as to be able to start a fire when he wanted it. (The lucifer match was not invented until a good many years after.) Then he had a pinch of mixed pepper and salt, wrapped in a piece of paper, and meant to be used in seasoning the game which they ate. A few other knick-knacks were stowed away in his inner pocket, and, kissing his parents "good-bye," he entered the path at the other end of the clearing, and walked briskly towards the home of his young friends.

When he reached the crossing where he shot the panthers the night before, he naturally looked for the carcasses of the animals. They were not in sight, having been carried away by the current.

"They've got mighty sharp claws," Jack said to himself, as he looked down at the scratches in the wood made by the beast before it dropped into the water. "It was well for me that I was able to shoot that other fellow before he could pounce upon me."

On the other side of the stream was a small area in the path, where the ground was so spongy that it showed any light imprint upon it. Jack looked at the impression left by his own heavy shoe, and then uttered an expression of astonishment.

And well he might do so, for there, beside the imprint of his shoe, was that of an Indian moccasin (or foot covering), made, too, since Jack had passed that way the evening before.

"Ah, ha," he muttered, looking keenly about him, "there are Indians not far off; I wonder whether they are Shawnees, Hurons, Wyandots, Pottawatomies, or what? Are they hunting for scalps or wild game?"

It would seem that the most natural thing for the boy to do under such circumstances was to turn back home and tell his father about the discovery he had made; but Jack had no thought of that; he had started out for a hunt and he was not going to let such a trifle as a few prowling Indians turn him back.

The young hunter noticed that the toe of the moccasin pointed eastward—that is, in the direction he himself was travelling.

"Maybe the boys have seen something of him," was his thought, as he pushed along the path; "he may be some friendly warrior who has stopped to ask for something to eat."

Jack Gedney had not walked twenty steps beyond the bridge when he heard a fierce threshing among the trees and undergrowth which he knew was made by an animal in its frenzied flight. The next moment a noble-looking buck broke cover on his right, less than a hundred feet away, and bounded straight across the path in front of the boy whose trusty rifle was at his shoulder on the instant.

As the animal turned his broad side towards Jack the latter sent a bullet behind the fore-leg, at the point where it was sure to tear its way clean through the heart, and shatter bone and muscle as it skimmed into the woods beyond.

The buck took two more of his tremendous bounds, as if he were unhurt, and he might have gone still farther had he not crashed straight against the trunk of a tree, from which he recoiled, and sank to the ground limp and lifeless.

Jack started to run towards his prize, but recalling the warning of his father, checked himself, and reloaded his gun before leaving the path. This was soon done, and then he broke into a trot which quickly took him to the side of the prize.

The young hunter's eyes sparkled.

"He's one of the finest animals I ever saw. Hallo!——"

He was looking at the tiny red orifice where his bullet had entered, and from which the life current was flowing, when he saw the feathered tip of an Indian arrow just under the fore part of the buck. Seizing the front legs, he rolled the animal over on the other side.

As he did so he saw that an arrow had been driven into the side of the deer, close to where his bullet had came out.

The wound thus made must have been mortal, though, as you may know, it is almost impossible to fire a shot that will instantly bring down one of these animals.

There could be but one meaning to this—an Indian had shot the buck before Jack fired at it.

"Of course he will claim it," thought the young hunter; "but I am not sure that it belongs to him, for from the way the deer was running it looked as if he was not going to give up for a long time, if indeed he would have fallen at all. But we shall soon know."

The cause of the last remark was the sight of the Indian who doubtless fired the arrow. Jack, on looking at him, saw with pleasure

that he was not a full-grown warrior, but a boy who could not have been much older than himself.

The young Indian wore the fringed hunting shirt, leggings, and beaded moccasins of his people, had a row of beads around his neck, a quiver of arrows over his left shoulder, and a long bow in his left hand. In the belt which clasped the waist of his deer-skin hunting shirt were thrust a tomahawk and hunting knife, so that he was as fully armed as most of his people.

The face was broad, with high cheek-bones, small twinkling bead-like eyes, broad thick nose, and retreating chin, the whole daubed with greasy yellow, red, and black paint, in the shape of circles, dots, and all sorts of hideous devices for which room could be found.

From a glance at the colors used in the dress of the Indian and on his contenance, Jack formed the conclusion that he belonged to the Wyandot tribe, many of whom he had met.

The young Indian must have believed he was a terrible-looking fellow, and that no white lad dare dispute him, for he strode along like one who knows he is master, and stopping a few steps away, pointed down at the smitten buck.

"He mine," he muttered, in good English; "me shoot him."

"So I see," calmly remarked Jack. "And I shot him too."

As he spoke he pointed to the place where the ball had left the body, close to the entrance of the arrow. The Indian stooped down, and with some dexterity pushed the latter through the body of the deer, drawing it out on the other side. The head of such a missile, as you can well see, is so fashioned that it cannot be drawn back after being driven into any body.

Rising to his feet, the young Wyandot restored the shaft to its place in the quiver, and repeated his remark:

"He mine; me shoot him with arrow."

Now there was no cause for Jack Gedney having a dispute with the Indian. The latter was welcome to the game, for Jack could do nothing with it, unless to run back home and tell his father to come and claim it. It was within convenient reach, but rather than give the time this would take, the youth would have preferred to lose several such deer.

He was anxious to join Will and George, who he knew were waiting impatiently for him; but he felt very much as you would have felt had you stood in his shoes. He thought the

Indian was trying to bully him, and he was not willing to submit. Had the Wyandot asked him to let him have the game, he would have been glad to do so; but when it was not clear which of the two was the rightful claimant to the prize, the sturdy young hunter did not mean to be dictated to by a young Indian whose face was painted like his. Before yielding he would resist him.

CHAPTER VI

THE WRESTLING BOUT

"Now, see here," said Jack, after the young Indian straightened up, "you have told me more than once that that deer is yours. I don't know whether it is or not, for the creature didn't fall till I shot him——"

"He mine! he mine!" interrupted the other, laying his hand in a threatening manner on his knife. "My name Arowaka—me Wyandot; father, Hua-awa-oma—he great chief!"

"He may be a great chief among his own people, but you won't find him of much account among white folk. What I meant to say, Arowaka, is that your saying that the game is yours doesn't make it yours. You have your hand on your knife. I have a knife too, and I am not afraid of you."

The young Wyandot showed by his manner that he was surprised. Clearly he did not expect such a rebuff as this, and, though his swarthy hand still rested on his weapon, he did not draw it forth.

"What is your bow good for, any way?" continued Jack, with a smile at the primitive

weapon. "You Indians can't do half as much with your bows and arrows as we can with our guns. I killed two painters with my rifle last night, and I'll warrant that that's more than you ever did in all your life."

At this point it struck Jack that he would do a foolish thing to engage in a quarrel with the young Indian over the ownership of so small a thing as the carcass of a deer. Since he had not only defied the other, but forced him to pause in his demands, the white youth felt more kindly towards him.

"See here, Arowaka," he added, "I think I have as much right to the game as you, but I don't want it half as bad. I'll let you have it. Why don't you pick it up and carry it off?"

The Wyandot, who must have understood these words, looked at the speaker with a curious expression, that is, so far as it could be seen through the paint with which his face was daubed.

"What is your name?" he asked, in a lower voice than before.

"Jack Gedney, and I live only a short distance up the path yonder."

"Me know," said the other. "Jack have fine gun."

"You are right about that," was the proud answer of the lad.

"Me like see him."

Jack was too wise to trust his valuable weapon in the hands of the young scamp, who would be glad enough to steal it. Still, he thought it safe to let him have a better view of it than he could have so long as it was held in the two hands of the owner.

So our young friend was foolish enough to compromise. He leaned his gun against the nearest tree, where his eye could trace its whole beautiful shape, from the muzzles to the lowermost corner of the ornamental stock.

Jack took care to stand quite close to the piece, so that, if the young Wyandot should make an attempt to seize it, he could be ahead of him.

To the surprise of Jack, the Wyandot, instead of advancing towards the weapon, moved back several paces, just as a person does when he wishes to view all the points of some large object.

"He knows better than to try to take it from me," was the conclusion of Jack, "for I would fight him like a painter, and I would never give up that gun except with my life."

At this moment came the greatest surprise of Jack Gedney's life. He was looking admiringly at his weapon when the hand of an Indian warrior softly reached from behind

the tree, and grasped the barrel. An instant later the figure of a Wyandot stepped into sight, holding his bow in one hand and the captured rifle in the other.

No one can imagine the consternation of Jack Gedney, who had allowed his prize to pass from his possession without so much as raising a finger to prevent it. It looked indeed as if the young Wyandot had been trying to get him to do the very thing that he had done. This, however, could not have been the case, for two Indians must have felt able to overcome so young a lad as Jack, even with his loaded gun.

Jack could hardly keep from crying, for his grief overflowed. The next instant he was filled with anger.

"That is mine," said he, stepping toward the Indian, and reaching out his hand.

The savage extended the weapon, as if he meant to pass it back to the lad; but before the latter could seize it it was withdrawn, and the Indian grinned more than ever.

The warrior was dressed similarly to Arowaka, the paint on his face being daubed in much the same fashion. From this, and the fact that several glances passed between the two, Jack Gedney rightly concluded that they were father and son, the warrior being Hua-

awa-oma, who, as his offspring claimed, was a great chief.

"Want gun?" asked the savage, speaking for the first time.

"Yes, it is mine. I must have it! I *will* have it!"

In his indignation, Jack was ready to draw his knife, and leap at his tantalizing enemy. Such a step could not have helped him, while it might have caused him much harm.

Hua-awa-oma showed that, like many an American Indian, he had a vein of waggery in his composition. The race to which he belonged is probably the most melancholy in the world, but there are times when its people show something akin to mirth. The chief set the gun against the tree where it was standing a few minutes before, and then beckoned to his son to come nigher.

Arowaka walked forward until he stood near the wondering Jack Gedney.

"You wrestle, you two!" said he. "One throw other, him have gun."

The meaning of this was clear enough; the ownership of the gun was to be decided by a wrestling bout between Jack Gedney and the young Wyandot.

The heart of the white youth gave a quick throb of delight, for there was no boy in the

settlement within two years of his age whom he could not easily master in such a contest. He had thrown Will Burton, taller and older than he, with as much ease as he had every lad anywhere near his age.

The lads having been told to begin, lost no time in doing so. It was fortunate for Jack that his opponent proved to be left-handed, since that gave Jack the hold which he wished. With their arms encircling each other, and their hands clasped in front, their heads bent slightly forward, so that they could watch each others' feet, the struggle began.

At this juncture the question came to Jack Gedney—

"If I do throw this fellow and win, will the chief keep his promise?"

It must be confessed that there was little reason to believe that Hua-awa-oma (He who fights without falling) would show the least regard for his pledge. This, however, did not weaken the arm of Jack Gedney, who, bending his body slightly forward and downward, suddenly caught his opponent on his hip and flung him on his back before the fellow could prevent it. Jack fell so heavily across him that he almost forced the breath from his body.

But Arowaka was on his feet scarcely a

second behind Jack, who was given no time to see how the chief took it, when he found both shoulders seized by his opponent.

Jack was quick to do the same, so that the two contestants faced each other. The young Wyandot took a lesson from his fall, and he was so guarded that he defeated several efforts to catch him unawares.

All at once, like a flash, Jack, tightly grasping the arms of Arowaka, dropped his own shoulders, kicked the feet of the other from beneath him, and, with the most powerful effort he could put forth, lifted the Wyandot clear from the ground.

Finding himself going, Arowaka struggled desperately, his feet beating the air like frantic drumsticks, but he could not save himself. The next instant he shot over Jack's head as if fired from a gun, and struck the ground with a shock that seemed violent enough to break his neck.

CHAPTER VII

JACK RESUMES HIS JOURNEY

No one could have won the wrestling bout more fairly than did Jack Gedney, who, having thrown the young Wyandot by the usual side hold, had now tossed him over his head with such violence that the youthful redskin must have made a big dent in the earth where his crown struck it.

The victor was startled for a moment by the fear that he had seriously injured his opponent and, running forward, he stooped over him.

"Is Arowaka hurt? I am sorry," he said, kindly. "I did not really mean to do it."

But the latter was on his feet like a flash, thus proving the toughness of his race. He was so angered that his small black eyes flashed fire. No doubt he ranked as a skilled wrestler among his own people, and he was chagrined beyond bearing by his defeat.

Grasping the handle of his knife, he drew it forth with the intention of rushing upon Jack; but before he could do so the chieftain, Hua-awa-oma, took part in the proceedings.

You know that the American Indians show little indulgence to their children, whom they rear much as wild animals rear their young. They are made to suffer hardships while infants that would prove fatal to you or me when double their age. The doctrine of forbearance, kindness, and patience, is unknown among those peculiar people.

The chief had watched the contest between his heir and the white boy, who was not as tall by several inches as the other. He had seen Arowaka beaten as if he were a child in the grasp of a giant. The chief was furious. Arowaka was in the very act of drawing his knife when his father seized one of his arms, and began belaboring him with his long bow, which he had caught up with the other hand.

Jack Gedney was so amazed for a few seconds that he could only stare in silence. Then he was pleased, for the son deserved his punishment, not because he was overthrown, but because he drew his knife upon the one who had fairly conquered him. In the midst of the odd scene Jack Gedney awoke to the fact that his darling rifle was leaning against the very tree where he first placed it for Arowaka to view. The chief and his son were closer to it than Jack, and the latter dared not make a rush to recover it while the Indian was in such

a furious mood, but he steadily edged that way, in hope of getting near enough to seize it before the Wyandot could prevent him.

But Jack was disappointed. Such a severe punishment as the chieftain gave to his son could not, in the nature of things last long. Probably a score of blows descended on the back and limbs of Arowaka when they ceased. The chief gave the youth an angry shove, as though he was ashamed of him, and then, turning about, he took a few quick paces and snatched up the gun.

As he seized up the weapon, the Wyandot, without glancing at his disgraced son, who stood sullenly apart, looking askance at the scene, walked straight to Jack and handed it to him.

"Take him—brave boy— make great warrior—Hua-awa-oma love Jack."

Doubting the earnestness of the chief, the youth reached out his hand, expecting the weapon to be withdrawn as before; but it was not, and a thrill of delight passed through the lad when he felt that his rifle was once more in his own possession.

"Huo-awa-oma, I thank you; you speak with a single tongue; you are a brave warrior; you have spoken truth; we are friends forever."

The Wyandot made no response to this,

but turning his back alike on white and red boy, he strode angrily off in the woods, taking a direction that led him towards the clearing where stood the cabin in which Jack Gedney was born.

Hua-awa-oma had gone only a couple of rods when his son followed him. He did not speak, but as he moved away he turned his head for an instant and glanced at Jack.

What that look meant was beyond the power of the boy to guess, but he believed it was a threat a warning that he had not yet finished with him.

However, Jack was not alarmed by the fierce glance of the dusky youth. He was also so delighted over the restoration of his rifle that for a few minutes he could think of nothing else.

Making his way back to the trail, he re-resumed his walk towards the home of the Burton Boys, who he knew were already impatient over his delay.

"It's very strange," he said, recalling the incidents that have just been described; "I don't believe that one Indian in a thousand would have kept his word like Hua-awa-oma. Having got hold of my gun, he would not have let go; but I suspect, after all, the chief is not such an honorable fellow as he seems

to be from his actions. If Arowaka had made a better fight, even though I beat him, his father would have let him have the gun; but I threw him so easily that the chief was maddened, and he gave the gun back to me more because he was angry with his son than because of his promise to me."

I must say that this conclusion of Jack Gedney was worthy of one much older than he. You may think that he showed an amazing amount of wisdom for a lad so young, but bear in mind that he was not only a bright boy, but he had the training that gave him a knowledge of the woods often denied to those of his years.

The presence of the two Indians in this neighborhood could not fail to set Jack to thinking what it meant. The Wyandots were among those who had fought the white settlers with intense fierceness. Some of their leaders were the most daring and skillful of the combined tribes, and the warriors were as brave and treacherous as the Apaches of the present time..

The natural question that Jack asked himself was as to the meaning of the presence of this chief and his son so near to the settlement and the few scattered cabins of that section. One alarming fact could not be lost sight of

during the past summer and early autumn the Indians had been usually hostile.

Some weeks before, Mr. Gedney was on the point of moving with his family to the settlement until the trouble should pass; but he disliked leaving the cabin and all the gains he had made since coming to the West. About that time, however, came news that drove away his fears, and he decided to stay, at least until more alarming tidings should reach him.

The thought that naturally came to Jack was that a chief generally had a number of warriors within call, and since they were Wyandots they were hostile to the whites who were trying to take their hunting-grounds away from them. The chief himself had shown a friendship towards Jack which he might extend to his relatives, but of course that was mere guesswork.

While the boy found plenty of cause for serious thought, he took comfort in his faith in the bravery and address of his father. He had been through some of the most thrilling scenes on the frontier, and in all he had carried himself so as to win the praise of every one.

So it was natural, as you will see, that, though Jack was disturbed by his fears, he was able to find relief in his faith in his father.

"He knows all about Indians," said the youth to himself; "if they mean anything wrong, he will find it out; they will never be able to catch *him* asleep."

And with this conclusion the boy walked more briskly than before along the trail over which he had journeyed so many times.

CHAPTER VIII

TRAVELING SOUTHWARD

All of Jack Gedney's doubts and misgivings left him for the time when he caught sight of the cabin of Mr. Burton. The moment he stepped into the clearing, where he could be seen, he was greeted by shouts from Will and George.

"We've been waiting more than a half-hour for you," called the elder; "what kept you."

"I didn't start quite as early as I wanted to, and I was stopped on the way by a couple of Indians."

Mr. Burton and his wife and daughter, who were within the cabin, came to the door when they heard this remark, for it was one in which it was natural that all should feel interest.

Jack followed the other boys into the house, where all sat down, and the visitor gave an account of his wrestling bout with the young Wyandot. When he came to relate how he sent the youth flying over his head, with his legs outspread like those of a frog, and of the trouncing the parent added to his defeat, every one of the listeners, including Mrs. Burton, laughed right merrily.

"It was bad enough to be tossed about in that fashion," said Mr. Burton, "but it was rough on the poor fellow to receive a whipping on that account."

"I would have given a good deal to see it," said Will, who had been thrown more than once by the doughty Jack. "I can imagine how he felt when he went flying over your head for I've been there myself."

"I was thinking," said Jack, more seriously, "that it might be that the chief and his boy are not alone in the woods. You know that a chief is pretty apt to have his warriors near him."

"More than likely you are right; what of it?" asked Mr. Burton.

The lightness with which this question was asked lessened the fears of Jack, and even made him ashamed that he was on the point of expressing them.

Then, too, Mrs. Burton, who was sometimes nervous about her children, showed no more signs of alarm than did little Ruth, standing by her side. Jack fairly blushed to recall how much he had been disturbed by his misgivings. He looked around at the boys, and asked abruptly—"Well are you ready, fellows?"

"Yes, and have been for nearly an hour."

"Then let's be off."

"How long do you think you will be away?" asked Mrs. Burton, putting her arms around each of her sons, and kissing them "good-bye."

"That depends on many things that can't be known now," said her husband, answering for the three. "I have no doubt they will spend one night in the woods, and perhaps two. I prefer that they should not be away any longer.

"We will not," said his elder boy, "unless something happens that we can't think of, and that won't let us get back."

"I don't think *that* is likely; but if you are not here by the close of the third day from this I shall start to hunt you up. Then, if your explanation is not satisfactory, I know two boys who will be made to dance a war-dance to which that of the young Wyandot cannot be compared."

All laughed at this remark of the father, and he himself spoke with a smile; but the young gentlemen concerned knew, all the same, that it was no laughing matter. Their parent would carry out his threat in spirit and letter.

Young George Burton, who was short and stout, carried a blanket, done up in a compact bundle, and strapped to his back, that being about the only burden of which he was

given charge, the other extras being at the command of his big brother.

You will observe that not one of the boys had a dog with him. Jack Gedney had been the owner of a fine hunter, but that had been killed in a fight with two bears only a month before. Mr. Burton had a good animal, but he preferred to keep him at home, where his intelligence was valuable. He gave notice of the approach of strangers in ample time to take all precaution against surprise. He was especially useful at night, when the most cautious Indian would have found it hard to steal up to the cabin without detection.

Besides, the young hunters were in less need of such an animal than you would think. During these later days, where the instinct of the brutes seem to be necessary to the most skilled sportsman, that man would be foolish who expected much success without one to help him. But a hundred years ago game was so plentiful along the river Ohio that the hunter could do very well without the aid of a dog. In the broad stretches of clearing or prairie roamed droves, numbering many hundreds, of American bison or buffalo, as they are wrongly called; while the bears who at that season of the year were hunting for food, and the deer, wolves, and other animals, were so

numerous that there was no excuse for any one failing to find them.

Such a buoyant party of young hunters are not likely to linger long over their farewells. Within three minutes following the warning of Mr. Burton of what would follow if they overstayed their time all three were out of sight of the cabin.

The direction taken was almost due south, where there were many miles of forest in which some at least of the wild animals had not yet seen a white man; more than likely many of them had not met a redskin, for if they had done so they would not have been allowed to live to remember it.

Since there was no path to follow, the boys walked beside each other. This was because they could talk better than in Indian file, and three such lads as those I am telling you about could not have been persuaded to keep still by the offer of several fortunes in gold.

It surely is unsportsman like to go hunting in that fashion. Not only were they without dogs (for which I have given you a reason), but they kept together, and talked a great deal, whereas professional hunters would have separated whenever in the neighborhood of game, and taken all pains to steal upon the animals before the latter could find out their danger.

The boys, however, stepped so softly upon the dry leaves that the rustling could be heard but a short distance, and they talked in such low voices that they might have passed close to a camp of Indians without discovery.

And then, too, no matter how great their interest in what they said, they were always on the alert. They glanced from side to side just as Jack Gedney did when walking along the path between his home and that of his friends.

For a time the wood was quite open, so that they were able to travel with little trouble. Now and then came breaks in their conversation, caused by the big tree trunks around which they had to pass. Then, too, the undergrowth was so dense that they sometimes involuntarily dropped into Indian file, and advanced in silence. In other parts of Kentucky there were long stretches of cane-brake so close that an Indian has passed within four feet of the fugitive for whom he was hunting without seeing him.

Young George Burton suffered more than the others from the running vines, which were not always seen. Some of these wound along the ground, like fine wire, and, catching in front of his ankle, did not break, but threw him forwards on his hands and knees. He

had so slight a distance to fall that it did not hurt him, and he joined the others in laughing over his slips. But all the same, it was anything but pleasant.

"Hurrah, here is a path!" called out Will, who was several steps in advance of the rest.

"I wonder what it means?" said Jack, as he and George hurried up beside him.

All three, however, quickly saw the explanation. It was a track made by animals in going to and from one of the "salt licks," as they are called, which are quite common in many parts of that section.

You know how fond animals are of salt. Well, there are spots in the country which I am telling you about where the water which oozes upward through the ground is so salt that, if left alone, it makes quite a deposit of that mineral. The wild beasts soon find it out, and lick the ground, so as to get the salt. The spaces sometimes cover hundreds of square feet, where the earth has been made as smooth as a planed board by the tongues of the different creatures in their quest for salt.

In some places the salt is so plentiful that the settlers used to gather there and spend days in getting it ready for domestic use. Daniel Boone was once engaged in doing this

when he was captured by Indians, and kept a prisoner for a long time.

From some of the salt licks you might have seen the paths of wild beasts radiating outward, until, as the animals fell away from the trails, they were gradually lost in the wilderness.

"We shall be likely to find some game there," was the remark of Jack, after the three had stood several minutes looking down at the ground, where the imprints of hoofs and feet were so numerous that none of them could be identified.

"That's what we have come into the woods for," replied Will, with a laugh.

"Yes, though you know that in Kentucky we are apt to find spots where there are more wild beasts than we can get along with comfortably."

CHAPTER IX

ROYAL GAME

"I wonder how far off the lick is," said George, looking along the path, which the eye could trace for several rods.

"There is but one way of finding out," replied his brother; "and that is to follow the trail to the lick."

Jack gazed in the other direction, where the trail could be seen for a greater distance before it wound out of sight.

"The path is so plain," he said, "that I don't believe the lick can be far off."

"If we should come here early in the morning we should be likely to find more of them."

"I don't think we shall have much trouble in finding enough to keep us busy, and to give you another trial with that fine gun of yours."

Since there was reason for believing they would soon meet some of the animals of which they were talking, the boys were wise enough to act like the young hunters they claimed to be.

Will took the lead, Jack coming next, with George in the rear, all walking close together.

Of course the gun of each was loaded, and, though carried over the shoulder, was ready for instant service.

"Keep your eyes open," was the unnecessary advice of Jack to their leader, "for we don't want you to fall over some beast before we see him."

"You needn't fear for me," was the confident reply of Will, "and don't you forget that some of them may be coming from the other way."

"George must attend to *them*," said Jack, glancing over his shoulder at the youngest member of the party, who also looked behind him on hearing the remark.

"This blanket, strapped like a knapsack behind my shoulders, is handy," remarked George, with a laugh. "If a painter would only use his paws on it he wouldn't hurt *me* much."

"A painter ain't so foolish as that," said Jack. "He knows too well how to get at a fellow of your size to waste any time in tearing up blankets."

"Sh! here comes something!" exclaimed Will, in a hushed voice, stopping short, and motioning to the others to do the same.

A second later the leader stepped quickly from the path, and ran a few paces to a large

"He pulled himself out of reach." (*See p. 68.*)

tree behind which he screened himself. The others quickly did the same, for, as you may well know, the large trunks were so handy that it was an easy thing to do.

Brief as was the time taken, it was enough to bring into sight the animal whose approach Will had learned by the sound of his feet upon the solid ground.

The huge bushy head of a bull bison loomed into sight, as he ambled along the trail at a leisurely gait, on his return from his dessert of salt. He looked frightful enough when viewed from the front, and it is probable that he would have charged upon the whole party of boys had they tried to stop him; but he is an animal little feared by the hunter, and not one of the three boys felt the least misgiving on the approach of the big beast.

His action showed that he had not observed the young hunters as they dodged from his path, and therefore they were the bolder in peeping from behind their shelter.

A moment after the bull came in sight, another was seen to be walking a short distance behind him. Then another and another appeared, until seven were counted, walking along the trail in their lazy fashion.

Nothing would have been easier for the boys than to have dropped three of the animals in

their tracks. As each one reached his fore leg forward he exposed a portion of his body though which a bullet could have been sent directly into his heart.

Not a shot, however, was fired. There was not enough danger in bringing down this kind of game to suit the boys, who wanted something of a more exciting nature. They therefore allowed the beasts to pass by unharmed, though Jack resolved to give them a scare.

In darting among the trees to find a hiding-place, George ran in front of Jack, so that the latter was thrown a few paces to the rear of the brothers. Just as the fine-looking bull came opposite, Jack, leaving his gun leaning against the tree, dashed out, threw up both hands and shouted.

He expected that the startled animal would plunge away at the top of his speed, but he did not.

Those who were following the leader flung up their heads each with a snort, and ran off among the trees; but the leader, stopping short, looked inquiringly at the youngster, as though trying to learn his species. Then he, too, uttered a snort, and dropping his big head, charged straight at the boy.

It would be putting it very mildly to say that Jack was surprised. When he saw his

danger he was less than a dozen paces from the beast, which crashed like a steam-engine through the bushes, undergrowth and among the trees.

"My gracious!" gasped the lad, wheeling about like a flash, and breaking for shelter; "shoot him, boys, or it's all up with me."

Jack, however, proved his readiness of resource by making a running leap at a large limb, a short distance away. Seizing it with both hands, he pulled himself out of reach, just as the bull thundered past beneath him.

The brute was trammeled in his movements by the trees, else he would have been likely to overtake the boy before he could secure the refuge.

Seeing that his victim had escaped, the bison looked up at him with an angry snuff, then turned slowly about and made his way back to the path, leaving his companions to do as they chose.

Jack wondered why, brief though the incident was, his friends had not fired at the bull, who charged him with such fury; but when from his perch he looked around for them, he understood very well why they held their peace.

Seeing the beast depart, the brothers stepped from behind the respective trees that had

sheltered them. Both were still shaking with laughter to such an extent that they could hardly stand, and they could not have aimed a gun at the bison had he been within a rod of them.

Jack was inclined to lose his temper when, after scowling at them for a full minute, he he saw no signs of a decrease in their mirth.

But by-and-by he began to see the ludicrous side of the picture, and he too broke into laughter. Dropping lightly to the ground, he caught up his rifle, and joining his friends, said—

"I started out to scare that old bull, but it looks as though he scared me."

"I should say he did, and——"

But Will dropped back against the tree, his brother doing the same, and both unable to speak another word.

Jack coolly sat down on the ground, saying:

"When you have finished we'll go on."

There is nothing which does a person more good than a hearty fit of laughter. That being so, it is safe to say that the Burton brothers never before had so much good done them.

The end, however, soon came, and shaking themselves together, as may be said, the three came back to the trail, along which they continued their way towards the lick.

They took the same order as before, and all were on the alert. Now and then Jack noticed the shoulders of their leader shaking in a way that told him he was laughing again over the figure cut by Jack when he set out to scare the bull. After a time this ceased altogether.

It was yet quite early in the day. and the boys expected when night came to be a long way from their friends. They would have felt themselves poor hunters if they did not spend a night in the woods, even though within easy reach of home, and since Mr. Burton had given his boys permission to stay a couple of nights in camp, it could be set down as a certainty that they would do so.

The experience of the young hunters on their jaunt through the Kentucky woods proved not only of the most stirring kind, but it was marked by a number of adventures the like of which they had never known or heard of before. Indeed, it may be said that this feature began with Jack's fight with the panthers the night before, when, instead of meeting only one, he ran against two. Of itself this was not so remarkable, but it was the first instance known to him.

The boys naturally felt confidence in themselves, for they were three in number, and

each had a good gun. Surely they ought to be more than enough for anything in the nature of a wild animal, and yet, when they least expected it, they ran into a peril of which none of them dreamed.

"My gracious!" suddenly exclaimed Will, turning short around; "here comes a hundred bears!"

Now it is not to be supposed that there was anything like the number which the lad in his excitement declared, but what he did see was enough to terrify any one.

Lumbering along the trail, directly towards them, was a black bear of large size, and there were two at least behind him. These three were discovered at the same moment, and the unusual sight led Will to believe that it was only the head of a procession coming from the salt lick a long distance away.

"Let's take to the trees," said Will, leading the way into the wood. "It won't do to fight all them."

"Hold on," replied Jack, standing his ground, "I didn't come out to hunt game, and then run away from it when found."

"You were the first one to do it, though," retorted Will. "You can stay if you want to, but I don't."

George followed his brother, but Jack, true to his word, stood his ground, ready to meet the bear.

CHAPTER X

HUNTING THE HUNTERS

It looked to the young hunters as though they had struck the popular hour for the visitors to the salt lick. They were no more than fairly rid of the bisons when they were met by three bears, that showed no wish to yield the path to them. It was this fact that led Will and George to take to their heels while Jack Gedney held his ground.

Now, it was the season of the year, as I have said, when the bears are generally in good condition. You know that they are what are called hibernating animals—that is, they spend most of the winter in sleep, during which their nourishment is the fat of their own bodies, though it is claimed that each sucks his fore paw. It is in the spring, when the bears come forth from their winter's sleep that they are lean, fierce, and dangerous. In the autumn they are in such comfortable form that they will not go far out of their way to harm anyone, unless he first provokes them.

Jack did not mean to fight the three bears

singlehanded. He was impatient when he saw that there was just one apiece, and that his two friends had fled.

"You're *my* game," said Jack to himself, drawing his gun to his shoulder and aiming at the foremost.

The latter was less than twenty yards away when he observed the lads. He halted and raised his pig-like snout, while the others, some distance to the rear, lumbered forward, not seeing the cause that had checked their leader.

I must do the brothers credit, however, by making haste to say that they had run but a short distance when both stopped as if by one accord.

"This won't do," said the elder; "if Jack makes a fight with the bears we must help him."

"That's what I think," added George, who, as he faced about, raised the flint of his gun.

The sight was a stirring one. There stood Jack with his gun at his shoulder, and pointed at the front of the savage-looking beast that paused, as if from curiosity, and was looking at him. Close behind were the other two brutes, swinging along in their awkward fashion, indifferent to the drama that must open within the next few moments.

Both Will and George could have sent a bullet into the body of the leading bear without stirring from where they stood, had they been so minded, but one or two causes restrained them.

It was clear that, so to speak, the foremost brute belonged to Jack himself, and he might well take offence if they should open on him before it was seen that their help was needed.

Then too, the instant the first one should be disposed of, the others would demand attention. The crack of the rifle, and the fall or struggles of the brute, would tell his companions what had taken place, even though Bruin is one of the most stupid of animals. Jack's gun having been fired, it was more than likely that he would be unable to re-load it in time to make defence against the others. He would have to leave them therefore, for his comrades to dispose of. They knew that Jack would be able to take care of his special charge unless some slip took place.

And that slip did take place. The young hunter observed, while his eye was running along the sights of his rifle, that a small limb or twig, no thicker than his finger, reached across the trail between him and the bear so that it was in the exact line of his fire.

While ordinarily this would have made no

difference to the swift-speeding bullet, yet the lad was wise enough to wait until the bear had advanced far enough to shift the line out of the way. This was the cause of the brothers thinking that Jack held his aim a long time.

At the instant of firing however, a slight puff of wind stirred the leaves and moved the twig so that the stem bowed again across the path of the bullet.

The consequence was that the ball was turned just enough out of its course to wound instead of killing the brute. It chipped its way through a corner of the skull without making a fatal hurt, though it was one that roused all the fury of the enormous beast.

Will and George, who were closely watching events, were sure that Jack had killed Bruin, who reared on his hind legs and swung his paws as if trying to draw the supposed splinters from his flesh. Then, instead of toppling over like a small mountain, he made straight for the young man who he well knew had caused his hurt.

Jack Gedney, like his young friends, was astonished at this proof that he had made a failure. He stood for a moment, waiting for the royal game to fall to the ground, but the vigor of the beast told plainly enough that there

was a dangerous amount of life left in him.

Unfortunately, this alarming truth did not break upon Jack until the beast was on him. He knew better than to try to re-load his gun, but hastily clubbing it, he swung it back over his shoulder, and brought the stock down on the head of the bear with the utmost strength he could command.

It may be said that the blow for one of the boy's years was powerful, but it did no more harm when it landed on the iron-like skull of Bruin that if it had been a feather duster. Instead of striking squarely, it glanced with such force that the weapon flew twenty feet out of the hands of the owner.

By this time, as you may well suppose, Will and George discovered the peril of their friend, and hastened to his rescue; but the seconds passed fast, and the bear had reared for the purpose of seizing Jack, whose blow was descending before the brothers brought their own guns to their shoulders and fired.

They had no time to run closer or to make their aim as effective as they wished, but they sent both bullets into the big black body that rose in front of the brave boy. The result was what you can well understand: Bruin was hit hard, but for a time at least he was as strong as ever, while his rage was the more intensified.

He reached out both ponderous paws to seize Jack, who, had he been caught, would have received a hug sufficient to crush all the bones in his body to a pulp; but with a dexterity and coolness wonderful in one of his years, he dropped down, so that the paws clasped vacancy over his head, and, darting to one side, he made a dash to the nearest sapling.

When the animal turned to see what had become of his victim, he observed him dashing off in a full run. Heavy and clumsy as is the bear, he is capable of considerable speed, and the one of which I am telling you dropped upon all fours, swung around, and made after the boy with astonishing dexterity.

It need not be said that Jack did not let the grass grow under his feet. Fortunately, indeed, for him that he did not have far to run before he flung his arms and legs about a small tree, up which he began travelling with desperate energy.

As it was, his pursuer was so close, that when he reared again, and reached upwards with his paws, his long sharp nails rattled against one of Jack's shoes. The boy jerked up both feet as though he had felt the fangs of a rattlesnake, and one more hitch took him beyond reach of the brute.

CHAPTER XI

GEORGE MAKES A SHOT

The bear found not one, but two boys, who would serve equally well as substitutes for the one that had just escaped him. Will stood less that fifty feet away, hastily ramming a bullet into his rifle, while George was a little farther to the right, busy at the same thing. Bruin decided that the lad who was the nearer of the two would serve him best, so he straightway went after him.

No one could hold the hug of a bear in greater dread than did Will Burton. Had he cooly stood still, and kept on re-loading his gun, it is likely he would have had it ready to fire before the beast reached him; but, as the boy expressed it, he was taking no such chances. He whirled on his heel, and followed the example of Jack, with a suppleness fully equal to his.

One of the hardest things for a man or boy to do is to climb a tree with a gun in hand. Much as Will wanted to keep his weapon, so as to use it when perched above reach of his enemy, he did not dare to try to do so. He

threw it from him, and even then the pursuit was so close that he escaped by a chance as narrow as that of Jack himself.

From his perch in the sapling the latter saw all this, which, you must remember, took place in a very brief time. The two elder boys of the little company had been treed by a huge bear, and neither of them had his gun with which to defend himself. It was clear that much now depended on George, the youngest of the company.

"Don't let him see you," called Jack. "Keep out of sight until your gun is loaded, and then make your aim sure."

George did not reply, through fear of attracting the notice of the bear, but he was doing his duty like a hero. During the fracas between Bruin and Will he had dodged behind the trunk of a tree large enough to screen his body, and then gave his whole attention to re-loading his weapon.

Now and then he peeped forth, taking care to show as little of himself as possible. What he saw encouraged him to hope that he would be able to do all that was expected of him.

For the second time the bear found his victim slipping away from him after he was within reach. You cannot wonder that he was in the angriest possible mood. He must have

called to mind, too, that a third boy was somewhere near, for he could not have failed to see him when he started after the bigger lad.

But where was the third of the party?

The bear looked here, there, everywhere, but saw nothing of him.

Ah! if the brute had gazed a little closer at that big oak trunk, off to his left, he would have seen a short, sturdy-looking boy, who had just finished pouring the priming into the pan of his rifle, and drawing back the hammer, was steathily peering around the trunk, so as to decide how best to aim at the creature.

It so happened that the latter was in the best position to receive such a charge, and George took but a few seconds to make his aim sure. When he let fly, the little sphere of lead that whistled from his rifle tore its way through the heart of the beast, which rolled over on his side and died immediately, almost without a struggle.

You remember there were two other bears. They were lumbering along the trail some distance behind the leader, but quite close together. They did not become aware that anything unusual was going on until Jack fired his first shot. Then they looked up in their stupid way, and stood still while the first part of the stirring incidents took place.

Before the crisis was reached, the couple seemed to conclude that there was no necessity to stay where they were likely to get hurt. So, without turning aside from the trail, they pushed on in the direction they were following when first seen.

Jack and Will quickly slid down from the saplings in which they had taken refuge, and, catching up their guns, ran towards the carcass of the bear, reached it almost at the same time with George, the three converging from different directions.

"He's dead sure enough," said Jack, kicking the bulky body.

"He ought to be, with three or four bullets in him." said Will; "George and I struck him the first time we fired, and you must have hit him. How was it, Jack that you didn't kill him?

"I'll find out," replied Jack, stooping down and examining the skull of the brute.

"I see how it is," he said, straightening up again; "I fired for his eye, but there was a stick across my line of aim—just enough to turn the ball aside, so that it didn't hurt him much."

"But it made him mad," suggested George.

"I should say it did; and then the other two balls made him so mad that he couldn't get any madder."

"He stood just right for me," said George; "and since he couldn't see me, I had all the time I wanted to take aim."

"And you did it well," added Jack, "and it was fortunate for us, for we couldn't use our guns. But what's become of the other two bears?" he asked, looking around.

"They didn't see any fun in staying here," replied Will, "and so they went off."

"Let's follow them."

But Will was not inclined to do so.

"You know we started out for a hunt," said he, "and I am in favor of making it as varied as we can. You found a couple of painters last night, and an Indian or two this moring. Awhile ago, you had a little fun with a bull buffalo, and he had more fun with you. We are just through with the bears, and I'm in favor of trying something else."

"What shall it be?" asked his brother.

Whatever comes along—wolves, deer or anything that turns up.'

While the three stood near the carcass they were busy re-loading their guns, for the brothers as well as Jack, had been taught that that was the first duty after discharging their weapons.

Naturally the boys were in high spirits over their adventure, which had ended

without harm to anyone of the company.

"It seems to me," said George, "that we can find all the fun we want by following this path to the lick."

"It looks to me," added Jack, "as though we may find *more* than we want."

"Not unless we meet more buffaloes," remarked Will, with a sly glance at Jack, whose face flushed.

"I wouldn't mind having one of them, for it will soon be dinner time, and their meat is good at this season."

"There may be others along the path, and then you can run out and scare one to death."

"To do that," retorted Jack, "I would have to run as fast as you did when the bear was at your heels."

"But hardly as fast as you ran when you missed your shot and got up the tree just in time."

"Any boy that will run from a wounded bear will run from a buffalo bull when he has his head down and is coming for him. I think one as bad as the other."

"That may be, which is a good reason why you shouldn't try to drive him off as though he were a rooster scratching up your corn."

George grinned over this bit of conversation, which took place with the best of nature on

both sides. When it had gone on for a few minutes more, Will stopped, laughed, and reached out his hand.

"Shake," said he; "I have laughed until I can't laugh any more, and now we'll drop it."

"I notice one thing that you may not know," said Will, looking up, as he spoke, through the tree tops, "and that is that the sky is not anything like as clear as it was a little while ago."

"And it is colder," added Jack, with a shiver; "it looks to me very much as though a storm is coming."

"If there is, it's likely to be a snow-storm, I feel sure."

"It's well I brought this blanket along with me," said George; "Will didn't think we needed it at all."

"I didn't think so as long as I believed mother meant that I should carry it. When I found that you were to take charge of it why I concluded it well to bring it."

"I almost wish I had mine," said Jack; "but there are plenty of places where we can build a good roaring fire and the wind won't reach us, and so after all we will be comfortable, and that's everything."

"Yes," said Will, looking around as though he half expected to see what they were talking about; "there are spots where we could sleep

without a blanket, after we had kindled a good fire, and it won't take us very long to find one of them."

At that moment, when all three were about to move toward the trail, they heard the report of a rifle. It sounded perhaps a quarter of a mile off, and directly to the south.

Now, there was nothing in this to cause any excitement on the part of the boys, but they looked in each other's faces with a half scared and half wondering expression, as though in doubt whether there was grounds for fear or whether there was not.

"I believe that gun was fired by an Indian," said George in a whisper.

"How can you know that?" asked his brother, impatiently.

"I don't know it," answered the younger, "but I only *think* so."

"I don't know that it makes any difference to us whether it was an Indian or white man who fired it."

"Of course; and we can't know until we find out for ourselves," was the sensible but not altogether necessary remark of Master Jack.

CHAPTER XII

THE STRANGE CAMP FIRE

The young hunters now asked themselves whether it was worth while to try to find out who had fired the gun whose report broke in upon them with such startling suddenness.

It was not at all unlikely that some of their friends from the settlement up the river, or from the scattered cabins, were out on a hunt through the woods.

But when young George blurted out his belief that it was an Indian who had fired the weapon, he uttered the very thought that was in the mind of Jack.

Ever since his meeting with the Wyandot chief and his son that morning he had been uneasy in mind. There were times when he would not think about the red men, but very soon his thoughts went back to the subject.

His misgiving may be understood when I repeat what I have already hinted, namely, that the presence of Hou-awa-oma and his son in the neighborhood of the two cabins meant that a band of his warriors were not far away. The Wyandots, as you have already learned

were among the fiercest enemies of the settlers, and the painted faces of the chieftain and his son made it look as if the latter was on his first war path.

All this might be hard to explain in the light of the treatment received by Jack at the hands of Hua-awa-oma, or "He who fights without falling" but still it was not inexplainable. More than likely the chief gave back the gun as part punishment to his boy because he was beaten so badly in the wrestling bout.

Probably the dusky leader felt so much faith in his own place at the head of a war party of Wyandots that he believed it safe to indulge such a whim, believing as he did that not only the rifle but also the boy himself would be at his disposal whenever he cared to claim them.

"If there are Indians near us." said Jack, "we ought to know it, so as to be able to keep out of their way."

"They must have heard our guns, since we heard one of theirs," remarked Will.

"If they are white men, we ought to know that too," added George.

"Well, if we are careful I guess we can find out. Come on."

Jack led the way back to the path which they had followed for some distance, and

crossing it, plunged into the wood on the other side. They had gone only a short way when the ground grew rougher, and sloped upward like a ridge. They pushed on until they reached the top of an elevation of several hundred feet.

Beyond this the land sloped off again into a valley, fully a half mile in width, beyond which it rose almost to the same height as the surface on which they stood.

The spot where they halted was so open and free from undergrowth that they had a good view of the small valley spread out before them, and over which they gazed with keen interest.

"Hallo, there they are!" whispered Will.

Following the direction of his finger, his companions saw near the middle of the valley a column of smoke ascending from among the trees, and lazily mingling with the air above, where it rested almost stationary, as though it had been there for hours.

"Yes," said Jack, "a camp fire is there, but we don't know whether it belongs to Indians or white men."

"That's what we have come to find out."

"It seems to me," said George, "that instead of going down together we ought to separate. What do you think, Jack?"

"It strikes we as a good plan; if we keep together it will be hard work for us to find out what we want to know without letting the Indians—if they are Indians—find out more than we want them to learn about us."

"That is good enough," observed Will, to whom the others looked to hear his opinion "and I guess we may as well try it; but if we separate we have got to be mighty careful that we don't run into danger before we know it. I will turn to the right, you, Jack, to the left, while George can push straight down into the valley; we must be on the watch all the time. As soon as one of us sees anything that tells what we want to know, he must turn back to this place and wait for the others."

"The first one who finds the camp and learns who started it, ought to signal to the others, so that they need not run any more risk."

"We will do that," said Jack; "and that is likely to be George, because he has a shorter distance than either of us to travel."

"What shall be the signal?"

Jack placed his two hands in front of his mouth, the palms curved toward each other, so that a hollow space was enclosed, the thumbs being in front. Pressing his lips against these, he blew gently, and made a soft, deep whistle, whose volume he could increase until it was audible for several hundred yards.

While the calls thus made bore little resemblance to that of any animal or bird, it had the advantage of being hard to locate. That is, if a person should detect it in the forest it would require the closest attention, and then would have to be repeated several times before the hearer could fix the exact spot whence it came.

"You know how to do that?" he said, looking inquiringly at the brothers.

By way of reply, each fashioned his hands as Jack had done, and, with the lips against the thumbs emitted a precisely similar sound.

"That's it," he said. "It is understood then that the first one who finds out what we want to know is to start straight back to this spot, and as soon as he reaches a point where it is safe to make the signal he will do so. Neither of the others will be too far off to hear, and will hurry back. Then, after we learn the truth, we'll settle what is best to be done."

All this was simple enough, and when each had added several cautions to the others they silently parted company.

You will see from what has been told that there was reason to believe that George Burton, who took the direct course to the campfire, would be the first to reach it. Indeed, the others were so confident of his doing so

that they were rather indifferent to their own progress.

Feeling the responsibility on him, young George acted like an old campaigner, using more care than seemed necessary at first; but he had felt quite sure from the beginning that they were near a party of Indian warriors, and he did not mean to betray himself and friends into their hands by any lack of caution.

He was glad to see, after going a short distance down the slope, that there was an increase of undergrowth. This gave him a better chance to keep his body screened while approaching the camp.

"Whatever happens," was his thought, "it shan't be said that *I* was the cause of Jack and Will getting into trouble. If there are a party of Indians tramping through here, it is for no good, and the best thing we can do is to get back home as quick as we know how."

At the end of a quarter of an hour he thought he must be close to the camp. Since coming down into the valley he was unable to see the smoke that was in such plain sight when they were on top of the ridge, but he used his keen eyes and sense of hearing with a skill that an Indian scout would have found hard to surpass.

"It must be close at hand—*sh*!"

Sure enough, he had not gone five steps farther when he came in full view of the camp.

In the middle of a small open space a number of sticks had been piled together and kindled an hour or two before. This was plain, not only from the number of burnt out embers and brands, but from the appearance of the smoke above the trees as already described.

On a fallen tree, near the fire, sat three Indian warriors, talking together in their low guttural voices. Another was in the act of stooping down and lighting his long-stemmed pipe, while a fifth was standing a few feet away, examining his rifle—this being all that were in sight.

Each was in his war paint, and, young as was George Burton, he was certain that they were but a fraction of the party that was in the woods bent on mischief.

"They must be Wyandots," he thought, forming this opinion from the story told by Jack of his encounter that morning, "and we must go home as fast as we can, and tell the folk."

Full of this purpose, he turned softly about to hasten back, when he found himself face to face with a gigantic and scowling Indian warrior!

CHAPTER XIII

CAPTIVE AND CAPTORS

Poor George Burton! After creeping close to the Indian camp fire, and using all the care he could, he had turned about to go back with the important news thus gained, when he found himself face to face with a gigantic warrior, who had stolen up behind him without the least noise that could betray his approach. For a moment the lad was speechless. Young as he was, he saw that he was helpless, but with a weak hope that the savage might be friendly, he said in a faint voice—

"How do you do?"

He did not reach out his hand, being afraid to do so, but he took a step to one side and forward, with the purpose of attempting to pass around the red man who had suddenly stood in his path.

It was an idle hope. The other also moved a step that placed him in front of the boy, so as to block his way.

"Howly do?" he asked, extending his brawny hand, which, it need not be said, was taken by George with much hesitation. The

Indian, however, grasped and shook it without offering any injury.

The lad noticed that not only was the face of the red man hideously painted, but that his nose was awry, as though it had been slashed or broken by some frightful wound. He must have been several inches more than six feet in height, with a tremendous breadth of chest and reach of limb. He was dressed in the usual fashion of his people, and carried a tomahawk and knife in his belt.

Instead of being armed with a bow and arrow, as was Hua-awa-oma, whom Jack had spoken about, this remarkable warrior had a long fine rifle, with the necessary powder horn and shot pouch held by strings passing round his neck.

The first action after this greeting was an alarming one to George. Reaching out, he drew the rifle from the grasp of the lad, whose anguish was as great as that of Jack Gedney had been.

"Hoof! Yenghese brave—he go!"

The lad would not have caught the whole meaning of this but for the expressive gesture that accompanied it. The red man pointed towards the camp fire, thereby meaning that his captive should walk in that direction.

The circumstances being as they were,

George did the wisest thing he could: He obeyed the order of his captor, who, had he chosen, could have smitten him to the earth with as much ease as though he were but an infant.

George, like all youngsters, was deeply interested in the accounts of frontier adventure. He had heard the hunters who sometimes stopped at his house say that the wisest course for a captive in the hands of Indians is to try to please them in every way. Any sullenness or disobedience rouses their anger, and they are quick to punish, and most likely to torment and kill, the hapless prisoner.

The agitation of George was great, but he forced himself to smile, and to say, "How do you do?" as he walked among the party, and took his seat on the log near where the three of whom I have spoken were waiting.

During the few minutes that George was allowed to sit undisturbed on the log he closely watched the faces of the Indians, and particularly of the one who had made him prisoner.

It was the ugliest contenance he had ever seen. Not only was the nose twisted out of shape, but the mouth was amazingly broad, though, like nearly all of the American race, his teeth were white and even; but his eyes were so small that they looked like beads.

Around each was a white ring, while the greasy clay that served for paint was daubed over the rest of his features with an effect so hideous as to prove that the redskin was a genius in that line.

During those few minutes also the little fellow did a great deal of serious thinking.

The most natural question that he tried to answer was as to what the Indians were likely to do with him. The different tribes who roamed through the Ohio forests and Kentucky cane-fields were not famous for their kindness or mercy to their prisoners. It is well known that they often tortured them in the most shocking manner. Colonel Crawford, who commanded one of the expeditions sent into that section about the time of which I am telling you, was not only defeated, but he and many of his men were taken prisoners. Colonel Crawford was fastened to a stake driven into the ground, and burned to death with dreadful agony.

All this, not to name other similar incidents was known to George Burton, who might well tremble for his own fate. Still he did not give up hope.

"Maybe they will think I don't amount to enough for them to bother with, and they may let me go, though I know there is no chance

of ever getting my rifle back again. I am glad of one thing—they didn't catch Will or Jack."

The thought of them led George to glance behind and in front, as though he expected to see them approach. Natural as was the act on his part, it was noticed by the Wyandot (such was their tribe), who may have supposed that he expected some of his friends to come to his relief. They looked sharply at the boy, and then resumed their talk.

"We agreed," thought George, recalling their parting, "that we should all keep up the hunt until we learned what we wanted. So Jack or Will will prowl around this camp until they see what a scrape I'm in, and then, what will they do?"

Ay, what *could* they do?

"They'll run home and tell father," thought the captive, continuing his line of thought, "and he may set out to get me, but what can he do against all this crowd? He may go up to the settlement and bring a lot of the folks to help, but before they can come within reach of these people my fate will be settled."

There was every reason to believe that George Burton was quite right in the latter conclusion.

The conversation of the Wyandots, whatever its nature, lasted only a few minutes

longer. Then the one who was occupied in filling his pipe when George first caught sight of the camp came forward, and stopped in front of him.

Most of the red men who live along the frontier soon pick up a few words of English, but it is seldom that one is seen who spoke so readily as did he who now addressed the captive. Doubtless on that account he was called upon.

"Where paleface came from?" he asked, with such a good accent that George looked up at him in surprise.

"From my home over yonder," was his prompt reply, as he pointed to the northward—the direction in which his home lay.

"What name be?"

George gave it, whereupon his questioner took several whiffs of his pipe, nodded his head several times and grunted, as if to signify that he knew all about Mr. Burton.

"Come alone?"

"I came with my brother Will and Jack Gedney."

Again the Indian indulged in several whiffs, nods, and grunts.

It was quite clear that he was in a neighborhood with which he was familiar.

"Where be they?"

"I do not know," was the truthful reply of the lad, who, all the same, would never say anything that could endanger his friends.

The eyes of his Wyandot questioner flashed, and without waiting to take any more puffs at his pipe, he added in a louder voice—

"Tell me, or me kill you."

"I can't tell you, for I don't know. I parted from them some time ago, and don't know where they are."

"Why you leave them?"

"We saw the smoke of your camp fire, and we started out to find whether it belonged to white or red men."

The Indian looked sharply down in his face, and laid his hand on his tomahawk, as if asking himself whether he had not better end the whole matter by whipping out the weapon and braining the little fellow as he sat on the log.

"Be oder Yengese in woods?"

"Not that I know of; Jack Gedney had a new gun given him yesterday by his father because it was his birthday, and he and we started into the woods to-day on a hunt."

Poor George would probably have added more had not an interruption taken place at that moment, caused by an important arrival.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SIGNAL AND ITS REPLY

You will remember that when the three boys separated with the purpose of finding out who started the camp fire, Will went to the right and Jack to the left.

Will, being the oldest of the three, felt that in a certain sense he was the leader of the party, and the one to whom the others looked for guidance. He knew at the same time that Jack Gedney was just as well qualified as he, and that in some respects he was his superior. But a year makes a big difference with a youngster of his age.

Will made quite a long circuit to the right, his intention being to approach the camp fire from a point some distance beyond. There was little change in the general character of the wood, though at some points the undergrowth was so plentiful as to require labor and patience on his part.

He was pushing forward in this fashion when he caught his toe in one of the troublesome running vines and went forward on his face. The fall was not violent enought to hurt him, though it caused a natural exclamation of impatience.

"It's well I am a good way from the camp," he thought, resuming his feet; "for if Indians were near they would have heard me sure."

A hundred yards farther, and he began turning to the left with the intention of approaching the camp; but he had gone only a short distance when he became aware that there was someone in front who was following the same course. He knew this by the bent and broken twigs, the presesd bushes, and more than all by sounds of a moving body only a short distance off.

"That's queer," was the natural thought of the boy; "I wonder whether Jack or George has got over on my side. They ought to know better than to move that way."

The thought had hardly taken shape in the mind of Will when he caught a glimpse of the figure a few rods in advance. It was an Indian warrior, whose back was turned towards him.

He was walking among the trees and through the undergrowth in a leisurely fashion, that showed he not only knew how close he was to the camp, but that the parties gathered there were his friends.

When the boy observed him he stepped softly behind the nearest tree, and hardly dared to peep out until the red man had passed

beyond sight. Had the savage turned his head at first, he must have detected the lad.

"That's strange," muttered Will, when he peeped around the tree, and found the Indian had disappeared; "if I had been a minute later in falling he must have heard me. His people don't travel in that style when they suspect enemies are near."

Will was sure he was right in his conclusion; the camp fire belonged to Indians, and the warrior who had just vanished was one of the party, as was shown by his carelessness of movement.

Such being the case, the boy felt that he had learned all that he needed to know, and it was not prudent for him to go farther. It was now certain that a war party of Indians were in the neighborhood, and the right thing for the boys to do was to hasten back home, so as to warn their friends.

It cannot be denied that this was a sensible decision, and Will lost no time in acting upon it.

His belief was that he was ahead of the others in learning about the red men, and he was anxious to notify Jack and George, so as to keep them from running into danger. Remembering the signal that had been agreed upon, he placed the hollow of his hands to-

gether, applied his lips to the thumbs, and gave out the whistle like that made by a steam engine, when the sound comes a long way over land and through forest.

"They will hear that," he said to himself as he stood a minute and listened, "and will keep away from the camp. The Indians will hear it too, but they won't have any idea what it means. Hallo!"

To the surprise of Will he detected an answer to his signal. It sounded faint and far off; but you remember what I said about the trouble of knowing the point from which such a signal comes. To save his life, the lad could not have told whether it issued from the north, south, east, or west.

"That's good," he said to himself, starting back over the course by which he had advanced. "I don't think Jack or George has got nigh enough to the camp to run any risk, and it was fortunate that I found out the truth in time to warn them."

Some minutes later, when he had made fair progress, he stopped in his walk and repeated his signal, thinking possibly that the first had been heard by only one of his companions.

"That will reach both, and start them towards the top of the ridge."

While he was listening he again caught the

reply. Since he was half expecting it, he laughed.

"I think that's Jack. There isn't any need of his answering, but I suppose he wants to show how well he can do it.'"

You would think that Will was sure of the course of the faint hollow whistle that trembled among the trees, but he was not. It may have been that because he expected the reply from a certain point that it seemed to come thence, but all the same he was mistaken.

"I'll be the first to the ridge, and most likely will be the only one that has got any news. My gracious!"

This time the tremulous call was so close that he could not mistake its direction. It sounded in front, and not twenty yards distant. The affrighted Will halted, knowing that something was wrong.

"I don't believe that is either Jack or George," he said to nimself. "They couldn't have got back there in time."

Whatever doubt might have lingered in the mind of Will was removed by the sight of the one who had just emitted the signal. The head of a Wyandot warrior was thrust so far from behind the trunk of a tree that his shoulders was seen through the black mass of coarse hair dangling about them.

The redskin was within easy gunshot, and he held his rifle pointed straight at the boy, but the latter, not knowing whether it was a summons to surrender, or whether the savage meant to fire, bounded behind the nearest tree.

"I've got a gun as well as you, and you don't catch me for the asking."

The same signal that had been heard several times once more fell upon the ear of Will. Like the last, it was so near that he could not mistake its direction—it was from the rear.

Turning his head, he saw a second Indian within fifty feet, with a bow and arrow. He did not try to screen his body, but his primitive weapon was held in such a position that he could launch the shaft before the boy could have used his weapon.

Will was caught between two fires, for you will see that since one of his enemies was in front and the other in the rear, he could not use the tree as a screen against both; in whatever position he took he would be exposed to their aim.

"There is no help for it," was the despairing thought of the lad, when both Indians began walking towards him. Not wishing to exasperate them, he dropped the butt of his gun

to the ground, as he stepped out from behind the tree that he had used for the moment as a screen against the first warrior.

His captors accepted this as a sign of friendship, and the one with the rifle also lowered his weapon, though both he and his ally kept a close watch on the youth, who, like ripe fruit, had fallen into their hands without "shaking."

It was a trying ordeal for Will to stand motionless while these two aborigines drew nigh, but he recalled what Jack had told him about his meeting with the chieftain Huaawa-oma, and his wrestling bout with Arowaka, his son.

"This must be his party; maybe that fellow with the bow and arrow is the chief himself. If he was so kind to Jack, he may show a little indulgence to me. But there is no way now of helping myself, and I must trust to God to take care of me, as He has done all my life."

The first act of the Indian with the bow and arrow was to take the gun of Will Burton from him. He did not ask for the powder-horn and bullet-pouch, satisfied, no doubt, that they were his whenever he chose to take them.

But the gun was loaded, and the safest course was to withdraw it from the hands of him who might feel like doing harm with it.

Will looked sharply at the redskin as he passed his rifle to him. He observed that he was dressed as Jack had described, and his face was hideously painted.

"Are you Hua-awa-oma?" asked the boy.

The savage looked inquiringly at him, and Will repeated the question. The warrior muttered something, and shook his head. He was not Hua-awa-oma, for he did not understand a word said to him.

The other Wyandot stood for a moment while this brief interview took place. Then pointing toward the camp fire, he made an angry gesture, nodded his head several times, and said something in his own tongue, which was clearly meant as the order "March!"

Will did not wait for a second command, but stepped briskly forward, and a few minutes later joined the group which I have already described as gathered around the Wyandot camp fire.

"The meeting of the brothers." (*See p. 110.*)

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER ARRIVAL

It was the arrival of Will Burton in charge of his two captors that broke in upon the interview between George and the Wyandot, who was asking him a number of questions shaped in very good English.

The meeting of the brothers as, you may well suppose, was a painful surprise to both of them.

"How came *you* to be here?" asked the elder, taking a seat beside the other on the log.

"One of them stole up behind me when I wasn't thinking," replied George, swallowing a lump in his throat. "I didn't believe any of them would catch *you*."

"Nor I, either," replied Will, with a shake of his head, and turning pale; "but they are mighty cunning and smart. Did you hear me when I signalled?"

George shook his head. It should be said that during the few minutes the brothers were allowed to talk with each other the Indians themselves were conversing. The arrival of the captives evidentally started several theor-

ies and questions, which required some time to discuss.

The Wyandots kept an eye on the boys sitting on the fallen tree, but they made no objection to their talking together. The latter noticed that all were on their feet, speaking earnestly, and gesticulating with much energy. Among them were a couple who had bows and arrows instead of guns, though the majority were furnished with the more deadly rifle.

"I wonder if they'll catch Jack, too?" said the younger, after his brother had told him how his own signal had betrayed him.

"I shouldn't wonder. I suppose there was so much going on here that you didn't hear me when I whistled, but it must have reached Jack and started him on the move, and likely enough he has made the same blunder that we have. You know he went on the other side from me, and must have come just as close to the camp."

"What do you suppose they will do with us, Will?"

The elder shook his head.

"I can't tell, any more than you can; we can only hope that they will spare our lives."

"If they do let us go they won't give us back our guns."

"Of course not; they will be a big loss to us, but not so much as our lives."

"We can't be sure that we won't lose them too," was the truthful remark of George. "I was thinking," he added, "that if Jack keeps out of their hands he will see what has happened to us. He'll hurry back home, and they may be able to get enough men together to make the Indians give us up."

Will shook his head and compressed his lips.

"There is no hope there; you know how fast the Indians travel through the woods. They will get away before any of our friends can start."

"But their villages are not so far off that they cannot be found. You remember how Daniel Boone chased the Indians that stole his daughter, and brought her back?"

"Yes; he told father about it when he was at our house. But that was different. If the Wyandots—as I suppose these people are—should find that there was any chance of losing us, they would kill us as quick as lightning. The only hope," added Will, with a sigh, "is in Hua-awa-oma."

"How do you make that out?"

"I don't make it out, and more than likely there's nothing in it; but you know Jack told us that he is a chief, and that he gave his gun back to him."

"That was because he beat his boy wrestling."

"Well, it may be that on Jack's account he won't be too severe with us; but," added Will the next instant, "there can't be much chance after all. I wonder whether Hua-awa-oma is among these fellows? I thought the one who came in with me was he, because he had no rifle until he took mine away from me."

"Maybe he is the chief."

"No; I asked him, and found he couldn't speak English. That fellow who brought you in is the biggest Indian I ever saw, but he can't be the chief."

"No; I know he is not."

While talking, the boys were studying the figures and faces of the red men around them, for they were interesting indeed.

"There's one thing that makes it sure that Hua-awa-oma is absent," said the elder, settling back on the log; "his boy who wrestled with Jack is not here. He is taking him on his first war trail, and he would be sure to keep him near him until they got back."

"Don't you think it strange, Will, that when most of these people have rifles the sachem who leads them should carry nothing better than bows and arrows?"

"That is natural enough: he has probably

taken his boy out for a little training, and his father carries his own bow the better to teach him. When the chief comes back to his warriors you may be sure that he will have the best gun in the party."

"It may be that he belongs to another party."

"I have thought of that, but I guess there is only the one company that is on this raid. However, we can talk all day and it won't help us any. Do you know whether any of them can speak English?"

"There is one that speaks it better than any Indian I ever saw, where is he?" asked George, straightening up, and looking around for the warrior who was questioning and threatening him at the moment the elder brother was brought into camp.

"I declare!" exclaimed the boy the next moment, when he discovered that the very Wyandot for whom he was searching was standing directly behind the log on which they were sitting. His arms were folded, and he was looking at his friends who were talking so earnestly together, but beyond all question he had heard and understood every word spoken by the boys.

"Well," said the elder, dropping his voice, "we have told all there is to tell, and we may as well keep on talking."

"And that doesn't leave us much to talk about," replied George, who spoke in a louder voice than his brother.

At this juncture the vigorous conversation among the Wyandots stopped; and several of them took seats on the log near the boys.

The brothers, as you may well suppose, felt anything but comfortable when they saw they were the objects of the attention that had been turned away for a few minutes.

The warrior who has been referred to as speaking such good English now addressed himself to Will.

"Where be Jack?"

This question was proof, if any was needed, that he understood what had passed between the brothers during the conversation which I have given.

"I parted company with him on the ridge, and haven't seen him since."

"Which way he go?"

Will hesitated before answering. He could not do anything that looked like a betrayal of his friend. If he answered the question truthfully it might give the very information that would result in the capture of the only one of the three that had been able to keep out of the hands of the Indians.

It would have been easy enough to tell an untruth, but the soul of the boy revolted against it. Besides, the falsehood was almost certain to be discovered sooner or later, in which event the penalty would be visited upon him.

"Don't you know," whispered George, that you spoke of the route Jack took? The Indian knows it himself."

Of course; why was not Will as quick as his brother to see the trap his questioner was setting?

Will disguised very well the cause of his hesitation. He scratched his head and looked around in the wood, as if uncertain of the point of the compass. Then his face lightened, as if it all had come back to him.

"Yonder is the ridge where we three stood a half-hour ago," he said, pointing in the proper direction; "I went that way; my brother here came straight down to camp; while Jack turned off so as to go among the trees yonder."

The answer was truthful, as the Indian well knew. He had been misled, too, by the manner of Will, who therefore gained whatever it was worth in the eyes of the Wyandots by speaking with a "single tongue."

"We catch Jack," continued his questioner;

"we bring him here; he soon be here; we take him home to Wyandot town; we make 'em run gauntlet; then we kill all you."

I suppose you know what is meant by running the gauntlet. It is a common torture to which the American Indians subject their prisoners. Two rows of savages arm themselves with clubs, and compel the poor captive to run a long distance between them. As he passes within reach, each redskin belabors him without mercy, so that, as the victim has to run a long way, he is almost certain to be knocked to the earth, where more than likely he is beaten to death.

If he succeeds in running the gauntlet he is sometimes spared (as was Simon Kenton), but he is often kept for other forms of torture.

What further the Wyandot might have said to the boys can only be guessed, for, as before, he was checked by another arrival that was the strangest and most important of all—one that astonished even the stolid Wyandots themselves.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW TO CONQUER AN ENEMY

I have told you what befell Will and George Burton when they made their attempt to find out who had kindled the camp fire in the valley below the ridge on which they halted. But the experience of Jack Gedney was the strangest of all.

You have learned enough about this boy to admit that he was bright and alert, and that when he moved through the woods he always kept his senses about him. Like his friend Will, he thought if best to pass slightly beyond the camp before approaching it, though for myself I cannot see the reason for such a course.

Instead, therefore, of taking the most direct route, he moved to the left, so that, when opposite to the Wyandots, he was really farther away from them than while on the ridge. The distance was such indeed that he failed to hear the signal of Will, who supposed it was loud enough to travel a long way through the wilderness.

Pausing for a moment, Jack carefully

looked about him, and even among the tops of the trees. The only living thing which he saw was a huge rattlesnake, that was crawling by a stump a few yards away. Like the majority of mankind, the first prompting of the lad was to rush forward and kill the reptile. In fact, he started to do so.

Instantly, the serpent twisted itself into a coil, and with its head rearing from the center, shook its rattle as an invitation to attack. Jack could have easily shot off its head, and he would have been glad to do so, for it was an unusually large and repulsive pest, but to fire his gun at such a time would have been an imprudence for which there could be no excuse.

"I'll let you go," he said, looking steadily at it for a few seconds; "but it's well for you that I didn't meet you before I knew anything about this camp."

The *crotalus* species is easily killed, but this specimen, finding its invitation to a fight not accepted, unwound, and crawled off.

Seeing and hearing nothing, Jack began moving towards the camp, though, like his friends, he was unable to see anything of the smoke that was their guide when they halted on the crest of the ridge. He had travelled through the forest long enough, however, to

keep his bearings, and he was sure that he was going in a straight line for the camp, which he was almost equally sure, belonged to the Wyandot tribe of Indians.

"It will be odd if I find Hua-awa-oma there," he said to himself, while stealthily picking his way. "I wonder what he would say if I should walk up to him and offer my hand? I am afraid he wouldn't be so kind as he was a while ago."

The boy was stepping in this guarded manner, as wide awake as ever, when, like Will, his toe caught in one of the running vines close to the ground, and he stumbled forward. He did not fall, though he came very near doing so. His head was thrown forward and downward in his effort to check himself.

No accident could have been more fortunate, for it saved Jack's life. At the very instant of stumbling he heard the twang of a bowstring, and the missile, which was aimed at him, whizzed over his shoulder, and was buried in the trunk of a tree beyond.

In obedience to a thought that came like an inspiration to him, the boy allowed himself to fall forward on his hands and knees, where he remained motionless for several seconds. Turning his head, he saw the arrow that had missed him by a hair's-breadth.

with its head buried deep in the bark, while the feathered shaft was still quivering from the force of the impact.

The missile was fired by Arowaka, who, in returning to camp, caught sight of his enemy in front of him. Seeing him fall at the moment the arrow left his hand, and failing to note where it went, the young savage thought the lad had been fatally pierced by the shaft. Whipping out his knife, he ran forward with the intention of taking the scalp from his victim.

He had but a short distance to go when he caught sight of the white boy, who, instead of lying on the ground in his death struggles, was kneeling on one knee, with his cocked rifle levelled at the head of the young Wyandot.

The latter, with a terrified "Hoof!" stopped as if shot, and stood transfixed, absolutely unable to stir. He saw he was at the mercy of his foe who he did not believe would spare his life for a dozen seconds.

"*Arowaka, you're mine!*" said Jack, slowly rising to his feet, but keeping his gun levelled.

The words seemed to rouse the senses of the Indian youth, who dropped his bow, folded his arms, and, throwing his shoulders back as he faced his conqueror, said in a low, firm voice—

"Arowaka ready! He die like warrior!"

There was a heroism in the pose and words of the youthful Wyandot which thrilled Jack Gedney. Almost any one would have started to run, or, seeing there was no hope in doing so, would have begged for mercy. The Indian did neither, but, the son of a sachem as he was, he proved that he could die like the bravest of his people.

But, bless your heart, Jack had not the least wish to harm him. The law of the border would have told him to shoot him, since the action of the Indian proved him to be a mortal enemy, and one who, unwilling to show mercy himself, did not deserve that any should be shown to him.

Jack would have done his utmost to slay the young savage had they met in mortal combat, but the check that came before that point was reached. And, again, he was touched by the cool daring of Arowaka.

Hardly were the words spoken by the Indian when Jack lowered his gun, softly letting down the hammer, and said, with a smile—

"Arowaka, let us be friends."

As he spoke, he stepped forward and offered his hand to the young Wyandot.

You would have been entertained could you have seen the face of Arowaka when he grasped

the meaning of the words and the actions of his conqueror. The paint smeared over his countenance could not hide the expressions of bewilderment, of wonder, and then of delight, that succeeded each other so quickly that he extended his own hand, and shook that of Jack with a warmth of pressure which made him wince.

"Arowaka love Jack."

There was no mistaking the depth of feeling that prompted these words, spoken in a low voice, in which there was a quaver that was not there when he declared himself ready to die.

The Indian felt that the youth who had overthrown him in the wrestling bout, and whose death he had treacherously attempted, had now given back his own life to him. That stratum of gratitude which, though hidden deeper in some hearts than others, nevertheless *is there*, and *can be reached*, had been found by Jack. The burning hatred of Arowaka for the youth was now turned to love.

The American might feel an enmity forever toward the Caucasian, but against this single member of that race he could never know aught but deep affection.

I tell you, boys and girls, there is nothing like kindness and charity in winning the hearts

of your enemies. Make the test, and prove it for yourselves.

At the moment the two youths of different blood stood with hands clasped and looking in each other's face, a third party silently pressed forward into sight.

He was Hua-awa-oma, the chieftain, and father of Arowaka.

He must have been surprised by the sight, knowing how resentful his son felt towards the white youth for overthrowing him, but the explanation was quickly made.

It seemed that Hua-awa-oma and his son had started out on a scout together (a number of warriors being similarly employed), when the former decided to return to the camp. He directed his son to take a different route from his own, and thus it came about that they met as they did in the vicinity of the war party.

Arowaka dropped the hand of his new friend, and turning to his father, told him the story.

Of course, Jack did not understand a word spoken, but the language of the American Indian is largely made up of gesture, and our young friend was sure of the general run of the story.

He-Who-Fights-Without-Falling (which, you know, was the meaning in English of the name of Hua-awa-oma) looked straight in

the face of the narrator while he was speaking, but did not utter a word. Jack, however, noted the gleam of his eye, and he knew that whatever it might mean, it signified no harm to him.

The story was a brief one, but as the Christian kindness of Jack went home to the heart of the son, so did the touching narrative thereof stir the deepest feelings of the swarthy heathen who had wrenched the hair from the head of more than one quivering victim, and sunk his tomahawk into the brain of more than one poor wretch pleading for mercy.

When Arowaka ceased, his parent turned towards Jack and reached out his hand.

"Brave Yenghese—great warrior—Hua-awa-oma love him; no Wyandot hurt Jack—*no hurt people of Jack*!"

The meaning of the last remark was not fully understood by the lad until years afterwards. I will tell you about it later on.

"I am glad that Hua-awa-oma is a friend to me. I love Arowaka, and we shall never try to hurt each other. I will do anything I can for Hua-awa-oma or for Arowaka."

And now followed such a singular proceeding, that I must take another chapter to tell you about it.

CHAPTER XVII

A FRIEND AT COURT

The American race is noted for its stoicism. An Indian warrior undergoing a painful death will not please his enemies by showing suffering, but will die with words of defiance on his lips, and scorning the rage of his persecutors.

Many have thought that these people are lacking in affection for their offspring, but this is a mistake. Among their wigwams in the depth of the wilderness, where the eye of no stranger can see them, they will pet and fondle their little ones with as much evidence of love as their civilized brother. They are strict and often cruel in training their young, but they hold them as closely to their hearts as the tenderest parent ever held his boy or girl.

So it was with the Wyandot chieftain. He was harsh with his son, whom he had taken on the warpath for the first time, but Hua-awa-oma would have given his life to save that of Arowaka. He would not have blamed him had he succeeded in driving the arrow though the heart of Jack Gedney, for the lad was

trained for such treacherous deeds; but Arowaka failed, and then the white boy spared his life.

This was an act beyond the reach of the American Indian, and, alas! I must say, it was beyond the reach of many a white man, but it won the gratitude of the chieftain. Having assured Jack of this fact, he now looked at him, and said in his abrupt way—

"Jack teach Arowaka how wrestle."

Jack laughed. The chief admired his skill as shown earlier in the day, and he wanted him to teach the dusky youth some of the tricks by which the white lad was able to lay his antagonist on his back.

Jack was glad to do so. Leaning his gun against the nearest tree, Arowaka doing the same with his bow, he stepped towards him, smiling and saying—

"Arowaka will soon see, for he is strong."

The Indian lad was as much pleased as he, for he was sure of learning more than he had ever known about the art of wrestling—enough to enable him to beat any of his friends who dared engage in a contest with him.

Jack was shrewd. When he locked arms with Arowaka he could have flung him at once to the earth, but he took good care not to do so. He made several feints, but checked

himself before the lad went down. Then he showed him how to make those feints, how to trip his opponent, and, indeed, he did his utmost to teach him everything that he had learned from his own father.

Arowaka was an apt pupil. He was lithe, sinewy, and eager to learn, and with such conditions a boy is sure to pick up the art with great quickness. After this had continued some time, Jack said—

"Now look out! See whether you can keep me from throwing you just as I did this morning the first time I tried."

The two locked their arms more rigidly than before, and the struggle looked like a fierce one. Hua-awa-oma watched it with the closest interest. Back and forth twisted the boys, like a couple of enemies locked in deadly embrace, and struggling for their lives.

All at once the heels of Jack went up in the air, and he fell flat on his back, with Arowaka, across him. The chief was so delighted that he broke into laughter. Was there ever an apter pupil than his own son?

Now I must tell you the truth. Jack Gedney was guilty of a gross deception. All that furious twisting and swinging back and forth was pretence on his part. He could have thrown Arowaka with a little more effort

than he put forth in the morning, but he deliberately allowed him to throw him, and he did it, too, in such a manner that neither the youth nor his parent suspected it was not a fair victory.

Jack climbed to his feet, and with a sheepish look brushed the leaves from his clothing.

"You did that well," said he; "when you go back to your people there will be no youth that you cannot master. Now let me show you something else."

Jack carefully instructed him in the method of flinging an antagonist over his shoulders. Arowaka soon caught the idea, but when, in his confidence, he offered to engage in a trial with his teacher, the latter laughed, and shook his head.

"No; I have never been tossed that way, and I don't want you to drive my head into the ground."

It really looked as if he was afraid of Arowaka, but you know he was not. He was wise however, in making Arowaka think so.

To please Hua-awa-oma, the youths once more locked arms. It would have awakened suspicion had Jack allowed the other to beat him again, but he went as near to it as was prudent. He struggled long, and when the two went down, it was side by side. Then,

when they tried it again, he threw Arowaka fairly.

Once more, and for the last time, they assailed each other, Jack, by what seemed a failure to catch a feint of the other, falling under him. The boys rose to their feet, and the smiling chieftain shook hands with both. Not only that, but he patted Jack on the shoulder and said—

"Brave boy! Hua-awa-oma friend—Jack come with Hua-awa-oma."

The lad was a little startled by this invitation to enter the Indian camp with the sachem. He would have much preferred to join his friends and go home, but he was afraid to object, and he knew that he would be safe so long as in the company of Hua-awa-oma.

"I will go with my friend the great chief," he said, picking up his gun, and pausing for the sachem to lead the way.

He-Who-Fights-Without-Falling stepped off, followed by Jack and Arowaka, the two youths walking side by side. It was the arrival of this little party which caused such a sensation in camp, and which, you will agree, was the most important of the three that took place.

That which astonished the Wyandots was the evidence that the third boy who approached

did not do so as a captive. Unlike the others he came as the friend and guest of their own chief, one of the most famous leaders of the Wyandot tribe. Not only that, but Hua-awa-oma was an implacable foe of the settlers along the Ohio and in Kentucky.

No wonder, therefore, that the warriors were astonished.

Will and George were as much amazed as was Jack to see them. They rose from the log, and the elder said—

"Well, they have got us all at last; we may as well give up now."

"Why, boys, I am not a prisoner. This is the chief and his son, and they are friends of mine."

The faces of the brothers lightened, but they did not feel sure that Jack was not mistaken. He read their doubts, and added—

"There is no mistake about it; I have been out in the woods yonder teaching Arowaka how to wrestle, and the chief was so pleased that he asked me to come into camp with him."

"How do you know what he means to do with you?" asked George.

"I have no fear about *that*," was the reply of Jack, "I showed mercy to his son when he didn't expect it, and the chief is grateful."

"We are glad to know that *you* are safe," said Will, speaking in a low voice, so that none of the Wyandots should overhear him; "but the chief has no reason to spare George and me."

"I am sure he will; any way, you can depend on one thing: I shall not accept my freedom unless he gives you yours. I'll stand by you all the way through."

"There is no need of that," replied Will, touched by the devotion of his friend. "I know you will do all you can to get Hua-awa-oma to let us go, but if he refuses it won't help matters by your staying behind."

"I'll show you how it will help matters," said Jack, more determinedly than before; "but while they are having their confab, tell me, Will, how came you to be here?"

The elder brother gave the particulars of his mishap, just as you learned them long ago. When he was through, George told his experience, which is also familiar to you. And then Jack related how Arowaka had so nearly taken his life, and how he spared him when he was helpless.

"It was no more than either of you would have done had you stood in my shoes."

"But it is a good deal more than any Indian would do for either of us," said Will.

"There can be no doubt of that. I never saw any one so grateful as Hua-awa-oma. I wouldn't be afraid to trust myself among a thousand Wyandots so long as he was with me."

"I wonder what they are talking about?" whispered George, glancing sideways at the Indians.

There had been so many arrivals within the last half-hour that the party now numbered eighteen. Some of these had bows and arrows, but the majority were armed with the rifle. It proved as Jack had declared. Although the chief had gone out with his son, each carrying the rude weapon, yet the moment Hua-awa-oma entered camp, one of his warriors passed a fine gun to him, taking the bow in exchange.

This occurrence left no doubt that the theory as expressed by young Gedney was the correct one.

The moment the chief joined the party, all gathered around him, and for several minutes the conversation was spirited. Nearly every one took part, but the manner and looks of Hua-awa-oma showed that he was master there: no warrior dared to dispute any command uttered by him.

George had no more than time to express

his wonderment over the subject of the conversation when the chief finished and turned toward the three boys, who were still sitting on the log, anxious indeed to hear what he had to say.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

The Wyandot leader seemed to think he could speak the English tongue well enough without asking the help of the warrior who had shown such excellent knowledge of it. Stepping forward in front of the boys, he took the hand of Jack, and said, while the rest kept silence—

"Hua-awa-oma is friend—Jack can go."

Now was the critical moment. The boy looked up in the face of the chief, and replied—

"Hua-awa-oma is a great chief; Jack loves him. Hua-awa-oma will let my brothers go with me; if he does not, the heart of Jack will always be sad."

It was clear that the sachem had not meant to set the brothers free, but he proved his gratitude to Jack by granting his request at once, thus saving a painful scene.

"Will do—will do—for Jack."

"Thank you, thank you," said Jack, bowing his head low, and finding it hard to keep from shouting for joy.

Poor Will and George were so delighted that they never stopped to say a word about their rifles, and when Jack started to leave the camp they were close at his heels.

"Wait," called the chief, and the boys stopped, not without some fear that the leader had changed his mind.

But he had not. He nodded to one of his warriors, who promptly trotted forward, carrying the two guns, and handing one to Will and the other to George. The latter smiled when he noticed that he had them wrong, but that was of no account.

"Come on," said Jack, who waved a "good-bye" to the chief and his son, the former smiling and the latter replying with a similar salute. A few minutes later the young hunters were out of sight in the wood.

They were so eager to get away from camp that they did not stop or speak until they reached the top of the ridge, where they had parted company more than an hour before.

When they came to a standstill they were so overrunning with delight that they laughed, and shook hands over and over again.

"May I yell?" asked George, looking as if he was on the point of exploding with his suppressed happiness.

"No; they would hear it. Some of the

warriors would think we were crowing over them, and they might start after us."

"But Hua-awa-oma wouldn't let 'em. However, I guess they won't hear me; I can't help it."

Throwing himself on the ground, the youngest member of the party buried his face in the leaves, and shouted with might and main. His voice was so muffled that the sounds could not have been heard more than twenty feet away, so it was safe to believe that it did not reach the ears of any of the Wyandots, who, had their chief allowed it, would have been eager to tomahawk all three lads.

After this ebullition had passed the young hunters were able to talk more coolly. It is not necessary that I should record all their expressions of delight, which, while natural in those of their years, can be imagined by you without help from me.

"Now, what are we to do?" asked Will.

"We are out of danger from the Wyandots," replied his brother, "and we might as well go on our hunt."

"We have father's permission to stay away a couple of nights," added Will; "but, somehow or other, after what we have passed through, I don't feel much like it."

"I think we had better go home."

The change in the weather of which I have spoken was more marked than an hour before. The sky was so clouded that the sun was out of sight, and the air was chilly. Will looked up at the cold vapor overhead, as though he supposed that was the reason for Jack's wish to go home.

"That isn't it," he hastened to say, reading their thoughts; "but I am afraid we are not by a long way through with those Indians yet."

The boys were surprised.

"Hua-awa-oma," he explained," has come up towards the Ohio to make an attack on some of the cabins. I don't believe he will go back until he has done so."

"If that is the case, the most likely ones to suffer will be yours and ours."

Jack nodded his head.

"It is a queer kind of gratitude that Hua-awa-oma has for you if he burns down your home and kills your father and mother. I don't expect mercy for any of us, for he wouldn't have let us go except for you."

"What I mean is this," explained Jack: "I have heard Simon Kenton speak of Hua-awa-oma as one of the worst Indians in Kentucky. We know that he has twenty warriors at least with him, and, as I said, they are not likely to go home without striking a blow.

Hua-awa-oma himself will not harm any of my folk."

"But he may claim that he didn't know they were yours."

"He can't do that, for he already knows it; but he may let another party go down there while he and the rest attack your home."

The brothers could not help feeling thankful to the Wyandot leader for sparing their lives, but their respect for him was much lessened by the opinion that Jack expressed. However, the danger startled Will and George, and drove away all wish on their part to continue their hunting jaunt. There would be plenty of time in the future in which to resume their sport in the woods.

"We mustn't wait on the road," said Will, gravely; "let us hurry."

Something cold struck the hand of George. He glanced downward and saw that it was a snow-flake.

"A snow storm is coming sure," said Jack, "and if we don't hasten we shall lose our way."

Without the sun or any beaten path to help, the boys found it hard work to keep from going astray; but their former experience in the woods was of much help, and the distance from home was not great enough to place them in serious danger. The fall of snow in-

creased, and before long the flakes were so dense that they could see only a short way ahead.

Good fortune, however, attended the young hunters, and, much to their delight, they struck the trail leading to the salt lick very near the spot where they had left it. This was followed until it could serve them no longer. By this time the snow-fall ceased, and they knew they were on the right course.

So it proved, and it was early in the afternoon when they came in sight of the clearing where stood the home of the Burton brothers.

The family, as may be supposed, were alarmed by the tidings. Mr. Burton had seen nothing of the Wyandots, and if any of them had been prowling near his home, the dog for once failed to discover them. But no time was lost in preparing for a hostile visit.

Jack did not tarry, and traveled over the mile of trail leading to his own house at a faster rate than ever before.

He found his father equally ignorant of the presence of the hostiles. Hua-awa-oma and his son had not allowed themselves to be seen, though it was clear they had been close to his cabin. He, too, made every preparation for an attack from the war party. He had enough water and provisions in his house to

last the inmates a week, and his wife was able to handle a rifle with a skill little short of that of her husband.

The afternoon and night passed without anything being seen of the hostiles. On the morrow the father stealthily left his home and made a prolonged scout through the surrounding forest. He came back at nightfall, with the good news that not a sign of a Wyandot was to be found. He visited the camp where they had spent a part of the previous day, but failed to catch a glimpse of a single warrior, and the dreaded attack was never made.

Toward the close of the last century, General Anthony Wayne was sent by President George Washington into the West to subdue the combined Indian tribes, who not only committed many outrages, but had defeated all the previous expeditions despatched against them.

Among those who served under the famous "Mad Anthony" was Jack Gedney, then grown to sturdy young manhood. At the famous Treaty of Greenville the representative chiefs of the powerful Indian confederation agreed to a peace, which was hardly broken until the war of 1812, nearly twenty years later.

Our young friend Jack was present at this memorable meeting, and there met the celebrated leader, Hua-awa-oma, and his son Arowaka, the latter having grown into a fine warrior.

During a friendly talk that Jack had with these two the father explained what he meant when, after the boy had spared the life of young Arowaka, he promised that he would "no hurt people of Jack." The chief had arranged to destroy the families of both Burton and Gedney, but out of gratitude to Jack he withdrew the entire party, and went back to his tribe without firing a hostile shot. The chief and his warriors, however, fired many such afterwards, but never against a member of the two families I have named.

And thus it was that the bread which Jack Gedney cast upon the waters in his youth, when he showed Christian charity toward a helpless foe, came back to him after many days.

THE END.

THE PERRY RUBBER WORKS

ONE Christmas day, about two years ago, found me in Des Moines, Iowa, which, by the way, is a very pleasant city to spend a holiday in. The day was unusually cold and windy, and as I was hugging the hotel fires closely, contemplating a pleasant visit at John Beckwith's that evening, to attend a Christmas festival, I rejoiced to think my business was such that it would enable me to remain indoors for at least one day, and especially one like that. Presently the mail from the east arrived, and among the letters I received was one that appeared to be important, and, one that being important, demanded immediate attention.

It appeared from the numerous papers in the case that the Rubber Works located at Perry, Iowa, had for some time been receiving money from almost every State in the Union, which it had retained without forwarding anything in return to the people who had thus contributed to its funds. Inasmuch as I had made arrangements to leave Des Moines on the following day in another direction, I was compelled

to send my regrets to the Christmas tree and go to Perry that afternoon. The train was to leave at one o'clock. It was prophesied at the hotel that owing to the terrible wind-storm it would not go. But it did go, and I went with it.

About an hour later when we reached Perry the wind was blowing a hundred miles an hour, and the mercury in the thermometers had dropped completely out of sight. The train was side-tracked to make way for the storm, and the passengers were comfortably housed in the depot building.

Five minutes later I went out on the south side of the depot to take a retrospective view of the town, and to see if I could perceive the Rubber Works. The Rubber Works were not visible, and neither was there a man, dog, nor other living thing in sight. The post-office, the stores, and even the saloons, were closed, as they are on the Sabbath. It was a splendid day to remain indoors, so I returned to the waiting room to converse with the station agent.

He stirred up the fire, added four bushels of soft coal, and then conveyed the cheerful intelligence to the anxious passengers that they might as well try and be comfortable as there would probably be no more trains out or in that day. "Owing to the storm," he said, "the wires are all crossed or down, and here you all are like shipwrecked voyagers on a lonely shore, unable to journey elsewhere, or even receive information from friends."

I told him, if the wire between the depot and the Rubber Works was working, I would be obliged if he

would call up the works and ascertain if the secretary or any of the officers were in.

"The wire between the depot and what place did you say?"

"The Perry Rubber Works."

"There is no wire running to the Perry Rubber Works that I know of."

"Well, then, how will be my best way to get over to them?"

"Where did I understand you to say?

"The Perry Rubber Works."

"I have been an operator at this station since early last spring and have been on the line for two years and a half, and I'll be hanged if this isn't the first time I ever heard of the Perry Rubber Works. You have surely struck the wrong town. There are half a dozen other Perrys scattered around in other States that I know of, and probably you will find the Rubber Works in some of them. Surely they are not here."

"No, I am not making any mistake. I was directed to go to Perry, Dallas County, Iowa. This is certainly the spot for the Rubber Works, and where are they?"

"Yes, this is Perry, Dallas County, Iowa, sure enough, but—"

"Mebby he means Jim Johnson's place, where Frank Peters used to make rubber stamps last summer," chimed in an interested auditor on the back seat.

"Possibly," said the operator, "What do the people make that you want to find?"

"Judging from the appearance of the complaints should say, rubber stamps."

"Well, then, come with me," said the interested auditor, who had awoke sufficiently to think he saw a small fee, I believe it's Johnson's place you want."

I borrowed a buffalo coat of the operator, and soon the I. A. and myself had started for Johnson's place. We backed against the cutting wind around half a dozen blocks to one end of the town, and finally brought up at what would have been an entirely vacant square only for an old building that graced the center. From the appearance of the surroundings it was evident that it had once been a blacksmith shop. There was no sign of life, and to enable us to escape the fury of the blast we quickly entered through a window.

In the further end of the deserted and desolate place stood a ladder leading to a hole in the floor above. To my astonishment my companion led the way to the ladder and commenced to ascend. I attempted to follow, and, being about three sizes larger than the other gentleman, and, being burdened with the great coat, which added to my natural weight considerably, a painful realization soon stole over me that the ladder was too frail and the hole too small.

I was obliged to reduce my corporosity and avoir dupois by removing all the clothing possible, which I sent up on the end of a long bellows-handle that had evidently been blown out of place by the bursting of some of the strong wind condensers and cold air pumps that had been shaking things up around Perry for sometime. At la I ascended without accident and entered in safety, when my shivering friend ob-

served: "Here, I think, is all there is left of the Perry Rubber Works."

I frankly acknowledge that I am at a loss to find words to faithfully picture the wild chaos and confusion that greeted my eyes. The velocity of the wind, which at the station I had estimated at a hundred miles an hour, could not even be conjectured here, while it was so cold that words fairly floated away in the form of icicles. All the windows, including the frames and sash, had fallen a helpless prey to the destroying elements and long since had been ruthlessly carried away to the mysterious somewhere; and it seemed to me that each rapidly succeeding breath of the raging hurricane would be the one upon which the interested auditor, myself, and the Rubber Works would soar away to other realms, and no one would be left to tell the tale.

The floor and a few of the rafters were still there; and in one corner protruded an iron pin with a crook on the end, above which, at some remote period in the halcyon past, the words "order hook," had been written. The hook and traces of the words remained; but the orders, alas! where were they? Ask the howling tempest.

Destruction and desolation reigned supreme, and it was evident to one unused to such scenes, that the unfilled orders, the letters, the books, the paraphernalia, and possibly the proprietor, had been induced to fly with the wind, and that the blissful days of prosperity had been suddenly, though unhappily terminated. It was a sad sight, which, mingled with fear was rapidly making me sick—sea-sick

The old structure shivered and shook like a floundered ship about to sink, and it seemed as if it, too, must soon go. I glanced to see if my friend was still on board, and, as I looked, he yelled: "Jump for your life, she's going."

Like a flash we sprang to the only natural place of exit, and in an instant had dropped to the floor below and had reached the open enclosure on the leeward side, and we reached the place of safety none too soon. The remaining rafters, the upper-floor, the clapboards and the order hook were the first to go. On the next blast followed all that was left below; and in less time than I have been telling you, the last vestige of the Robber Works had been wafted away far beyond the sight of human eyes, and beyond the swelling of the tide.

We lost no time in creeping back to the station as best we could, where, skirmishing considerably, I found a five dollar gold piece carefully tucked away in the only corner where the remorseless wind had failed to leave impressions of its cruel work. This I had intended for the Christmas tree, but I handed it to my kind guide, with many thanks for a safe deliverance, and with a parting request that he would find Johnson, if he was alive, and send him around to see me any time during the night.

At about eleven o'clock there was a slight indication that the cyclone was getting weary. It was still strong enough to play with a small frame house as does the small boy with the little red balloon, yet, as I said before, there was a slight indication that it was getting tired; but it was too slight to allow the

return of confidence to any remarkable degree. By eleven-fifty there was a much more hopeful feeling prevailing in Perry, and just as the clock struck twelve Johnson blew in.

He was a night-watchman somewhere; and when he enumerated the vicissitudes he had encountered in his vain endeavors to operate the Rubber Works, fill the orders promptly, compete with older established plants, still do his regular work, and then, at last, to have everything swept away in a single hour he touched a responsive chord in my tender heart, and I regretted that I had already parted with my last dollar.

The interview was highly satisfactory, and after I had told him so, I wrote a long report in which I informed the Department that I was satisfied Johnson did not start the business intending to defraud; that his faith had unquestionably been good, but that his business qualifications and endurance, had been overestimated by himself, and, not being a prophet, nor the son of one, he could not have foreseen the dire calamity that had just befallen his manufactory, in which everything had been swallowed up and carried away.

I closed by saying I felt sorry, of course, for those who had paid for stamps and not received them, but I felt confident from Johnson's appearance, that if anyone would kindly produce the original orders they would be filled. As it was, there was nothing to show who had stamps due them; nothing to show who had paid, and absolutely nothing left of the business.

At seven the next morning a train started back to Des Moines, and, after stopping occasionally to replace

some of the track that was found in the neighboring fields, we arrived without serious accident at noon. I never returned to Perry afterward, nor have I looked during the last six months to see whether it is still on the map; I may add, however, that up to this writing no tidings have reached me concerning the mysterious whereabouts of the Rubber Works.

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