

A SON *of the*  
CINCINNATI

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MONTAGUE BRISARD



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THE CINCINNATI



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BY  
MONTAGUE BRISARD



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A SON OF  
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# A SON OF THE CINCINNATI

## CHAPTER I

*Where is the trail that did not begin  
With the laughter of youth and a heartsick sin?*

STAGGERING with the quantity of liquor that was in him, David Muir made his way across the reading room of the coffee house. The grizzled negro, crouching by the embers of the fire, glanced up; despair was etched in his black features.

“Y’ain’t los’ all dat money, Marse Dave?”

“No talk,” growled Muir, holding to the edge of a table for support. “Where’s the rest of it?”

“Y’ain’t got no more, Marse. Yo’ done used it, suh.” The voice of the negro was agonized. “Oh, don’t go back! Come along wid me, Marse Dave ——”

“Damn your impudence!” shot out Muir drunkenly, his clear voice thickened until it was almost unrecognizable. “Run up to Mr. Clay’s house and tell him that I need the loan of a thousand dollars. Off with you — run!”

With a gesture of hopeless despair, the old negro rose to his feet, showing himself to be gigantic in stature, and disappeared in the night.

Muir turned back to the inner door, reeled through a narrow passage, and then paused in the glare of lights to settle his disordered brain. Ahead of him was the garden, and he did not intend to go staggering across the open space until the dancers were once more whirling about to cloak his uncertain passage.

In this year, which most men reckoned as the thirty-fifth of the independence of the United States of America, no gayer place could be found anywhere west of the Alleghenies than Mr. Terasse's coffee house and garden of Vauxhall, in Lexington. No more famous place, either, or more deserving of its reputation as a meeting-ground for Bacchus, Terpsichore and Minerva.

Terasse had come to Kentucky from the island of St. Bartholomew, and had brought to the western settlements a fund of Creole gaiety and French elegance. His reading room was a marvel, with its forty-two files of newspapers; while there were entire rooms devoted to chess and billiards and card games. Behind the coffee house was Vauxhall Garden, open to the public each Wednesday evening. Here, besides the dancing floor, there

were vine arbors and summer houses; and here, on this evening of late spring, fiddles and fifes were all askirl, with a gay assemblage present. Mr. John James Audubon, over from Louisville on business, was showing the company new dancing steps; and it was hoped that Mr. Henry Clay, home from Washington on a brief visit, would drop in before the evening was over.

Of all these things David Muir recked little as he carefully worked his way among the dancers to the other side of the garden. At length he gained one of the farther summer houses, which boasted an open log fire in its tiny fireplace. In this house he had spent the past twenty hours and more. He staggered in and closed the door behind him.

The three men who greeted him were of diverse types. One was a wealthy trader from the French grant on the Ohio, in whose blood gambling ran like wine. The second was a fur merchant from New York, touring the Far West, with no lack of money to spend. The third, opposite whom Muir dropped into his vacant chair, was Captain Philip Hogan.

“Hogan, I’ll sell you ten slaves at half their market value,” said Muir thickly. He reached for a jug of raw whiskey on the floor beside him. In the act, he noted a scrap of white lace beside

the jug, stared at it stupidly, then picked it up and thrust it into his waistcoat pocket. "My man is out of funds. I had some tobacco for shipment; but damme, gentlemen, I've forgotten how much of it there was!"

He laughed, as did the others. They were all mellow with liquor, and were well-known men. But these two, Muir and Captain Hogan, were rather remarkable — each in his own way.

Hogan's name was famed all along the border. He was a hard-eyed, handsome man of thirty, with a reputation as an Indian fighter, and notorious as a man whose wealth grew by leaps and bounds. His backwoods garb held many touches of the exquisite; fine beads to the moccasins, a handsome gold clasp to the fur cap, brightly dyed quills to the squaw-tanned buckskin. He commanded a company in a regiment of Kentucky scouts now with General Harrison at Vincennes, and was held to be lucky at cards.

David Muir, on the other hand, owned little, and now seemed very likely to lose that little. He was ten years younger than Hogan. Despite its bloated liquor-flush, his features were strong, fine, virile, and his body was great-thewed and good to look upon. Yet men said that he was on the short road to ruin, and in this men said truth.

When David was ten years old, his father had been slain in some border brawl. Since that time, old Uncle Tom had managed the plantation, aided by the advice of Mr. Henry Clay. David had eventually studied law at Transylvania University, under the guidance and wardship of Clay, who was then professor of law. But Clay had gone to Congress, and with his departure David Muir had fallen upon evil days.

Corn whiskey and chance company, as the saying goes, are untidy folk. Expelled from the university, half his broad plantation gambled away, branded openly in Lexington as a brawler and a godless ruffian, young Muir found the houses of the gentry closed to him and spent much time afield in the forest. From time to time, coming to Vauxhall, he fell among thieves.

“Curse the cards!” cried out the fur dealer, with the heady impatience of a man in liquor. “Boy, fetch us some dice!”

“I have dice here,” said Hogan. He flung the cards into a corner, where squatted the slave who was in attendance on them. From his hand, a set of dice rattled across the table, and the Frenchman gathered them up with a laugh and a snatch of drunken song.

“‘*Legèrement, ma bergère*’—varee good! Ze

dice, he is more quick, eh? Mains, my friends, mains for ze ten dollair ze fling, yes?"

"Wait a minute!" cried Muir. He flung back his black hair, broken from its queue knot, and his gray eyes blazed at Hogan with almost a light of challenge. "Do you buy my slaves, Mr. Hogan? Take the whole damned plantation if you like!"

"What price?" queried Hogan, his eyes narrowing.

"Damme if I know its value — say, five thousand!"

A flash of incredulity flickered in the dark eyes of the winning gamester, to pass instantly. Hogan appeared to consider, then slowly nodded his head.

"For everything?"

"Everything on the place." Young Muir laughed recklessly and swung the jug deftly on his elbow, mouth to lips. He lowered it again. "Everything but my hogsheads of tobacco and my personal slave, Uncle Tom. Agreed?"

"Agreed." Hogan nodded and turned his head. "Boy! Send Mr. Terasse here with a bill of sale. Fling the dice, monsieur, and devil take the hindmost!"

The dark, agile and rather saturnine Terasse appeared just as David Muir was gathering in a heap of paper money and coins, for in this game



only currency passed muster. Muir glanced up and smiled, and the other three stared at him, astonished.

Terasse was the one man in Lexington who dared defy the public dictum by an open friendship with David Muir. He had ever liked the lad, and Muir liked him. This was why, as Muir smiled, the other three gazed at him in blank surprise. In all their hours spent here together, they had not seen such a look on Muir's face — this warm, heart-free, boyish smile that welcomed a friend, wiping away the brand of liquor for an instant's kindness. The wastrel's smiles had been thin-lipped and unmirthful of late.

“Mr. Terasse, a bill of sale, if you please,” said Muir.

“I have brought it, sir, all prepared.”

Terasse held out a paper, with quill and ink-horn. Muir beckoned Captain Hogan to his side. While they made out and signed the paper, the fur dealer and the Frenchman drank an uproarious toast, ignoring what was going on. Terasse watched with narrowed eyes, then, having witnessed the paper, shrugged lightly and withdrew.

Hogan dipped gold and silver notes from his voluminous greatcoat pockets, for his coat was flung over the back of his chair to serve as a bank.

Muir heaped the piles in front of him, not deigning to count the money, but accepting Hogan's dictum unquestioned.

"Mains!" he cried out. "Mains, for a hundred!"

"Double you!" returned Hogan quietly.

"Double you again, you damned rogue!" said Muir, and laughed.

There was no insult in the words; as men will, these players had indulged in much rough freedom of talk among themselves. Yet Hogan's massive, powerful jaw seemed to clench in anger, and into his direct, close-set eyes leaped a lurid flicker. He shoved out his stakes and seized the dice.

Presently the fur dealer from New York, who had absorbed over much Kentucky liquor, began to nod somnolently where he sat. The Frenchman found the stakes too high for his purse, and sipped at his wine, occasionally breaking into fantastic toasts and snatches of song. The other two men played on while from the garden outside there came the scrape of dancing feet and the monotonous twang of the music, mingled with laughter and gay talk.

An hour later, in the deserted and poorly lighted reading room, the grizzled Uncle Tom squatted by the fireplace, staring with a mournful and deso-

late aspect into the dull embers. Slightly to one side, shadowed by the settle, stood Mr. Terasse; he was speaking to a cloaked figure, speaking passionately and furiously.

“*Mon Dieu*, sir, I could do nothing — nothing! You know that man Hogan; and he was cheating. It was no place to interfere, of course; yet he has stripped the lad of everything. Think of that plantation, that glorious mansion, those slaves, going for a beggarly five thousand! Yet, had I interfered, there would have been trouble. The game is breaking up now, I believe. If you say the word, sir, I will gladly go into court and swear that Hogan cheated. I am not afraid of that misbegotten firebrand ——”

“Let be, good sir, let be,” returned the cloaked figure. The vibrant, crisp voice seemed tinged with a weary sadness. “The lad is a wastrel — God knows I have tried to save him from himself! Yet there is manly stuff in him, could I only find the right key with which to open that locked door, with which to reach him! Well, I shall deal with him, Mr. Terasse, and I thank you for your kindly summons. Sir, your servant.”

Terasse turned about and departed to the garden. From the fireplace there came a low sound like a choked sob; the head of the old negro had

fallen into his hands. The cloaked figure was still shadowed.

Five minutes afterward, the figure of David Muir came stumbling into the ill-lighted room; seeming somewhat sobered, the wastrel paused and stared at the crouching figure of the giant negro. Then, drawing himself up, Muir advanced toward the fireplace, steadily enough, and laid his hand upon the shoulder of the grizzled black.

“Uncle Tom.”

“Oh, Marse Dave!” The negro rose, his gigantic stature towering above his master. “Yo’ ain’t los’ no more? Don’ say yo’ done los’ no more ——”

“It’s all gone, old friend.” Muir’s voice was bitter, and was still thick with the whiskey-fumes. “It’s all gone, except you and the tobacco we put up. Come along, and ——”

He turned, then came to an abrupt halt. The cloaked figure had stepped forth from the shadows, and was now disclosed as a man clad all in black, with a very incisive and sharply cut face, whose eyes flamed out at the astounded Muir like steel.

“*You!*”

The single word escaping his lips, the wastrel drew himself up.

“Yes, Dave, it’s I,” came the answer, sadly

enough. "Dave, your father died in my arms, murdered. Do you know who killed him?"

"No." Muir looked steadily at the older man, but he trembled a little.

"Since his death, Dave, that old slave has maintained your plantation. Tonight you have flung away the work of all his life, the hope of all his love and care, the ambition that he has fostered — on your behalf, not on his own. You have flung this away in a drunken gambling game. I believe, sir, I speak the truth?"

"You do."

The wastrel seemed of a sudden stricken cold sober.

"Your father, Dave, was an officer under General Washington. He belonged to the knighthood of the Cincinnati, of which Washington was president. You, as his son, have rightly worn that order's emblem and badge. Do you wear it now?"

A steely tension, a stern accusation, had leaped into the voice of Clay. But Muir did not flinch. His hand went to his waistcoat, where hung by its ribbon an enameled eagle of gold. He laughed bitterly.

"Thank heaven, I did not gamble *this* away!"

"Let me have that emblem, Mr. Muir."

At this form of address, the wastrel shivered.

Without words, he placed the ribbon and pendant eagle in the hand of the older man.

“Now, sir,” went on the latter, in that same cold, terrible voice, “you have this night and for many past nights disgraced yourself shamelessly. You have disgraced me. You have disgraced this old negro, for whom my heart is sore. You have disgraced your father’s memory. You are not worthy to wear this emblem, and wear it you shall not ——”

“What!” Muir was stabbed into life by those words. “Not that, sir — not that! You have no right to do such a thing — Henry, I have been a fool, perhaps, but ——”

“To you, sir, I am no longer Henry. My name is Mr. Clay,” cut in the inexorable voice. “You, sir, are a worthless runabout, a drunken wastrel, and you shall not disgrace the memory of your father, who was my friend, any further. To call yourself a son of the Cincinnati — bah!”

The biting contempt of Clay’s voice sank into Muir’s heart like a whip of steel, and in that dim light his features became ghastly pale.

“But you have not the right!” he cried again, in frantic protest. “You cannot take such liberties ——”

“I take the right — so!” On the word, Clay

slipped the emblem into his pocket. "Sir, the Cincinnati is composed of those men who fought with Washington to win freedom, and of their eldest sons. It is a society of patriots, but you seem to regard it as one of tapsters and whiskey guzzlers! It is a brotherhood of stout-hearted gentlemen who sacrificed their all to liberty and with the utmost devotion of heart gave themselves to their country. You, sir, have sacrificed your all to dice and to low companions. Sir, I say that you are a disgrace to that noble company. Deny it if you can."

Muir stood silent, motionless. Clay continued his excoriation.

"Mr. Muir, I would advise you to go into the wilderness of Indiana or to the Ohio settlements — and stay there. I have watched over you for many years. I have seen you as a boy of great promise, a man of tremendous potentialities, a student who bade fair to become one of the finest legal scholars of our land.

"But, sir," and now the vibrant voice drooped into tones of liquid sadness, "I return to Lexington and I find you none of these things. I find you a drunken gambler who has ruined himself openly. I find you sodden with whiskey, ambition closed to you. I find you expelled from that university where I had hoped to see you some day occupy the

chair which I myself had held with honor. In short, sir, I find you worthless.”

Clay paused, and then his voice drooped lower still.

“David Muir, you have come near to breaking my heart. Now go — depart into the wilderness where men know you not. Sink into the depths, if you will; or, if you will, lift yourself once more to the level of a gentleman, as I think you can do. Damme, sir, get down on your knees and pray your God to make a man of you! If He does it, then come back to me and I will restore you this emblem which your father once wore, and I will take you to my heart again. Mr. Muir, your servant.”

Clay turned. Behind him, David Muir swayed for a moment — then suddenly darted forward, and his hand clutched at the older man’s arm.

“Henry — Mr. Clay!” he cried out hoarsely. “One thing — tell me! You have always promised me that some day you would tell me who it was so basely murdered my father ——”

Clay swung upon him, with harsh and bitter features.

“Yes, David Muir, I promised you. I had no legal evidence against the man, and my hands have been tied; yet I had thought and hoped that some day you might take vengeance, as was your right.



I believe that you have been gambling with one Mr. Hogan?"

"Yes. Captain Philip Hogan, of the Indiana Territory."

"He is your father's murderer."

One hoarse gasp broke from Muir. His face contracted horribly, and he staggered as though an actual physical blow had been dealt him; then he straightened, and his hand slowly went to the knife hanging at his belt. With a sudden movement he whirled, and headed for the narrow way leading to the garden, but he found Clay blocking his passage.

"Let me by!" demanded Muir in a strangled voice. "Damme, I say let me by ——"

"You fool! Would you be hanged for a murderer? You are not fitted to avenge your father; you, a drunken sot, to think yourself worthy such work!" Clay's voice fairly crackled with scorn and contempt. "First prove yourself the man your father was, or else go down among the swine and rot!"

Muir stared at the man, then took a backward step. A groan broke from his lips.

"You are right," he said, breathing hard. "You are right. Yes."

"I understand that you have saved some tobacco

from the wreck," said Clay coldly. "Take it to my friend Berthoud, at Louisville. I will write him by next post, saying nothing of your character. Perchance Mr. Berthoud will give you a fresh start on one of his river boats. Mr. Muir, your servant."

Clay swung on his heel and passed on into the garden where the fiddles still shrieked and the laughing voices rose.

The tall figure of Muir stood for a little while quite immobile; then, abruptly, the wastrel fell against the wall and leaned there, his head on his arms. A slight choking sound issued from his lips, but he uttered no word.

Presently a huge hand touched his shoulder and the fingers encircled his upper arm. Muir stirred and came erect, and swung about to find the grizzled negro standing over him, dim against the obscurity.

"Marse Dave, does yo' want dem hosses saddled?"

"Yes, Tom — no, wait! Never mind the horses. Get Mr. Terasse, and I'll make out your freedom papers. I've treated you like a dog this night, Tom, and I'm sorry. God bless you, old friend ——"

"Marse Dave, yo' ain't gwine do no sech thing!"

"Eh?" Muir stared at him, then made a hope-

less gesture. "Come, Tom, it's no use. I'm down, and the only decent thing I can do for you is to set you free. Get Mr. Terasse."

"No, suh! Who's gwine take care of yo' when yo' gits to Louisville? Who's gwine press yo' clo'es, who's gwine tote yo' shaving water — oh, Marse Dave!" The big negro's voice quavered and broke abruptly. "Don' yo' go to carryin' on like dis! Yo' ain't gwine kick ol' Tom out, is yo'?"

There was a brief silence. Muir pressed his cheek down against the huge black hand that still gripped his arm, and his cheek was wet.

"Go and saddle up, Tom," he said simply.

## CHAPTER II

*If they that ride may see,  
Roads bring good company.*

“ I WONDER where I got this!”

David Muir stared down at a scrap of lace in his hand, frowning at it in puzzled bewilderment.

This was a very different David Muir from the young man who had left Vauxhall Garden, in Lexington, a fortnight previously. Instead of broadcloth, he was now clothed in stained, water-stiff buckskin. No overt trace of liquor now remained in his features, though a cunning eye might have detected the truth, and he sat his horse like a cavalier. They were good features beneath his fur cap, and even handsome after the manner of men. The black hair and brows threw into startling contrast the steady, vivid gray eyes; the wide strength of jaw, the thin nostrils, the broad brow—all bespoke a man of power and action. Yet the whole face was terribly haggard, and the hands resting on the saddle-pommel were shaking as if from ague.

Behind, three wagons were slowly proceeding, and in the rear of them rode the gigantic negro,

Tom. Like his master, Tom bore a long Kentucky rifle over his shoulder and pistols at his saddle. In the wagons was tobacco — all that remained to Muir of his patrimony; and this, as it were, but a sorry interest on the whole. Muir had taken Clay's counsel and was heading for Louisville.

The wastrel stared down at the scrap of lace in his hand, vainly trying to recall how he had come by it. The thing was but a fragment, perhaps torn from some kerchief, and was broidered with the letters "A. du C."

"Where the devil did I get it?" he mused. "It was in my waistcoat pocket — I must have brought it from Lexington. Therein, it appears, lies a riddle! It's from the kerchief of a lady, yet no lady has had favors for David Muir in many a long month; yet, drunk or sober, I never mixed with the town women, damme if I did!"

This was true enough. He had been a drunken brawler and worse, but no light woman could boast his acquaintance, for David Muir had ever kept himself a span's breadth out of hell.

"Well, no matter!" he thought in dismissal, and stowed away the scrap of lace. "Lexington lies behind me, and the wilderness ahead — and where rides Philip Hogan, I wonder?"

He dropped his chin on his breast, in abject bit-

terness of thought. It was not the down-thrust after long weeks of drinking which had left him thus haggard and worn; it was realization. The one man whom he revered above all others, Henry Clay, had cast him forth; and no word of all that Clay had uttered on that eventful night but was branded deep in Muir's brain.

Yet, though he had come close to madness, he had refused to cheer his soul with liquor since that night. It was an awful thing that Clay had torn from him his dearest treasure, the memento of his father which he had cherished with highest pride, the emblem of the Cincinnati; but more awful still was what had followed. The man with whom he had drunk and gambled, the man whom he had disliked yet had admired as a border notable, was the same who had shot his father in the back ten years previously. And Clay had turned him from vengeance, had sped him into the night as a drunken fool ——

“I can't stand it!” Muir writhed in the saddle, lifting a tormented face to the sunset sky. “What have I done, after all? Other men drink more than I, brawl more than I, yet people think well of them! Or is it because I bade them all go to the devil, and flung the circuit rider into the river when he lectured me?”

Well enough he knew that it was no one concrete thing, but all things combined. He knew that he was stronger than most men, and drink had led him into fighting; that the senseless arrogance with which he had flung money away roused the disgust and anger of his friends. And to remonstrance he had responded with curses and drunken blows and laughter.

It is hard for a man to realize that he has been a fool, that he has made grave errors by wholesale; but it is much harder for a man to realize every step of his mad folly in proper sequence — and confess it to himself. In the past fortnight David Muir had thought over each act of his little tragedy, and his reflections had not been good for his peace of mind.

True, a man of twenty-three has no business with such unhappy reflections; but David Muir was not the average frontier law student of his day. He had spent half his time roaming the forests with Uncle Tom, who was an exceptional negro in that he was a most expert woodsman. Once left at Transylvania with the shepherding eye of Henry Clay removed, Muir had violently rebelled against the strict rules. His revolt had ended in disgraceful expulsion; and after that — chaos.

“ Oh, Tom!”

Muir turned in the saddle, shouting. At the call, Uncle Tom trotted around the slowly moving wagons, took off his coonskin cap, and wiped his black brow as he drew rein at Muir's stirrup.

"Yes, suh?"

"I haven't said very much about this unhappy affair to you, have I?"

"No, suh, I don' guess yo' have."

Muir eyed the black man, and then his haggard features relaxed into the kindly, warm-hearted smile which so won men's souls to him.

"Uncle Tom, I've been in a right smart lot of scrapes?"

"Well, Marse Dave, I reckon yo' done cut up some."

"Yes; but, Tom, they've been boy scrapes — all of them. They've not been things of large importance. They've not been rogueries that enter into a man's life and swing it after them. But this time it's different. Now I've been a cursed fool, and I'm in a man's trouble."

"Yes, suh, I 'lows yo' is," was the uncomplaining response. The big negro did not look at his master, but his eyes roved over the rolling country ahead, where the Louisville trace vanished in the forest. There were few settlers hereabouts.

"Well," continued Muir calmly, yet with a calm



that was born of desperation, "I'm going to leave the issue in your hands, Tom. I'm a big man, a good fighter, and you're better than I am. We can strike the Ohio River, go to flatboating, and get to the top with a rough hand, a rough crew, and a roll of white liquor. You know how that goes, and there's money in it. Or else — I'll make a gentleman's fight, in which case I'll probably make no money and lose in the end. Now, which shall it be?"

Tom did not reply immediately. His gaze was still scanning the sunset-crimsoned trees ahead, and the bloodshot gray eyes of Muir evoked no swift response. Finally the big negro hitched around his long rifle and directed a sober glance at his master.

"I reckon, suh, we-uns had better trus' to luck and shove for dem trees. Ain't no Injuns in dishyer country, I reckon, and I sees a smoke ahead. If yo' is willing, suh, we kin make camp wid dem white folks, and mebbe de good Lawd is gwine send a sign our way."

At this roundabout response to his question, Muir frowned with irritation — then he shrugged his shoulders.

"All right. I'll ride on, while you bring up the wagons."

He struck his spurs, and sent his horse leaping forward. Looking down from the rolling crest on which they stood, he too could descry the smoke of which Tom had spoken; yet, had they both not been skilled woodsmen, it would have been invisible. Muir abruptly drew rein, without regard for his horse.

As he eyed that faint smoke, his face seemed to tighten into something of its natural lines. He made out what had so puzzled Tom — there was something peculiar about that gray twist of smoke. It was too slight to come from any settler's cabin. Yet it was no fire such as any white hunter would build, and it wound up too steadily and darkly for an Indian camp smoke. To Muir's notion it held an indefinable air of carelessness which argued that it came from the fire of some such reckless wanderer as himself, and at the same time the wood had been carefully selected, perhaps mechanically or from force of habit, to give off as little smoke as possible.

Thus reading with his woodsman's eye, Muir headed his horse down the trace into the trees. The smoke had appeared to be a short mile distant. Interest in this small incident somewhat relieved his mental confusion, and Muir trotted on for half a mile, then dismounted. He carefully primed his

rifle, inserted a fresh flint, and, bridle over arm, led his horse forward along the ruts of the trace. Here on the lower ground, evening dusk was already closing beneath the purpled trees. Ahead, Muir could make out no flicker of firelight, and he advanced cautiously. Marauding Indians still came across the Ohio, and even now the woods were not safe for careless men.

Then, coming to a thick clump of brush that edged the road, Muir suddenly halted. From the trees ahead there lifted a quavering, eerie voice which struck on his tensed nerves like a knife. The voice was harmless, however, and followed a monotonous tune as it sang:

“The trail is long, and we have trod  
The forest ways apart from God;  
Lord, grant that we may better know  
Thy minstrelsy where four winds blow!  
Lord, let us learn that birds rejoice  
And red men turn at Black Sand’s voice——”

More than this, Muir did not hear. Without a sound, an arm had shot forth from the bushes at his very side; iron fingers clamped down on his trigger hand, holding his rifle motionless; into his ear breathed a rich, vibrant voice:

“Does my brother come in peace?”

Startled as he was, David Muir recognized an

Indian voice, and knew that here was neither enemy nor peril. No drunken redskin spoke such English as this person used.

“In peace, brother,” he answered quietly. “My servant and wagons follow.”

The fingers fell from his hand. “Come!”

A figure, fully as tall as was he himself, rose at his side and stepped into the road; it was leather clad, like his own, but he could see no details because of the gathering darkness. As the Indian strode on, Muir followed, leading his horse.

Five minutes afterward, David Muir came upon a curious scene, all ignorant that he had that afternoon been approaching it along the highroad of destiny.

Standing on the other side of the small fire, and gazing expectantly toward the two men, was the strangest being Muir had ever seen. At first he thought the man a natural, but soon realized his error. Black Sand was, at this period, between sixty and seventy years of age. Silver hair fell loosely over his neck and shoulders; he was attired in the simple buckskin of the woods, but carried neither tomahawk nor rifle. A knife was slung across his breast. His visage was weather-worn and hollow, marred by a pendulous lower lip; his eyes were deeply sunken, and his nose was awry.

His head, too, was ill set on his shoulders, for it continually drooped to the right side in a listening attitude, yet this was no deformity, but rather habit. His stature was a trifle over five feet.

Here, as Muir realized, was the singer he had heard. The tall Indian, whose buckskin was completely dyed with bloodroot and thickly beaded, advanced to the fire and sat down. Muir followed, and extended a hand to the strange creature who awaited him. The latter greeted him in a querulous tone.

“I bid you a good even, sir. May God prosper your errand, for your face is good!”

“Thank you,” rejoined Muir, in some astonishment. “I am David Muir, late of Lexington. May I share your camp? My wagons and servant are following.”

“Aye, we heard the creak of three wagons,” said the other. “I am Black Sand, a humble servant of the Lord, a voice that crieth in the wilderness. This gentleman,” and he motioned to the Indian, “is my friend. Verily, I think that Providence hath sent you to us, sir.”

Black Sand, as a name, was well known to Muir and to every other dweller along the Kentucky border; but few men had ever seen Black Sand in the flesh. He was said to be a crazed Moravian

missionary who went about preaching to the Indians. Around his name had clustered a thousand wild legends, most of which endowed him with supernatural powers. Muir eyed the man without response, being in two minds what to do. Encampment with an Indian and a madman did not appeal to him, yet in the very aspect of Black Sand he found little insanity and much shrewd sense.

“Aye, sir, you were sent to us,” went on the strange creature. As he spoke, Black Sand put up a hand and began to pull at his lower lip, stretching it marvelously far. “My friend, here, is in sore need of rifle and horn. I pray you, Mr. Muir, lend him yours for the space of a few weeks. I assure you that the debt will be repaid.”

The cool absurdity of this request left Muir thunderstruck. Even though Muir shared none of the average Kentuckian's savage contempt for the red men, Black Sand could not know the fact. Muir laughed shortly, staring at the speaker, wondering anew whether or not the man could be sane. Yet the eyes were quite calm and cool that regarded him.

Here he was calmly requested to turn over his weapons to a potential enemy, to leave himself defenseless, to place his goods at the mercy of an Indian who presumably would have no compunc-

tion about shooting him in the back and robbing him! None the less, being quite careless as to his own fate, the thing fitted in excellently with Muir's mood. He laughed again, and then unslung his powder horn.

“Damme, Mr. Black Sand, you may have heard of me as a fool; but if not, your request has a devilish aptness! Aye, it is granted. I am a fool, a man cast out and scorned and utterly worthless. Redskin, take the rifle. If it please you to shoot me, you'll rid the world of an incubus.”

With this bitter speech, he dropped rifle and horn, and then turned to help Tom, who was arriving on the scene with the wagons.

“It's all right, Tom — friends! Unhitch and camp over here.”

Together they got the horses unhitched and hobbled, a hundred feet from the fire. As they worked, Muir saw that the Indian still sat there motionless; Black Sand was bending over some strips of venison, which were smoking beside the fire. His odd figure showed grotesque and monstrous in the flickering light. The negro turned a half fearful face to Muir.

“Marse Dave, who *is* dem folks?”

“One is Black Sand,” said Muir. “And I shouldn't wonder if that sign you spoke of ——”

“Black Sand!” broke in Tom. “Fo’ de Lawd! I gits in dishyer wagon, Marse Dave; no, suh, I don’ wan’ no supper, more’n dis cold co’n pone!” With this, the negro hastily scrambled into the wagon, atop of the hogsheads.

“Devil take you, get out of here!” Muir ordered, and laughed. “He won’t hurt you.”

“He ain’t gwine git de chance,” came the muffled response. “Dem hobblegobs and witches can’t hurt white folks, suh, but dey sho’ is pow’ful mean to niggers. Yes, suh! If dat Black Sand comes anigh me, I’s gwine to run. I sho’ is! I’s got rabbit blood in me!”

Chuckling to himself, Muir turned away, for he knew that superstition was the one thing which could completely quell the big negro. He returned to the fire, where Black Sand was now sitting with the powder horn in his hand. The Indian had begun to eat. Joining them, Muir produced some cold corn pone from his pouch, and fell to work also at the venison. Black Sand continued to fondle the powder horn, emptying a few grains of the powder into his palm, and from time to time shooting a glance at Muir. At last he broke the silence, his querulous voice sounding like that of a child.

“Mr. Muir, I like you strangely. Look, will



you, at this powder — black sand it is, the black sand of death and destruction. See, I throw a pinch on the fire —” and he suited action to words — “and it puffs up into smoke and flies away. Such is life, sir, such is life! Man’s life is taken from him and leaves the body, but it is not destroyed any more than is this black sand, which is transmuted into a puff of smoke ——”

He broke off, staring down at the black grains in his hand. The man spoke excellent English, and there seemed to be a sound philosophy in his talk.

“Mr. Muir, I am sorry to give you the lie.”

Black Sand had suddenly raised his head and uttered the words rapidly. The Kentuckian, looking into the deep, fathomless blue eyes of the man, felt a chill steal up his spine.

“Eh?” he exclaimed, startled. “You give me the lie — why, what mean you?”

Still the other gazed at him searchingly. The Indian, meantime, was continuing his meal and seemed to pay them no attention at all.

“You named yourself a fool, a rogue and a fool. Mr. Muir, I see in your features the tokens of Satan — signs of strong drink and evil temper; but more than these, there is writ upon your countenance the symbol of manhood and of destiny. Aye, sir, I who am called Black Sand can read in your

face that we shall travel strange trails together — that we shall witness the black sand of destruction spread wide through the forest, that we shall see men die, that we shall see good grow out of evil, that we shall feel the hand of God outstretched over the wilderness!”

Muir was held speechless by those deep blue eyes. There was in this man a singular power, a remarkable confidence and assurance, which was very far from madness. Muir could plainly see why Black Sand was accounted crazed, but he could also perceive that the man was very sane.

“How —” he wet his lips — “how mean you?”

Black Sand began to pull at his pendulous lower lip, and laid aside the powder horn.

“My mission is to spread peace. Shall I tell you of myself? Long years ago I saw — I saw — nay, I forget! It was blood and the black sand of death ——”

The querulous voice died away. The blue eyes closed. Black Sand’s head sank down upon his right shoulder, not in sleep, but in a mental confusion and bewilderment that was not normal.

In later days, Muir learned that of which the man spoke, and which now so strangely affected his brain. A Moravian missionary, Black Sand had labored among the red men. Some forty years

previously, drunken white men had massacred a tribe of friendly Indians on the Bloody River, in Pennsylvania, and with the Indians the Moravians who labored among them. There, among his neophytes, Black Sand had seen his own wife and babes slain by drunken frontiersmen and had himself been left for dead. Since then Black Sand, in border belief, had been touched of the Great Spirit.

Suddenly the motionless Indian stirred. He produced a short pipe of red stone and filled it with tobacco. He moved forward from the shadows, plucked a brand from the fire, and held it to the pipe. And once more David Muir was startled; more, he was awed by what he saw.

This Indian's face, lighted by the brand, was the handsomest that ever Muir had seen on red shoulders. The features were a perfect oval, with high, commanding nose, a wide brow, a mouth and chin of chiseled strength; and through all these shone the fires of character, of personality. For an instant the stern black eyes flitted about like those of a bird, then, lifting the pipe, the Indian slowly expelled a puff of smoke to each quarter of the heavens, and passed the stone to Muir.

Astonished though he was, Muir repeated the action and handed on the red calumet to Black Sand. When the latter had also puffed, the Indian

looked full at Muir and spoke in fluent and correct English.

“My brother, you have heard the words of Black Sand, who speaks with the tongue of the Great Spirit. You have given me a rifle and powder. My brother, you have done well.”

The Indian paused. His voice held Muir petrified, for not only was it resonant and musical, but it held a peculiar vibration which seemed to resound back again from the circling wall of trees. It was a most astounding voice.

“My brother, I have listened to the words of my father Black Sand. His voice is as the voice of the Great Spirit in my ears. My brother, if there were more white men like you, then there would be no more powder burned along the border. I have said.”

Muir understood that he was expected to say something, but words did not come easily to him at this moment. He looked at the Indian's moccasins and recognized them for Shawano make. This meant nothing; he himself was wearing Shawano moccasins, for that tribe was the closest to the settlements and their products were most readily obtained.

“I don't know who you are,” he returned slowly, “and yet I think that if there were more red men

like you, there might be more white men who feel as I do toward your race.”

A flicker of pleased gratification passed over the swarthy face. Then Black Sand lifted his head and spoke.

“Mr. Muir, am I right in thinking that you are seeking your fortune?”

Compelled by those weird blue eyes, Muir answered bitterly enough.

“No, Mr. Black Sand, I am seeking my manhood. I have thrown away my fortune. I have drunk and gambled away my heritage, and I am now about to choose between giving my life to whiskey and roistering, or once more gaining all that I have flung away.”

For a space there was silence. Muir met the steady regard of those blue eyes, and his own level gaze did not flinch. The Indian stared gravely into the fire, fingering a knife which was, like that of Black Sand, slung across his breast by a thong.

“Ten years ago,” said Black Sand slowly, “I met a drunken Indian in the forest. I talked to him; we became friends. I prevailed upon him to put away the liquor of Satan, and prayed to God that this Indian might believe the holy message. My prayers were answered, as they always are. Although he is not a Christian, that Indian prays

today at my side, addressing the Great Spirit, the architect of the universe, who dwells in a house not made with hands.

“What is more, sir, that Indian has founded a settlement on the Wabash. In this settlement is allowed no liquor. The men till the ground and use the black sand of destruction for hunting alone, and for naught else. The ablest men of the Miami, Shawano, Sac, Ottawa, Pottawatomie and other nations are gathered there about one council fire. No violence is done. The hatchet is buried. The scalping knife is beaten into a hoe.”

Muir nodded. “I have heard of such a town, but I did not believe the story. The Indian, I understand, is Tecumsey the Shawano.”

“His real name is Tecumthe, and the story is true.” With startling abruptness, Black Sand rose. “Kneel down, David Muir! Kneel down, while I pray that the Great Spirit will send you grace and healing!”

For a moment Muir resisted the command. He looked at the Indian, wondering if by any chance this could be the famous chief Tecumthe; then he perceived that the red man had bowed his head. Shamed by that fact more than he cared to admit, David Muir rather awkwardly came to his knees. He recalled now how Henry Clay had so scathingly

bade him do this very thing — and it brought reality into his gesture.

What words Black Sand uttered, Muir never knew. Part of the prayer was in English, part in Shawano, and part in some other tongue that Muir took for German. He paid little heed, for an extraordinary feeling had gripped him. There seemed to be a force bending him to its will — some tremendous force that drove fear and shame and contrition into his soul, yet spurred him to a groping desire after higher things. He had never heard of hypnotic suggestion, but he vaguely sensed that this force came from the dominating personality of Black Sand, and before it he was helpless.

Then he heard the man praying in some sort of doggerel verse, such verse as he had first heard Black Sand singing in the trees. No words fastened themselves on Muir's brain, however; only the spirit of the whole scene gripped him, lifted him out of himself. That querulous voice, so filled with earnest power, was like a pæan of the soul.

Then it was over, suddenly. Muir looked up to see the short, squat figure of Black Sand go gliding off among the trees until it vanished. The stalwart Indian wrapped a blanket about his shoulders and lay down, feet to the fire. Once more feeling the

unreality of the whole experience, Muir stirred to his feet, sought his wagon, and rolled up for the night.

When he wakened to the dawn, he found a plain buckskin thong about his right wrist, and fastened to the thong was a round tag of leather. What it signified, he could not tell. Black Sand and the Indian had disappeared completely.



### CHAPTER III

*A friend to trust in the devil's despite —  
Who grips faith's hand in the white sunlight?*

“THIRTY thousand-pound hogsheads, sir, and three wagons with horses. Hm!”

The speaker was the ruddy and prosperous Mr. Berthoud, who owned all Shippingport, and he was discussing business with one David Muir, the latter having safely reached Louisville with his wagons. Having heard already by post from Henry Clay, the merchant was willing and ready to do business, the more so because several flatboats were now awaiting cargo to New Orleans.

“All for sale, sir, and you shall set the price,” said Muir cheerfully.

He was a better-looking man than when he had met Black Sand. Firmness had returned to his face, and Mr. Berthoud's Oporto had put color in his cheeks. Since leaving Lexington, however, he had not touched any white liquor.

“You are arrived at an opportune time,” observed Berthoud, biting at a twist of tobacco. “I can take over your leaf at twenty dollars the thousand; but I would advise for your own profit that

you ship it to be sold at New Orleans. In that fashion you'll get twenty-five, and perhaps more if you accompany the leaf yourself."

"Damme, I have no liking for a month's cruise down the river!" and Muir laughed. "And besides, I run the risk of pirates or river dangers. No, take the stuff if you will, and I thank you for your kindness, no less than for your hospitality."

"Any friend of Mr. Clay honors my house by his presence, sir," returned Berthoud. "Well, so let it be. The tobacco, then, comes to six hundred dollars; the teams, let us say, three hundred more. Nine hundred in all. Is that satisfactory?"

"Entirely so.

The merchant drew quills and paper before him, and wrote.

David Muir had arrived that same morning, and found himself at once established as the guest of the hospitable merchant. Once rid of his tobacco, he meant to look around and invest his money—although he knew nothing of investments. For such work, he must depend on the advice of Berthoud.

"There, sir, is an order on my clerk," and the merchant handed him a paper. "You may leave the money in our hands or draw it out, as you prefer."

“Then I shall draw it, chiefly for the pleasure of feeling gold chink in my pocket.”

Berthoud shook his head. “You’ll find no gold hereabouts, I fear. However, I have a few government notes—oh, one moment! Keep your chair, sir.”

The Kentuckian relaxed in his chair. Berthoud opened a cubby in the wall and brought out a decanter of Oporto, with two glasses which he filled.

“Mr. Muir, your health!”

Muir bowed acceptance, sensing something more here than the mere pleasure of a glass of wine. Also, he found that Berthoud was eyeing him keenly while sipping at the wine, and was not slow to understand that he was being appraised and weighed. Then, as with a sudden decision, the rosy-cheeked merchant placed his glass on the table and leaned forward confidentially.

“Sir,” he began, biting again at the twist of tobacco, “we were speaking a little time since of your prospects, and an idea has come to me. I am about to repose a confidence in you. You may know that five years ago a great number of people passed down the river in the wake of that arrant schemer, Mr. Burr? Learning of his overthrow, many of these people took up land in Indiana or along the river.”

“So I have heard,” said Muir, nodding. Berthoud leaned back, speaking in a low voice.

“One such family came from the French grant upriver, and stopped with me for a short visit — charming people, sir, charming! Like all French settlers they had no fear of the Indians, and went across the river into Indiana to secure some promising land. Being possessed of some fortune and knowing that money was of no value in the wilderness, this gentlemen left with me for investment the sum of six hundred dollars. It was a transaction between gentlemen, sir, and no one else knew of it.

“I put the money into river enterprises, met with success, and invested it further in Louisville property. Today, Mr. Muir, that money has grown to the sum of ten thousand dollars — a large amount for this country. The deuce of it is that I can’t find the owner!”

Muir’s eyebrows lifted slightly. The other man nodded confirmation.

“Exactly. I found trace of him, for he was killed by some drunken soldiers near Vincennes, three years ago. His family, however, were somewhere in the wilderness, and little was known of them. From what I could ascertain, they must now be living in very reduced circumstances — living as all pioneer settlers must do, dependent upon the

good God for their daily bread. They were not aware that the money was left with me — deuce take it, I feel like a scoundrel! You see, sir, this family has vanished, like smoke in the sky.”

Berthoud spat nervously into a box of sawdust, and continued.

“ I feel a responsibility in the matter, naturally, since the money is theirs. Yet I cannot locate them. I have spared no pains, have sent out searchers, and all to no avail. Perhaps the family has been wiped out by Indians — perhaps it exists in some far corner of the territory. It just occurred to me, Mr. Muir, that you had mentioned proceeding to the farther settlements. In such case, you might pursue inquiries on my behalf.”

“ Gladly,” said Muir, frowning a little in thought. “ Did you send out good men?”

“ The best men whom I could engage, I assure you! Only last month returned one of the finest woodsmen on the border, with word that the family were completely lost to sight. You may have heard of Captain Philip Hogan. No better frontiersman exists.”

“ Yes — I have heard of him.”

Muir had started slightly at the name. Now he stared down at the table, a new gleam stirring in his gray eyes. His lips tightened a little. When he

glanced up again, the change in his face was so perceptible that Berthoud was startled.

“Eh, sir? What’s the matter?”

“Nothing.” Muir smiled, though not in mirth. “The task appeals to me, Mr. Berthoud, and I will gladly accept it. But, I pray you, say nothing to Hogan or any other man about my undertaking the errand. We may discuss details tonight. Who was the gentleman in question?”

“His name was Major André du Croix — an officer under Lafayette, I believe, who settled in this country. He had a beautiful wife, a daughter of fifteen years, and a son of sixteen.”

A swift flame leaped through Muir’s brain. André du Croix! He rose and bowed.

“You honor me, sir, and I shall be most happy to go upon this quest. So, then, adieu until dinner. I’ll spend the afternoon in viewing the town. Perhaps I shall find an investment for my money, eh?”

He turned to the door. Once it closed behind him, his hand shot to his pocket. He brought forth a dirty, tattered bit of lace, and held it up to the light. For the hundredth time he looked at those broided initials — “A. du C.”

“Now, more than ever, I wonder where I got this!” he mused, frowning. “Could it have belonged to this André du Croix? No; it seems to be

a bit of woman's gear. Still, I must have gotten it that night at Lexington — and I was dicing with Hogan. Oh, fool, fool that I was to drink! What have I stumbled upon here? What clue has the cursed liquor driven from my memory?"

With a gesture of despair, he went on to the clerk's office, drew his money in government notes, and passed outside to inspect Louisville. Tom was not with him, being engaged in unpacking and pressing Muir's clothes.

The towns of Louisville and Shippingport, while two miles apart, were in reality so joined by cabins and farms as to be one city. Shippingport gained its name from lying at the foot of the Great Falls of the Ohio, while Louisville was above the falls. Thus, all boats that came to Louisville from the upper river had to be piloted down through the falls by one of two narrow channels, or else they must be landed and portaged down to Shippingport. The lower town, whose entire site was owned by Berthoud, was the clearing place for all goods which went to New Orleans or St. Louis from the entire Ohio country.

Save for the Berthoud house and buildings, the Tarascon mills and rope-walk and a huddle of taverns and warehouses, there was little in Shippingport to attract the interest of Muir. The place was

filled with flatboat men, settlers bound downriver, and merchants; the river men were lounging or fighting or drinking in the rough laziness of their daily lives, filling the streets with brawls and occasionally with blood, for they knew no restraint.

Yet, as Muir strode toward Louisville, more than one of those rudely brawling giants stared after him in admiration; the flatboat men had ever an eye for manliness. Muir lacked nothing of this, from his arrogantly uptilted chin to his firm stride. He was angry, and in anger his level gray eyes were like a driving force, while the keen lines of his profile had the edge of the tomahawk at his girdle. This anger, which had been inspired by the bare mention of Hogan's name, soon passed away and became a lively interest in the scenes about him as he gained the upper town. He had heard much of the place, and needed no informant for cicerone.

Louisville was built upon an elevated plain which gradually sloped up from the river. Muir halted at the lower end of town, where magnificent hanging gardens and terraces surrounded the stately brick Buttets mansion, and gazed out across the mile-wide Ohio. Beyond the falls and the low islands he could make out Clarksville, nestled under the Silver Creek hills; there dwelt the famed George Rogers Clark, now a crippled veteran who



was drinking himself to death in a besotted old age.

Turning, the Kentuckian strode on into the half-mile-long street which comprised Louisville. The town was not so large as Lexington, yet it was infinitely more handsome and was fast nearing the day when it was to become famed as the city of fine mansions. Most of its three-storied brick houses had parapets along the roofs, enclosing gardens or promenades; and the courthouse, with its pillars and cupola, was accounted a very remarkable building for the frontier.

The day chanced to be a Saturday. Thus the big market was crowded with slaves from the countryside, as well as with rivermen and townfolk of every character. Muir paused to fill his pipe. As he did so, he was attracted by the figure of a man who leaned quietly against a house wall nearby, smoking and studying the crowds.

The man was a frontiersman of tremendous proportions, only his silvered hair betraying the fact that he must be well over fifty. His features were powerful in the extreme, criss-crossed by tiny wrinkles and marred by several scars. From beneath bushy gray brows stuck forth great, wide-set eyes — not of the same warm gray as those of Muir, but colder, sterner, steelier — and those eyes held the fearless and simple assurance of a boy.

The man had in his entire bearing something of a singular simplicity, yet mingled with this quality was a poise and strength which attracted the Kentuckian.

“Friend, will you lend me fire?” inquired Muir. “Flint and steel make slow work where a ready spark may be had.”

“Sartin, sartin!” the big frontiersman turned, and such charm lay in his cordial manner that it drove the ache from Muir’s heart. The latter lighted his pipe from the other one, then looked up. The eyes of the two men met and held, and suddenly Muir found the old boyish smile warming him and lighting up his own features. He liked this man strangely.

“You’re not from Kentucky?” he queried.

“No — up Ohio way.” The steely gaze swept over Muir, and the man jerked his head. “From down thar, I reckon? Kaintuck?”

“Yes. From Lexington. This is quite a fine town, eh?”

“It ain’t fer me, stranger.” The other man laughed. “I come here cl’ar from Ohio to locate a feller. Found him gone to N’Orleens with all my money. Ain’t seed a soul I know. It’s a ’tarnal stiff blow to me, I tell you.”

“You mean he stole your money?”

“ Stole? I reckon he don’t steal from old Sime! No, sir. Ye see, I got a passel o’ land in Ohio. This feller, he had a sick woman and a boat o’ ter-baccer to sell, but he was plumb stuck, upriver a spell. So I riz all the money thar was to raise and holp him along to here.”

By dint of further questioning, Muir extracted a remarkable story. It appeared that the frontiersman, who called himself Sime, had actually mortgaged his farm in order to help a total stranger who had come from upriver with a sick wife and a damaged boat. The stranger had, however, been honest enough. Coming down to Louisville, he had sold his cargo at a good profit and had left word with a merchant for Sime that, having secured a flatboat run to New Orleans, he would be back in a few months with the money. While honest, the stranger obviously had small regard for Sime’s exigencies.

Sime had been met with this message on reaching Louisville in the wake of the stranger. Meantime, he had not a cent with which to pay his back taxes and buy his spring seed, and before the stranger could return from New Orleans, his farm would be sold for the back taxes which he had neglected to pay. Further, his mortgage had been made out for only ninety days, much of which time was now consumed.

“You don’t seem much worried over it,” said Muir, observing the nonchalance of the other man. Sime puffed soberly at his pipe.

“Ain’t no use, friend. I ain’t never went back on the A’mighty, nor has He went back on me. If so be it’s His will to turn out old Sime, out I goes. If not, then it’s sartin that all hell an’ high water can’t turn me out! Anyways, it’s too late fer that spring plowin’. I reckon I got to go on a good hunt and let things drift. Ohio’s too durned thick settled fer game. Lots left on the Wabash, though.”

Muir perceived that the man, speaking in earnest, was simple and guileless as a child. There was something about this backwoodsman that fascinated him — something in the man’s forthright character, in his evident strength of body and mind, in his unassuming but steady poise. The Kentuckian was unaware that he himself possessed that same fascination for the other man. He did not observe the sudden warmth which had filled the steely eyes when he had smiled; he did not observe that this frontiersman in the stained golden deerskin had suddenly changed from a stern aloofness to a cordial confidence.

“How much do you need, Sime?” he asked, his hand touching the roll of notes that reposed in the pocket of his hunting shirt.

“Well, I give a law shark a mortgage on my passel o’ land fer five hundred dollars. That much might cl’ar me, and ag’in it mightn’t. The A’mighty didn’t give me a head fer figgers, I reckon.”

Now, David Muir had often acted on sheer impulse, only to suffer for it afterward. He hesitated for an instant before the impulse that now assailed him, and then yielded to it. He felt drawn to this man. Moreover, he knew the type well, and comprehended that Sime was as strictly honest as the blue sky itself.

“Here,” he said quickly, taking out his roll of notes and stripping off the requisite amount. “Here’s six hundred, Sime —”

With astounding swiftness the frontiersman whirled, one hand flashing to the ornate tomahawk at his waist, the steely eyes flooding with such terrible anger that Muir stood transfixed.

As he met the surprised gaze of the Kentuckian, however, Sime paused, checked himself. In the clear, steady gaze of Muir he read the truth, and a flush crept athwart his bronzed and high-boned cheeks.

“I done you wrong, friend, I did for sartin,” he said quietly. “I thought as how you figgered on givin’ old Sime charity, and I don’t claim no charity ’cept from Him up above. Be you in arnest?”

“Of course.” Muir smiled in comprehension, and the smile transformed him. “Take the money as a loan, Sime. I’ve just sold some tobacco and could put it to no better purpose.”

The other, almost reluctantly, extended a huge hand and slowly gripped the roll of notes. Muir continued without pause.

“You spoke of a hunt over to the Wabash country. Well, I’d like to go over that way myself, Sime, and I’ve seldom seen a man I’d sooner have as companion than yourself. What say you? Shall we take the trail together?”

The other did not reply for a long moment. He stood gazing straight at Muir, a frown of concentration drawing down his bushy gray brows. Then he nodded abstractedly and furnished an explanation for his silence.

“Oh, sure! I’m figgerin’ on time. I got to git back upriver, then back here — s’pose we say two weeks, eh? Would that sarve you, friend?”

Muir assented. “Yes. I’ll be at Mr. Berthoud’s house in Shippingport. My name’s Muir. Will you come for me there?”

“Aye, two weeks from today,” affirmed Sime positively. “And may the A’mighty take keer on you, friend Muir! You sartinly be the likeliest younker I’ve seed fer a long day. Your sarvint —”

“Eh?” exclaimed Muir, as the other man turned to depart abruptly. “You’re not going this minute?”

“Sure. I figger I can git my traps, ketch a boat upriver this a’ternoon, and save time.”

“All right! In two weeks, then.”

Big Sime waved a hand as he departed toward the upper end of town, where the cove of Beargrass Creek lay just above the falls. Muir gazed after the stalwart figure until it was lost to sight in the crowd, and noted that many persons turned to gaze after it likewise. Then a sudden and joyous laugh broke from him.

“Damme if I so much as thought of asking his name or home — Sime could be only his given name, of course! And six hundred of my dollars gone with him! I’ll lay odds that honest Berthoud will call me a rank fool when I tell him of this!”

He slowly retraced his steps to Shippingport, somewhat ruefully fingering the remnants of his fortune as he went. Yet he did not in the least regret his impulsive action. Recalling that remarkable face, those keenly brave eyes, the whole figure of the man, Muir had no doubt as to the honesty of his new friend. Neither did he have the slightest doubt that, should Sime meet another family in distress before regaining his home, the money

would be cheerfully tendered in alleviation. The thought was amusing, but wholesome.

Muir said nothing of the incident until, that evening, Mistress Berthoud and the family had withdrawn and he was sitting across the table with the rosy-cheeked merchant and a decanter of sherry. Then he laughingly related the story. Somewhat to his astonishment, as he described his meeting with Sime, Berthoud bent no frown upon him; instead, the merchant seemed fired with sudden interest.

“And you learned nothing more of his name, sir?”

“Devil take me, I forgot all about it until he had gone!” Muir chuckled. “Also, he stated that he knew not a soul in Louisville.”

“There spoke the man, Mr. Muir!” Berthoud’s ruddy face broke into a slow smile. “I had heard that he was in town. He was devout, perhaps? Wore a very handsome tomahawk at his girdle?”

“Why, yes! You know him?”

Berthoud broke into a roar of laughter.

“Know him? Why, twenty years ago men would have given their fortunes to be seen with him in public! Even today, I warrant you, he was being pointed out on every hand. Sir, have no fear for your money —”



“I have none,” broke in Muir drily. “Who is he, then?”

“The most famous borderer in the country, barring only Colonel Boone. I congratulate you on having today won the friendship of General Simon Kenton. Mr. Muir, a glass with you to his health!”

The Kentuckian was too astounded even to drink the toast. Simon Kenton! Through all the western lands that name was far-famed, coupled with the name of Daniel Boone. But old Colonel Boone had been driven to Missouri, while Kenton remained on his Ohio farm; Boone had long since given up fighting, while Kenton still scouted as of old, still risked his life in every corner of the wilderness.

“He’s coming back here in two weeks,” said Muir slowly, “and we’re going to the Wabash country together.”

“Excellent! And you’ll look out for the du Croix family?”

“Of course. By the way, do you recall the names of the two children?”

Muir thought best to say nothing of that scrap of lace in his pocket. He could not swear that it had come from Hogan, and there were too many French settlers scattered through the country to admit of his mental conjecture being entirely probable.

“Yes,” rejoined Berthoud thoughtfully, “I remember those of the children; that of the mother, I never knew. The girl was called Alice, and the boy Jean. As I remember them, both were fair of hue, and the boy was a handsome young chap, although badly spoiled and headstrong.”

Except that the du Croix family had been entirely lost to sight during the past three years, the merchant could tender no further information. But a grim thought was in the mind of Muir. If, by any chance, he had procured that bit of lace from Hogan on the last drunken night of revelry—where had Hogan obtained it? If, by any chance, Hogan had obtained it from Alixe du Croix—why had Hogan lied to Berthoud about finding the family? If, as seemed certain, Hogan knew of the money awaiting the du Croix family—what devil’s game was being played?

“When Kenton’s friend returns with the money, and it is paid over,” said Muir quietly, forcing himself back to facts, “may I impose on you to the extent of handling it for me? We shall arrange to have it all pass through your hands. And I shall leave my effects here, if I may—buckskin is enough for the trail.”

Berthoud was hugely delighted to assist his guest, being charmed with the new friend Clay had sent

him, and he vowed that Muir should have no loss of income from his hand.

When retiring that night, a very startling idea occurred to the Kentuckian. He remembered Black Sand and all the strange creature had said; he remembered what the Indian had said; and he remembered what Simon Kenton had this very day said.

“Those men are all of the wilderness, but they are men of achievement and influence,” he mused in the darkness. “I have met other men equally remarkable in the taverns of Lexington. But I do not recall that in the taverns there was much talk of God — not, at least, as those three men talked. I wonder, now —”

Still wondering, he fell asleep.

## CHAPTER IV

*Give Tongue to a friend and Teeth to a foe;  
This is the creed that the wolfings know!*

IN this thirty-fifth year of the independence of the United States, when the word was invariably capitalized and that same capital "I" was a proudly emphasized rule of life, whiskey was as water along the border. Especially was this true in Kentucky, where as yet no blue grass flourished, but where each settler distilled his own corn liquor.

In Louisville, David Muir found self-restraint hard, but he mastered the craving. While forming no resolution whatever, he steadily refrained from touching "fire-water." Hardest of all were the two weeks which he spent with Berthoud, awaiting the return of Sime Kenton. Here whiskey was plentiful; it was a part of every meal, and between meals was discussed with abandon. The flatboat men consumed huge quantities, and no man of them was ashamed of being drunk. While ashore, in fact, this was their normal condition.

Yet there was a darker side. Shippingport was filled with these rivermen, who were no more than

huge, childish animals. No weaklings could survive among them. They had no regard for the law, and the law very carefully forebore to interfere with them. Fighting was their pastime. With half a hundred of such men drunk at one time, Shippingport did not lack for excitement. It was rarely that these drunken brawls did not end in a knife thrust or in gouged eyes.

Moreover, every flatboat man was a crack rifle shot, and the Indians who came to town for liquor were heavy sufferers. One afternoon, Muir saw a drunken Winnebago shot down to settle a wager; the victim received four bullets, each of which entered his left eye. The groups of rivermen were wildly delighted, and of course the murderers were untouched. The shooting of an Indian was not classed as murder in any sense of the word. At other times men stood in the street and, at fifty yards' distance, punctured tin cups and snuffed candles on the heads of companions. As an exhibition of shooting, this was marvelous work, but on one occasion a drunken contestant shot too low, and did it intentionally, whereat the sport was stopped for the day and all hands got drunk at the funeral. Here, again, the law dared not intervene.

True to his word, Sime Kenton arrived at the house of Mr. Berthoud exactly two weeks from the

day of his departure. Muir was expecting him, for he had discovered that the man's very name stood for integrity and a sterling honesty which was above all suspicion. With warmth in his heart, Muir gripped Kenton's hand and looked into the steely gray eyes; seldom indeed had he been so drawn to a man as he was to this old frontiersman.

That same morning they arranged with Berthoud all matters relating to the financial tangle, and the merchant undertook to secure and handle the funds which were to come back from New Orleans with Kenton's friend. The borderer was informed of the du Croix mystery, but had never heard of such a family. He was more than glad, however, to take up the search with Muir, as it gave them a definite object for their wilderness jaunt.

"If you wish to start at once," said Berthoud, "I would suggest that you go by boat to the settlement at Blue River, forty-odd miles downstream. Governor Harrison has built a sawmill near there, and it leaves only a hundred miles to Vincennes, as the Louisville post road crosses Blue River —"

"All that ain't to the p'int," interposed Kenton bluntly. "I don't figger much on roads and such. Howsoever, I reckon as we'll take a boat fer a bit, to save time."

"Then Mike Fink's craft leaves this afternoon.

I do not wish to hurry you, gentlemen; my house is yours as long as you would stay. But I know that Mr. Muir is impatient to be started. While I cannot recommend Mike Fink personally, I know that as a riverman he has no equal. Should you so desire, I can engage passage for you with him."

Muir glanced at Kenton, who nodded slightly.

"Very well," assented the Kentuckian. "I thank you, Mr. Berthoud, and accept with pleasure. Now I must walk up to Louisville and attend to my outfit. Sime, if you can spare an hour, come along and pick me out a rifle."

In expectation of the other man's arrival, Muir had that morning changed to his woods garb of buckskin and moccasins. Accordingly, the two set out immediately, walking along the road that led from the port to Louisville. On the way to town, Muir recalled his meeting with Black Sand, and recounted the matter to Kenton, explaining how he had given away his rifle and horn. Kenton listened gravely enough, but made no comment. He examined the tag of leather which Muir had sewed to the wrist of his hunting shirt, and only shook his head. Guessing shrewdly that Kenton must know Black Sand, Muir asked no questions but bided his friend's time for speaking. Wherein he gave proof of wisdom.

Proceeding to the store of Audubon & Rosier, they were waited upon by the senior member of the firm. Muir did not know him personally, but had more than once seen him at Lexington and had admired both his good looks and his graceful dancing. Audubon, however, was notorious as a lazy fellow, who preferred wearing fine French linen, loafing in the woods and sketching birds, to conducting his store and counting farthings as a good tradesman should.

Having plenty of money left, Muir was soon provided with an excellent rifle, to the selection of which Kenton gave great care, and a new horn. The old frontiersman himself bought a spare horn of powder, being otherwise fully equipped.

Leaving the store first, Kenton suddenly checked himself and re-entered the doorway, colliding with Muir. He waved the latter back and uttered a quiet word.

“Friend, thar’s a feller comin’ this-a-way as I don’t like. Mebbe we’d best leave him git inside afore we go out.”

He stepped to one side, accordingly. Muir was about to follow suit, when he looked outside and saw the approaching figure which Kenton had first descried. It was that of Captain Hogan, clad in a mixture of regimentals and border costume.



Involuntarily, the Kentuckian's hand dropped to his pistol, and he half drew the weapon. Then he checked himself, trembling a little; he was very angry, but shame was yet stronger upon him. This man, his father's murderer, he himself had dined with, had flung to this man all his patrimony! He had drunk with this man, ignorant of the past — and he could not step out and shoot him down in cold blood. Moreover, Clay's words still burned in Muir's brain. He had no mind to be hanged for murder, and certainly he had not in any way redeemed his recent disgraceful past. No, he was not worthy to take up that quarrel as yet.

One more thing that gave him pause was the scrap of lace in his pocket. There lay a mystery, he thought grimly, and resolved that he would swiftly make his position quite clear to Captain Philip Hogan.

At this instant Hogan entered the store, perceived the figure of Muir, and stopped short. His handsome face lighted in a smile, and his hand went out in cordial greeting. Muir ignored the gesture and looked into Hogan's eyes; under the blazing fury of his face, Hogan took an involuntary step backward.

“Mr. Hogan,” said Muir, his voice tensed but quiet, “you need not proffer your hand to me in

future. I have learned that it was you who, ten years back, basely murdered my father. You had best take heed of me hereafter, sir, for on our next meeting I shall shoot you down like the cowardly cur that you are.”

At the words, Hogan’s smile swept into a sneer; but it was an evil sneer, and the dark eyes gleamed out at Muir with a sudden lurid malignance in their depths, like the deep and fathomless eyes of a copperhead.

“Thankee, drunken cub,” he said in reply, with a snarl. “Losing at dice has bred swift hatred, eh? Nay, trouble me not with your lies of ancient doings, you drunken fool! Get out of my way and let me by.”

“One thing more.” Muir’s voice was still very quiet — so quiet that the terrible anger in his eyes was marvelous to see. “I believe that in Lexington you dropped a scrap of lace which had belonged to Madame Alixe du Croix—”

He broke off abruptly. At these final words, Hogan’s face turned absolutely livid. Without a sound, the man whipped forth a hidden pistol and threw it up. Stark murder shone in his eyes — but a deadly, biting voice caused him to whip a glance over his shoulder.

“Keerful wi’ that thar thing, Hogan!”

A long, brown rifle barrel was held like a rock within a foot of Hogan's ear, and over it looked the keen, steely eyes of Sime Kenton.

"Now," drawled the frontiersman, "you pesky, lowdown varmint — git! And git quick!"

Hogan, staring into the eyes of Kenton, slowly put away his pistol. Still, he displayed no trace of fear, but only a terrible malevolence that was devilish in its very revelation.

"Mr. Simon Kenton!" he said, and his white teeth flashed out in a slow, cruel smile. "Your servant, sir! Sorry to find you in such bad company. So you are still at my heels, are you? For your own sake, I trust that we shall not meet again speedily, sir. As for you, drunken cub," and his eyes flickered to Muir, "I can safely predict your fate, since you plainly appear to be bound for the border. What mean your words about a scrap of lace?"

Muir produced the scrap of filmy lace. "You recognize this?"

"No!" Hogan inspected it, then shrugged with slow insolence. "No!"

"Thar you lie," put in Kenton. "Git, afore I lose my temper!"

His finger pressed the trigger of the rifle so that the flint actually quivered. Hogan saw it, and went

whiter still; then, without a word further, turned and strode from the store.

“The pesky snake!” muttered Kenton, uncocking his rifle and paying no heed to the alarmed Audubon. “Come along, friend Dave.”

They stepped out into the street. The figure of Hogan was visible, walking rapidly toward Shippingport; and at Kenton’s suggestion they turned into the first tavern and took chairs in the empty travelers’ room for a quiet talk.

“Git some b’ar’s grease on your tongue, Dave,” said Kenton when they had filled their pipes. “How come you to know that thar cuss?”

Muir told him frankly, also relating what Henry Clay had said of Hogan on that last night in Vauxhall Garden. He went on to give an idea of his suspicion anent the bit of lace. The fact that Hogan had, at bare mention of it, flashed into such deadly rage was clear evidence that the scout was engaged in some tricky transaction involving the lost du Croix family. In this theory Kenton concurred. Still, since they had no proof which would involve Hogan under the law, the two friends agreed to say nothing of the matter to Berthoud.

Kenton had no pleasant things to tell of Hogan, whom he knew well through Indian friends, of whom Tecumthe was one. Tecumthe’s twin, the

savage-hearted Prophet, was a thorn in the side of the greater brother. While Tecumthe was an advocate of peace, the Prophet urged the tribes to war; while Tecumthe wished to lead his followers into an altruistic state of farming and hunting, the Prophet called for "a flame on the border." His claims to miraculous powers were fully believed, not only by Indians but by many of the whites.

Hogan, ostensibly a scout under Harrison and an officer in the militia, was secretly a friend of the Prophet. This did not argue him a renegade, but it did argue that Hogan was inimical to the one person on the frontier whom red men and white alike respected — Tecumthe. Kenton understood that Hogan, by aid and connivance of certain chiefs, had been concerned in whiskey-running to the Indian towns, even to that model town on the Wabash. This had gained him wealth and influence among the tribes, but had made Tecumthe's friends his bitter foes. Tecumthe himself had warned Hogan not to enter the Indian country under penalty of death.

The Prophet might not favor the liquor traffic, but was beyond doubt violently in heat for war, and was hand in glove with the British, who, from their post at Malden, were inflaming the war party. Hogan, in his trafficking, was said to have brought

many British muskets to the Indian towns; of this, Sime Kenton ardently desired to obtain proof, in order that he might accuse Hogan openly before General Harrison. It did not occur either to Kenton or to Muir that Hogan's activities might have a more terrible and sinister motive than that of any personal profit.

"Well," and Muir rose as men entered the tavern and the bell on the roof banged out its midday call, "it's time we were getting back to Berthoud's. We'll have enough chances to talk over the matter later on."

"Sure. You take good keer o' that thar bit o' leather," and Kenton touched the leather tag on Muir's sleeve. "Put it back on its thong like it was in the fust place."

"Why?"

"Tell you later."

Kenton was disquieted by the stares of the other men, and hastened to leave the place. They walked back to Shippingport in silence, and gathered for Muir's last meal with the hospitable Berthoud family.

When the final glass of wine had been drunk, Berthoud donned his beaver, Uncle Tom was summoned, and the merchant escorted the three leather-clad men down to the landing. Here lay a huge

flatboat, piled high with hogsheads of tobacco, with fruit, with cured ginseng, and with kegs of whiskey. Aside from this there was little else, since this boat was going through to New Orleans without a stop except at St. Louis.

Here it was that Muir, through the rosy-cheeked Berthoud, met the man who was later destined to bear a redoubtable name along the whole Mississippi — the man who was to become famed for his crimes, for his reckless daring, for his utter disregard of all law.

Mike Fink made no return of Berthoud's bow, but greeted his passengers with a grunt. Even among the big rivermen he bulked large, not in height alone but in all ways; yet his huge-boned frame held no superfluous flesh. His countenance was brutal, bloated with hard drinking, altogether forbidding. None the less, no man on the river was sooner trusted with a rich cargo than Mike Fink.

The boatman bent a black look on Uncle Tom, but did not protest his coming aboard. Then he gave Berthoud a glum nod.

“Git ashore. You-all come jest in time. Castin' off now.”

The merchant shook hands with Kenton and Muir, wished them Godspeed, and hurried ashore.

Fink turned and bellowed orders to his men, who leaped to the lines. A moment more and the great flatboat, her sweeps out on either side, was slowly moving into the river current.

“I don’t like that feller,” observed Kenton, gazing intently at the captain.

Muir shared the feeling, but led the frontiersman forward to view the river. There, perched on the same hogsheads he had brought to Louisville, the Kentuckian filled his pipe and watched with quick interest as the lumbering craft gathered speed and swept out upon her long journey. He almost regretted that he was not going the whole distance to New Orleans with her.

Suddenly, without preamble, Kenton touched the leather tag on Muir’s arm and explained its significance.

“Thar’s a right smart little war goin’ on along the frontier,” he said. “Specially up in Indianny. It ain’t no reg’lar tribal war, but a lot o’ killin’ is going on. So Tecumthe gives his friends a tag like that, fer a sign to all Injuns — his white friends, I mean.”

“Then Tecumthe was the Indian whom I met with Black Sand?” queried Muir, not greatly astonished. Kenton nodded, and went on to explain matters.



By giving Tecumthe his rifle and horn, David Muir had rendered the Indian a service that would probably insure his own safety along the frontier. The whole Indian border, according to the old scout, was ready to break into a flame, and this was largely the fault of Governor Harrison.

By the last Indian treaty, criminals of each race were to be surrendered to justice. Tecumthe's allied redskins were mistreated or murdered on every hand by the whites, and never a white man had been handed over for punishment. No sooner, however, was a settler scalped by the red men, than Tecumthe brought in the guilty parties to the Vincennes fort. The chieftain had now grown tired of this one-sided justice. Further, white settlers had encroached on the Indian lands, and complaints to Harrison brought no redress. The governor was helpless to make his troops enforce the law at the expense of any whites.

The secret at the bottom of the whole thing was that the Prophet's town, as Tecumthe's famous settlement was called, was located only two hundred miles from Vincennes — and had been purposely located thus close in order to show Harrison that no strife was intended. The chieftain's ambition to uplift his race, however, had put the whole border in panic. To the whites, Indians were only

wild animals to be killed at sight; and to see these Shawano and Kickapoo braves returning to the vigorous, simple life of their ancestors had roused fear and hatred throughout the border. Men said that Tecumthe was building up a great war machine to destroy the settlements, and that he was secretly assembling forces for a great blow at Vincennes and the Ohio country. In reality, they were enraged at the chief for his determined opposition to the liquor traffic, and the whiskey traders were busily at work fomenting the fears of the settlements and striving to cause a war that would wipe out Tecumthe and his town.

Kenton had explained thus far when one of the boatmen approached and with scarcely veiled insolence stated that Fink wanted them in the stern at once. They were now seven miles below Louisville, and were just opposite Sullivan's Ferry, where ran the post road to Vincennes.

"Our worthy captain waxes great," said Muir, and rose suddenly, angered by the insolent stare of the boatman. "Wipe that look off your face, you rogue!"

Under the flame of his gray eyes, the boatman stepped back in confusion. But, as he turned and shuffled away, he flung back a Parthian shaft.

"You-all better git aft! Else you'll get ducked."

Muir looked at Kenton, to find the latter quietly priming his rifle.

“Does this signify trouble, Sime? What does he mean by getting ducked?”

Kenton's wide lips relaxed in a slight grin.

“I reckon, friend Dave, thar's a drinkin' match going on. Man what gits drunk fust, gits soused in the river. Let's go see.”

“You're not going to enter the match?”

“Me?” The old hunter chuckled. “No one ain't seed old Sime drink fer a long day, friend! No, I reckon that 'tarnal skunk Hogan has put this feller Fink up to some dirty work. Let's go see. We can load into that thar skiff towin' behint, if trouble comes.”

“But in that case,” objected Muir, “we'd not get down the river —”

“Who wants to git downriver? Not me. I don't hanker after no water trail. Quicker I git ashore into the woods, the better. Come on, Dave!”

Muir nodded to Uncle Tom, and all three walked back to the stern of the flatboat.

There, seated in a circle, they found the four men of the crew with Mike Fink, a jug of whiskey to hand and rifles close by. All grinned expectantly as the passengers approached. Fink waved his hand jovially and addressed Muir in particular.

“Sot, friends, an’ drink!”

“Thanks,” rejoined Muir. “But we’re not drinking, Cap’n.”

“What?” Fink came lightly to his feet and stared at Muir in mingled surprise and ferocity. “What? You ’lows we ain’t good enough fer to drink with you-all?”

“Not a bit of it.” Muir watched him steadily. “No. I said that we don’t care to drink. And we’re not drinking.”

“Man, I ’lows right here that you’s a damned aristocrat!” Fink shot out his heavy under jaw and advanced a step, his fists clenched. “Man, I don’t like your face! Say your prayers, you gray-eyed, long-legged alligator! ’Tarnal death to me, but I’m a’going to l’arn you-all who Mike Fink is!”

He concluded this speech with a wild whoop, relaxed and bent for a drink from the jug. Muir perceived that a fight was not only unavoidable, but doubtless prearranged. The four men of the crew were all on the wide grin. Kenton and Uncle Tom had stepped to one side, the old negro anxious and perturbed, the hunter inscrutable of face. Muir and Fink were left facing each other at the stern of the craft beside the long sweep.

“Whoopee!” Fink straightened up, leaped in the air, and cracked his heels. “Man, say your

prayers! I'm agoin' to eat you, gun, tom axe and all! I'm agoin' to claw you! Hold up them fore-legs, you white-livered aristocrat! Cock-a-doodle-doo! Grab me by the tail, you-all, whilst I claws this yere skunk —”

The Kentuckian understood perfectly that once this braggadocio was terminated, Fink would be at him in earnest; and, once the brawl started, it would be a finish fight that knew neither rules, science nor mercy. So, while Fink was still bellowing out his peroration, Muir stooped to lay his rifle on the deck.

Then, rising in one swift, forward leap from the boards, he brought up his fist with the whole spring of his body behind it, driving himself bodily into the air. He came up beneath the widely swinging arms of Fink. His fist cracked into the burly jaw with a force that numbed his whole arm, and as the shock jerked him backward, he saw Fink go flying headforemost over the stern of the boat into the river.

Instantly the four men were rising, gripping their rifles—only to find that Kenton and the Negro had already covered them. Muir, panting with the effort of his exertion, caught up his own rifle and laughed slightly.

“Tom, go pick up that big scoundrel.”

Tom grinned and drew in the skiff, handing his rifle to Kenton. He got into the boat, loosed the line, and paddled to where Fink was splashing mightily and yelling for help, now far astern of the flatboat. Ten minutes later the dripping and disheveled captain crawled aboard to look into Kenton's rifle.

"I reckon we'll leave you here, cap," drawled the frontiersman. "Dave, sling them guns overboard, and we'll mosey along."

While the five men cursed and raved in impotent fury, Muir tossed their rifles over the side. Then, joining Kenton, he climbed into the skiff and glanced back at the raging Mike Fink, while Tom struck out for the Indiana shore.

"My regards to Mr. Hogan," he called. "And a merry voyage to you!"

"Marse Dave," and Tom grinned widely over his paddle, "you suttinly is some man, suh!"

Sime Kenton chuckled assent.

## CHAPTER V

*Who knoweth not his trail  
Findeth somewhere a Grail.*

THE three companions landed ten miles west of Sullivan's Ferry, and camped in the woods for the night. At dawn Tom brought in a deer, and over a broiled venison steak the line of march was discussed.

"Thar's four ways to go," said Kenton. "Fust, by the Injun trace from Henderson to Vincennes. Next, by the trace from the Yeller Banks to the old Delaware village what ain't no more. Third, by the post road to Vincennes."

"Well?" demanded Muir as the other paused. "What is the fourth way?"

"By leavin' them roads, friend Dave, and keepin' to the woods. North o' Vincennes is Injuns, cl'ar to Fort Dearborn. All the durned tribes a man ever seed is crowded into this country, betwixt the whites and the Sioux."

"But the du Croix family must be up there," objected Muir. "They left Louisville in 1860. They are either up there or dead — and they may be dead."

“They ain’t dead nohow,” retorted Kenton. “Hogan found them Doo Craws through his Injun friends, I reckon. Likely the family struck out into the Injun country and settled; lots o’ folks, ’specially French, takes chances that-a-way. Mind, though, we may be follerin’ a false trail.”

This was a possibility, since they had small grounds on which to base their suspicions of Hogan. Finally Kenton flatly stated that they had better avoid Vincennes, keep to the woods, and see what news they could pick up near the Prophet’s Town. Muir assented, and comprehending that the hunter had some objective in view of which he did not wish to speak at present, was content to let Kenton direct the march. With this, they broke camp.

Now followed a week of such travel as Muir had never known — travel through virgin forest, their only food what they shot on the way, and with never a sign of settlers. They twice met Indians, who were hunting, but these merely exchanged a few words with Kenton and then disappeared.

To Muir, all danger seemed very far away, yet he found Kenton ever on the alert, and a master of such woodcraft as he had never dreamed hitherto. The stir of a leaf, the scratch on a tree trunk, the very winds themselves, seemed freighted with messages for the frontiersman. Yet Kenton was com-



placently unboastful as regarded his own powers.

“I reckon the A'mighty figgered on presarvin' my life, friend Dave, and so l'arned me the wilder-ness way to save Himself trouble. If I do say it, I ain't never seed the Injun as could lay over me.”

Before that week was up, David Muir found his endurance taxed to the utmost; and this despite the fact that in sheer physical strength he was the equal of Sime Kenton. Uncle Tom managed to maintain without difficulty the terrific pace set by the hunter, for the old negro was a natural woodsman and was well trained to the forest. There was no pause for hunting — when they wanted meat, Kenton whistled in a turkey or Muir barked a squirrel. The Kentuckian asked no questions about their destination; he trusted all to Kenton, who appeared to have a very definite idea of their course.

Only once did Kenton unbosom himself as to the cause of their speed — and this proved to be no other than Captain Hogan. It seemed very likely that Hogan was bound for the frontier, especially since learning that Muir knew of the du Croix family; therefore Kenton was resolved to reach the Prophet's Town ahead of the scout. But the three companions were not destined to attain their goal in such fashion.

At the end of the week, Kenton one night an-

nounced that at dawn they would proceed separately up the stream which they were then following. They had reached the headwaters of the west fork of the White River and were far north of Vincennes, but were a considerable distance east and south of the Prophet's Town.

"Why proceed separately?" queried the puzzled Muir, feeling somewhat vexed that Kenton preserved so strict a silence as to the immediate object of their trip.

"So's to find a big elm tree with a cross blazed on it, right-hand side o' this crick," said Kenton, and grinned. Uncle Tom was watching him with bulging eyes. "I ain't never been here, but I been directed by Black Sand —"

"Oh, lawdy, I knowed it!" groaned the big negro. "Marse Dave, is you-all gwine take up wid dem ghostesses an' hobblegobs —"

"Keep quiet!" said Muir, though not without a twitch of the lips. "Then you know the man, Sime?"

"Sartin," Kenton nodded. "I've seed him a few times. Find that thar elm and climb it. After you've clomb her you'll sight a hill to the nor' east. On that thar hill is Black Sand's settlement. Fust one of us to sight the elm, give three turkey calls."

At this, Muir would not be denied, but pressed

the old scout with questions. He finally elicited the information that Black Sand possessed a cabin and clearing which were held inviolate by all Indians, whether Shawano, Wea or Wyandot. Black Sand was regarded as touched by the Great Spirit, and unless by his explicit invitation no red man would venture near the man's abode. Even the far-famed Prophet, and Kenton chuckled at the fact, had a wholesome fear of Black Sand, and the Moravian came and went through all the borders without danger. It was even said that he had once invaded a council of Pottawatomie chiefs and destroyed some kegs of whiskey without a warrior daring to touch him or interfere.

More than this, however, Muir could learn nothing. He conjectured that Kenton intended to question Black Sand about the du Croix family, and hope rose in him. Black Sand should know of the missing people, if any one did.

Upon breaking camp at dawn the three separated, making their way along the right bank of the stream, as Kenton did not know just how far the blazed elm was from the creek. He knew from other landmarks that they were not far from the tree, but it was necessary to find that particular elm, as there were numbers of hills in every direction, any one of which might be that of Black Sand.

The Kentuckian was farthest from the river, and pushed his way through the heavy timber without having sighted any elms whatever. An hour passed, and another. He had lost sight of Uncle Tom, on his left, and was badly scratched by thorns and brambles, while the morning was coming up decidedly hot. Thus far, neither of the other two men had uttered the signal of three turkey calls which was to announce that the elm was found. Muir cursed the whole affair — then paused as he emerged from a cover of bushes, and stood staring. Fifty feet distant from him was a large elm, and on its bark was blazed a huge white cross.

The Kentuckian was raising his head to give the signal, when suddenly he drew back among the bushes. His quick eye had caught a moving object amid the trees opposite, and he swiftly dropped to cover, flung forward his rifle, and lay motionless, waiting. A moment later he was staring into the glade ahead, with wonder flooding on his mind as he watched.

Into the sunlight had flitted a girl. Her supple body was clad in buckskin hunting shirt and short skirt, their fringed edges dyed scarlet with blood-root. She wore leggings and split-sole Delaware moccasins; over her shoulder hung horn and flask, while a long, light rifle lay across her arm.

Muir took in these details at a single glance, then his gaze rested on the girl's face. So brown it was that, but for the massed and netted golden hair above, he had thought her a halfbreed. Closer scrutiny showed his mistake. Her features were firmly limned yet quite delicately carven—chiseled in clear lines of no insipid beauty, but of self-reliance and calm efficiency. As Muir lay close in his thicket she turned and scanned the trees with leisurely air, passing over the blazed elm as though it were an old friend.

Moved by sheer impish impulse, the Kentuckian uttered three loud, clear wild-turkey calls. He thought rather of startling her than aught else, for such a signal would be more apt to come from an Indian throat than from a bird. Consequently, he was already smiling to himself when, without warning, the girl's rifle flashed up and she fired from her hip.

Barely in time, Muir cast himself sideways; her aim had been deadly, swift as it was. The Kentuckian leaped to his feet, a startled cry on his lips. The bullet had torn through his coonskin cap without touching his head.

Removing the ripped head-dress, Muir stepped forth from the covert. The girl was now staring at him, wide-eyed, yet already her tomahawk was in

her hand ready for a throw. Muir bowed, and as he advanced he noted that her eyes were of the same golden brown as her buckskin gear.

“Your pardon, madame,” he said, smiling a little despite the whiteness of his cheeks from that narrow escape. “I meant only to startle you — and confess my fault with apologies. Had your bullet pierced the head with the cap, it had been entirely justified. My name, madame, is David Muir of Kentucky, your humble servant to command.”

Her gaze took in the torn cap, and he thought that pallor crept into her dusky-rose face. For a long moment she did not answer, but stood regarding him in silence, and, perhaps, in surprise not untouched with admiration. As he stood there smiling in the sunlight, David Muir was no unpleasant sight. He had shaved that morning, and his steady eyes shone forth from a grave and even severe countenance — a countenance that looked much older than it had appeared some weeks earlier in Lexington. In those weeks, Muir had become a different man, and showed the change.

“I am sorry, sir.” As her low voice reached him, he was astonished to find that her accents were not those of the backwoods, but betrayed culture and education. “I came in search of a squirrel

or turkey, since my brother is ill of — of a fever — and it was thought that a broth might restore him ——”

She paused, flushing slightly. Muir caught an odd note in her soft voice, a note which in another person would have spelled falsehood. But he only smiled and then turned as Tom came into the clearing with a shout of relief at sighting him.

“Marse Dave, you done found dat tree? Glory be, ol’ Uncle Tom done los’ more skin on dem cussed briers — oh, lawdy!”

As his eyes fell on the girl, the big negro halted, and his jaw fell in blank amazement. Muir broke into a laugh, and a moment later Simon Kenton also came into view. Muir turned to the girl, and bowed, speaking swiftly to assuage the alarm in her manner.

“Madame, allow me to present Mr. Simon Kenton, whom I am proud to call my friend.”

Kenton, coming forward, jerked off his cap, looking from Muir to the girl in evident surprise. At his name, however, quick relief sprang to her face.

“Kenton?” she exclaimed. “Surely, not General Simon Kenton of Ohio?”

“At your sarvice, ma’am,” said Kenton with an embarrassed air.

“But what are you doing here — I mean, how did you come —”

She broke off, and Muir smiled quickly.

“The surprise was entirely mutual, madame. We were seeking that tree behind you, and I had just found it when you came into sight.”

“The tree — the elm? Then you must be in search of —”

“Of the feller called Black Sand, ma’am,” broke in Kenton suddenly. “Mebbe you kin take us to him? He’s a right good friend o’ mine.”

The girl looked from one to the other, then dipped Muir a slight curtsy and nodded.

“Certainly,” she rejoined quietly. “I am Madame Alice Cross. I and my brother John live with Black Sand. Will it please you to accompany me?”

She turned. Kenton darted Muir one glance of mingled amazement, startled comprehension and warning, and Muir checked the astounded word that came to his lips. But, as he fell in behind Kenton, his brain was in a whirl of wonder.

Alice and John Cross — what were these but the anglicized names of Alixe and Jean du Croix? So, at least, it seemed to him in this first moment. Yet, even as this realization burst upon him, Muir suddenly remembered the girl’s first words to him.



She and her brother were living with Black Sand, which in itself was something of a mystery; but Muir felt that, unless he were much mistaken, there was something very strange about that fever with which the girl's brother was afflicted. He could sense it, had seen it in her very eyes as she had choked back some unguarded utterance.

"I fear me, Madame Alice," he mused as he followed Kenton, "that you have told a sad falsehood this morning! Yet I think that falsehood from your lips were sweeter than truth from those of any other woman I have ever seen."

The girl led them swiftly through the woods, moving with the celerity and ease of an Indian maid. Presently Muir perceived that they were treading a scarcely perceptible trail. He glanced around at Tom, who grinned delightedly at him, all fear lost.

How did it happen that such a woman as this was living with that singular creature, Black Sand? Even as Muir thought of this, even as the recollection of her name again smote him with perplexity, Kenton turned his head and spoke in a low voice.

"I reckon she's the da'ter of old Miles Cross what fit at Fallen Timbers with Mad Anthony. I heerd as how he'd left a couple o' younkers."

At this, all Muir's sudden fabric of dream

crashed down, and he strode forward without attention to the trail. Perhaps the girl had caught something of Kenton's aside, for she glanced back with a sudden smiling word.

"I have often heard Black Sand speak of you, Mr. Kenton. He is our guardian, you know. You have not encountered Tecumthe on the trail, by any chance?"

"Ain't seed him, ma'am. Glad to say I ain't seed the Prophet neither."

Muir listened with sinking heart, having no further doubt that Kenton had rightly identified the sister and brother. So Black Sand was their guardian! Then they were orphans — the last of a family that had been wiped out in some bloody frontier episode. This was not at all unusual. Nor was it unusual for settlers to adopt the orphaned children of other settlers. Food was abundant and children were an asset. What was unusual was that in this instance the guardian was Black Sand.

The girl led them swiftly onward, and presently Muir made out one of the small knobs with which the country was dotted, rising just ahead. As the trees thinned out, a cluster of cabins was disclosed on the south side of the hills, with a clearing around it planted with tobacco and corn.

"This is our home," and the girl halted. "My

cabin is the one nearest us. That in the center is my brother's. The far cabin is that of Black Sand. You will find him either inside or else caring for my brother, who is — ill."

Once again Muir detected a dusky flush rising in her cheek. Then, turning abruptly from them, she flitted away and vanished among the trees in the direction whence they had come — doubtless starting anew on her search for fresh meat.

"The A'mighty knows His business, I reckon," said Kenton, with a slow and wondering shake of the head. "Nor it ain't fer man to question Him, friend Dave. Let's drap in."

He strode across the clearing. No sign of life greeted them except from a shack which served as barn, where two horses were hitched to a rude plow. A rifle stood against the door jamb of John Cross' cabin. The aspect of the whole place was disturbing — it impressed Muir with the feeling that something had just happened here, something very unusual. The hitched horses, the rifle, the manner of Alice Cross, were all unnatural.

Then the three visitors were stricken into a halt, halfway across the clearing. A voice had risen from the cabin of John Cross — a terrible, shrilling voice with stark madness in its tone.

"You lie, you lie, Black Sand! I tell you, it

has all been arranged in Vincennes — the town of Tecumthe is to be attacked, massacred, wiped out! Captain Hogan has told me the whole scheme — loose me, loose me, loose me!”

The cry ended in a wild scream of frantic rage, and at the cabin's door appeared a man whom Muir knew instantly to be the brother of Alice Cross. He had the girl's yellow hair and delicate features but he was half dressed, and his face was branded with the sheer insanity of a liquor-crazed individual.

For an instant he halted, staring at the three strangers. Then an inarticulate cry burst from him. He seized the rifle leaning by the door, and threw it up. Muir leaped in at him, sensing the mad purpose. The rifle roared out almost in his face, and he was sent staggering backward.

Tom caught him, but Muir only gripped the negro's arm, watching in stupefied wonder. Close upon the shot, Sime Kenton had sprung in and grappled the man; the two staggered from the doorway, and then Black Sand made his appearance, coming from inside the cabin. Yet those two struggling figures formed a sight that held Muir gripped.

The younger man was a creature of demoniac beauty, and his supple strength was frightful to see put forth. Kenton, who now stood like a rock,

was plainly exerting all his great strength to quell the snarling, maddened being who was tearing furiously at him. It was not a battle of fists, for although Cross had drawn knife and tomahawk, Kenton gripped him by both wrists and strove desperately to bend the younger man backward. In vain Cross lunged and kicked and bit. Although Kenton's whole body was convulsed with the effort, he still managed to accomplish his purpose, slowly but surely.

At this instant the fight was ended in startling fashion. While the frontiersman was gradually bending his antagonist back, Black Sand gave one erratic leap that brought him beside the two figures. His clenched fist drove out, and caught Cross squarely under the ear. The raving figure went limp and collapsed.

"Dave!" Kenton straightened up and whirled about. "Be you hurt?"

Muir tried to throw off the old negro, then felt a sudden weakness. This puzzled him, for he had not felt any pain, and for an instant he stood without response. Then he smiled — that rare, flashing smile which made men wonder at him.

"Looks like it, Sime," he began, and words failed him. Darkness came down upon him, and he pitched forward.

## CHAPTER VI

*For Him who touches hands with fate  
Faith smooths the road, Love keeps the gate.*

A SWEET voice it was, oddly haunting in its beauty, and the lilt of the voyageur boating-song came with a thrill to Muir's heart.

*“ Derrière chez nous, il y a un étang —  
Ye, ye, ye, ment!”*

Quite sane all of a sudden, quite conscious, the Kentuckian opened his eyes and gazed around. He had a very clear memory of everything that had passed until the darkness fell upon him, yet he could not reconcile it with his surroundings. He lay in a sunny room, and in the air was a scent of mignonette. The walls were of chinked logs, hung over with skins. He recognized his own buckskin suit and accouterments hanging on pegs above a spinning wheel.

Muir sniffed the scent of mignonette. He held up his hand, and was amazed to find it not only feeble, but white and thin. Trying to sit up, he discovered that the effort was not only useless, but

sent a throb of pain across his chest. Yet he tried again, and this time succeeded.

Sitting up, he gazed through an open doorway, saw a clearing outside, and then knew that he was lying in one of Black Sand's cabins. A sun mark on the floor showed him that the afternoon was far spent.

“ Daughter, is all well with you?”

It was the thin, querulous voice of Black Sand, and it seemed to come from an adjoining room. The words were answered by a cry of surprise. Muir recognized the same sweet voice that he had heard singing, and comprehended that it was the voice of Alice Cross.

“ Oh — you are back! Where is Mr. Kenton?”

“ At the Prophet's Town, whither I must depart tonight. We journey with Tecumthe to the Pottawatomie towns in the north. Has God blessed our friend with health? How is John — I trust the grip of Satan has been loosed from the lad?”

“ John is in his own cabin and I am attending to him,” came the girl's reply. “ The black man is out hunting and Mr. Muir has so far shown no sign of recovery, except that the fever seems to have left him —”

“ What ho!” The Kentuckian lifted his voice cheerily. “ Friends, David Muir is awake and

mightily interested in the world. Come in, I pray you!”

His words were met by a short silence, which was broken by Black Sand's voice.

“If you have any bear's oil, daughter, grease the hoe and make me a batch of cakes for my night's journey.”

With this, Muir saw the small and somewhat awry figure of the man himself in the doorway, and was addressed in a solemn tone.

“Praised be providence for its blessings! The hand of the evil one has been heavily upon you, David Muir!”

Crossing to the pallet, Black Sand seated himself on its foot. He gazed steadfastly at Muir, who ventured an astonished reply.

“I suppose, sir, that I have been ill —”

“Do not talk, do not talk!” Black Sand settled himself comfortably. Putting one hand to the pocket of his hide shirt, he drew forth a few grains of powder and, as though from force of habit, began to finger them. “I will explain, sir. Perchance you know that in my care are two children, Alice and John. Sir, it grieves me to say that the boy has evil friends who have led him in the paths of iniquity. In short, he is far in the grip of Satan! At the moment of your arrival I was wrestling with



the Evil Being; the boy was crazed by whiskey and was inhabited by devils. He knew not what he did. Aye, he shot you in the breast, though the bullet glanced from a rib.

“You, sir, were not yet recovered from much hard drinking — let us not mince words! You fell into fever, and for a week have lain here in delirium. Alice has cared for both of you, aided by your black slave —”

“Kenton! You said that he was —”

“Peace!” came the imperious word. “Aye, he went with me to the Prophet’s Town and we are engaged in furthering the business of God among the heathen. You shall wait here until our return, for I must away this very night, lest the black sand of destruction work havoc in the wilderness.”

The head drooped further on the right shoulder, and the thin voice died away, yet the deep blue eyes continued to dwell upon Muir, and the pendulous lip quivered slightly.

Muir now comprehended his position perfectly. So, then, that drink-crazed fool had shot him, after all! And now, weakened with fever, his strength undermined by past dissipation, he was cut off from his search and was destined to a slow recovery here in the forest. The bitter thought was alleviated by the memory of Alice Cross as he had first

seen her beneath the blazed elm. Once again the name startled him, until he remembered that Kenton had identified the girl and her brother.

“Mr. Muir,” and afterward he often wondered whether Black Sand had read his mind in this moment of silence, “take no fear for the morrow. You are safe and well cared for. It may be that God in His infinite wisdom has not laid you low without some purpose. Now I must be gone, for there is much to do.”

Black Sand rose, bowed grotesquely, and disappeared. From outside, Muir could hear his thin voice lifting in a snatch of doggerel, which presently dropped away in the distance:

“Thou, who hast placed us here  
Under the forest,  
Give us Thy faith and fear —  
Thou, who restorest!  
Give us to find again  
Those we are mourning,  
Those whom ——”

Now there was a rush of feet, and through the doorway came Uncle Tom. He fell on his knees beside the bed, gripping Muir's hand to his wet cheeks, crying inarticulate things and sobbing his joy in mingled tears and laughter.

Muir held the grizzled head close to him, unable

to speak for the choking at his throat. Well he knew that no man would ever again love him as did this huge black slave; yet, the next instant, he broke into laughter as Alice Cross appeared in the doorway, with an angry stamp of her foot and indignation in her lovely face.

“Tom, how dare you dump down that bloody deer in my clean kitchen! Get out here and clean that floor, you rascal —”

At Muir’s laugh, she broke off short, smiled, and vanished. Tom, blubbering and grinning all at once, rose and followed her. Then after a moment the girl reappeared bearing a steaming bowl.

“Here’s broth for you, sir,” she said, a pretty flush in her cheeks as she came to the bedside and met Muir’s eager eyes. His smile sent her into rippling laughter. “Nay, but the honest fool angered me, flinging down his bloody deer and rushing in to see you — alas, I am ever hasty of temper!”

She was now clad in butternut homespun, and as Muir looked up he thought that never had he seen so wonderful a woman.

“And your brother John?” he inquired gravely. “He is recovering, I trust?”

A sudden startled fear came into her eyes.

“You — oh, Mr. Muir, I pray you do not bear

him ill will!" she cried, and her hand fluttered down to his as she gave him the bowl. Muir pressed the brown fingers reassuringly and smiled anew, for she did not draw away her hand.

"Ill will — for having given me such a nurse? Madame Alice, you wrong me!"

"Then you will pardon him? He is himself again, and remorse has preyed heavily —"

"Dear lady, I shall even thank him for being the means of holding me here, where it seems that I shall have the happiness of seeing you daily."

"Fine words, sir — yet you seem to mean them," she said, looking steadily at him as she drew back. "I thank you. Now drink this broth, then sleep if you can."

Muir obeyed, and was asleep before the girl left with the empty bowl.

When he wakened again, it was morning, and for a little he lay very quiet and content. In the doorway sat Alice Cross, sewing, and Muir saw that she was repairing the rent in his buckskin shirt and the bullet-tear in his coon cap. In the freshness of early morning she was more beautiful than ever, masses of golden hair coiled loosely on her head, her delicately chiseled features intent upon her task. After a moment he cleared his throat, and

instantly she was rising, coming to him with a fresh hoecake and more broth.

Then she moved her stool closer beside him, working and talking at once. He lay, it proved, in her own cabin, where she could better care for him in comfort. Tom was busy with the plow in the clearing, and Muir was glad to find that the old negro had taken hold on things and was assisting the girl.

“John will be here presently,” she said. “He is most anxious to offer you his deep apologies. I pray you be quiet, sir —”

“On one condition,” and Muir laughed happily. “Madame Alice, I hear much talk of John, so why should there not be talk of David also? Surely such formality need not exist in this wilderness, if I be truly fallen among friends.”

For a moment her gaze dwelt gravely on him, then she rose.

“Very well — David,” she said, and broke into a smile. “Here is John coming now.”

Muir caught a faint and halting step, yet for the moment he was not thinking of the brother. How had this girl, by her own admission put here far from the settlements, learned such ways and such speech? Perhaps from Black Sand, he con-

sidered. The Moravian seemed to have an excellent education.

Now a figure darkened the doorway, and Muir looked up to see John Cross. The man's face startled him, so wild was it. Filled with something of the girl's delicate beauty, it was none the less the face of a lean wolf; yet the eyes were those of a sorrowing woman, haunting in their melancholy. Their brilliance was enhanced by the ghastliness of the pallid features — evidently Cross had been in no better case than Muir.

“Mr. Muir?” Cross came forward and took the stool brought him by the girl, lowering himself upon it stiffly. “I regret more than I can say, sir, that I met you as I did. I beg to offer my apologies —”

“Say no more,” broke in Muir, who perceived that these words came with difficulty to the lad's lips. “It was not your chance shot alone that wrecked me, but the evil which I have done to myself in the past. Frankly, I have nearly ruined myself with hard liquor. Now, I trust, things will take another turn with me.”

His words, by no means undesigned, brought a deep flush to the pallid face of the younger man. There was something in that face which Muir disliked. It was not wholly the brand of drink, nor

was it the passionate, unbridled temper. Rather, it was the same latent cruelty, intolerance, which lent to his whole aspect its wolfish air. None the less, he was young; not over one and twenty, thought Muir. From his own knowledge of men, the Kentuckian was well able to read the haunting look of those eyes. He saw that John Cross was far on the same road which he himself had so lately traveled.

In the sullen eyes of the man, Muir now perceived that his words had wakened a slumbering hostility. Even with that thought, however, another came to his mind. It brought him to his elbow, regardless of the pain that twinged through him.

“Cross!” he exclaimed. “And the French is du Croix — tell me, sir! Is it as Kenton thought, that you are the son of a settler named Miles Cross — or are not you and your sister French? I have —”

“No!” The word burst from Cross with angry vehemence. “No, damme! We are not French, but honest Americans, Mr. Muir, born and raised in this country. Aye, and I’d have you know that my father fought in the Revolution! Why should you leap to the conclusion that we are French, simply because we live on the frontier —”

“John, dear, please!” The girl came up, gently seizing her brother’s arm. “Mr. Muir meant nothing amiss by his words.”

“No, no.” Muir lay back again, white with pain and anger. “I meant naught, sir.”

Cross sullenly rose, and dragged himself away, the girl assisting. Muir lay quietly, until she returned, her face anxious.

“Pray bear with him,” she said softly, taking up her sewing anew. “He is very proud that our father fought under Washington and that we are true Americans. Indeed, so am I!”

“I meant naught,” said Muir. “Indeed, I too have been a fool, as I said, and I can feel very deeply for your brother.”

“He does not ask sympathy, sir!” she flashed out. Then her face softened, and a sigh broke from her. “Oh, I am wrong to speak so to you! John has not chosen well in his associates. But let us talk of it no more, David.”

That word drew a smile from Muir, and they talked no more of this matter — indeed, they talked little further during the following week, for Muir’s fever threatened to return. Within the fortnight, however, he was able to be on his feet, though work was still far from his ability.

Then fled away three more weeks, while he slowly



regained health and strength. In those weeks he learned many things, and his acquaintance with Alice Cross warmed into friendship and comradely liking. But with John Cross, it was far otherwise.

On one afternoon the brother came into the cabin where Muir was sitting. The Kentuckian, his mind again dwelling on that similarity of names, looked up with a frown, not observing that young Cross had been drinking.

“Tell me, John,” he said absently, “were you not among those who adhered to Aaron Burr? There was a gentleman named du Croix —”

“Devil take you!” burst out Cross. Such insanity of wild fury shone in his eyes that Muir was thunderstruck. “Have I not told you that we are Americans? Let me hear no more of this French talk, or by gad I may forget that you are not a well man! Save your insults for other folks, you clod!”

He turned and departed, not without a slight stagger. Muir, who was white with swift anger, made no response. After this he said no more on the subject and dismissed it from his own mind. Cross avoided him so far as possible, and the two men had little to say to each other, an increasing coldness growing up between them.

The urgently necessary work of the place was done by Uncle Tom, Muir lending what help he

could as he grew stronger. At this time the girl, who must have noticed the ill feeling between her brother and Muir, kept more to herself. No visitors came to the clearing, and no word was received either from Kenton or from Black Sand, in whose cabin Muir and Uncle Tom now dwelt.

As the summer days wore along, Muir, taking up his share of the work and the hunting, began to feel more like his old self. At the same time, his past had marked him. It was rarely that the old boyish smile lightened his face, and at times the craving for whiskey gripped him with terrific force — especially when John Cross was at home. For the lad was often gone, sometimes for days, and invariably returned bringing a jug of white liquor. It was not hard to conjecture that somewhere in the vicinity there was a still. Muir spent many a long hour striding through the woods, fearing lest he come upon the place and yet hoping that he might do so, for the craving waxed strong within him. Find it he did not, however.

Concerning the brother and sister, he picked up a good deal through chance talk. Three years previously, after they had been settled here for some time, the father had departed to trade some corn at the settlements, and had never returned; word was later received that he had been slain in a

tavern brawl, where he had interfered to quell a fight. The mother had shortly afterward died of fever. While the two children were burying her, Black Sand appeared on the scene.

This was no uncommon tragedy of the border. The Moravian rover had taken charge of the two orphans and since then all three had dwelt here together. Muir gathered that John's "evil associates" consisted of certain Indians and traders, but learned nothing very definite; he more than suspected, however, that the boy was acquainted with Hogan.

In this position stood matters when the crisis burst suddenly. Muir was now nearly recovered, and was only awaiting word from Kenton before departing. John Cross had been gone from the place for six days. Just prior to his departure he had bandied hard words with the Kentuckian, and Muir, although restraining himself with an iron hand, had fallen into deep distrust of the lad's growing sullenness.

With Alice herself, Muir found his comradeship ever deepening. She had temper enough, but it was the temper of steel; she owned none of her brother's undoubtedly vicious hostility. In fact, Muir found little in common between them, save that touch of wild beauty in the lad's face.

On the day that John returned, it so chanced that Tom had splintered his axe helve, and Muir was cutting out a fresh one in the sunshine before the cabin. He was carving the helve from a four-foot hickory club which he had just cut. Tom was butchering a newly killed deer, and Alice was at work in her own cabin. The Kentuckian was startled by a shout, and looked up to see John Cross come striding from the trees at the edge of the clearing, rifle in hand. The lad called out again, impatiently.

“Alice! Where the devil are you?”

The girl came to the door of her cabin. Cross waved a hand at her.

“Get some food ready — two of my friends are coming, and perhaps more. Wait! Come here a moment; I have a message for you.”

Muir said nothing, but felt a hot surge of anger at the insolent tone of the young fellow. Alice, however, smiled and joined them, Cross meantime favoring Muir with a black look but not addressing him.

“Alice,” he said, with a hinted sneer, “your gentleman friend will be here in a moment — oh, you know the one I mean! Put on your best gown, girl.”

It seemed to Muir that the girl’s brown cheeks

paled a trifle, but her steady gaze did not falter from that of her brother.

“Whom do you mean, John?”

“Whom do I mean?” and he mimicked her, laughing. “Nay, sweet sister, no virginal modesty now! He to whom you gave your kerchief, our best friend! He comes on weighty business, but I think he had sooner see you than —”

A flame rushed into the girl’s face, and suddenly her temper burst out.

At that moment Muir caught the eye of Uncle Tom, and made a slight gesture that drew the negro.

“You shameless boy!” cried Alice hotly. “Have you no respect for any one? Gave him my kerchief, indeed — when you lost it to him at cards! Go and set table for your own drunken swine and keep them at their distance from me. If Black Sand were here, your graceless runabouts would have their crops full!”

Muir turned at a touch, and found Tom bending over him.

“Go to the house,” he murmured softly. “Get the rifles ready. Stay hidden. Trouble.”

Cross had gone livid with rage at the girl’s words. He took a swift step forward and seized her shoulder roughly.

“Damme, you’ll do as I say!” he cried. “I tell

you I'll have no more of this! You remember that you're a settler's sister now, and you can't ruffle it any longer with your fine French airs over me. My name's Cross, and I'll have none of this du Croix folly —"

Muir leaped to his feet. With a sweep of his arm he sent the speaker staggering a yard backward. His gray eyes flamed out with sudden anger and surmise.

"What's this?" he broke out. "Then you are really Jean du Croix, and this is your sister, Alixe du Croix!"

The lad's hand was on his knife, his face convulsed by rage; but Muir's words halted him.

"Devil take you! What is it to you?"

"This!"

The Kentuckian's hand went to his pocket, and he turned as he drew forth the scrap of lace, holding it out to the girl.

"Alice, is this yours?"

She uttered an exclamation.

"Where did you get it? I — I lost it months ago —"

"Deal with me in this, you Kentucky farmer!" Cross came leaping between them, his knife flaming in the sunlight. "Where got you that piece of lace?"

Muir's cold eyes fairly drove him back a pace. The girl intervened anxiously.

“John, have a care! This —”

The lad shoved her aside and faced Muir. “You impudent dog, that lace belongs to Captain Philip Hogan! It was my pledge to him that he should have the hand of my sister — ho, there, Hogan! Just in time, man! Come over here!”

Muir whirled about, to look at the approaching figure of his enemy.

## CHAPTER VII

*When bides a snake within the nest,  
Who smiteth soonest smiteth best.*

“ALICE, get back to Black Sand’s cabin — quick!” shot out Muir swiftly.

From the corner of his eye he saw the girl, terrified and shrinking, obey his command. Then he could spare no further thought on her, for Hogan was almost upon him; and behind Hogan, the figures of three Indians, armed and painted, and evidently chieftains of rank.

Instantly, John Cross was relegated to the background. Hogan advanced, his black eyes fastened upon Muir, their baleful gleam belying the smile that rested on his lips. Muir met the look steadily, restraining his own passionate impulse to anger, and stood leaning on the shaft of hickory.

“So, so, here is my old friend Mr. David Muir!” said Hogan very softly.

Muir made no response, but under his undeviating look, Hogan’s sneering poise began to fall off. The whole affair had come like a flash. Too late, Muir now saw how the furious false pride of



John Cross had deceived and hindered him. Too late he realized how the lad, sullenly disliking him, had flashed into impassioned negation, considering himself insulted by being called French. So Kenton had been wrong, after all! Muir now wished that he had forced matters to an explanation, but it was too late for regrets.

Also, Muir began to comprehend Hogan's utter villainy. The scout knew brother and sister well, and had seemingly arranged with John Cross to marry Alice. Thus half of the money in the hands of Berthoud would come to him, and it was highly probable that he had formed some scheme to get hold of the portion which of right would go to John Cross.

Under Muir's regard, Hogan lost his temper completely.

"I would suggest that you leave this settlement at once," he flashed out furiously. "The presence of drunken fools is not wanted here. Kindly rid us of your presence."

Muir only laughed a little. That laugh gave no indication of what was passing in his mind, nor did his restrained response hint at the flame that inwardly consumed him.

"I fear, Mr. Hogan, that your wishes have small weight hereabouts. I deeply regret that we meet

upon a spot which is hallowed to peace. Otherwise, I should be happy to carry out the threat that I made at our last meeting."

The two men were ten feet apart. Now John Cross came forward, between them, staring at Hogan in open surprise. The three Indian chiefs had halted to one side, and were watching the scene in grim unconcern.

"Do you know this fellow, Philip?" cried out young Cross. "Devil take me, you said naught of it when I told you about him!"

"I preferred to surprise you." Hogan grinned as he spoke. "Muir, what do you here?"

"None of your cursed business, renegade," said the Kentuckian. Again he laughed a little, and again the laugh gave no hint of the blood lust in his heart. He could not forget that the man facing him was his father's murderer. "Get on with your friends, Hogan, and see to it that you keep out of my sight hereafter, else I may quite forget that this is no place for brawling with half-bred curs."

Hogan, partly shielded behind the figure of John Cross, slid one hand along his belt. Though the motion was hidden, the man's face was not. The devilish rage in that face, the same stark murder that had shone there in the store of Audubon in

Louisville, once more conveyed a flash of warning to Muir.

“Careful!” he cried swiftly, but too late.

Hogan, with a flicker of his wrist and arm, had thrown his tomahawk in an underhand fling, so that the weapon whirled up beneath the arm of John Cross. Then, shoving Cross aside, the scout leaped forward, knife in hand, to follow up the stroke.

But David Muir had seen such work long ere this. He jerked his head sharply, and the razor-edged “tom axe” only snipped a lock of his black hair in its passing. Then, as Hogan came in at him, Muir swung out with the shaft of wood in his hand.

There was no mercy in that blow. The stout hickory took Hogan full above the ear, and without a groan the scout pitched forward and sprawled in the dirt. Over his body sprang Muir, darted upon John Cross, and with a single wrench tore the knife from the other’s hand. Then he caught the younger man by the shoulder.

“You fool!” he cried harshly. So full of contempt and anger were his eyes that Cross stood transfixed and staring. “You fool! Now get this foul friend of yours out of my sight, before I put a bullet into him!”

Cross stood motionless, utterly astounded by

Hogan's fall, by Muir's sudden transformation, by the threatening tragedy of the whole scene. The three Indians still watched, immobile. Muir turned away and strode toward the cabin of Black Sand without another glance at the prostrate Hogan, knowing bitterly that he had only knocked the scoundrel senseless.

“This is the second time he would have murdered me as he did my father,” thought Muir. “Lucky how that face of his warned me! Clearly enough, he knows that I've spoiled his game to get hold of the Cross money, or at least I will spoil it. Why the devil did Berthoud ever trust such a man! Now, if he can, he'll put a bullet into me — and the sooner he tries, the better satisfied I'll be. I'd like nothing better than to shoot it out with him here and now!”

For the present, however, Muir felt satisfied that he was safe. Against Hogan, he was fully warned, and the Indians would certainly offer him no harm while on Black Sand's actual premises. Hogan's schemes were completely checkmated.

At Muir's approach the cabin door was flung open, and Tom appeared, rifle in hand. Muir glanced back; Cross and the three Indians were lifting Hogan to his feet and there was no indication of any further hostilities. Then, entering the

cabin, Muir found Alice at his side, catching his arm in swift anxiety.

“No harm done,” he said, quietly patting her hand, and mistaking the thought in her golden-brown eyes. “John isn’t hurt —”

“Come, quickly! Do you know those men?” she interrupted. Then, turning, she drew Tom aside from the half-open door and pointed, excitement in her manner. “Look! That first one, with the eagle feather, is Winnemac, one of the greatest Pottawatomie chiefs; the one behind him, with the blanket and the short musket, is White Loon, an Ottawa; the third —”

She paused for breath, since the words had poured from her in mad haste. Muir, looking at the three redskins, perceived that the third was a tall man, elaborately dressed and the bosom of his red coat hung with medals.

“Yes?” he prompted. “Who is the third, then?”

“Tecumthe’s brother — the Prophet!”

Muir started. As he stared with new interest at the group of men, who were assisting Hogan across the clearing toward the cabin of John Cross, he suddenly was aware of a black streak under his arm. Whirling, he found Tom kneeling and in the very act of firing his long rifle.

“Confound you!”

Muir darted his hand down beneath the falling flint and knocked the powder from the pan. Then, with a grimace of pain, he disengaged his hand from the lock and jerked the huge negro upright.

“Who gave you permission to fire? What do you mean by it?”

“Miss Alice done say dat am de Prophet,” rejoined Tom, terrified by Muir’s wrath. “Marse Dave, you ain’t gwine see him procrastinate around dat-a-way and not shoot? What de folks at home say when dey hears we killed dat Injun, suh?”

“You shoot without my permission, Tom, and devil take me if I don’t sell you down river! Fire the first shot here, and we’d be attacked by all the Indians in the country! Don’t dare attempt a thing unless we’re attacked. Don’t you know this is a sacred place to the redskins? Now stay on watch and keep your mouth shut.”

Muir slammed and barred the door, and turned to the girl.

“Alice, tell me what you know of this man Hogan.”

It was a demand, rather than a question, and Muir’s face was hard and stormy. The girl made response in troubled accents.

“He has been here several time, Dave, and has always been quite gentlemanly until the last

occasion — several months ago. Then he got John aside and they played cards and diced and drank —”

Muir nodded. “All right. Never mind the rest — it’s easy to imagine. I’ll tell you what I know about the scoundrel.”

Alice already knew a great deal of his story. Now, with bitterness clutching at his heart, Muir told her about that last night in Lexington, and the words of Henry Clay, and how he had discovered the identity of his father’s murderer. When he had finished, he sat silent, his face like stone. The tale had not been an easy one to tell, for he spared himself nothing; she must have felt this, for suddenly he found her hand creeping into his.

“Don’t feel so bitterly, David,” she said simply. “You’ve made mistakes, but so does every one. And what does it matter, so long as we know them for mistakes, and profit by the knowledge?”

Muir drew a deep breath. “No, it doesn’t matter, Alice. Some day I shall go to Henry Clay in Washington, I trust, and reclaim that medal.”

“My father was of the Cincinnati, too,” she said. “John has his emblem and his certificate, signed by Washington.”

There was a silence, while Muir stared through a loophole at the clearing outside; the visitors had dis-

appeared from his range of vision, but he was not thinking of them. So this was Alixe du Croix! Muir felt no great elation over being in position to restore her birthright to this girl; now that the swift excitement of the realization had passed, the personal element had taken hold of his mind. Her half of the inheritance would make her a rich woman for that day and generation, particularly on the frontier. And who was he to have aught to do with her? A penniless wanderer, an outcast —

“Nay!” He threw back his head, the thought firing his gray eyes with pride. “I am a son of the Cincinnati, gainsay it who will! And it seems to me that I have found work ready to my hand. That must come first. Afterward I can think of myself.”

So, turning, he gently told the girl of the heritage awaiting her and her brother in Louisville.

She heard him gravely, her startled eyes fastened on his face, her fingers still enclosed in his hand. No word did she say, although when he told of how Hogan had gone back to Louisville with a report of failure, he felt her hand quiver suddenly. When he had made an end of the tale, they sat for a little space, wordless, Muir staring out at the clearing, the girl watching his face as though she found there things which held her speechless. Only



old Tom, rifle in hand, moved from loophole to loophole, keeping his restless watch.

To Muir's mind, though he did not mention it, the outlook was a dark one. Hogan had evidently hoped to force Alice into marriage by the aid of her brother; but did John Cross know of this inheritance? No, or he would have told his sister. Cross possessed a sullen but passionate temper, was a drunkard — but was not dishonorable. Obviously, Hogan had held the whole thing a secret. There lay the sore point. Hogan was hand in glove with the Prophet and these other two chiefs. Muir knew the latter by name, as being of the war party and opposed to Tecumthe and that chieftain's high sentiments. They and their warriors wanted whiskey and guns — which Hogan no doubt supplied. The Prophet was opposed to liquor, but then the Prophet wanted war and was something of a diplomat.

“Marse Dave!”

Tom called swiftly, and Muir bent forward. He saw the squat figure of Winnemac the Pottawatomie striding across the clearing toward the forest, the other two chiefs following him. At the same instant, John Cross appeared, coming openly from his own cabin and walking toward that of Black Sand. Muir pushed Tom aside and opened the door, waiting

there until the younger man drew nearer. Cross came to a halt and addressed him.

“Mr. Muir! Will you come out and speak with me on a matter of importance?”

The words were quite dispassionate. Searching the man’s face, Muir found there only a cold gravity; so like was the face to that of Alice, in this moment, that something clutched at Muir’s heart — pity, perhaps.

“You are alone?”

“Yes.”

“Marse Dave!” spoke up Tom in protest, “mebbe dem Injuns got some bobbery planned —”

“Shut up!” snapped Muir. Alice had come to him and he was looking down into her eyes. “Yes? What is it, Alice?”

“Please bear with him, David!” she said softly. “He is not himself when he has been drinking, but he is not bad, really —”

“I know, girl.” Muir smiled, all the lean harshness suddenly stricken out of his face. “I know. Trust me.”

He leaned over and brought her hand to his lips. Then, leaving his rifle behind, he stepped past the door and closed it behind him. Cross was unarmed.

“Come a little aside, sir,” said the younger man.

“Our talk must not be overheard. It is of great importance.”

“I should imagine that your sister might be trusted,” said Muir.

At the words, Cross flushed, but gave no answer, and Muir followed him. They walked down across the clearing, and the younger man seated himself on a stump. Just beyond them grew a thick clump of bushes.

Muir, knowing that Tom would be watching with ready rifle, and entertaining no suspicion of any treachery, did not hesitate. He sat down and filled his pipe, and Cross silently handed him flint and steel. Not until his pipe was alight was the silence broken.

“Mr. Muir, we do not like each other,” said Cross abruptly, “and chiefly, perhaps, because Mr. Hogan is my friend. Ever since your intrusion here, I have feared lest you come between him and Alice, whose hand I have promised him. However, let that pass. You know, no doubt, that Mr. Hogan is in the government service?”

The Kentuckian replied with a curt nod.

“And you saw that he came here today in company of the Prophet and the two highest chiefs of the allied tribes. For some time past, Mr. Hogan

has succeeded in making himself friendly with these chieftains —”

“By selling them whiskey and guns,” broke in Muir calmly. “Proceed.”

“What matter the means?” returned Cross, his quiet demeanor beginning to break. “By gad, sir, it is time that you understood this affair! Over on the Wabash, the Shawanoes and others have set themselves up under Tecumthe — who, I grant you, is a great man. The Prophet helps his brother, but he thinks only of the day when the warriors can sweep down on the settlements; he is a danger, a menace to the whole border! And now, sir, the time approaches when this conspiracy must be wiped out. The British at Malden are sending a great number of muskets, with powder and shot, to the Prophet’s braves. Tecumthe goes on long exhorting trips, and when he next departs, Mr. Hogan intends to save our frontier settlements.”

“Very patriotic of Mr. Hogan,” said Muir coolly. “In what fashion, pray?”

“In this manner,” returned Cross. “General Harrison is going to march to the Prophet’s Town with his army, but peacefully. He hopes, in the absence of Tecumthe, to make a treaty with the allied chiefs by which the town will be abandoned. He thinks that the Prophet will consent to this, and

that everything can be accomplished without firing a shot. Now, we who are on the spot know better. Harrison is a fool to dream such dreams. Mr. Muir, the redskins must be wiped out while they are in one body, just as Wayne wiped them out at Fallen Timbers! Mr. Hogan intends to accomplish this by having them attack Harrison's army, and is using his influence with the Prophet to this end, knowing that Harrison will destroy them."

"I don't quite understand you!" Muir frowned, finding himself both perplexed and astounded by these revelations. "Surely the Prophet does not condone Hogan's whiskey trade?"

"No. But Winnemac, White Loon and other chiefs want whiskey. Tecumthe refuses to compromise and let them have it. The Prophet does so, however, in order to get their help in his war plans — for the Prophet has none of Tecumthe's high ideals. Now, Hogan is —"

"John, wait one moment!" Muir looked at the younger man, and deliberately assumed a familiar and intimate attitude. "You are quite sincere in believing that Hogan is a patriot who is working for unselfish ends. Now, I beg of you, keep silence while I tell you about him. First, do you know of the money awaiting you in Louisville?"

“Money?” Cross was obviously bewildered. “No.”

Very bluntly, the Kentuckian told his story. As he listened to it, Cross flushed and paled again, his fingers playing with his knife haft. More than once rank disbelief leaped to his eyes, but it vanished under the steady words of Muir. Presently, with a stifled curse of astonishment and anger, Cross lifted a horn flask from his belt and drank deeply.

“Such is the man to whom you promised your sister’s hand,” concluded Muir, after relating what he knew of Hogan as well as the tale of the inheritance. “John, he wants that money which is now in Berthoud’s hands. Providing that he had married Alice, how long would you have lived? Not to reach Louisville, that is sure! Now let’s put this personal matter aside, since you’ve learned about it. Why did you bring me here? In order to persuade me to keep out of Hogan’s affairs?”

Cross nodded. Muir’s tale had evidently stung him very deeply; all the beauty had vanished from his features, and in its place leaped out the cruel wolf look.

“And was this done at Hogan’s suggestion?”

Again the younger man nodded. Muir stared thoughtfully at the ground, for he was suspicious and puzzled. Surely, Hogan would have guessed

that once the two men came together, John Cross would learn about that money in Louisville! The scout was far too crafty to make such a move without some object in view.

“Where does Black Sand stand in this Indian imbroglio?”

“He’s a fool,” muttered Cross sullenly.

“So you named General Harrison.” Muir smiled drily. “John, from what I’ve heard of Harrison, he’s a shrewd man and would like nothing better than to be attacked. Has it occurred to you that Hogan may be acting at a higher instigation in thus stirring up the Prophet to war? Why should not Hogan have lied to you, since —”

“By gad, sir, there have been crooked tongues hereabouts!” Cross leaped to his feet in a furious storm of passion. “Either you have lied, or else Mr. Hogan has lied — and damme if I don’t think the two of you are liars! Let’s have this matter out with him at once —”

Muir, feeling well satisfied with the result of his words, was just lifting the pipe to his lips; but the corncob never reached its destination.

A twisting, curling loop of hide slithered out from the clump of bushes behind him. It settled over his head and shoulders and was drawn taut; Muir felt himself jerked backward to the ground,

then hauled into the bushes, where men fell upon him. Even before he tried to struggle, he realized what had happened.

The three chiefs had summoned some warriors, who had evidently been waiting outside the clearing, and he had been very neatly trapped. With this desperate thought, Muir put forth all his strength in an endeavor to get free. His all was not enough; the binding cord about his arms held him close, hands gripped his wrists and tied them. He perceived that he was in the grip of three powerful Indians, while Winnemac stood looking on and grinning. The whole party was now screened from the cabin by the bushes around.

Muir's first thought was that Cross had lured him into the trap. Then, after his ankles were bound and the three warriors rose, he heard a furious altercation and saw Cross engaged in a heated dispute with Winnemac. Evidently, then, the treachery had been cunningly and thoroughly planned by Hogan.

A guttural exclamation from one of the three warriors caused the chief to turn. Muir remembered Uncle Tom, and lifted his voice in a hasty shout of warning, but he was too late. Unable to see just what had taken place, the old negro had come from the cabin at a dead run — and, like



his master, he was caught by the hide noose as he came close to the brush.

But Tom exacted vengeance for that snaring. He carried his rifle ready, and, just as Muir shouted, the thong slid out over him, settled about his black neck, and jerked him forward. Without hesitation the negro fired pointblank, and the Indian who held the noose fell dead. At that, the others were out and upon him. For an instant Tom seemed about to win clear, for a warrior who had grappled with him was picked up and flung bodily, and Tom went at the remaining man like a maniac. Winnemac, however, picked the right moment and drove his clubbed rifle into the negro's stomach — and the fight was over.

Through this, John Cross stood watching, paralyzed by the swiftness of it all. His face was convulsed with horror — but now it swept into a storm of new passion as the bushes opened and Captain Philip Hogan stepped through them.

## CHAPTER VIII

*When they ring you and scourge you and bait you  
Then laugh! Only death can await you.*

FOR the sake of Alice and for the sake of John Cross himself, David Muir made a frantically determined effort to avert the storm which he now perceived was only too certain to break. He knew that Winnemac, beyond all doubt, could speak English. This doubt was further lessened when, behind Hogan, he sighted the other two head chiefs. The bound figure of Tom had been flung down beside him, and now Muir raised himself and sat up, with one swift cry.

“Elkswatawa!”

This, the Shawano name of the Prophet, at once checked the threatened outburst from Cross, and drew upon Muir the regard of the Indians.

“Elkswatawa!” he went on swiftly. “Here on my right wrist is a leather thong. On that thong is the mark of Tecumthe, who is my friend. Bid your young men see if I speak with a single tongue!”

The one-eyed chieftain uttered a grunt of command, his hideous features staring at Muir. One

of the warriors stooped and found the leather tag. A dead silence fell upon the group; the sight of the token was obviously impressive. Hogan looked down at Muir with venom in his eyes, but dared not speak lest he take the wrong cue.

Then it was that Muir understood what manner of men these were, and what he might expect from them. The Prophet uttered a sharp command; the warrior flashed down with his knife and cut the thong from Muir's wrist, passing it to Elkswatawa. After a cursory examination that chief extended it to Hogan with a grimace, and Hogan uttered a laugh as he seized it.

“Thank'ee, Chief! Mayhap it'll come in handy later on, eh? Now take your prisoners along and leave me to follow with the young squaw.”

The Prophet nodded acquiescence. Incredulous, Muir realized that the authority of Tecumthe amounted to little among these men, who would not even recognize the sanctity of Black Sand's clearing. He saw, too, that he and Tom were to be summarily dealt with, in certainty that the absent Tecumthe would never learn of it. Yet, remembering that proud and kingly man who had sat across the fire from Black Sand on a certain night in Kentucky, Muir thought that the Prophet would act very differently were Tecumthe here.

Now, suddenly, John Cross took a forward step, his knife bared. In the look that he bent upon Hogan there was such passionate fury that the scout involuntarily took a step back.

“John, be silent!” cried Muir in desperation. “Go back and take care of Alice —”

Cross paid no heed to him, but held out his clenched knife hand and addressed Hogan in a voice that shook with uncontrolled anger.

“You dirty dog! You have lied to me and made me a trickster — made me a lure for these two men! Turn them loose at once, d’ye hear?”

Hogan regarded him fixedly, hand at belt. Then, with a swift gesture, he stepped to the side of Muir, leaned over, and slipped the Kentuckian’s knife from its sheath. He rose, and spoke quietly as he came erect.

“John, what’s the matter? You were not speaking to me?”

“Aye!” shouted Cross. “I know all about you — I know your whole dirty plan, and now I tell you that I’ll kill you myself before you ever touch my sister, you dog!”

Hogan stood motionless, but in his eyes was the lurid flame of murder.

“So!” he sneered softly. “And perhaps you would offer to fight with me?”

Cross appeared to take warning, but the flame of rage in his brain drove it out almost at once and he forgot everything.

“Damn you, I’ll tell the Prophet of your treachery —”

The word ended in a gasp, and the head of Cross flew back. Both hands came to his throat; even before the rush of blood, Muir saw the haft of a knife set there in the white flesh, and knew it for his own knife. This time, the underhand throw had driven home the steel!

Cross seemed to double up, his knees loosened, and as he fell he sobbed his life away. Hogan turned quickly to the watching Indians and addressed them in their own tongue. White Loon uttered a call, and other warriors appeared from the nearby bushes. Hogan turned to Muir, with a vicious kick of his moccasined foot.

“Now, drunken cub, you’re out of the way!” he exclaimed. “What will your fair maid say when I tell of how you killed her brother — and show the body as proof, eh. You fool, you fool! She and I go to Louisville together, while you go to hell.”

Laughing, he turned and disappeared in the bushes.

Muir saw that the redskins were now in haste

to be gone. The Prophet barked out an order and, more warriors appearing, Muir and Tom were lifted and carried off into the forest. Once among the trees, they were set down while the three chiefs conferred together to one side.

A good dozen warriors were now grouped around. Twisting as he lay, Muir perceived that Tom, at his elbow, was slowly gasping his way to consciousness again. Now the Prophet gave another order, and the warriors leaped to work. The negro was kicked into life. His ankles and those of Muir were first loosened and then hobbled, so that they could take only short steps. One of the warriors, in broken English, ordered them up, and tied a thong to their wrists; then the entire party started off in single file through the forest.

Once the old negro addressed Muir, but a jab from a rifle constrained him to silence, and no further word was spoken by any. None the less, the Kentuckian began to piece things together, and arrived at certain conclusions which, although highly interesting, were also highly uncomfortable.

It was now evident that Hogan, by some devilish ingenuity, had not only planned the whole trap, but had schemed from the first to murder John Cross. His ingenuity had even committed the crime with Muir's knife, so that Alice Cross might well deem

Muir guilty of the deed. And what of the girl herself? By his last words, the scout plainly intended to carry her off and marry her. In some ways this was well, since he would certainly offer her neither insult nor harm, only marriage at Vincennes being able to secure him the money for which he was playing this game of murder.

Concerning his own position, Muir was in no doubt whatever. He and Tom could look for no mercy whatever. From what Kenton had previously told him, Muir knew that while the Prophet was allied with Tecumthe in the general project of banding the Indian tribes and founding a joint settlement at the juncture of the Wabash and Tippecanoe rivers, the one-eyed chief was also savagely set upon war. Also, Elkswatawa was a man of utter cruelty, and no doubt meant to use the two captives to inflame his own followers still further.

So far, the wonderful eloquence and the amazing personality of Tecumthe had offset the Prophet's influence, and the council of the tribes was irrevocably resolved upon peace. But here came in Governor Harrison, who, although a personal friend of Tecumthe, also had his own future to look after. The men who served under him were very difficult to curb. Tecumthe's ambitions menaced the whiskey trade and gave no opportunity for con-

ducting raids on the Indian lands. Consequently, the borderers were intent upon provoking the red men into war by every possible means. Did Harrison attempt to stem the tide, he would most certainly endanger his own political future. Did he, on the other hand, maintain a semblance of justice and at the same time crush Tecumthe's alleged conspiracy, he would be the hero of the entire border. It was not hard to see what course a shrewd man would choose.

But what of Alice Cross? What of the girl whose brother lay dead at the edge of the clearing behind? Muir groaned at the thought, knowing himself helpless and lost.

Noon passed, but there was no halt for a meal. Two hours afterward, the chief White Loon, after a brief talk with the Prophet, left the party and vanished in the forest. Muir conjectured that, since all the others save the Prophet were Pottawatomies, the Ottawa chief had departed to rejoin a band of his own warriors.

Not until darkness fell did the band halt. Then Muir and Tom, securely bound, were flung down in the center of the group, a brief meal was made on dried venison, and the warriors were asleep almost at once. One brave remained on guard — a warrior painted with white war-paint, the same who



had cut from Muir's wrist the token of Tecumthe. Neither of the prisoners was allowed speech. Muir was utterly worn out by that stiff day's march; escape was quite out of the question, and, despite the pain caused by the thongs that bound him, he presently fell into slumber beside the already snoring Tom.

He was wakened by a kick, and found the dawn upon them. Another snatch of dried venison, and in the same ominous silence the party took up their journey through the forest. Muir observed that they traveled northwest, veering to west as the day wore on, and followed a distinct trail that tokened an objective of some importance.

The two captives were given no consideration. If they lagged, a guttural word and a prodding musket spurred them; if they came to a stream, they were dragged across, without care whether they lived or drowned. Nor were they allowed speech, although Muir guessed that the redskins spoke English upon occasion.

On the second evening, half dead, bedraggled, and weary beyond words, the Kentuckian staggered into what seemed to be an ancient clearing, where several fires were blazing. He comprehended that their destination was reached, though he saw no signs of any town, but he was too worn out even to

eat. Flinging himself down beside Tom, he dropped at once into sleep.

With the morning, however, he awakened to a more lively interest in his environment. He and Tom had been loosed of their bonds, though the white-painted warrior was still on guard over them; and, as he gazed around, Muir began to understand their situation, which was amazing enough. The clearing, in the center of which they lay, was a large one. It contained no lodges whatever, but here were gathered some sixscore Indians. Since it was late in July, the encampment lay beneath the blue sky. This was, evidently, some general meeting place of the tribes, a council spot.

The warriors were of all nations. Muir and Tom between them made out Shawanoes, Pottawatomies, Miamis, Piankeshaws, Delawares, Wyandots, Ottawas, and even two lordly and aloof Sacs. All except the Sacs were in full war paint; and moving from party to party, greeted with obvious fear and veneration, was the miracle-working Prophet.

“Must be a council of war chiefs, Tom!” exclaimed Muir, for the bar of silence had now been lifted from them. “See — there’s White Loon again, with those Ottawas of the bear clan! This must be a secret gathering of the war party from each tribe, called by the Prophet without the knowl-

edge of Tecumthe, and I'll wager that devil Hogan instigated the meeting!"

"Marse Dave, I reckon we-all gwine say good-by," responded the grizzled negro, his haggard features now settled into a strange calm. "Dis hyer Prophet, he's a-fixin' to raise de debbil."

"I expect you're right, Tom," assented Muir, watching the hideous figure of Elkswatawa with interest. His gray eyes were steady and clear, and he flung Tom a smile. "Brace up, old friend! We mustn't give them the pleasure of seeing us flinch."

"Not me, suh! No low-down Injun gwine make Uncle Tom shet his eye — only, suh, I hopes dey won't have none o' dem hobblegobs around."

Breakfast over, the two captives found themselves at once the center of attraction. The Prophet and Winnemac, with other of the head chiefs, were in consultation about a fire, but the remainder of the warriors crowded around Muir and Tom with lively grins. The very fact that they attempted no hostilities, that they spoke entirely in their own tongue, and that they seemed in boisterous good humor, spelled danger to the Kentuckian. Were his conjecture as to this gathering a true one, these warriors were anticipating a rare treat that evening.

Toward noon, Tom and Muir were ordered up and were led to the edge of the clearing, where two

trees grew a dozen feet apart. To these trees they were lashed very thoroughly, while in the center of the clearing was built a long, low fire. Around this fire the Indians seated themselves by tribes.

“Council!” said Muir, watching intently. “No torture yet, to amount to anything, Tom —”

He broke off abruptly. The old negro, worn out and still suffering from that first blow in the stomach, had fainted. His giant body hung limp in its lashings.

“Lucky for him,” thought Muir bitterly. “Well, if Mr. Henry Clay were here now, I think he’d be quite satisfied in the matter of the wastrel! At least, I’ll do my best.”

For the present, however, he was quite left alone. When the calumet had passed around in its slow and ceremonious course, the Prophet rose and addressed the council. What the one-eyed chieftain said, Muir could not understand; but from his voice, his frenzied gestures, and from the effect of the words, he had little doubt that Elkswatawa was talking war and crying for red belts. Then Muir observed something else.

Beside each warrior was a bundle wrapped in list. As each man had advanced to his place, he had put a second and larger bundle on a great heap to one side. These wrapped objects caused the

Kentuckian no little wonder, until suddenly the Prophet, with a dramatic gesture, caught one of them up, ripped off the list wrapping with his knife, and disclosed a British musket. Upon that, Muir comprehended the whole thing, for John Cross had said something about the British sending muskets and powder from Malden. And now the Prophet, whose Indian name signified "Loud Voice," passed into a more violent harangue than ever. In the midst of this, he broke off with startling abruptness and tossed a powder horn into the fire.

Even Muir was alarmed by that seemingly mad action. The seated Indians leaped up with wild cries, shocked out of their ceremonial calm — then one and all stood transfixed with awe. For, instead of an explosion, the flames vomited forth what seemed to be a huge serpent, that came twisting out of the fire, rolled upon the ground at the very feet of the exultant Prophet, and, with a lifelike convulsion, fell to ashes.

"Cunning Britishers!" thought the Kentuckian, comprehending that this was some trick. "And thrice cunning Prophet — damme if you aren't a clever rogue!"

Beyond a doubt, the trick was excellently played; its effect was immediately visible in the looks of wondering awe and fear which were bent upon the

Prophet. The latter seated himself, then drew his blanket over his head to await the outcome of the council.

Winnemac arose, holding a belt of black wampum and another of white. Without a word, he advanced toward the Prophet and dropped the black belt at the feet of the seated chieftain. White Loon followed him, repeating the action. Amid a tense, strained silence, the chiefs arose one by one, passed to the figure of the Prophet, and dropped either red or black belts — the token of war.

Only one delegation failed to join this majority. The two Sac chieftains, proud contempt upon their unpainted features, laid down two white belts and then strode off into the forest and were gone. Whether or not they had seen through the trick of that magic, David Muir could not tell. But there was no mistaking what followed.

After a long period of silence, craftily planned to increase the tension of the scene, Elkswatawa uncovered his head and stared down at the belts. His gaze swept up around the circle of fierce, intent faces; then he suddenly leaped to his feet and pointed at the two captives. Instantly all the dignified silence was shattered by one wild yell of unleashed fury. Springing up as one man, the warriors bounded toward Muir, a flame of naked steel

in their hands. Realizing that fate was close upon him, the Kentuckian faced the charging mob with steady gaze — then the warriors were halted as the Prophet uttered a cry and strode through their midst, halting before the stakes.

He gave a low command. Two braves fetched water and flung it into the face of Tom, reviving him, while the Prophet himself strode to Muir; in that one-eyed, repulsively painted face the Kentuckian saw maddened rage and hatred.

“Long knife!” cried out the chief, in English, his voice ringing deeply and with a trace of Tecumthe’s vibrant power. “We have dug up the hatchet. Your brothers have betrayed their treaties. They have spoken with double tongues. My young men are going to sweep them from the earth, and the Great Spirit will aid us.”

Seeing that some answer was expected, Muir laughed a little. After all, death was no great matter!

“Elkswatawa,” he said, his level gaze never flinching, “you are a village cur who hears the wolf howling in the forest and puts his tail between his legs. Your warriors are like mongrels who snap at the heels of strangers but fear the kick. You captured me by guile on the sacred ground of Black Sand. Were Tecumthe here, you would turn pale

and shrink before him, as a squaw before her master!”

His words were drowned in an outburst of maddened yells. The Prophet motioned to the white-painted warrior, who sprang forward and flourished a knife before the eyes of Muir with a wild grin, and paused to spit in the captive's face. Muir looked at him steadily.

“You are the dog who dared to take from my wrist the token that was placed there by Tecumthe,” he said. “Tell the Prophet to save you quickly if he can, for the wrath of his brother will find you out!”

The warrior drew back, half in fear, then leaned forward with a snarl of sudden rage. His knife swept down and severed the bonds of Muir. One thong alone was left — a strip of hide about his waist that held him loosely tied to the tree-stake. Tom, who was by this time staring around him, was left bound in the same fashion, and the crowd of warriors withdrew to a distance of twenty paces. Muir glanced across at the slave, and his face was transfigured by its old, kindly smile.

“Good-by, old friend!” he called, lifting his voice above the yells. “Good-by, Tom!”

“Good-by, Marse Dave!” Tom gathered himself together and stood very straight, yet with a grayish



pallor creeping into his wrinkled black cheeks. "Ol' Tom'll be ready to tote you 'crost Jordan, suh —"

The negro's words were cut short by a hatchet that spat into the tree beside his ear.

At the same instant, a knife flamed before Muir's eyes and then slapped, quivering, into the wood behind him, so close that the haft stood against his cheek. The game was on!

Knowing that this was but the preliminary, Muir gazed squarely at the circle of warriors and stood as though carved in stone. Silence had fallen upon the crowd, and as man after man stepped forward and let fly, low grunts of disgust or approval alone were to be heard. Slow work was made of it, for each man recovered his weapon after the throw.

With every fresh flame of steel, Muir thought that his end had come, but each time the knife or tomahawk bit into the tree-trunk and left him unharmed. More than once his skin was grazed; more than once a knife pierced his leathern shirt and pinned him to the wood, but he greeted each such throw with a taunting laugh which drew admiring grunts from the torturers. He stood in no actual danger, for all of these men were famed warriors, skilled in such play, and his comments on their poorer

throws caused them much delight; they perceived that his coolness was no less than their own.

As a side glance showed Muir, Tom was likewise unhurt. He thrilled to the courage of the old negro, who stood without a quiver, although one ill-flung hatchet had brought a tiny stream of blood from his brow.

Presently the warriors tired of this sport, seeing that the two captives were too strong of will to show fear. Leaping forward, the white-painted brave seized flaming brands from the fire, ran with them to Tom, and crossed them above the naked feet of the negro. A wild yell of applause swept up at this diversion, and another brave sprang out with burning sticks and bounded forward, laying these across the moccasined feet of Muir.

Now the crowd closed in, silent, watching to see which of the captives would first give way and kick off the torturing brands. Protected for the moment by his heavy moccasins, Muir glanced at Tom. The grizzled negro was standing erect, glaring at his tormentors, yet with signs of agony distorting his features. At this instant the Prophet came striding forward and kicked the brands from Tom's feet; what his purpose was in so doing, however, was never known.

For, like a startled deer, the chieftain whirled

about, listening. From somewhere close at hand drifted up through the trees a thin, querulous voice — a voice that Muir recognized with a gasping thrill of relief. The Kentuckian kicked the brands from his feet, but not a warrior heeded the action. That voice, rising in its singsong doggerel, had gripped them all in swift dismay and consternation —

“The dun deer dies  
 By lick and spring;  
 The eagle cries,  
 Death high a-wing;  
 And in wait God lies  
 For everything.

Scalp locks hang straight  
 When life is done;  
 By many a gate  
 Death's house is won;  
 And God lies in wait  
 For every one.

The sorriest clod  
 May understand  
 How Death's dark rod  
 Cowers all the land;  
 But in wait lies God  
 To guard Black Sand!”

The words died out. A tall figure stepped into the clearing, a dozen feet from Muir's torture tree.

One low grunt of unconquerable amazement broke from the crowd. The Prophet positively shrank back in withering fear. Yet the figure stood motionless, its flitting, birdlike eyes flickering over the assemblage.

With unutterable relief flooding over his soul, Muir recognized Tecumthe. And behind the chief, standing equally motionless, was the strange shape of Black Sand.

## CHAPTER IX

*Simpler than tricksters, stronger than foes,  
Humble to God the great man goes.*

IN a silence that was more deadly and terrible because of its very strangeness, Tecumthe stepped forward, turned his back on the warriors, and looked Muir in the eye.

“My brother,” he said in English, “I am glad to see you.” He whipped out his knife and slashed the thong that bound Muir to the tree, then extended his hand. Muir gripped it and met a firm, strong handshake from iron fingers.

“My brother,” went on Tecumthe calmly, yet with a smoldering flame of frightful anger rising in his eyes, “I am sorry to find that these young men have been playing. I thought they were chiefs, but I see they were only village boys. They have not harmed you?”

“The dogs do not harm the black bear.” Muir laughed lightly. “Although they may tear his fur a little, they are afraid before his teeth.”

Tecumthe’s eyes flitted to Muir’s knife-torn shirt, and gleamed appreciation of the metaphor. A

smile even touched those thin lips, but it was gone instantly.

“I placed a strip of leather on the wrist of my brother, the Black Bear.” As the chief uttered these words, Muir thrilled. They meant that he had been given a name, that he had won a name in bestowal from the greatest of all the forest chieftains. No higher accolade could have been gained through all the frontier than this. “I do not see the leather there. Why does not my brother wear it, so that all the red men may know he is the friend of Tecumthe?”

Now the face of Muir set hard, for there was a grim reckoning at hand. He guessed that Tecumthe had been hiding among the trees a long while, and knew perfectly everything that had taken place in the clearing; therefore, he fell into the part of the little drama which the chief had assigned him, looking toward the bloodstained end. Others looked to that end also. Upon the assembly had fallen a frightful and horrible silence, the palpitating fear of the gathered warriors making itself actually felt.

“Three days ago,” said Muir, “I was talking with John Cross in the clearing of Black Sand. The scout Hogan brought Winnemac, White Loon, Elkswatawa and their warriors to the spot. I was

noosed and taken prisoner, as was my black brother yonder," and he nodded toward Uncle Tom, who had been released by Black Sand and now lay unconscious on the ground. "Hogan basely murdered John Cross, profaning the spot with blood. I showed Elkswatawa the token of my brother Tecumthe. The Prophet laughed, and at his bidding a certain Pottawatomie brave cut the token from my wrist and gave it to Hogan to wear. I do not need to tell my brother Tecumthe the name of that warrior. The great red chief knows everything. To him and to Black Sand the Great Spirit whispered that we were in danger, and they came."

A flicker of gratification passed across the chief's face at these words, then he turned.

Muir saw the once lordly and masterful Prophet standing before them ashen-cheeked, stricken with fear. Out of all that shrinking circle of chiefs and great warriors, not one dared to break the silence. Tecumthe's eyes swept over them like a consuming fire, and they withered beneath the gaze. Then the chief, his hand at the hatchet in his belt, slowly stepped forward.

The circle of chiefs wavered at his approach, watched him in a horrible fascination. In the midst of that circle stood the white-painted warrior; his eyes were fastened on Tecumthe, and in the hideous

face Muir discerned the fear of death. That fear was justified. Without a word, Tecumthe flung back his arm, and the tomahawk sped like a flash of light. One awful shriek burst from the warrior, then he fell with his skull cloven.

“Dog!”

Tecumthe had whirled, with that one spitting word. He threw himself forward and took the Prophet by the throat. For an instant Muir fancied that Tecumthe would slay his worthless brother on the spot, but the chief mastered his rage, flung the Prophet from him with a savage gesture, and then faced the crowd of warriors. His magnificent voice leaped out like a clarion.

“My brothers, I have witnessed your council. I have heard your words of wisdom. My brothers, Tecumthe sees that you have made a mistake, for you thought that *he* had summoned you to this council, when in fact it was Elkswatawa who called you. My brothers, I am here. Let us talk together.”

That they understood his English words was evident. There was a general shiver of relief, and weapons were sheathed; still in the spell of their fear-struck silence, the red men turned and seated themselves again around the council fire. Tecumthe motioned to Muir, who accompanied him and took the indicated place at his side. On the ground still



lay the heap of black belts, with the white wampum of the two Sacs to one side.

Now there ensued a long silence, while the calumet was made ready and passed around. Tecumthe himself performed this rite, passing the pipe first to Muir. Black Sand did not join them, but remained at the edge of the clearing, working over the figure of Tom. The Prophet took his place among the Shawano chiefs, but without the honor he had held a short while before.

From Kenton, Muir had heard that of all the Indian tongues that of the Shawano tribe was the most musical and flexible. When at length Tecumthe arose and began speaking, he found it true. Never had Muir heard such remarkable oratory, even from the lips of the great Henry Clay; though he could not understand the words, he could make out the sense of the speech from Tecumthe's gestures, from the tones of that organ-like voice, and from the effects produced.

Tecumthe swept into an impassioned address, his voice vibrating until it resounded from the circling trees in bitter denunciation — then changed abruptly to the lowest and most rippling music that Muir had ever heard from human throat. Never again, he knew, would he hear such a command of oratory as this Shawano chief possessed;

like the red men themselves, he sat in spellbound tensity, gripped powerless.

Tecumthe singled out the Prophet in his contemptuous accusation, kicking aside the heap of wampum in angry disdain; and a terrible wave of anger went leaping through his words until the terrified Loud Voice bent under the storm, shamelessly covered his face with his blanket, and sat thus beneath the whiplash of his brother's eloquence.

Then, turning to the others, Tecumthe picked up the two white Sac belts which lay at his feet, and his voice and manner changed completely. Even Muir could understand the passionate appeal of those words, while the ringing, vibrant tones carried him aloft in their sheer beauty. That this was a plea for peace was clear enough.

The great chief had not yet finished, however. Abandoning his appeal, he caught up one of those wrapped bundles, exactly as the Prophet had done. Tecumthe, too, stripped off the wrappings to expose a musket and horn of powder. Holding these aloft, he addressed the assembled chiefs with such biting scorn, such evident denunciation of the British and of the chiefs themselves, that Muir wondered how they could calmly sit beneath the stinging flow of words. Nor could they. Uneasy grunts

arose, and with a leap the infuriated White Loon suddenly came to his feet as though to interrupt.

Then Muir saw how Tecumthe had lured his opponents on. This action of the Ottawa's was a flagrant and unpardonable breach of council etiquette. No sooner was White Loon on his feet than he realized his act; he was shamed, he had lost control of himself, and Tecumthe faced him with such an outburst of furious rage that he sank down again abashed and with his influence destroyed. Tecumthe whirled on the others, lashing them unmercifully with vitriolic words that searched them out and bit deeply. He took each chief in turn, and in turn each chief drew his blanket over his face and bowed to the storm.

Then abruptly Tecumthe sat down — and, with the movement, he tossed the rifle and powder horn into the fire.

There was no stagecraft or mummery about this. The horn exploded before any of the startled warriors could spring up; burned brands, shredded bits of horn and glowing embers showered the entire gathering. The dramatic effect was tremendous. Through it all sat Tecumthe, watching with keenly proud eyes; and, as the uproar subsided, he called to the Prophet and uttered a curt order. Cringing and in terrible fear, Elkswatawa picked

up the war belts and threw them into what remained of the fire, and by this action destroyed all the influence and power that he had built up for himself.

Now Tecumthe paid his brother no further attention, but called forth the chiefs one by one. They came, and, to Muir's surprise, came with admiration and respect showing in their proud, fierce eyes; but proudest and fiercest of them all was Tecumthe, who remained seated as they flung at his feet the white belts which they had retained. Then, with a sweep of his hand toward the forest around, he dismissed them; and, taking the guns, they departed in silence. The Prophet vanished among the others.

In less than a moment, Muir found himself alone with Tecumthe and the dead warrior. To one side, Black Sand was holding Tom in his arms. The tension removed, Muir leaped up and strode hurriedly to the side of the old negro, whose feet and legs had been much burned but who was otherwise unhurt. Taking Tom's hand, Muir looked up into the face of Black Sand.

"Whether I owe greater thanks to you or to Tecumthe, I know not," he said gravely, and in his other hand gripped that of Black Sand. Tecumthe had joined them, and Black Sand gave the chief a swift glance.

"You owe thanks to none but God," rejoined

Black Sand. "Guided by Him, I returned home a few hours after you had left the clearing, and with me was this gentleman," for so, quaintly but justly, he usually termed the chief. "We found the body of John —"

"Alice!" exclaimed Muir eagerly. "Was she there? Had Hogan carried her off?"

"So it would seem, sir," assented Black Sand sadly. "From the signs of the earth, we ascertained much that had happened. Since Alice had departed with a white man, we followed the larger trail. It was important that this gentleman should learn the designs of his despicable brother. This we have done, and have defeated them."

"Kenton —"

"Is at Vincennes. What of Alice? Surely not even the Prophet dared to injure her? And how came your knife in the throat of poor John?"

"Peace!" groaned Muir. "If there is food, let's eat and I'll give you the tale. We are half starved. For you, Tecumthe, I have grave and important news."

There was no lack of game in the camp. Tecumthe secured some bear's fat and managed to relieve the pain of Tom's burns; after which, with evening close at hand, Muir told of that last eventful morning at Black Sand's settlement. When he

related what Cross had said about Hogan and General Harrison, he saw the brown fingers of the chief contract and open again convulsively, but Tecumthe's face did not change, nor did he speak.

Black Sand, too, sat wordless. His head drooped a little on his right shoulder and he pulled at his pendulous lower lip while he listened, but no grief did he show over the death of John Cross, and no anxiety regarding the fate of Alice.

“I suppose,” said Muir to him in conclusion, “that you will accept my aid in safely recovering Alice? Hogan must have taken her to Vincennes, unless he has deposited her with some Indians or settlers —”

“She is in the hands of God, friend Muir,” observed Black Sand. “No harm will come to her, be assured. If Hogan took her to Vincennes, all is well. Simon Kenton is even now in that town, and he would know her and care for her. But more likely, Hogan has hidden her with some outlying family, perhaps in the Prophet's Town. Now leave her fate in higher hands than ours, for we have greater matters to discuss.”

Indeed, the man seemed to speak of Alice Cross indifferently, almost hurriedly, as though things of more importance weighed upon him. Shocked though he might be, Muir knew that Black Sand

was not to be hastened or bullied. For a moment he chafed, however, until Tecumthe spoke.

“My brother Black Bear speaks with a single tongue. He has borne me bad news of Hogan and others. He has seen that these chiefs have given me belts of peace. Is it so?”

“Aye,” assented Muir. “Tecumthe’s voice was to them like the wind to the autumn leaves.”

The chief smiled, but the smile was sad.

“My father Black Sand, for many winters I have prayed at your side to the Great Spirit. I have kept my young men from the war trail, I have kept whiskey from their lodges. I have taught them to till the ground and to hunt game, to live in peace and to pray the Great Spirit. Does Tecumthe speak with a single tongue, my father?”

“He does,” said Black Sand curtly.

“My father has seen that I have kept faith with Governor Harrison. My young men have been slain, my lands have been seized, my hunting grounds have been despoiled, and the Long Knife has not kept faith with me. Is it so, my father?”

“It is so,” assented Black Sand. Tecumthe paused, then went on slowly.

“My father speaks with the tongue of the Great Spirit. He has heard the words of my brother Black Bear. He has heard how the Long Knife wishes to

force war upon Tecumthe. He knows that Tecumthe goes from here to meet Governor Harrison. My father, shall it be white wampum or black wampum? Let my father speak. Tecumthe will obey.”

With a start of amazement, Muir searched the grave, noble features of the Indian and found them as though carved from granite. Thrilling to the very thought, he realized that in this moment was history being made — that Tecumthe was trembling in the balance between peace and the war to which he seemed irrevocably forced. And what was this about a meeting with the governor?

Now the Kentuckian saw what had so terribly overpowered Black Sand, even to forgetfulness of those whom he loved; for upon the words of this singular creature there now depended the peace of the frontier. The Moravian held his peace a little space; he had ceased to pull at his lip, and instead was playing with a few grains of powder taken from his pocket.

“Brother,” he began slowly, a gathering firmness in his querulous tone, “the British are urging your warriors to take up the hatchet. The Long Knives also would force war upon you, because you have injured their whiskey trade and because they fear your greatness; so they seek a pretext to destroy your town. These things we know.



“ Brother, you have formed all the red men into a confederacy of peace. The black sand of destruction is not sown in the wilderness, and the Great Spirit loves his red children. The tribes are allied, and soon you go to the south to bring the Creeks and Cherokees into this federation of peace and good will. Is this so?”

“ It is so, my father.” Tecumthe stared into the gathering night, his face set and stern. Black Sand pursued his address.

“ I will tell you what shall come to pass, Tecumthe, and you shall remember my words. Before you are two trails. You may move all your young men and your tribes and your council fire into the country of the Illinois where there are no white men, making alliance with the Sacs and the Sioux, and there you shall wax great. You may preserve peace with the Long Knives, who cannot reach you, and with each moon your dream shall grow to fulfillment. This is one trail.

“ Here is the other trail: You may take up the hatchet, and you shall perish. Your council fire shall be stamped out. Your young men shall die. Your lands shall pass to the Long Knives. The black sand of destruction shall wipe out your name. I have spoken.”

Black Sand's voice fell, and his head drooped

again upon his shoulder. The Kentuckian sat staring, intent, utterly fascinated by the eagle-like features of Tecumthe. Never had he seen more expressive features than those, although the chief sat gazing before him with unseeing eyes. At the first words of Black Sand, a glory had lighted up the red man's face — the glory of a visionary, who sees before him some great dream growing to sure accomplishment. Then this radiance passed and faded, to be succeeded by a look of such utter sadness that Muir was appalled by its stern agony. In this instant he saw the greatness of this red man, the high nobility of his spirit, the terrible struggle that was consuming the very soul of him. Suddenly Tecumthe spoke, in an agonized voice.

“My father, I am a warrior. Is it not better to die with honor, to see my tree cut down by the hatchets of lesser men, than to see it flourish in the shadow of dishonor and cowardice? What would the Great Spirit think of Tecumthe, did his scalp lock grow gray among the Sioux and his young men till the ground of strangers because they could not keep the lands of their fathers? No! I can lead five thousand warriors on the war path!”

“Brother,” cried out Black Sand, startling vigor thrilling his tone, “I tell you this! The Great Spirit whispers to me that Tecumthe has been

chosen to lead His red children out of bondage; that in the western country of the Illinois, where there are no white men, Tecumthe shall build up such a confederacy as shall make the Long Knives pause forever; that Tecumthe shall there kindle a council fire that will never be stamped out. Choose, chief of the Shawanoes! Choose between the Evil One and the Great Spirit!”

With a gesture, the Indian drew his blanket over his bowed head, but not before Muir had caught the glimmer of a tear on his cheek.

Now for a long space there was silence, a tense and drawn silence of waiting. Under cover of that blanket, Tecumthe was fighting the battle within himself; in that stillness, Muir could actually hear the grains of powder slowly gritting between the restless fingers of the old Moravian. Then, abruptly, Tecumthe flung off the blanket, raised his head, and a smile sat upon his proud features.

“My father,” he said to Black Sand, “the Great Spirit has whispered to my heart that you have spoken well. Listen! I shall obtain a pledge of peace from my chiefs. I shall smoke the calumet with Governor Harrison, and my young men shall look upon Vincennes and they shall see that peace is good. Then I shall go to the Creek and Cherokee nations, and bind them in a federacy of peace, and

the hatchet shall be buried." He paused a moment, then went on, his eyes kindling eagerly.

"My father, when I return from the south I shall move my council fire to the west. Already the Sac chiefs and the Sioux are my brothers. My people shall enter into their towns, and the Great Spirit shall guide us. There shall be one council fire for the red men. There shall be no more taking of scalps. Tecumthe has said."

Muir glanced at Black Sand, and found the man's face drawn, haggard, ghastly with the tenseness of his concentration. Tecumthe rose and strode away among the trees; and after a little Black Sand looked at Muir and broke the silence, a terrible earnestness in his voice.

"Mr. Muir, you have seen a great thing this evening. My very soul is aching for that man who has just left us."

"Why?" demanded Muir, astonished.

"Because, sir, I think that black treachery will annihilate him. Yet it cannot be helped; God has given me to speak, and I have spoken. It may be, after all, that the black sand of destruction shall never again be strewn in this wilderness — yes, it may be that there shall be one shedding of blood, and then no more —"

Then, abruptly dismissing his vague phrases,

Black Sand fell into swift talk, and Muir was given a lucid understanding of many things. It proved that Tecumthe and Black Sand had been in the north, binding peace and federation upon the Ottawas and Pottawatomies there. At the Prophet's Town, upon their return, they had met Sime Kenton bearing messages from Governor Harrison. It was now close to the end of July, and before the end of the month Tecumthe was to bring certain of his chiefs to hold a conference with Harrison at Vincennes. But, previous to this conference, the chief was to meet Harrison in private and arrange matters which could not well be thrashed out in public council. This private meeting was to take place within two days.

Somewhat to his surprise, Muir learned that at the present moment he was less than two hundred yards from the Wabash itself, and only ten miles below the Prophet's Town.

Now that the strain of concentration was over, Black Sand discussed the question of Alice, and what should be done in her behalf. Also, Uncle Tom was unable to follow a trail, and would be disabled for some little time to come. Therefore, since canoes were hidden close by on the river, the Moravian suggested that he take Tom to the Prophet's Town, later to return to his own settle-

ment, while Muir went on with Tecumthe to the private meeting with Harrison.

“But what would the chief say to such a scheme?” objected the astonished Kentuckian. “He has not asked me to go. Besides, you are the one—”

“Nay, not I!” retorted Black Sand. “I have no liking for Harrison, and I will have no dealings with him. As for Tecumthe, he likes you mightily, as you have had proof this day. He will be glad of your company, perhaps of your advice, for your tongue is not forked. Then, in regard to Alice, you may confer with Kenton, and if Hogan has not taken her to Vincennes we must begin a search. I will soon discover if she is in the Prophet’s Town.”

The warriors of Tecumthe were to march slowly toward Vincennes, to be joined by the chief after the private interview with Harrison. This meeting was to be arranged by Kenton, so that each side was free from any suspicion of treachery, both red men and white trusting the old scout implicitly. After talking over the scheme at length, Muir admitted that Black Sand was exceeding wise in counsel, and accepted the plan. While they were still discussing it, Tecumthe returned and was made acquainted with Black Sand’s proposal.

“My brother Black Bear shall paddle with me,”

he said, and made a gesture of finality. "Now let us sleep, for we must be off early."

Muir laid himself down beside Tom, to whom he explained the situation. The poor negro had no liking for his visit to the Indian town in the company of Black Sand, but he had no choice in the matter. Besides, he had come to place some faith in the Moravian.

So the Kentuckian slept, nor dreamed what heartsick days awaited him.

## CHAPTER X

*'Ware the wolf of vows! Who makes  
A promise glibly, glibly breaks.*

IN the stern of the canoe sat Tecumthe, brown, stalwart, tireless, his birdlike eyes ever flitting from bank to bank of the river. In the bow was David Muir, less used to the paddle and somewhat awkward with his blade; at his right wrist now dangled another of those leather tokens, made overnight by Tecumthe and marked with the chief's own totem.

Down this same river, the Kentuckian knew, had passed the forgotten heroes of aforetime. Here, on this same Ouabache, had paddled La Salle and Tonti. Here had voyaged the black robes, followed by St. Ange and the Sieur de Vincennes. Hither had come those mongrels of the New World, the *coureur de bois*, naked and painted like the savages — fur hunters, rovers, freebooters of the wilderness who acknowledged no law and who feared neither God, man nor devil. But their day was long past.

On these waters had fought other men — Pontiac and his Ottawas, the now exterminated Illinois, the



Chickasaws who slew Vincennes, the Iroquois and the Menomines, called by the French the Folles Avoines, and by the English settlers Fallsavines. These, too, had vanished from the stage, and in their place had come Delawares and Shawanoes and tribes of lesser renown, with the wave of leather-shirted white men shoving them all steadily into the westward. Thinking of these things, Muir looked back at Tecumthe and wondered what lay in the future for this lordly chieftain.

Of himself, the Kentuckian recked little. After his illness he had become whole of body again, and all the past seemed very dim and distant. At times he remembered the golden eagle of the Cincinnati with a mellowed bitterness; but on this morning, at the end of July, he was enthralled by the present. There was the rescue of Alice Cross to be pushed, and with every hour his resolve to recover her grew firmer. And he knew that he wanted to recover her, not for her heritage, but for herself.

“What matters her money, after all?” thought Muir to himself. “Money is naught, save to scoundrels like Hogan, who is already wealthy and yet holds insatiate lust after more wealth! I have given my own energy to throwing away money; let me give it to making money, and by gad, I’ll equal

her wealth inside a year's time! First, though, to find and bestow her in safety; then to make payment for my father's murder —”

The slightly ironical voice of Tecumthe cut into his reflections.

“The Black Bear is very strong, but if he will turn his paddle to the stroke, Tecumthe will not become weary before sunset.”

Only then was Muir aware that he had been driving down his paddle with tremendous forthright strokes that gave the chief all the burden of steering. He laughed shortly.

“The Black Bear, Chief, is not accustomed to the ways of fish!”

Tecumthe chuckled at this rejoinder, and had no further fault to find.

The meeting with Governor Harrison was to take place on the following evening, but the exact spot was yet unknown to Tecumthe. Vincennes lay a hundred and fifty miles down the river, and the chief desired to cover two-thirds of the distance that day, in order that he might communicate with Simon Kenton on the following morning and learn the location of the interview.

It was well for Muir that his strength had returned. The two days of rough travel with the band of the Prophet, followed by that preliminary tor-

ture, had told heavily upon him; and now from dawn to dark he found his body driven like a machine. Unused to a canoe as he was, he made hard going of it.

Hour after hour they flashed on down the winding reaches of the Wabash, until Muir's blade hung like lead in his hands and his shoulders were racked with weariness. None the less, he swung steadily to the rhythm of the work — down, back, up — down, back, up — until the beady eyes of the chief rested on his broad back in stern approval. Then, as dusk gathered, Tecumthe swung the craft in toward a point of land.

With a great sigh of relief, Muir dragged his stiffened limbs from the canoe, caught the "fire bag" which the chief tossed him, and with flint, steel and punk got a fire aglow. Ere he had finished, Tecumthe's rifle barked amid the trees, and the Indian appeared bearing a plump turkey.

When at last he could eat no more, Muir rolled up beneath the overturned canoe and slept. His last memory was of Tecumthe, sitting before the fire and staring into the embers as though beholding his great dream of empery unfolding there; and when Muir wakened at dawn, there the chieftain still sat with eyes fixed upon the fire, as though he had been in the same posture all night.

They breakfasted on the remnants of the turkey, after which Tecumthe heaped green boughs on the fire and by skillful manipulations of his hunting shirt sent up a dozen soft, billowy waves of thick smoke that rose slowly on the still air of the morning. He then motioned Muir toward the canoe and condescended to explain that the smoke was a signal, not only to Kenton, but to a large party of warriors and squaws who were marching south to meet him near Vincennes for the public conference with Harrison.

“Why do you bring squaws to a council fire?” asked Muir, puzzled.

“To show my white brothers that Tecumthe comes in peace.”

There was some reason in this, thought Muir, when he discovered that the party of warriors numbered three hundred — not a fifth of those who were now under Tecumthe’s direct command, not a tenth of those whom he could summon to his aid within a fortnight’s time. Fifteen hundred warriors at the Prophet’s Town! The realization was a shock to Muir. Now he began to see why the whole border feared Tecumthe’s growing power; should the chieftain turn his checked avalanche loose upon the frontier, nothing could withstand him. No wonder that the Vincennes settlement,

closest of all to the sweep of this potential besom of destruction, was filled with wildest panic and apprehension.

The two men paddled straight on through the morning. Muir was stiff and sore, but bent himself to the labor in grim resolution. What was to come of this affair, so far as he himself was concerned, he could not imagine; at least, Kenton would know if Alice had come to the post at Vincennes, and he might have news of Hogan also.

If the Indian caught any warning signals, Muir could not tell. Yet, when they sighted a canoe and two white men on the shore of a promontory ahead, Tecumthe betrayed no surprise and headed for the spot. Muir recognized the tall figure of Kenton, and waved his paddle joyously. Beside Kenton stood another figure in uniform, which at first seemed to be that of Harrison; but Muir sensed his mistake as the canoe drove in to the shore. This was a very handsome officer, while he had heard that Harrison was anything but good looking.

The Kentuckian leaped out and gripped the hand of Kenton. Tecumthe followed, and they were both introduced to the officer, who proved to be a lieutenant colonel, Zebulon M. Pike by name.

“Pike came along to meet you,” drawled Kenton to the chief. “The gen’ral’s down river quite a

spell. Take Pike with you, Tecumthe, and mebbe you kin git a line on each other and swap some peace talk."

"My brother is welcome to my canoe," said Tecumthe simply.

They re-embarked as Kenton had suggested. Muir stepped into the canoe of the hunter, and Kenton shoved off, the other two following. With suppressed eagerness, Muir turned to his friend.

"Have you seen Alice Cross? Or Hogan?"

Kenton's eyes widened slightly as he scrutinized the Kentuckian.

"Who — me?" he said in surprise. "No, I ain't. But I jedge from your looks that you been in a scrimmage lately. Whar's that big nigger of your'n?"

Muir settled down to the paddling, jerking out his story as he worked. Since Alice had not come to Vincennes, Hogan must have placed her elsewhere, probably in safe hands, although he might have started with her for Louisville direct. More likely, however, the former conjecture was the case. Black Sand had predicted exactly such a course, and Muir had gained a wholesome respect for the uncanny sagacity of the old Moravian. Kenton heard the tale in silence, striking in here and there with an incisive query, but offering no com-

ment. Finally he glanced back at the other canoe, then spoke swiftly, as though not desiring to have any further discussion at present.

“I’d half promised the gen’ral to jine this here campaign, friend Dave, but I’m glad to git out of it. I reckon you and me goes another trail — say! You talk to the gen’ral about that cuss Hogan. Do it tonight, after Tecumthe gits gone. See what the ol’ man says, fust of all.”

Muir nodded. After all, why not? Surely, did Harrison know the caliber of Hogan, did he know that the scout was deliberately fomenting the Indians to the warpath, Hogan’s day would soon be over. Besides, such a dastardly act as the murder of John Cross, such an infamy as Hogan had schemed against both brother and sister, could not be allowed to go unpunished. With this reflection, Muir paddled ahead in new eagerness, confident that ere many days he would have his enemy laid by the heels.

Evening was just gathering when they sighted a fire ahead, and paddled in to find two dark figures awaiting them. Kenton’s canoe was well in the lead. As it touched the shore, the two figures came down to meet them.

“General Kenton?” snapped a harsh voice.

“Old Sime it is,” returned the frontiersman,

shaking hands. "Gen'ral, this here is my partic'ler friend, David Muir, who's up from Kaintuck."

"Your servant, Mr. Muir." Harrison gripped the hand of Muir, then turned. "Gentlemen, come up to the fire. Mr. Muir, this is Mr. Zachary Taylor, a captain in the Fourth Regiment — I think you know Kenton, Zach? Where is Tecumthe, gentlemen?"

"Comin' with Pike," said the frontiersman.

They advanced to the fire, where slices of venison were roasting. With much interest, Muir inspected Harrison and found him a rugged-featured man whose naturally kindly countenance seemed deep in troubled thought. Taylor, too, was of the same rough type; while neither of them lacked in strength of character, they obviously paid little attention to military regulations, both being garbed in semi-uniform costume.

Now the other canoe drew in, and Harrison rose to shake hands with Tecumthe, while young Taylor prepared the venison. Muir found it hard to credit that in the hands of these men lay the destiny of peoples; the meeting was matter-of-fact, without tension, as though a party of hunters had gathered around their evening fire, instead of men whose names were household words along the frontier.

Harrison had some bread, none too clean. Te-



cumthe contributed a quantity of corn, and with these and the venison a satisfactory meal was provided. While eating, they talked — but not of the frontier. Pike had traveled extensively, it proved, on expeditions far into the unexplored west, and Muir, like Kenton, was amazed at hearing what the extent of Louisiana was really like. Taylor, too, had been to New Orleans and had for some time held Fort Massac, at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi, in the midst of a savage land, and had tales to tell.

After a little, quite naturally, Kenton drifted off into the darkness. Pike lifted his brows at Muir, Zach Taylor rose with them, and they, too, sought the shadow of the trees. Harrison and Tecumthe remained sitting by the fire. As he watched these two from some little distance, Muir saw that the Indian was speaking slowly and gravely; his words were not hard to guess. There was no mummery of calumet or wampum, for Tecumthe was above these things except when far in the forest among his own folk. Harrison sat motionless, staring into the fire as he listened, and gloom sat ever darker upon his rough-hewn features.

“Does the redskin want war, Mr. Muir?” queried Taylor softly.

“Not so. He has taken peace belts from all his

chiefs," responded Muir, not without a feeling of surprise at the question.

Taylor grunted harshly.

"Huh! If I was Harrison, there'd be no such palavering as this! 'Fore gad, I'd have the army at them cussed redskins inside of a week! It ain't the way —"

"You forget yourself, Mr. Taylor," came the gravely rebuking tones of Pike, and after this no further words were spoken by the group.

When Tecumthe had finished his speech, Harrison replied at length. The chief broke in with a sharp word, and the two men straightway abandoned any pretense of the usual Indian ceremonial council. Here were no stately pauses, no tricks of oratory, but simply an extremely animated discussion in which Harrison seemed to be admitting point after point. The watchers could see by the gestures of Tecumthe that the latter was forcing Harrison to one admission after another, and the face of Harrison grew ever darker.

Muir found in Taylor's words a reflection of the prevailing border sentiment. Indians were animals, and the sooner they were destroyed the better. Yet, remembering that Black Sand disliked Harrison and would not meet him, remembering a dozen little inconsidered trifles, Muir found himself puz-

zled and wondering. Hogan's scheme would never be allowed to go forward now, surely!

Then, with unexpected abruptness, the two men at the fire had risen and were shaking hands. Harrison's voice lifted for the first time, in words that the others could overhear plainly.

"—be assured that so long as your warriors keep peace, my men shall keep it. I am sorry that we cannot agree about those lands, Tecumthe."

"Brother," came the grave response, "there is one way in which we can agree. When I return from my visit in the south, those lands shall be ceded to you. Farewell!"

Leaving Harrison to gaze after him in amazed silence, the chief turned and stalked to his canoe. Once he glanced around and lifted his hand as though in farewell to Muir and Kenton; then he pushed out and was gone, Harrison standing motionless.

The figure of Sime Kenton stepped into the circle of firelight, and Muir walked in with the two officers. Harrison turned to them; but in his features was none of the satisfaction which Muir had thought to find there. Instead, his face was more anxious and frowning than ever.

"Gentlemen," said Harrison curtly, "there is to be no war in this country, except it be openly begun

by the redskins. Tecumthe is quite in accord with us.”

“You don’t seem a whole lot pleased, Gen’ral,” observed Kenton, whom Muir had apprised of Tecumthe’s resolve to move his whole settlement into the Illinois region. “It ain’t to be doubted that Tecumthe kin do his part, if you kin keep your sojers to heel.”

Harrison flashed him a swift, startled glance.

“Do you doubt my ability in that direction, sir?”

“Not a mite, Gen’ral, not a mite!” Kenton, leaning on his long rifle, gazed calmly at the governor, as though trying to read what secrets lay behind that rugged face. But, in the steely eyes of the frontiersman, Muir read something very like a menace — less in the look itself, than in some intuition, some half-sensed feeling, born of the look. Perhaps Harrison felt this also, for he smiled quickly with an effort at cordiality.

“If it ever chanced that we had trouble on the border, General, I’d give a good deal to have you as my chief of scouts.”

“Thankee.” Kenton jerked his head slightly. “If Tecumthe takes up the hatchet, I reckon I’ll be some’eres in the scrimmage. But he’s agoin’ off to the south, and whilst he’s gone, his warriors

ain't goin' to pick no fight. He's done attended to that a few days ago. So there won't be no war. Don't that stand plumb to reason?"

Harrison flushed slightly, even in the firelight, and with a curt nod of assent turned away, evidently repressing some unpolitic reply. Muir, suddenly remembering his own urgent affairs, stepped forward.

"May I crave a moment's talk in private, sir?"

"Certainly," responded Harrison. "Mr. Pike, kindly make ready our canoe, for I will have letters to write tonight and must be back early. If you'll step aside with me, Mr. Muir, I shall be entirely at your service."

They walked aside beneath the shadowing trees, and Muir quietly told of the murder of John Cross and the scoundrelism of Philip Hogan. He made no mention of his own story, but after relating the occurrences at Black Sand's settlement, prayed Harrison to have Hogan laid by the heels and to take Alice Cross under his own protection, did the scout bring her to Vincennes. Harrison at this point interrupted him curtly.

"I am much astonished at this story, Mr. Muir. Captain Hogan is one of my best scouts and a highly valuable man. He is even now transacting some private business for me at the Shaker settlement,

eighteen miles north of Vincennes. Black Sand, on the contrary, is a poor, crazed wanderer —”

“This is no place for comparisons, sir,” broke in Muir. “I am asking you for justice on a scoundrel. If you will do nothing in the matter of the murder, at least protect Madame Alice Cross!”

“That I will do right gladly, if the young lady stands in any need,” responded the other. “Yet, sir, I cannot but think that you are mistaken in this whole matter. Mr. Hogan is my most valuable scout, whose services are of inestimable worth to the territory under my control —”

“Tut, tut!” broke in Muir, whose temper was straining at the leash. “Are your soldiers amenable to the laws? Have you the assurance to say that they shall deliberately commit murder and go unpunished or unquestioned by you?”

“I am governor of this territory, sir,” snapped Harrison in cold accents, “and I do not accept dictation from every chance woods runner. Bring proof of your statements and I will act. If you cannot —”

“Do you call me a liar, then?” Muir’s voice shook with passion.

“I do not, sir,” came the cold response. “Your unsupported word, however, will not hang a man, as you should certainly know.”

“Then, Mr. Harrison, listen to this!” exclaimed the Kentuckian. “Your worthy Hogan has told more than one person of a scheme to attack the Prophet’s Town under the guise of peace; whether or not it is your own scheme, I do not know or care. But Hogan has told of his own attempts to incite certain chiefs to war. I learned of this last night, and I so informed Tecumthe himself.”

For all his anger, Muir was keeping himself well in hand. He perceived that the whole situation was tense, that behind it all must be something of which he stood in ignorance. At his final words, however, he heard Harrison draw in a sharp breath as though keenly startled. Then Harrison spoke in a changed voice, softly and almost with appeal.

“Mr. Muir, you have thrust yourself into a most serious business. Allow me to tell you, sir, that when a man is working for the public good, especially if he holds a high position, he must do things and must use instruments which he would find abhorrent to touch in his own private behalf. As for this Madame Cross, I have never heard of her; but I promise you that, when the opportunity offers, I shall investigate the matter thoroughly.”

“Your Excellency is most kind, sir,” said Muir, his voice quick with bitter irony. “I am sorry to learn that Hogan is carrying out your commands

when he incites the Indians to attack the border.”

Harrison cut in with words of swift, incisive menace.

“Do not try to learn too much, Mr. Muir. I recommend that you return to Kentucky, sir, with the least possible delay. If you are tempted to visit Vincennes, reconsider the visit unless you desire to find yourself in unpleasant quarters. Sir, your servant.”

With this curt farewell, Harrison walked down to the waiting canoe, leaving Muir silent but white-lipped with rage. He watched, motionless, while the governor and his two officers paddled off into the darkness, then he strode in to the fire, where Kenton still stood leaning on his long rifle as though in deep thought.

“Threats!” reflected Muir. “Threats! Is Harrison afraid of what I might tell? But surely that’s impossible.”

In response to Kenton’s look of interrogation, Muir repeated what had passed in his talk with Harrison, and found himself no longer bewildered. Harrison was playing a deep and subtle game, in which Hogan was a highly essential factor; the outcome of this intrigue was to be the destruction of the Prophet’s Town and the stamping out of the rising Indian power. In comparison with such



business, the murder of John Cross was as nothing; although, to give Harrison his due, the governor would probably extend protection to Alice Cross.

Sime Kenton shook his head sadly, and in his deep eyes gathered a mournful expression.

“I reckon the A’mighty knows His own ways, friend Dave, but sometimes His ways come powerful hard. Tecumthe ain’t agoin’ to break his word, and he trusts Harrison — well, let it go fer now. What be you figgerin’ on doin’ next?”

“I’m going north to reach that Shaker settlement Harrison mentioned,” said Muir. “He said that Hogan was there. I’ll either settle matters with him or know the reason why. It may be that Alice is there. You’ll come with me?”

To his surprise, Kenton dissented.

“No. I reckon I’ll trail up to Black Sand’s place and git him, in the canoe. It ain’t fur into the trace from here, due east. We’re about six mile north o’ Vincennes. You strike in to the trace, git on to that thar Shaker town, and wait thar fer me and Black Sand. How ’bout it? Agreed?”

Muir nodded. He felt too utterly depressed for further speech. Hogan was set beyond his reach by Harrison’s protection, and Alice might or might not find herself secure at Vincennes. Tecumthe was being netted and snared in some slow but cer-

tain manner. He himself had made a mess of things with Harrison through letting his temper dictate a few words.

Altogether, David Muir had more cause for bitterness of soul on this night than he had had since his last meeting with Henry Clay. Or so, at least, he told himself.

## CHAPTER XI

*An ale word is an ill word ever;  
Men who know this, heed it never.*

OF the historic meeting between Harrison and the red chieftains on that twenty-seventh of July, David Muir saw nothing. He was well north of Vincennes and was engaged in his business of vengeance and rescue.

Immediately after that meeting, as he knew, Tecumthe was going to the far south, and would be out of Indiana for some time. Kenton spoke of this as they parted; and was able to provide Muir with a rifle to replace his own weapon. Also, Kenton stated that Tecumthe had mentioned a repayment of the loan of weapons which Muir had made him in Kentucky, but nothing had come of it and the chieftain had presumably overlooked the matter.

So, then, the two friends parted at the Wabash, and Muir headed in through the woods from the river. After some rough traveling, he emerged upon the trace. This was little better than a blazed trail leading from Vincennes to the one or two little

settlements existing north of that post. The Kentuckian greeted the wagon ruts with a sigh of relief, and paused to prime his rifle.

“The Shaker settlement must be about twelve miles north of here,” he reflected. “Now let Harrison and Tecumthe fight out their own struggle! I owe Hogan a debt of my own, with heavy interest on my father’s debt; and I have Alice Cross to find. By gad, if I see Hogan this day, Harrison’s protection will avail him little!”

Having got his rifle prepared to his liking, Muir struck into the trace. Scarcely had he done so, however, when he halted again and turned; the whinny of a horse had sounded from somewhere in the rear, and he quietly drew into the shelter of some bushes and waited to see who came.

It proved to be a horseman riding from the direction of Vincennes, and Muir had no need to cock his rifle. The rider was rubicund and jolly of aspect, his big steed was laden with flour bags, and the wide hat and sober garb apprised Muir that this must be some member of the Shaker community. So, indeed, it proved when the rider came up and drew rein.

“Good day, friend,” said he, in a wheezy voice. “Is thee going to the meeting of warlike men at Vincennes?”

“No,” said Muir. “To the settlement of Shakers, of whom I take you to be one, sir.”

“Elias Powell, at thy service.”

The Kentuckian gave his name and asked at once if Powell knew anything of Hogan. The Shaker, however, had been for three days past at the Vincennes mills and could tell him nothing of the scout.

“If thee is willing to journey with me, friend Muir, let us go on together. Thee is a man of learning, and we may discourse profitably on the road.”

Muir assented gladly, and fell in beside the stirrup of the Shaker. Powell, who was a man of some education, told how he had come from Pennsylvania and proceeded to evince the utmost curiosity regarding Muir’s life, pursuits and present business in the Territory of Indiana. Wearying of his questions, Muir finally answered him with characteristic bluntness.

“As for my life, sir, I have most of it still to live, I trust. My pursuit is after a golden eagle of the Cincinnati society, and my present business is to kill a man. There you have the entire scroll, at your service.”

“Hm!” Powell pursed up his lips and gazed down at Muir. “Thee is a man of parts, friend

Muir. 'Tis a pity that thee belongs to that pestilential order of knighthood which threatens to overturn all our established democracy —”

“What find you against the Cincinnati?” demanded Muir curtly. “It was the men of that order who won this wilderness for such as you.”

“Yea, yea, of a surety!” granted the Shaker, with such complacent good humor that Muir’s irritation lessened. “Yet the whole is inconsistent with our institutions. Mayhap thee recalls the motto of that society?”

“You may have to recall it yourself, if there comes an Indian war,” retorted Muir. “It is ‘*Omnia reliquit servare rempublicam,*’ and honest Latin it is.”

“There thee is wrong, good sir,” and Powell smiled. “The infinitive is used where the gerund was intended — but, apart from that, the merit of Cincinnatus consisted in his resigning the commission of the Roman Senate and returning to his plow; not, as thee would have it, in doing the reverse of this act. Friend Muir, this society was founded upon caprice, not upon utility — but, enough, sir! I wished to test thee in politeness, and I find that thee has it.”

Muir laughed up at the jolly Shaker, and forgot his ill humor. He knew well that the Democratic

party were bitter assailants of the Cincinnati, but this rubicund personage was far too good-natured and obstinate to be argued over to the other side. Of his own accord, Powell presently shifted the subject, being keenly interested in the purpose of Mr. Noah Webster to detach the United States from England in the matter of language.

“It is not a bad idea,” agreed Muir, “except that he goes a trifle too far, as when he calls the usage of ‘you was’ a correct —”

“Thee is a stiff-necked aristocrat,” and Powell sighed whimsically. “If thee had listened to Mr. Webster’s eloquent lectures, thee would know better. If thee will look into philology and consider the connection between language and knowledge—”

And in this fashion the worthy but garrulous Elias continued without cessation, for he was one who loved nothing better than to display his learning and hear his own tongue clacking. He possessed a certain amount of knowledge on every subject from slavery to Paine’s pamphlets on the “Rights of Man,” and Muir had only to interpose some objection in order to keep the Shaker’s tongue wagging indefinitely. Like most of the border folk Powell treasured as almost a sacred book the extremely popular “Modern Chivalry,” and on discovering that Muir knew the Brackenridge family,

and the author of that work in particular, he immediately and sincerely placed himself and all that he had at the disposal of the Kentuckian.

The trace was quite deserted. After three hours of converse, the two men approached the settlement. This proved to be a group of half a dozen log cabins, situated on a ridge west of a wide bayou and mud flat that extended in from the Wabash.

“Where would I be most like to find any persons who are stopping here?” queried Muir, halting and roving his keen gaze over the settlement. “There is no tavern?”

“None but my own house, friend. I had hoped to erect a tavern myself, but the myriads of the army worm moved upon us last year and ravaged my crops, so the building has been perforce postponed. My dwelling is that one to the right, of goodly size, and if thee will be my guest ——”

“I thank you,” broke in Muir. “But, I pray you, ride on alone and let me follow shortly.”

This curt request met with a nod of assent, and Powell rode on.

Muir waited, wondering at his own indecision. As he leaned on his rifle and inspected the little settlement, where men worked in the cotton field and women clustered to ask Elias Powell the latest



news, he suddenly felt a hesitancy to go forward and seek Hogan. Oddly enough, this talk with the jolly Shaker had put him out of the savage mood to do murder which had hitherto driven him so hard; instead of putting a bullet into Hogan, much the better scheme would be to overpower the man, take him to Vincennes, and there act through the regular channels of the law, despite Harrison or any one else, to obtain satisfaction for the murder of Cross.

However, since he could see no indication of Hogan's presence in the settlement, Muir finally shouldered his rifle and directed his course toward the abode of Elias Powell. After all, he thought, let destiny take its own course! So, rubbing one hand ruefully across his worn, stubble-bearded features, he strode up to where the jolly Shaker, assisted by a woman and two children, was unloading his bags of flour and provisions. Powell greeted him with a smile and a wave of the hand, but Muir intervened bluntly before the man could speak.

"Mr. Powell, have you any guests here? A man named Hogan, or a lady, Madame Alice Cross?"

"Come thee with me," responded the Shaker, nodding. "The goodwife tells me that such a lady is stopping among us. The man was here also, but has gone away."

So, then, all was well! Alice was here! With a thrill at his heartstrings, Muir followed Powell into the cabin, which consisted of several rooms. Its size and furnishings showed that Powell was a man of some affluence, as things went on the border at that time.

“Sit thee, and I will send in the damsel.” Powell went to an inner doorway and there paused, to fling a significant wink over his shoulder. “Also, friend Muir, thee will not be disturbed!”

Chuckling, he disappeared. Muir leaned his rifle against the wall — and he looked up to see Alice Cross standing in the doorway.

For a moment he stood as though gazing at some vision, then he started forward, his hands outstretched, a glad cry of greeting on his lips. He was brought to an abrupt and startled halt; in her finely chiseled features was no sign of answering friendliness, no hint even of recognition; her gold-brown eyes held only scorn and passionate contempt. Too late, Muir remembered how John Cross had been slain.

“Alice! What’s wrong? Have you no word —”

“How dare you seek me out, Mr. Muir?” she demanded, her voice low, contained, yet vibrant with anger. “Do not dissemble, sir! You murdered my poor brother — I saw your own knife in his

throat, and heard how the base act was done. Now depart, leave me here in peace, or —”

White-faced, Muir stared at her, realizing how incredibly the lies of Hogan had prevailed, and perceiving that she must somehow have come to believe the scout's tale. His brain seethed with mingled emotions.

“Did Hogan tell you that I had murdered John?” he asked slowly. “Did he say that he had now come to take you to Louisville? Did he relate all manner of evil things about me —”

“Yes, you murderer!” she flashed out, her hands clenched at her sides.

“That is an ill-deserved word, Alice.” With a terrible effort, Muir remained calm, kept his head, though he was stung to the quick by the look in the girl's eyes. Crafty liar that Hogan was, to have so prevailed! Muir gripped the knife at his belt, and took a step forward, holding out the blade. “We have dwelt together, we have come to know and to trust each other, you have nursed me to life and strength; yet you would believe these things against me! Alice, take this knife and exact vengeance on me if you wish —”

Her hand flashed out and struck the knife to the floor.

“Your word is nothing to me,” she cried pas-

sionately, scorn blazing in her eyes. "Yes, I liked and trusted you, Mr. Muir, and you betrayed that trust! Mr. Hogan showed me how the whole deed came about — how you murdered poor John, and how he had the Indians seize you. I was only sorry that your dastardly act caused poor old Tom to be taken —"

"Why, little girl!" In the sadness of Muir's heart, the smile came to his lips; so that before his smile she fell silent, wondering at the fleeting beauty of it. "Alice, dear, will you not listen to reason? It was Hogan who so basely murdered John, and not I. Hogan delivered me to the Indian torturers, took my knife and —"

"So he warned me you would say," she exclaimed. Her attitude of scornful contempt drove a swift, hot fury into Muir's heart. So bitter became his gray eyes that she recoiled from him in fear.

"Then trust your brother's murderer, if you will!" he cried harshly, stung now past further bearing. "The truth is known to others; you alone set that coward's word against mine — even General Harrison questioned naught of what I told him, though he protected the murderer! Wait here until Black Sand comes, in a day or two; when you have come to see the truth, then you will

bitterly repent the words you've flung at me today."

He turned to the door, but her voice drew him back again.

"David — wait! Bring me witnesses —"

"Witnesses?" Muir's anger flamed up anew. "Deeming me a liar and a dastard, you ask such a thing? No, Alice, I bring you no witnesses! I had hoped that some day I might offer you the heart and love of an honest man, but you have chosen a rogue instead — then cleave to him, and let me go my way."

He caught up his rifle and burst out of the cabin. Even in this moment of departure, he regretted those final words, regretted the bitter fury that had burned within him. Yet a false pride mastered him, drove him forth with raging flame in his heart. Outside the cabin, he came upon Elias Powell, and halted abruptly.

"Where is the man who fetched Madame Cross here?"

Powell stared up, and his rubicund features went white when he met the murder look in the face of Muir.

"Friend, I — I know not. They say that he brought her here yesterday — and was hastily summoned by a courier to Vincennes —"

"Devil take the lot of you!"

The Kentuckian strode hastily away, leaving the Shaker staring after him apprehensively.

Not even on that last night in Lexington had Muir known such bitterness of soul as now filled him, and such consuming lust for the life of Philip Hogan. The whole thing now lay clear before him. Hogan had come to the Shaker settlement with Alice, had there found a messenger from Harrison bidding him to some errand, and had left the girl in charge of the Shakers until he could return. Doubtless his private designs had been interfered with by the Governor's errand, and he dared not play fast and loose with Harrison. Knowing the man thoroughly, Muir could well imagine how Alice had been beguiled by his assumed sincerity, his *savoir-faire*, his aggressive nature. Hogan was a murderer, a cunning schemer and worse, but he was no physical coward, though Muir had lately named him so.

Now Muir had but one object left him. Whether or no he would find Hogan in Vincennes, was very uncertain; but he meant to find the man, to pursue him unrelentingly, to run him down and achieve a settlement for all time. With this one blood-lust driving him, Muir headed for Vincennes, knowing that sooner or later he would find his prey there, and quite careless of Harrison's veiled threat.

“Most like, the Governor will have greater affairs in hand than watching me,” thought the Kentuckian as he strode along the rough trace over which he had so lately come. “So Alice is lost — I’ve lost her — lost her! She’s safe enough, but my own words have closed everything between us. I’ve lost her — and I care for nothing but to find Hogan and feel my hands on his foul throat.”

With this mood of utter despair upon him, Muir had covered half the distance to Vincennes, long past noon, when he came upon a settler who was also going into town. The man had a horn hip-flask, and in his absolute abandon Muir begged a drink of the liquor, which the man readily bestowed.

When he had returned the flask, Muir once again broke into his Indian jog-trot, the backwoodsman staring after him as after a madman. And Muir was little better. The fiery liquor had laid hold upon his heart and gripped him down; gone was every thought save the one consuming flame of hatred.

So at last he came to the northern heights above the town, and, with the effect of the whiskey wearing off, composed himself into a semblance of calm. It was no more than semblance, for his lungs were a-fire and a mad thirst was dragging at his whole

body as he strode down to the ferry and was taken across the river. He had no money, and offered his tomahawk to the ferryman in payment; the man cursed, but after one look into Muir's eyes, said no more.

Thus, with a terrible and unnatural calm settled upon him, David Muir came into the town. Vincennes was filled with soldiers; the Fourth was here, with a company of dragoons, while Kentucky riflemen crowded the streets. Muir passed the handsome brick house and gardens of Harrison, all unwitting, and strode on through the narrow streets. In his heart was the single thought of Hogan, his eyes searched only for that evilly arrogant face among those of the passers-by.

Muir was by no means a pleasing object, with his week-old scrub of beard, his flying black hair, his wild eyes and torn buckskin garb, but Vincennes was too well acquainted with this type of man to give Muir more than a passing glance. He realized that he craved whiskey, and craved it badly; all his future was lost to sight, all his ambitions were dead.

At this instant some one stopped him with a shout of greeting, and he recognized the man as a former neighbor in Kentucky, and now a rifleman of the militia. Muir shook hands, found himself sur-



rounded by a yelping group of excited Kentuckians, and asked for Hogan. He was answered with a flask of whiskey, from which he drank avidly.

That drink clouded his brain. Later, as evening was darkening all things, Muir was ensconced in a tavern window. Around him were gathered a dozen Kentuckians, roaring out songs and maudlin jests; he dimly heard that there had been a great conference with Tecumthe that morning, at which peace belts were passed, but it meant nothing to him. He drank whiskey as though it were water — drank until even the seasoned militia stared at him, aghast.

How the end came about, he could remember but vaguely. Somewhere had been the face of Hogan, striking fire into his maddened brain. There was fighting, the watch was called, a squad of the Fourth came to enforce order; Muir could remember the uniforms. He recalled no further details save that the lust of battle had flowed into his veins, and he thrilled as men went down before his fists. Another memory, this time of Hogan — his fingers on the scout's neck, hard clenched, while a swirl of bodies swept down upon them both. After this, oblivion crushed all things from Muir's brain.

Men talked long of that fight, though upon the

records it was entered as "a tavern brawl." In his stark madness, the Kentuckian had nearly throttled Captain Hogan, both men being badly mauled and bruised beneath the feet of the mob. When order was at last restored, Muir, being found to be whole of body, was clapped into the Vincennes log-cabin jail.

In this place he lay for three weeks, seeing no one but his jailer.

When this time had passed by, Muir was given his rifle and personal effects, with the compliments of Governor Harrison, and was ordered to leave Vincennes within the hour.

## CHAPTER XII

*Who flees from God shall feel God's goad  
Bestirring him upon God's road.*

IT was a worn and haggard man who dropped upon a log beside the river and laid his face in his hands, great sobs shaking his body. Hair and beard were grown past recognition; the gray eyes glowed from ghastly features; the lean, hatchet edge of the face was gaunt and keen, like that of a very old man.

David Muir had been at this Delaware village for two days; he knew only that it was somewhere on the White River. A month had passed since his eviction from Vincennes. He had spent a fortnight in a Miami village, then had fled north and east into the wilderness without seeing a white face. Because of the leather thong on his wrist, he had been received as a friend of Tecumthe; further, he found that he was widely known by repute. The tale of how Tecumthe had named him the Black Bear and had tamed the war chiefs, had spread afar through the woods. But now he sat staring down into the river, tears on his ragged beard.

“Drunk!” he whispered to himself. “Drunk!”

Hogan escaped me because I was drunk. The chance was missed. Word of it will get to Louisville — Clay will know that I am still a fool. And what of Alice? Where is she now?"

There was none to answer. In those three weeks that he lay jailed, no one had come to see him, yet he could not doubt that Kenton and Black Sand had found Alice at the Shaker settlement. The very fact of his release from jail proved that Hogan had not dared to carry his lies about the murder up to Harrison's ear. All this, however, now mattered little; it was himself which now concerned Muir's bitter thoughts. He did not even think of Uncle Tom, save in fleeting wonder that not even this old and faithful servant had come to see him while he lay prisoned.

Muir was obsessed with the consciousness of his own relapse into shame, as he deemed it, and the fact that none of his friends had come to him only served to drive the iron deeper into his soul, until the rust stains lay red about the wound. He had flung away his cherished vengeance. He had flung away all chance of helping Alice and no further thought of her must now linger in his mind. The realization stripped his soul bare, and on leaving Vincennes he had fled almost at random.

"Drunk," he thought. "Drunk! But I will

drink never more, until I have found Hogan and have slain him. After that, let hell open. There's nothing else left."

He washed in the river, and returned to the Delaware village. These seven weeks his life had been a savage nightmare — from the day he had last spoken with Alice Cross. On that day, it seemed, all the threads of his old life had snapped away, only the one thread of Hogan remaining. So, at least, Muir was thinking as he passed among the brush lodges to that which had been assigned him. More than one Delaware maiden turned to look after him, in mingled admiration and awe. He was a strong man, strong of thews and of heart, they whispered, but it was obvious that the Great Spirit had touched his mind. He was not as other men, even white men.

It was the warm afternoon of late summer, but Muir saw a dozen warriors grouped about the council fire. He paused long enough to note that a Miami was seated among them, and then passed on to his own lodge. A hunter or runner had come in; it was none of his affair, he reflected. In this, however, he proved greatly mistaken. Ten minutes afterward, a voice brought him to the door of his lodge, where he found old White Sky, head chief of the village, awaiting him.

“Does my brudder Black Bear know my fader Black Sand?” asked the chief bluntly.

Muir started. “Yes,” he said curtly. “What of him?”

“A Miami tells us dat our fader Black Sand is seeking Black Bear. Will my brudder go back to de Miami villages?”

“No,” answered Muir. “No! Tell him I depart at dawn upon another trail.”

Black Sand! The Kentuckian savagely rammed tobacco into his pipe. Why was the man now seeking him? He sat alone in his lodge, and thought for a long time.

Perhaps Black Sand had heard of that wild scene in Vincennes. Kenton had no doubt taken Alice and Uncle Tom to Louisville ere this. Muir puffed away at his pipe, angry and frightened at the same time.

“Damme if I ever want to see Black Sand again!” he muttered. “I’ve made a fool of myself — for the last time — and I’ll hide my shame in the wilderness, as Henry Clay bade me do. Devil take the lot of them! I never want to see a settlement again.”

With this reflection strong upon him, he stole from his lodge that same night and hurriedly departed from the Delaware town, and thus began

that senseless flight which was to have so strange an ending.

Yet it was not altogether senseless, in that it was caused by the very strength of David Muir's own character and human impulse. He had been jailed like a common felon, disgraced in all eyes, driven in shame from Vincennes. Worse yet, he had caused it all himself by flying to drink at an inopportune moment. His actions had been insensate. And now his wild impulse to shun all persons was very human.

He was far worse shamed in his own sight than in that of other men. And so he fled into the wilderness, as men have fled before and since, whether their wilderness has been a thing of fact or of metaphor. To such men as David Muir, who have largely lived alone in the strength of self-assurance, the wilderness is ever a tremendous and cleansing force, a reliance, an abiding-place of God. And to the best of Muir's belief, all the threads of his old life save one had been snapped away.

In those terrible seven weeks of hell, the last craving for whiskey had been wiped away, tortured out of him, whipped out of him by the scourges of circumstance and remorse and self-accusation. Since leaving Lexington, Muir had become a new man in more than one way, as do

all who live intensely; since leaving Alice Cross, his suffering and torment had deepened, but it was remaking something inside of him. Sooner or later such a change comes. The past seems irrevocably cut away, destiny appears to have altered her course into a completely new channel, the old hopes, fears and ambitions become atrophied or changed. The past seems dead, the present is evanescent. Yet the past never dies, for life's tomorrow is often built upon the day before yesterday, not upon the today.

Careless of what happened to him, Muir drove straight into the forest. It was nearing the end of September, but he had lost count of time. For a week he saw no man; then, when he had shot an elk, the smoke of his fire brought two Pottawatomie hunters to him. These at once recognized the safe-conduct of Tecumthe, and all three men camped together that night.

From them Muir learned that Tecumthe was still away in the south, visiting the Creek nation; that the Prophet's Town was in charge of Elkswatawa, and that for the present there was little talk of war. He also learned, however, that Black Sand was seeking him through the Indian towns, and he did not wait for dawn to take up his aimless journey anew. It was not a journey — it was a flight.



Muir realized this, and vaguely wondered at it, but he was savagely compelled to go. *Go!* That was all — go, and lose himself absolutely from everything and every one he had ever known.

He struck to the east, fell in with a brutish Wea hunter, and they traveled in company for three days. On the fourth morning the Wea had vanished. Muir went on alone and came to a small village of Shawanoes, who took him in as a brother. Here he remained for six days, until a Shawano runner came into the village and Muir caught the name of Black Sand uttered at the council fire. At this, Muir incontinently caught up his rifle and fled away, vowing that he would have no more to do with any man, red or white.

In the furtherance of this vow he headed north, avoided all trails of smoke on the sky and of feet on the ground, and held to the recesses of the forest. Day after day he wandered thus; night after night he sat alone, smoking beneath the stars, or watching how the frost-whitened leaves above him “made lightnings in the splendor of the moon.” The days were growing cold and frosty now, and in these days he learned many things, for never before this had he been so utterly alone in the wilderness. He joyed in it, joyed in its risks and its perils, joyed in the gorgeous splendor of

the scarlet autumn woods — and became humble and awed before the new thing he found.

The new thing was reverence. In these desolate forests was a soul-mellowing fear and reverence — an utterly unreasonable, childish, awe-inspiring sense of greatness, of unseen things and forces. Muir could not explain it, he could not trace its trail, but there it was. In this feeling there lay peace; a peace beyond all understanding, which slowly worked into his spirit and cleansed him insensibly.

Dimly, in no definite knowledge but in a slowly growing sense, he came to realize why he had fled thus into the heart of the forest, why some dumb instinct had led him to seek this peace and reverence. Was it God? He could not tell; yet, as the rust was slowly eaten from his hurt spirit, it sometimes seemed to him that he was closely in touch with vague forces, with creation, with a higher power that was sheltering and guiding him. Everything in his past became dim and non-essential; he lived only from day to day, desiring little, ever fleeing farther on, ever feeling strange communion with unseen things, and gradually coming to a saner outlook. So deeply had he been hurt that his return to normality was very slow and erratic.

Save for Forts Wayne and Dearborn, far to the north and west, he was beyond the uttermost rim of settlements, in a savage country where he saw no man. Yet he felt no loneliness; the forest was pulsing with life. The scream of an eagle, the widening wedge of a muskrat-wake in the water, the jagged stump of a beaver's harvesting — these were symbols of the nature forces all around him. At night he smiled to the scream of panthers and the howl of wolves; he smiled often now, for this wilderness trail had oddly softened and mellowed him. The physical fatigue, the sweat and dirt and chances of the trail, were like parts of a healing symphony. None the less, he still fled on.

How this might have ended was problematic, for the ending that seemed to come by sheer chance was sternly dramatic, at least to Muir. One day in running down a wounded deer — since he had need to preserve his powder — it happened that he circled widely and came back upon the same trail he had made that very morning. And at sight of it he forgot the quarry, and came to a halt.

Hereabouts was soft ground, and his trail was distinct. But beside it ran another trail — marks of split-sole Shawano moccasins, so freshly made that water was still oozing into the compact depressions. The toe-prints were very heavy. It was

the trail of a weighty man, running on the balls of his feet, Indian fashion. But the toed-in tracks did not deceive Muir.

“Black Sand wore split-sole moccasins!” he muttered, aghast. As though in response came the thin and querulous voice of the man himself, reaching up without exertion into the trees, in the doggerel that Black Sand chanted as he ran:

“The road is long across the waste  
 And they who made the road are sped;  
 Yet their strong spirit knew no haste —  
 Their children wrought when they lay dead.  
 Lord God, give us that we may know  
 The surety our fathers felt;  
 Faith, that the forest winds will blow  
 The dust of towns where we have knelt —”

Muir turned and fled headlong, in mad panic, with a wondering anger dragging at him. Why could he not be left to his own miserable fate? Why was he thus pursued? Why should this crazed Moravian follow him like an avenging conscience? Muir desired neither exhortation nor sympathy. He wanted only to be alone.

Where he was Muir knew not, but now he held a straight course to the east. For three days he traveled hard and furiously, hiding his trail where possible, picking dry sticks for his fire, scanning

the sky for any wisp of smoke that might spell pursuit.

He saw nothing more to alarm him, but had the feeling that his trail was followed. On the fourth afternoon he struck into a wide patch of low, bushy ground, thick with alder clumps. Several miles ahead he had made out a wooded ridge, determining to reach that higher ground before evening.

Suddenly, as he passed by a thick growth of alders, he caught a gleam of white amid the shoots, and came to a halt. The white object was a dozen feet from the ground and evidently had been carried up by the growth of the alder on which it was impaled. Muir looked up at it with a ghastly chill striking into him, for the thing was a human skull. Like a signpost set there to attract his notice, it grinned down horribly. The very oddity of the thing fascinated Muir.

He turned aside and pushed into the springy bushes, and so came to the young tree on which the skull rested. The tip of the tree had grown out through the right eye-socket and had then carried the skull up into the air. The Kentuckian set down his rifle and examined the lush grass at his feet. Yes, there were other bones here, a whole heap of them — the skull and vertebræ of a horse and,

most significant of all, a human femur with a ragged bit of lead imbedded in the bone.

“By gad!” exclaimed Muir, poking about in the grass. “This fellow must have been shot in the thigh, eh? And he was a white man, no doubt, since he was riding a horse — hello!”

He had turned up a tarnished brass button, corroded to almost nothing, and with it some thin rust flakes that crumbled under his moccasin. These remains must have lain here for many long years; the very bones themselves seemed rotted out.

Muir could find nothing more, nothing of identification or in proof of his theory, for the dampness had destroyed all else. He was rising to his feet when his eye caught a dull gleam amid the grass. Stooping, he picked up a small object — then suddenly he straightened, staring at it like a man transfixed. He rubbed it feverishly against his hunting shirt and held it up again. The object was of a metal that does not rust, and now the dullness was rubbed into the brighter sheen of rich gold — a golden eagle, wings outspread, and in the center a marred design where once had been an enameled picture.

It had been the emblem of the Cincinnati.

The sight of it, the recognition, smote Muir like a blow. Small wonder that he glared in rank in-

credulity and awe at this thing which he had plucked from a moldering heap of bones! There was no engraving on the gold, and the enamel had almost vanished, yet no doubt could exist as to the emblem itself.

How had it come here? The answer was simple enough, on the face of things; those bones had once been clothed with flesh — a Revolutionary officer had ridden to his lonely fate here in the far lands. Yet he had been wounded. Why, then, had not Indians trailed him and robbed his body? What unwritten episode of history lay dumbly recorded here? Although the truth might contain little to wonder at, Muir marveled at the astonishing contradictions of the situation.

“But — gad! For me to find it thus! By what miracle has it lain here through all the years until my hand lifted it? Is it — is it a sign ——”

He shivered; his gray eyes glowed in startled surmise from his tangle of beard and hair. He looked up at the clustering alder thicket, fear gripping him. The mystery of the wilderness pressed close upon him — the mystic, fearful solitudes that encompassed him became filled with a real terror. What did it mean? Why was it that these bones had awaited his coming through the long years? He felt as though surrounded, bayed by the leagues

of forest, pursued and lashed and driven until here he stood at the end of everything ——

Muir wiped the sweat from his brow, and fastened his eyes again on that golden eagle. To him, the token stood for very concrete things. It represented Saratoga, Valley Forge, Morristown, Yorktown; it spoke, mutely eloquent, of the band of valiant hearts who had served as officers through dreary and dark days, who had seen a new nation evolved from their very blood; undoubtedly this eagle had been given from the hands of Washington himself. To David Muir it was a sacred thing. Whose it had been he would never know; and for that reason fear gripped him again. Had this emblem been sent to him by an unseen Hand?

It was this thought which so frightened him, awed him, struck his imagination into a flame of wildfire. For a fleeting instant he saw himself as he really was — he saw that his physical sufferings had been little things, that his mental torments had been great things; he saw that he was a changed man in his whole outlook on life, and that he himself was not entirely ruler of his own destiny. Everything in his past life was having its bearing on today, on the future. What manner of sign was this token of the Cincinnati, whose very motto was a call to forget self and selfish things? Muir



shrank from the thought. It seemed to him with increasing clarity that this emblem, this little golden eagle, had been sent into his hand in order to turn him back the way he had come.

Surely it could not be chance alone. And he was a son of the Cincinnati. Not even Henry Clay could abolish that fact, though his father's emblem might have been taken from him. What if this gift of the wilderness had been sent to him as a symbol, a token that the past might yet be redeemed — that some task lay ready to his hand, some duty awaiting him?

“It is hard,” whispered Muir to himself, his gaunt face dropping into his hands, the eagle pressing cold against his brow. “It is hard — but I will go back, accept the work! Perhaps it's all imagination; I don't know! I've been a coward to run like this, a miserable coward! I think that God has not sent me this eagle for nothing.”

For a space he sat silent, and then roused himself.

The afternoon was half gone and the air was damp and chill. After some effort, Muir managed to get fire from his flint and steel, and built up a good lasting blaze. Then, with reverent hands, he recovered that grinning skull from the alder shoot, and laid it with the bones, heaping earth over all

and hewing a rude cross of wood to surmount the grave. It was the least he could do. The golden eagle he fastened with a bit of gut to his hunting shirt.

Then, conscious of hunger, he built up the fire anew and took his rifle. Passing through the thicket, he came presently to a small creek near by. Within half an hour he had whistled in a turkey.

Evening was falling as he returned to his camp fire, the turkey over his shoulder. At his approach a shadow rose on the other side of the fire. Muir looked into the pendulous-lipped features of Black Sand and smiled. He was not surprised.

“Good evening,” he said quietly. “I’ve brought our supper.”

## CHAPTER XIII

*Howsoever hard the trail,  
Evil tidings cannot fail.*

THE meeting with Black Sand was very prosaic. Beyond a discussion of the gold eagle and its origin, the two men said little until the turkey had been cleaned, cooked and made away with.

As Muir had thought, there was a very good explanation for the presence of that eagle here. The high ground a few miles farther on had been the scene of St. Clair's disastrous defeat by the Indian tribes in 1791. The better part of St. Clair's officers had been Revolutionary veterans; this unknown and wounded man had evidently broken through the attackers and had ridden until he could ride no more, or until his horse failed him. In the heat of the battle and massacre he had not been pursued, or else a mad burst of speed had carried him clear. So Black Sand elucidated the mystery.

Supper over, Muir sat back and stuffed his pipe, and lighted it with a red brand from the fire — the sweetest of all lights to good tobacco. For a space Black Sand stared into the flames, pulling

at that lower lip of his; then he sighed, took some grains of powder from his pocket, and fell to rubbing them between his fingers. His deep-set blue eyes rested on the steady regard of Muir.

“I see that the hand of Satan has been lifted from your soul,” he said abruptly.

“It might have been lifted sooner, had you come to me when I lay in the Vincennes jail,” retorted Muir, with a touch of acerbity. “What want you with me? What have I to do with you?”

Black Sand chuckled, though without mirth.

“What have I to do with thee?” he said. “Those are sad words, sir, sad words! Now hark’ee. Our friend General Simon Kenton went to Harrison and bade him release you. They passed harsh words. The end of that matter was that Kenton was sent packing from Vincennes. I did not come myself because I was caring for Alice ——”

“Then you found her?” broke in Muir, though he flinched at her name.

“Aye, and took her home in safety. By the testimony of your black slave, as well as from that of others, she has learned how John was slain, and she would not rest until I came to seek and bring you home again. She must see you. But the search has been long, friend Muir! The

search has been long, and we have other and greater work in hand, for now the black sand of destruction is being sown broadcast — the hearts of men are being turned from the ways of peace ——”

The Moravian's head drooped, and his eyes closed wearily. Muir knew that the man was not asleep, but he did not intrude upon that silence.

Who was he to hold his pride against the love of a girl because she had misjudged him? Oh, bitter fool that he had been! The golden eagle of the Cincinnati had truly been a sign, he felt; his old life was calling him back again. He came to the resolution very simply and sanely. The forest life had purged his spirit, and the spell of Black Sand was strongly upon him. He would go back — and perhaps the same providence which had sent him a sign in the wilderness might still farther open up the back trail, the trail which would end only with his assoilment by Henry Clay.

“The wolves are out!” Suddenly the cry burst from Black Sand, as the man's head came up. “Wrath to the wilderness places, wrath! The scalp feather hangs dun in the sunrise, the war eagle screams over the river — up flint, out horn! Let the black sands of destruction run and leap like flame across the dawn ——”

Abruptly the speaker's head drooped again.

Muir watched him with a chill stealing into heart and soul, for he thought that probably the man was stark mad at times. He could find no coherence or meaning in those weirdly babbling words, though soon enough he was to remember them keenly. None the less, his curiosity was awakened, and he stirred the embers with his foot so that they flung up a redder glow, and spoke.

“Black Sand, what do your words mean?”

The Moravian looked straightly at him, and in the deep eyes Muir read sanity — terrible sanity, and grief, and despair.

“It means that we have work to do, David Muir! Satan is abroad. Whether we shall prevail against him I know not, for I have seen a vision of the black sands of death. Yet we must try, for the work is given to our hand. If we fail, then the noblest man on all the frontier will be destroyed.”

“Tecumthe?” Muir suddenly understood. “There is no Indian war?”

“There is none,” muttered Black Sand. “The warriors have gone home. The Prophet has a few hundred men in his town, no more, and he will not dig up the hatchet until Tecumthe returns, two months hence. There is no war, David Muir, but let war come and Tecumthe’s dream and power will be both shattered together — burned in the

black sand of death and doom — burned, burned.”

Again Black Sand's head drooped, and now the Kentuckian disturbed him no more. Muir was divided between fear and awe; for, as he watched that grotesque figure opposite him, he felt comprehension stealing into his brain.

This Moravian's whole ambition was wrapped up in the designs of the Shawano sagamore, Tecumthe. His warped missionary's spirit had found a grafting in the strong, simple nobility of the chief. Under the tutelage of Black Sand, Tecumthe had founded his town, and had banded the tribes in a confederacy — in very truth a “silver chain of peace” as the ancient Iroquois had called their own league. Black Sand's vision had so prevailed that now Tecumthe designed to remove his council fire to the wilderness of the Illinois country, beyond all contamination, beyond all danger of war with the white race.

What lay further behind all this, Muir could only conjecture. He fancied that Black Sand cherished the ambition of bringing the red race into tune with his own belief in Deity, of stopping all bloodshed and liquor trade, and of making the Indians anew in the image of their fathers. It was feasible. It had been done at the Prophet's Town. Tecumthe's high nobility and marvelous

personality, combined with the Prophet's mummery, had proven the dream practicable. Yet Muir knew that Black Sand was not dreaming of empire; his vision was a spiritual thing, a vague and shapeless altruism, and it was through Tecumthe that a more concrete ambition took form from the dream.

With the dawn light Muir and Black Sand turned their faces westward. The sunshine seemed to sweep all the vague incoherency out of the Moravian's mind, and Muir managed to learn something of the duty and task before them — something, but not all, since Black Sand himself did not know all.

“You're heading for the Prophet's Town?” asked Muir. “Why? There's no danger that Elkswatawa will stir up any trouble, after the way Tecumthe handled him.”

“None,” said Black Sand. “That trail is closed, friend Muir. But the trail to Malden lies open, and we must close it.”

Muir learned that a large force of Pottawatomies were on their way from Malden to the Prophet's Town, bearing with them a large quantity of British muskets and powder. These warriors must not only be restrained from influencing Elkswatawa's braves, but they must be prevented from any vio-



lence toward the settlements. There would be a council of course, and it was to be present at this that Black Sand was eager to reach the Wabash. Muir, with his forest name and his friendship with Tecumthe well known, must assume a share in this work, since the redskins would listen to Black Sand as inspired but to Muir as a man of sense and physical strength. At the beginning of October Harrison had sent militia up the Wabash to build a fort, and Black Sand knew not what might have happened in the intervening time.

Was this, then, his mission, thought Muir — was it to stand as a bulwark of peace in the councils of the redskins that he had been summoned back? It scarcely seemed definite enough, direct enough, yet he accepted it gladly. Fastened to his shirt was the unmarked golden eagle, and Muir felt pride in the wearing of it. Some day he might reclaim his own emblem, but at present he cared little about Henry Clay; he was a son of the Cincinnati, a fact which nothing could remove.

He had cherished the notion of passing some supreme test, of doing some great deed which would enable him to go to Clay and demand his own; but this was so no longer. That way led romance and the unreality of dreams. Muir was now too close to the realities of life not to know that

Clay had demanded the accolade of the spirit, not of the body; that manliness is of the heart, not of the high deed. The Volsung must sweat over the forging of his blade ere he can wield it as a hero.

From the vicinity of St. Clair's disaster to the Indian town on the Wabash was only a bird's flight of a hundred miles, but it was virgin forest, and much of it was swamp or marsh. The two companions could cover little more than twenty miles a day of this air line, for Black Sand was very weary after his long pursuit of Muir. On the second day, the Kentuckian borrowed the older man's razor and used it; he inspected his clean-shaven features in the mirror of a forest pool, and wondered at them. He had thought himself an old man, yet his face seemed younger than ever, firm of line and contour, while from beneath the harsh brows leaped out the gray eyes with all their old startling aggression. He was not much changed externally, but Muir knew that the wilderness had touched his spirit and had left him the better for the contact.

So the two men traveled on together, thankful that winter was still keeping its chill hand from the land. Black Sand had calculated that their journey would require all of five days, but they picked up a little on this time. After four days of hard woods running they crossed a stream which

the Moravian identified as one only fifteen miles from the Prophet's Town. Muir was all for pushing on that night and finishing the journey, but to this Black Sand uttered a flat and determined negative. When pressed for a reason, he fell silent and began to gather wood for a fire, so Muir gave in and helped make camp for the fourth and last time. Yet, when they had supped, Black Sand gave an indication of his thought.

“Have you observed, friend Muir,” he said abruptly, “that in these four days past we have not seen a single red man?”

Muir nodded frowningly. “You think there is war? Perhaps the hunters have been gathered in to await action by this coming council.”

Black Sand pulled gloomily at his pendulous lip.

“We shall know in the morning,” he muttered, staring into the crackling fire. “I have seen a vision of the black sand of death. There shall be feathers in touch-holes, ramrods in barrels, flints in the air! Let the guns be loaded — let the guns be loaded ——”

He fell silent, and Muir did not disturb his visionary mood; yet that mood held more of fact than fancy.

With the next morning they were off early, and

an hour after sunrise came to a rippling ridge of land. Upon reaching the crest, where they halted for a view of the country around, Black Sand suddenly flung out his arm and his voice leaped forth.

“Look! The smoke!”

To the south was a thin smoke rising puff on puff. Muir took it for an Indian smoke talk, but Black Sand shook his head and produced his fire-bag.

“No. It is a signal from my daughter Alice — a signal of news, a summons calling me in all haste. Let us make response, quickly!”

Alice! Muir said nothing, but his heart beat faster. Was she actually in the forest, trying to reach them with signals? Then Kenton and Tom must be with her; but what did it mean — was there an Indian war, then?

They worked together with flint and steel, and when Black Sand had sent up an airy thread of smoke in reply, they stamped out the fire and set off toward the south, where by this time the first signal had died away. Now the Moravian was seized by a furious energy, which was barely equalled by the eagerness in Muir's heart. He wanted to see Alice Cross; he wanted this more than anything else, as he suddenly realized. He thrilled

to the feel of that bit of gold on his breast. It was a visible and outward sign of an inward grace that had touched his spirit. The gulf between himself and Alice had closed, forgotten; it was swept away and mattered not at all.

Now Muir's eyes were opened, and he perceived how wrong he had been — the threads of his past were by no means snapped away. Some of them had worn out. The sordid, baser threads had frictioned into nothing, but there remained the fine silvern threads of higher things strung across his soul, vibrating to the stirrings of the spirit —

A huge shape leaped out upon them, gripped Muir, hugged him with wild cries of incoherent gladness. The Kentuckian held the scarred, grizzled head of Tom against his breast and felt hot tears drip on his hands; but he looked over the negro's bowed head to where Alice Cross stood, just beyond.

Like a flame of loveliness she seemed, clad now in buckskin as first he had beheld her. Black Sand was speaking to her, but the girl was heedless; her gaze was fastened upon that of Muir. He, sensing the appeal of her look, gently loosened the hold of Tom and stepped forward.

“Alice, I crave your pardon for the words I used at our last meeting ——”

“Oh, David!” She sprang to him, hands outstretched. “I am so sorry!”

In this moment, hands clasped hard, they looked into each other's eyes. Her face was lifted, its delicate lines so beautiful that Muir felt a tug of pain at his heart; her beauty seemed scarcely human. It drove the words from him; he felt stunned by the very loveliness of her, and was silent. Yet, as he smiled, his face was transfigured, and he bent to her hands and kissed them.

“Alice!”

The querulous voice of Black Sand broke in upon them. Muir turned, found Tom at his side, and smiled again at the slave who loved him so truly.

“All right again, Tom?”

The negro nodded in silence and caught Muir's hand. Black Sand, staring at the girl, now spoke rapidly and urgently.

“Daughter, what means this signal? Explain, explain! Where is Kenton?”

“Oh — you must hasten!” she burst out impetuously. “The chief Stone Eater came for you with news three days ago ——”

“Stone Eater? Tecumthe's friend?”

“Yes. Mr. Kenton was hurt, having crushed his leg beneath a log, but he went on to the Prophet's

Town to do what he could — the council is set for tonight ——”

“Quiet, girl!” snapped Black Sand impatiently, seeing that she was too excited for calm speech. “Chief Stone Eater is of the peace party. Now tell at length what has happened, and God send that no scalps have yet been taken!”

The girl restrained herself and spoke more collectedly, yet with a flash in her eye and a heaving bosom that belied her calmness.

“Governor Harrison and his army have built a fort between here and Vincennes. They are marching on the Prophet’s Town, nine hundred of them — by this time they must have arrived. Stone Eater said that no scalps had been taken, and that the chiefs would parley with Harrison and keep the peace until the council ——”

“What day is this?” shot out Black Sand.

“The sixth of November. The Miamis and Delawares have deserted the Prophet ——”

“Why did Harrison march? Has there been fighting or bloodshed?”

“No. Nobody knows why. The Prophet has had no time to call in the tribes, and Harrison has sent word that he came in peace, not in war. Tecumthe is away, and Stone Eater is most anxious for your presence at tonight’s council, hoping that

you can make the chiefs keep peace at any cost—”

“Be quiet — let me think!” cried Black Sand in an agonized voice, his features working terribly.

Muir stood silent, stricken by these tidings. So Harrison had struck! He could understand well enough what lay in the background. Harrison was set on destroying the Prophet's Town at all costs, by peace or by war. Alice's tale showed how desperately the Indians were striving to maintain peace until the return of Tecumthe. There was good reason for this. If the Delawares and Miamis had deserted the Prophet, then Elkswatawa could have only a few warriors around him, and the Potawatomies bearing the British muskets probably formed his main reliance. His efforts to prevent war would be desperate; and Harrison's efforts would be as desperate in the attempt to force hostilities. The army was in the Indian lands without excuse, in time of peace; unless he were attacked, Harrison would have to face a heavy reckoning. He must force that attack, since he had caught the Indians by surprise, with not a tithe of their force at hand.

“To the Prophet's Town at once!” broke out Black Sand swiftly. “Friend Muir, you come with me, for I must lean heavily upon you. Alice, return with this negro to our clearing ——”



“Hold on!” Muir firmly advanced his will against that of Black Sand. “If war is at hand, your unprotected settlement is no place for a woman. Even if we manage to maintain peace, Harrison is determined to destroy the Prophet’s Town, and this means that Tecumthe will raise the tribes in a red flame of war.”

“Well?” questioned Black Sand, nodding gloomy assent. “What is in your mind?”

“This: Let Tom take Alice south to the Wabash, where they can get a canoe and go on. Instead of halting at Vincennes, let them continue to the Ohio while they may still travel in peace. Once at the Ohio, they will have no trouble in reaching Louisville, where Alice will find shelter with Mr. Berthoud. You can trust Tom — he is a better woodsman than I, Alice is absolutely safe with him, and ——”

Muir turned, snatching from his wrist the safe-conduct of Tecumthe.

“Tom, bind this on your arm; it’s Tecumthe’s token, and any Indians you meet will let you pass freely. You remember Mr. Berthoud? Good! Guard Madame Alice with your life.”

Black Sand nodded, and held out his hand to Alice.

“A good plan. Daughter, may God bless you

— and you also, black man of the faithful heart! Now haste, for you must strike the Wabash to the south, and paddle swiftly.”

Muir bowed again over the girl’s hand. When he straightened up, he found tears in her eyes.

“Good-by, Alice,” he said quietly. “We’ll meet at Louisville, if God is good.”

She turned away, not answering his words. Tom gripped Muir’s hand again.

“Marse Dave, you-all can trust ol’ Tom. Good-by, Marse. We’ll see you-all at Louisville — Lawd bless yo’, suh!”

“Go,” said Black Sand, with an imperative gesture. “And God go with you!”

A moment later Muir and Black Sand stood together, alone. The Moravian put out his hand to that of Muir, with a crushing grip.

“The word of God is in my heart that we four shall never meet again, for I think that you and I go to our deaths. Yet I believe the girl is safe.”

Muir nodded. “They’ll let us in to the council?”

“You are known as Tecumthe’s friend, and you are with me. There is a seat for Black Sand at any council fire. Now — come!”

## CHAPTER XIV

*Powder and Bullet and Flint and Fire —  
Who shall naysay ye from Hell's desire?*

STILL nearly fifteen miles from the Prophet's Town, Black Sand now stayed for naught but drove straight ahead. Most of the way lay through swamps and dried muck, since in the spring there had been heavy floods, and by noon they had scarcely covered five miles.

The morasses were thickly grown with alders and hazel, which must be fought through at a maddening cost of delay. Once the Moravian floundered into a quicksand, and not until half an hour had passed did Muir get him extricated. When at length they sighted long wisps of trailing smoke against the sky. Black Sand drew a deep breath of relief.

“We are not too late!”

“How so? Perhaps that is the town now burning.”

“Nay! Harrison set out to destroy the town, but if that were accomplished we should now see no smoke at all, or else the flames of it. Yonder are the camp fires of the army.”

They plunged anew into the thickets. It was bitterly cold, they were both of them adrip with muck and mire, and Muir was half frozen despite the hard work. As the afternoon wore on, they came to another open space and a cry broke from Muir; the sky ahead was filled with a great cloud of smoke.

“The attack! The town’s fired ——”

“Nay, friend Muir! There would be denser smoke, flames, and the roll of rifles. Those are but the camp fires built up to prepare the evening meal. Hasten!”

Desperate haste spurred them on, yet it was only an hour before sundown when they stumbled out on the low eastern bank of the Wabash. On the higher ground, opposite them, lay the Prophet’s Town. Canoes were crowded along the shore, and Muir’s shout brought an Indian from the trees, who waved his hand and came over in a canoe. There was a swift interchange of words between Black Sand and the Indian, who then sent up a long, quavering yell and motioned them into the canoe. Muir stepped in, followed by the Moravian, and they sped across the river.

As they neared the opposite bank, the fringe of trees became alive with dark shapes. Foremost was that of Kenton, who leaned heavily upon a

rifle; with him were three chiefs who Muir recognized as Elkswatawa, Winnemac and White Loon. Muir stepped ashore to grip Kenton's hand.

"How goes everything, Sime?"

"Badly, Dave, badly."

Black Sand hurried to the chiefs and began an eager exchange of words, while curious warriors crowded around. The Moravian turned with a swift word to Kenton.

"Get Muir away. Bring him to the council later."

The frontiersman nodded and urged Muir away. The crowd moved upward toward the bluff, and Muir found more than one warrior of his acquaintance nodding to him in surly greeting. Then, as they broke from the shore trees and ascended the rising ground behind, Muir was astounded by the mass of men that broke on his sight.

Here there were hundreds of Indians, all warriors and all in war paint, yet he noted that not half of them bore guns. No Delawares or Miamis were in evidence, but the Kentuckian made out Shawanoes, Ottawas, Chippewas, Pottawatomies, Kickapoos and Wyandots, with a few Sacs and Winnebagoes. Over them all rested an ominous silence, and as the two white men came to the higher ground, the Indians turned with one accord

to face the west. Muir felt Kenton's fingers grip his arm and he stopped short. There was no need for words.

Perhaps a mile distant, along a line of trees that told of a creek, was a long array of fires — Harrison's army, in camp. Between, lay the cornfields of the Indians and a wide strip of swamp-land. Muir could catch a glitter of bayonets and a gleam of white tents in the far camp.

“Come along to my lodge,” said Kenton quietly. “You ain't fur from perishin' from cold, I reckon.”

This was true enough, and Muir followed his friend into the town of the Prophet. This contained nearly threescore large and well built cabins surrounding a council house of imposing size; adjoining, but on lower ground, were twice as many cabins and brush huts, with some skin lodges. Kenton led the Kentuckian to a cabin not far from the long-house, seated him by the fire, and laid out a fresh suit and moccasins of buckskin.

“You're a sight, Dave, and lookin' kind o' peaked,” said Kenton. “I done twisted my leg right smart — say, let's have some meat.”

He left the hut. Muir had scarcely changed from his stiff, mud-caked garb when Kenton returned with a thick slice of venison and a gourd of

water. While the Kentuckian was eating, the hunter hastily related the general aspect of affairs.

Harrison, with close to nine hundred men, had that morning reached the Prophet's Town and had marched to within fifty yards of the town itself. There the chiefs had met and halted him, arranging to hold a council on the following day with him, and giving him the camp ground beside a small creek a mile to the west. Muir, to his satisfaction, found that no hostilities had taken place. The Prophet and his chiefs, although pushed to a sullen desperation, had obeyed the mandate of Tecumthe and refrained from violence. Moreover, there were a scant six hundred warriors in the town.

"Thar's the council," announced Kenton, as the booming tones of a war drum rose in hollow thunder. "Dave, here's whar we see somethin' great! Say — that cuss Hogan is here."

Muir stiffened suddenly. "Where?"

"Now, you go easy," admonished Kenton, his steely eyes troubled. "Hogan come with a message from Harrison. You ain't goin' to tech him."

"Sime, I'm going to kill him," said Muir.

Kenton gripped him by the arms in an outburst of passionate earnestness.

"Dave, are you a plumb fool? Thar's three hundred British guns in the long-house. The

Prophet was goin' to sarve 'em out last night, but I got him to wait on this council. If you tech Hogan, the Injuns'll know that Harrison will burn 'em out in revenge. Hogan's Injun friends will scalp us sartin; the war party and the peace party will join to attack Harrison fust, knowin' it's the only thing left to do if his messenger gits killed. Man, you jest *can't* tech him here! It's jest what Harrison wants, dum him! Ain't you got no sense at all?"

Muir's lips set, for a moment, then he nodded. "I'll not touch him, Sime," he said bitterly. "Come along."

They left the cabin together and found a huge crowd of silent, waiting warriors surrounding the council house. Striding through them at Kenton's side, Muir found the door guarded by a stalwart Shawano, who grunted at sight of them and ushered them inside. Evening was now at hand, and little did Muir dream what this night was to bring, not only to him but to all the northern wilderness.

So smoky was the interior of the council house that for a little Muir could discern nothing. He followed Kenton blindly and sat down by his friend. Presently, in the dull glow of the central fire, he began to make out the details of this assemblage.



Around the walls were seated some fifty chieftains, as this was a council of chiefs alone. Muir saw the squat figure of Black Sand to one side. At one end of the council sat the Prophet, divested of his war paint and nearly naked, preparing a large calumet pipe. Beside each chief was a list-wrapped package, and a great heap of them was piled behind Elkswatawa. Muir perceived that these were more British muskets, identical with those he had seen at that other council.

Slowly the Prophet raised and lighted his calumet, then drew the four ceremonial puffs. In silence and in the same grave dignity the calumet was passed from hand to hand, Kenton and Muir being included in the courtesy. When the pipe at length returned to the Prophet, all eyes went to that chief; but he sat like a graven image, motionless, until the silence became intolerable. Then, dignity satisfied and the stage set, he rose and began to speak slowly in very good English.

“My brothers are of many tongues, but all speak English. My brothers, a swarm of locusts threatens to eat up our lodges and cornfields and young men. We are not many. We have had no time to call for our brothers from the forest. Our hearts have been set upon the peace trail, our war paint is not prepared, and we have kept our oaths. Our

brothers the Saganosh, whose fort is at Malden, have sent us guns and powder. My brothers, Elkwatawa would like to hear your thoughts.”

He ceased. There was a general turning of heads, and Muir looked with the others at an old, wrinkled but still stalwart chief — Stone Eater, famed as a counselor and wise man. Stone Eater took his own time to reply, but presently rose and delivered a stately example of pure Indian oratory. He spoke in his own tongue, but Muir understood from Kenton’s whisper that the address was a dignified plea for peace.

Stone Eater advised the chiefs very strongly to give way before Harrison in everything, even to yielding up the town; to throw the burden of blame on the whites; to await the return of Tecumthe and then to gather the tribes and open a relentless war. It was sound advice and pleasant to many of the hearers, although the Prophet’s one eye gleamed red with bitterness.

Next spoke Winnemac in broken English, making a short, blunt demand for an immediate attack on Harrison’s camp. One by one the principal chiefs followed, yet for the most part they inclined to the side of peace. Came the turn of Kenton, but he motioned Muir to rise in his place. Muir came erect, his face stern; for a space he stood

silent, looking from face to face, and gained the greater respect thereby. When he spoke, the silence was tense.

“My brothers, I am white of heart, but you know that Tecumthe is my friend and brother. I have heard General Harrison promise Tecumthe that the Long Knives would not be the first to lift the hatchet. I know that the Long Knives hope to make you begin the war. My brothers, you must not do this, which is evil counsel. Detain Harrison until you have sent away your old men, your squaws, your children. Then give him this town and await the return of Tecumthe, so that General Harrison will get great blame for his deeds. I have said.”

He could determine no effect from his words, save a black scowl from Winnemac. The Prophet now spoke without rising.

“My brother Black Bear speaks with a single tongue, but we know that his heart is white, as he told us. My brothers, we would like to hear the words of our father Black Sand, whose skin is white, but whose heart is red. Our father has told us that the Great Spirit whispers in his ear. We should like to hear the words of the Great Spirit, who also whispers in the ear of Elkswatawa. We should like to know what the Great Spirit has whis-

pered to our father Black Sand, about loading these guns.”

The words were tipped with calculated malice. Muir realized suddenly that the whole issue now lay between Black Sand and Elkswatawa, who was undoubtedly jealous of the Moravian's influence and was fearful for his own position of wizard.

There was a quick stir of interest, but Black Sand seemed not to heed it. He sat staring at the fire, his long fingers playing ceaselessly with powder grains, his lower lip pendulous; but at last he came to his feet and his voice rang out in the Shawano tongue. Muir could understand nothing, but he could see from the faces around him that the chiefs were being powerfully moved by the appeal. Kenton nudged his arm, motioning toward Elkswatawa. Glancing at this chief, Muir perceived that underneath the surface the Prophet was in a mad fury of rage; even in the half obscurity his hideous features shone with a devil's light. At this instant Black Sand broke into English.

“My brothers, you who take up the hatchet shall perish by the hatchet! This is the word of the Great Spirit to Black Sand. If you load these guns, you shall be wiped away and your very names shall perish utterly. Now bring in the messenger from the Long Knives and let him speak to us.

Remember the word of the Great Spirit! Black Sand has spoken.”

A crafty move, this, since it cut off all rebuttal, and the angry Prophet motioned with his hand. A moment later the tall, handsome figure of Hogan entered and stood behind Kenton, to one side of Muir, facing Black Sand. The scout, who was in forest garb, was slow to make out faces, and was not in a position to recognize Muir.

“Speak!” commanded the Prophet briefly.

“I have a message from General Harrison,” said Hogan. His voice rang firm, but his closely set eyes shifted from Black Sand to the Prophet and back again. “The Long Knives come in peace and will hold a council with you tomorrow. They wish to destroy this town, but they will pay you for what they destroy. They wish you no harm. The great father at Washington loves his red children. General Harrison has spoken.”

This message, ostensibly pacific, not only surprised the council but perplexed and irritated them strangely. Hogan had deliberately violated all Indian etiquette in thus making his message bald and curt, as though in contempt and scorn of his auditors. A thinly veiled sneer sat on the lips of the Prophet. Then the Ottawa chief, White Loon, leaped passionately to his feet.

“We have heard the words of our father Harrison,” he cried out. “Hogan is our brother. His heart is good. He speaks with a single tongue. He has told us what the Long Knives gave him to say. Now let him speak in council with us! Let him tell his red brothers whether the Long Knives speak with a double tongue!”

A grunt of assent arose. Muir, not looking up, heard the smooth voice of Hogan begin a speech which drove madness into more than one listener.

“My brothers, it makes me very happy to hear such words. You know me. You ask me to tell you what is in the hearts of the Long Knives. I will tell you, my brothers. Listen!

“You have been asked to a council tomorrow, but you will not be there, my brothers. You will be dead and scattered. At dawn the Long Knives mean to sweep down upon you, catch you unguarded, destroy your town, and kill all whom they find here. Go and look at their camp, and you will see that they sleep with their guns ready, and that Kentucky riflemen are waiting at the edge of the swamp to steal around and cut off your escape. My brothers, my heart is sad because of this plan. I have spoken.”

In this moment, the chiefs had need of all their wonted stoicism. Hogan's words evoked one low,

terrible snarl of fury from the whole circle — never had Muir heard such a sound, and it lingered in his memory long afterward. More than one knife flamed in the firelight. Only with an effort did Muir repress his mad impulse to leap up and give Hogan the lie direct. But he caught sight of Black Sand, and the man's face gave him pause. Through that terrible sound of repressed fury and anguish there pierced the thin voice of the Moravian.

“My brothers, Hogan lies!”

Muir glanced up. He saw the scout eyeing Black Sand with an assumed sneer through which showed a very real alarm. Black Sand came to his feet and continued.

“My brothers, this man lies. He speaks with a double tongue, as he has been bidden to speak. This is a plot to make you take up the hatchet — did not Black Sand warn you of such a thing? Has not Black Bear warned you? Now listen, my brothers! Hogan, do you swear that your words are true, before the Great Spirit?”

Hogan's face went livid, and the man bit at his lip until a drop of blood came out. But Hogan, knowing that all depended on him, made quick assent.

“Yes. I swear.”

“Where are your proofs?” demanded Black Sand, obviously taken aback by this oath.

“Proofs?” Hogan flung up his head suddenly. “If my brothers need proof, let them go and look at the camp of the Long Knives. Let Black Sand go, if he is not afraid that the village dogs will bark at his shadow. Let him go with me and see how the Long Knives sleep on their arms, let him see how the riflemen wait for the dawn to attack you!”

Before Black Sand could reply, the old chief Stone Eater rose and looked at Hogan. In his hand the chieftain held his bared knife.

“My brothers,” he cried out, his aged voice thrilling passionately, “we have heard the words of Captain Hogan. Can my brothers trust this Long Knife who has given whiskey to our young men? Can a white man who deals in firewater speak to us with a single tongue? Let my father Black Sand go out with this Long Knife and see if he speaks truth; let my father Black Sand come back and tell us of what he sees, for we can trust his words!”

There was an outburst of assenting grunts from the whole circle. Muir, looking up, saw a lurid flame in the eyes of Hogan. Not knowing what he feared from the man, Muir moved to gain his feet — but Kenton’s hand clamped down on his



arm and held him quiet. In after days, Kenton bitterly regretted that act.

“Black Sand will do this,” said the Moravian quietly. “Let my brothers wait here until I return. Let them also remember the words I have spoken, whispered to me by the Great Spirit.”

He rose, stepped around the fire, crossed to the door, and was gone. Hogan followed in silence, and departed. After a moment the Prophet came to his feet, his naked brown body crimsoned by the fire glow. He spoke calmly, in English.

“My brothers, while our father Black Sand is away I will speak with the Great Spirit. Perhaps the Great Spirit will whisper to Elkswatawa in this matter.”

He, too, strode to the door and vanished. Presently an Ottawa chief arose and began to speak in his own tongue, but Muir caught the soft voice of Kenton at his ear.

“Dave! This ain’t right, to my notion. Git out.”

They drew back together, rose and gained the door. Only when they emerged did Muir realize that they had been in the council house for three hours or more. The night was very cold, and the sky had clouded over.

“Rain or snow,” commented Kenton, as they

stood outside the door. "Dave, I wonder what that thar cuss had in his head?"

"He had murder in his eyes," said Muir grimly. "And I believe he deliberately drew Black Sand on this errand. Why? Let's follow them."

Kenton was silent for an instant.

"Nope, not me," he said slowly. "I ain't right good fer walkin', and them pesky sojers is liable to fire if a stick cracks. Dave, if the A'mighty is payin' any heed to this here frontier ——"

He broke short off; Muir caught his arm, startled.

The Prophet's Town was ringed with fires, and from the camp of Harrison showed the red gleam of other fires. In between were cornfields and a patch of swamp. From this point and not far from the town itself, suddenly quavered up the voice of Black Sand. It lifted in the singsong, monotonous doggerel to which the roving Moravian was so addicted. As the words pierced clearly across the frosty night, the doorways of the cabins and lodges became crowded with listening warriors. Muir caught the song distinctly, and for some reason it brought a swift, cold fear into his heart.

"Up flint and out horn —

Dun hangs the scalp feather!

Wrath comes on the morn

And smoke of the burning;  
Out bullet and rod —  
Black Sand is the omen,  
The anger of God  
Shall waken ye, foemen!  
Awake ye and wake  
To the war-eagle's screaming!  
God shall shatter and break  
The dream of your dreaming;  
Up flint and out horn —  
Your greatness is broken!  
Death rides on the morn  
And Black Sand has spok——”

The thing ended abruptly. A ghastly, pregnant silence settled on the night.

“Good God!” gasped Kenton suddenly. “Dave, git out thar and see what that means! Here, you red varmints —” He turned to the nearest group of warriors and shot a swift order at them.

Muir leaped away, the Indians at his heels. An uncanny feeling seized him, a feeling that Black Sand's weird song had not come to any good end; and as he recalled the flame in Hogan's eyes, he cursed himself for not having gone with the two men.

Something of that same feeling must have reached the Indians, for behind Muir the whole town was leaping into a babel of tongues. More

warriors leaped after the Kentuckian, men sprang out of the darkness with shouted directions, and as Muir ran across the first cornfields he felt a cold drop of rain on his cheek. But he was not thinking of these things; as he went, he shouted aloud, and no one made answer to him.

At the edge of the swamp they found Black Sand. He was quite dead, and there were two great knife wounds in his back.

## CHAPTER XV

*If the Wolf be brave and his heart be stout,  
When the lips draw back from his fangs — look out!*

MUIR stood trembling from head to foot. Such awful rage was upon him that it robbed him of strength, shook him helpless in its grip. He could not speak or move, but as he stood over the body of Black Sand while the Indians surged around with shrill cries, his soul was wrenched asunder by the bitter storm of grief and hatred.

Hogan had undoubtedly reached the American lines in safety before this. Muir stared toward those fires, and with a spasm of self-control that was even more terrible than his anger, got himself in hand.

“I must follow him,” he muttered aloud. “Kenton and I — together. He cannot escape us now. Aye, we’ll reach him in the presence of Harrison himself! It’ll be execution, not murder.”

The warriors gently shoved him aside, for they respected his agony of soul, and with low wails caught up the body of Black Sand. Muir turned and strode back toward the town. His seething spirit had now settled into a grim and merciless

resolve. The cup of Hogan was full. The murderer was less deserving of pity than any gaunt timber wolf. Picturing how Black Sand had been decoyed and knifed to death, in the very midst of his weird song, Muir gripped his fingers into his palms and madness clutched at him anew. It was prearranged by Hogan, of course. The scout knew that this murder would prove his words to the Indian chiefs, would provoke the war which it was his errand to bring on. But again Muir controlled himself, desperately.

When he came to the town and found Kenton standing in the drizzle of rain awaiting him, Muir spoke with a cold tensity of voice.

“Black Sand was knifed in the back by Hogan. Murdered. Where’s my rifle?”

Kenton’s iron fingers clasped his shoulder.

“Man — d’you mean it?” gasped the frontiersman.

“Let me go,” snarled Muir, and tried to tear free. But he could not. Kenton’s grip held him like a vise, and suddenly he perceived the reason.

Within arm’s length of them a horrible figure had taken shape — the figure of a naked man, striped and ringed with white paint, hung with scalps and bones and rattles of deer hooves. The face was a hideous mask, through which gleamed

the one eye of Elkswatawa, glowing with a wild and insensate ferocity. Those who bore Black Sand's body came past, and in their wake leaped that nightmare shape, and vanished.

"Git back to my lodge," commanded Kenton sternly. "Wait thar fer me; load the rifles. They're takin' the body to the council lodge and thar's hell to pay. Wait till I come."

The old frontiersman slipped away in the wake of the flitting figures. The fires that ringed the town were now being scattered and stamped out; the cold, drizzling rain was hissing on the embers; the whole place was buzzing with low voices, and women were wailing.

Muir sought Kenton's lodge, where their rifles had been left. He knew that the Prophet had assumed his character of wizard — but the Kentuckian cared little whether peace or war now developed. Black Sand was dead, basely murdered. Muir, when he had loaded the rifles, dropped beside the fire in the cabin.

He remembered very acutely his father's face, proud, kindly, stern of eye. He thought of how his father had been slain, by a knife in the back. He thought of John Cross and of the poor roving Moravian, whose brain had held so much of keen sense and kindness and love.

“It will be justice, not murder,” he muttered to himself.

He looked down at his own rifle again, feathering the touch-hole free of the least dust speck, going about the work with cold caution. From the near-by council house he could hear the loud, clear voice of the Prophet raised in a frenzied chant, which continued without cessation or pause. Despite the grim resolve on vengeance which had once more clutched upon his brain, Muir grew cooler with each passing moment, gained firmer grip on himself. Later, he was glad of this.

When at length Kenton appeared, Muir was staring into the fire, one hand clenching the golden eagle which hung at his breast. He swung to his feet at Kenton's entrance.

“Well?”

“Ain't no time to waste.” Sime Kenton quietly picked up his rifle and leaned on it a moment, to ease his hurt leg. “They're goin' to rush Harrison an hour 'fore dawn. They're stirred up now past quietin', and we got to warn Harrison.”

“I'm going to kill Hogan,” said Muir quietly.

“All right. You'll likely get hell fer doin' it. S'pose you take the warnin'.”

Muir nodded, his gray eyes flaming as the sun flames through ice.



“I’ll do it, Sime, and then I’ll pay that murderous dog if I have to kill Harrison first.”

Kenton regarded him a long moment, his steely eyes curiously narrowed.

“I reckon you’d do it,” he said at length. “Sarve out the pesky varmint, Dave, and a dum good job! But how you figgerin’ to git cl’ar afterward?”

“Eh? What do you mean?”

Kenton laughed harshly. “They’ll be hell riz with you fer killin’ him. Now, I ain’t goin’ to jine Harrison. This thing was all pieced up so’s to make the Injuns attack, and old Sime ain’t goin’ to have no hand in it. I’ll git in a canoe an’ paddle downstream. If you git cl’ar o’ them sojers, foller the crick from the camp to where she hits the Wabash. I’ll be waitin’ there with the canoe.”

Muir nodded comprehension. He had neither thought nor care as to what might follow the death of Hogan, but he realized that Kenton’s plan was shrewd. More than likely, Harrison would try to punish him immediately for the killing of Hogan.

“Very well, Sime,” he said. “Good-by.”

“Oh, I’ll go along a ways,” muttered the frontiersman, and turned.

They left the cabin together, Muir covering the

pan of his rifle from the rain. The chant of Elks-watawa was rising shrill and high from the council house, and in the streets were gathered anxious, maddened warriors despite the rain. These paid no attention to the two friends, however, and at the edge of the village Kenton halted.

“No Injun guards out, so git along,” he said simply. “I reckon the A’mighty ain’t goin’ to forget what this skunk Hogan done tonight. Sarve him out, and old Sime’ll be waitin’ fer you.”

Muir strode away into the darkness and misty rain toward the glimmering fires of Harrison’s encampment. That he must warn Harrison he took as a matter of course. Whatever his sympathy with Tecumthe’s plans, he was first and last a white man, a Kentuckian, a son of the Cincinnati. Warning to his own people must come first, and after that, vengeance.

Presently he came upon a trail and followed it through cornfields and swamp, ever coming closer to the glimmering fires, until the sharp challenge of a sentry halted him.

“Halt! Who goes?”

“David Muir of Kentucky. I have immediate news for General Harrison.”

Muir found that he had come upon a very cautious vedette. No one appeared until a repeated

shout fetched an officer and half a dozen men who came crashing forward with torches held aloft. When Muir's figure was descried, the officer held out his hand with a word of apology.

"We must be cautious, sir — I do not recall your face, but you wear the eagle of the Cincinnati and we have not many of that society in the army."

"I am not of the army," said Muir. "I come from the Prophet's Town with news. I must see the General immediately."

"Come with me, sir."

A moment more, and Muir found himself in the camp. He had fallen among the Indiana militia, behind whom were stationed the regular troops. These latter had tents, and Muir's guide led him between the canvas lines, halting at length before a fire where a staff officer was dozing in no great comfort.

"Mr. Muir of Kentucky, sir, with important information."

The officer sprang up instantly.

"I'm Major Waller, sir — you may deliver your news to me."

"My news is for the ear of Mr. Harrison only," said Muir. "I must see him at once."

"But — gad, sir! It's after midnight and the General is sleeping ——"

“Then wake him, unless you want to be massacred.”

Muir leaned on his rifle, grimly immobile. Major Waller looked him in the eye, then shivered slightly; the Kentuckian's face reflected the harshness that had settled upon his soul. Without a word more, Waller turned to the nearest tent, passed a sentry, and disappeared. There came a muffled sound of voices. Harrison, half dressed and with a blanket flung about his shoulders, strode out to the fire and faced Muir.

“Well, sir?” he snapped brusquely.

Muir looked silently at Waller and two more officers who had joined the group. He saw no sign of Hogan.

“Withdraw, gentlemen,” ordered Harrison, and they obeyed. Muir caught a stifled mutter of “Impudent farmer!” from one of them. Then he looked steadily into the eyes of Harrison and spoke.

“Sir, I am just come from the Prophet's Town. The chiefs have decided to attack your position an hour before dawn. They have some six hundred warriors and no lack of muskets.”

It seemed to him that a swift flash of exultation leaped into Harrison's cold eyes, but the General betrayed no surprise. He answered Muir with more courtesy.

“ I thank you for this news, sir. I did not think you bore me such good will, in view of what passed some time ago in Vincennes.”

“ You were quite correct in so thinking,” said Muir bluntly. “ But you, sir, represent my country.”

Harrison met his gaze frowningly, and for a little he did not respond. Then his eyes dropped to the emblem on Muir’s breast, and he started slightly.

“ Mr. Muir, you are of the Cincinnati? Why did you not tell me that fact earlier? Had I known this when you lay in jail at Vincennes ——”

“ Never mind all that. You had best get your army in shape at once.”

“ My dispositions are made, sir,” came the significant answer. Muir smiled thinly, in a wave of bitter anger.

“ I suspected as much, Mr. Harrison, when your devil Hogan spoke to the chiefs. Thank heaven I am not in your army! I congratulate you, sir, on being well served.”

He bowed ironically. Even in the fire-glimmer he caught the dark flush that rose to Harrison’s cheeks under the bite of his words. Then, to his astonishment, the General stepped closer and laid a hand on his arm, looking him full in the eye. He

spoke slowly, and with a grave sadness in his voice that startled Muir.

“Sir, I perceive that you are a gentleman. I have this to say to you — that I have no personal feelings to consider when my duty lies clear before me. I have done all that is possible to break up this Indian settlement in peace. In justice to my people, to my governance, to my country, I cannot have this Indian confederation existing at my very door. I appreciate your views, but my duty stands first. Can you comprehend me better now, sir?”

Muir stood silent. In that moment he did, indeed, begin to comprehend the man who faced him, and he knew that this appeal to him had been hard to say. He understood how Harrison, inflexibly stern in all that regarded his office, had acted from the standpoint of duty alone — and from that standpoint had acted well. Then the thought of Hogan drove fire through his brain and brought words to his lips.

“I am sensible of your attitude, Mr. Harrison,” he admitted, “and it may be that I have been blinded by personal considerations. But now there is a pressing matter in which I must ask your aid. Black Sand, of whom you know, was basely murdered this evening — knifed in the back by Hogan. Where is this man, sir?”

“Hogan?” Harrison started in genuine surprise, and his eyes leaped into keenness. “He murdered Black Sand, you say?”

“With a knife in the back,” snapped Muir. “Where is he?”

“By gad, that must explain it!” muttered Harrison as though to himself. “Why, sir, Captain Hogan left camp an hour ago — upon my word, I knew nothing of this deed!”

“Left camp?” repeated Muir, dumfounded. “Left camp, you say?”

“Aye, sir.” Harrison frowned, trouble in his eyes. “He returned from the Indian town with word that the chiefs undoubtedly meant war, and had not answered my message. He prayed that he might not have to witness the destruction of the town where he had so often been a guest. By gad, I thought the request an odd one! But I sent him with dispatches to Vincennes ——”

Muir cried out suddenly, an inarticulate, bursting cry that sent Harrison a pace backward. For, suddenly, a terrible fear had leaped into Muir’s heart.

“Tell me,” he cried hoarsely, “tell me if you know anything about Madame Alice Cross, who was accompanied by a black slave?”

“My scouts stopped them on the river south of

here this afternoon, sir," responded Harrison. "They were fleeing from the Indians, and were allowed to pass on to Vincennes. Madame Cross — good heavens, sir! That is the lady of whom you spoke, once before, in connection with Hogan ——"

"At the time of your private interview with Tecumthe." Muir groaned. "And now that devil Hogan has sped after them — he learned that she had been seen by your scouts ——"

"Impossible, Mr. Muir — nay, not impossible, either." Harrison flamed into sudden keen interest. "By gad, this looks strange! Hogan was in haste to get away. Yet surely he could not conceive harm against a woman ——"

"He is the devil let loose." Muir caught up his rifle. "Mr. Harrison, your servant. For the sake of my country, I wish you well."

He strode away, leaving Harrison to stare after him as though he were a madman.

Nor was there any great amount of sanity in Muir's brain at that moment. The bitter fact that Hogan had escaped him was like fire to his brain. The realization that Hogan had gone questing after Alice Cross was maddening.

At the south end of the camp, Muir was halted by a score of Spencer's riflemen, but he strode through



them without a word and they, knowing him for a white man, dared not fire after him. Raging inwardly, Muir came to the creek and followed it with ever increasing speed — running through the half-frozen mud, splashing through rain water and pools, cursing as he went in the frenzy of anger that drove and spurred him.

Hogan was fleeing! The scout had returned to camp, had heard about Alice and the negro, and had set out immediately in pursuit. Here, Hogan's work had been terribly finished, and he was free to follow his own desires. He knew that could he overtake Alice Cross he might at least force her into a semblance of marriage at Vincennes or before.

“Sime! Sime!”

Muir splashed out on the Wabash bank. At his shout, a dark shape drove in at him.

“Right here, Dave! I ain't heard no shot — did ye knife the skunk?”

Sobbing blindly, Muir scrambled aboard the canoe and seized a paddle.

“He's an hour ahead — gone to Vincennes with dispatches — pursuing Alice Cross. After him, Sime, after him!”

Sime listened to the panted tale in stark amazement. Muir forgot that he had gained little rest

since the previous dawn; he remembered only that, somewhere on this river, somewhere in the hundred and fifty-seven miles between himself and Vincennes, was Philip Hogan, cruel and merciless as any kestrel hawk. Muir told himself that he, in his own turn, would be cruel and merciless as the eagle that strikes down the kestrel. His first convulsive fear for Alice had by this time passed away. Even against Hogan, old Tom was quite competent to protect the girl, given any warning. And Tom would not be caught off guard.

“Now, Sime — paddle! We’ll need the exercise to keep warm.”

“We’ll need more’n than that,” said Kenton grimly. “Lay to that thar oar, and we’ll make Vincennes post by sundown tomorrer, if we ain’t dead.”

Fresh hope thrilled into Muir, as he bent to the swing of the paddle. He had told Tom to make for the Ohio and place Alice in the care of Berthoud at Louisville. They must have struck the river and started the trip shortly after noon of that day, after leaving Muir and Black Sand. Thus they would have a twelve-hour start on Hogan.

With Kenton in the stern, steering through the rainy, freezing night by some subtle woodsman’s instinct, they flashed down the river. They came

to the small post built by Harrison, where his bateaux and canoes were collected, and sped past, silent and unchallenged. Ten minutes afterward, Muir held up his paddle and turned, listening. A faint, muttering sound had reached through the darkness to them — a sound as of a canebrake popping in a forest fire.

“It’s about an hour to dawn, friend Dave,” said Kenton solemnly. “May the A’mighty be good to them thar poor sojers and Injuns this day!”

Muir shuddered a little, though not from cold and caught up his paddle. The crackling mutter continued steadily, somewhere in the night behind them. The Tippecanoe swamps would freeze red that day.

## CHAPTER XVI

*Though ye conquer twice and thrice  
Ye must pay the gods their price.*

ON the evening of the seventh of November, 1811, the landing stage at Vincennes was by no means a cheerful spot.

Most of the townsmen had marched with Harrison, and those who remained were half-breeds or French Canadian voyageurs, whose sympathies lay more with the Indians than with the territorial army. A few of these were loitering on the river front, while on the landing stage itself was standing a group of Shakers, talking together. Chief among them was one of rubicund visage and jolly eye. On this early evening, however, the rubicund countenance of Elias Powell was clouded over with the pale cast of anxiety. All Vincennes was on tenter-hooks, for that matter; suspense had gripped the whole territory. No man knew what tidings might come out of the north at any moment, and no man but was divided between hope and fear.

An exclamation from a staring Canadian caused the group of Shakers to turn and gaze at the river. Drifting down the stream and heading in to the

landing stage was a canoe bearing two men. One of these, a frontiersman of powerful frame, was humped over his paddle in the stern as though in complete exhaustion. The other, in the bow, seemed in no better case, yet he managed to turn the craft athwart the current. He was haggard, ghastly of face, and borne down by a terrible weariness; but as he caught sight of Elias Powell he smiled a little.

“It’s Gin’ral Kenton in the starn!” cried some one. “Who’s the other? Are they scouts?”

Powell cried Muir’s name, and was the first to meet the canoe. Kenton had fainted in utter exhaustion. Not even the magnificent strength of Kenton had availed against his age, for since leaving the battle ground they had paddled like madmen, with neither rest nor food. Muir’s burning fury of vengeance had lent him superhuman energy, and it was he who had lasted best in that terrific spurt. Now he refused to be helped ashore, but gripped Powell’s hand and made a swift appeal.

“No,” he cried wearily, “we have no news, no news. Powell, for heaven’s sake drive these people away! I must speak to you in private.”

Since it was well known that Kenton had not marched with the army, the keen interest of the crowd waned swiftly, and the men drew away.

Muir, his chin sagging on his breast, found the Shaker bending over him. He looked up and spoke.

“Madame Cross — have you seen her? With a negro slave?”

“This afternoon, sir,” came Powell’s anxious reply. “Be at ease! They are safe. I met them and sped them on their way, for they would not stop except to get food. Thee does ——”

“Captain Hogan!” demanded Muir feverishly. “Has he arrived?”

“He left only a half hour ago, having brought word that Mr. Harrison did expect battle with the savages momentarily.”

“Did he know that Madame Cross had been here? Did he ask for her?”

“Yea, and I myself told him,” said Powell complacently. “Methought ’twas best for so estimable a man to lend his protection to a female, and he so promised to do. He hired boatmen and ——”

“Ah! Wait — help me here! Sime, Sime! We’ve lost!”

Muir stretched back in the canoe and seized Kenton by the shoulder, shaking the older man with savage vehemence. Muir realized that his own strength was almost burned out, and redoubled his frenzied efforts to rouse Kenton. Under

his blows, the old borderer swayed up like a man in liquor, his eyes still closed.

Powell, now comprehending that something of importance was afoot, seized Kenton and jerked icy water into his face from the river. Muir desperately collected his reeling senses to face matters. He had no great fear for Alice, for Tom would protect her to the death. Besides, Hogan had hired boatmen, and before these witnesses would attempt no violence. It was now sheer blind hatred that drove Muir, like a knife in his soul.

“Eh?” Kenton was awake at last. “What is it?”

Muir and the Shaker made him understand the situation. Then Powell, who had gathered some inkling of the truth, leaped up with a call to the nearest boatman. The Canadian came sauntering to them through the dusk.

“Friend Jean, get thy four-fathom fur canoe!” commanded Powell. “Three paddlers besides thee. These men would go to the Ohio settlements, perchance to Louisville. Haste thee, lazy woods rogue — *vaurien* — fur thief ——”

With astonishing energy and a shower of harmless oaths, Powell rushed the boatman away toward his fellows. Behind, Muir clung limply to the landing stage, blessing this speedy action of the

man whose stupidity he had been cursing only a moment previously. Kenton had already relapsed into the slumber of exhaustion. Gradually Muir, too, dropped away beneath the numbing hand of cold and weariness.

Then men shook him awake again, and he was aware of being aided into a larger canoe — a high-bowed four-fathom craft of birch; the liquid voices of Canadian boatmen were around him, and he threw up his head in a final effort of his iron will. Kenton was being dragged into the larger craft.

“You know Captain Hogan?” demanded Muir thickly.

“*Oui, m’sieu*, we know him.”

“Then, if you overtake him, waken me. He is between here and Louisville. Go fast ——”

Muir sank back, his last energy spent. As in a dream, he heard the boatmen singing to the surge and swing of their paddles — singing that same song which the French trader had hummed one night in Lexington, the same song which he had once heard on the lips of Alice Cross:

“— *trois canards s’en vont baignans*  
*Tous du long de la rivière,*  
*Legèrement ma bergère,*  
*Legrément, ye ment!*”

After that, the Kentuckian knew no more.



While he slept, the long canoe swept on down the Wabash through the night, and the stars shone cold in the frost-white sky, and the wild geese heading away into the south flew honking overhead against the spangled heavens.

When Muir awakened and looked up into the face of Kenton, the morning was well forward. The long canoe was on the Ohio, moored to a tree on the south bank, and the two friends joined the boatmen in their repast of dried venison. From a flatboat encountered at the mouth of the Wabash, the Canadians had learned that Hogan was still ahead.

As both Muir and Kenton now felt fit for work, they relieved two of the boatmen and once more the long canoe began her battle against the current of the Ohio. An hour afterward, they hailed an ark passing down to St. Louis, and learned that Hogan was only a few miles ahead of them, but that his canoe contained neither negro nor girl. This news mightily relieved Muir. He concluded that Uncle Tom had either fallen in with other travelers or else that the old negro had camped out somewhere along the Wabash; in either case, Hogan had been eluded.

The boatmen, who had entered whole-heartedly into the business of overtaking Hogan, now con-

fessed that it could scarcely be done. Muir and Kenton conferred in puzzled wonder as to Hogan's haste, since the scout could not possibly know that they were at his heels, and must be aware that he had missed Alice Cross.

Fear could not be driving him. So far as Hogan could know, David Muir was back there in the wilderness. He had nothing to fear from the murder of Black Sand, so far as the law was concerned, nor could the murder of John Cross be fastened upon him by the sole testimony of Muir, since Uncle Tom was a slave whose testimony would not be allowed. Kenton conjectured that Hogan was driving for Louisville, to report that he had found the du Croix family and collect the reward therefor. Yet to Muir this seemed too small an excuse. And Muir was right.

That night, with all six men worn out, the canoe drew in to a small settlement on the Kentucky shore. Here they rested for six hours, then recommenced the steady battle against the river current. Kenton, whose injured leg was improving fast, fretted over the twists and bends of the river, but for this there was no help. Muir marveled at the iron endurance of the boatmen, who kept their paddles swinging steadily all the next day, and marveled still more at the way Hogan maintained

his lead, and the reason for it. That afternoon they met a flatboat whose crew reported Hogan five miles ahead.

“We cannot do it,” said the head Canadian helplessly. “We can make Henderson tonight, but there we must rest until morning. You can get a fresh crew at Henderson if you wish. Hogan’s crew must also be relieved there.”

Ten miles from Henderson, however, came a most unexpected intervention. Kenton, who was seated behind Muir, leaned forward and tapped the Kentuckian’s shoulder.

“Dave, look at that thar canoe a-comin’ down!”

Dead ahead of them, a small canoe had just rounded a bend into their sight. Muir stared at it, then an exclamation of astounded wonder broke from his lips; seated in the canoe was no other than Uncle Tom!

The negro saw them at the same moment, stood up for a better look, and then waved his paddle with a wild yell of recognition, at imminent danger of capsizing.

Five minutes afterward the two craft were alongside each other, and Tom was scrambling into the larger canoe with breathless eagerness, casting his own small canoe adrift.

“Bless de Lawd!” he shouted, hugging Muir

vehemently. "Ol' Tom was gwine back to de Wabash, a-fixin' to find yo'-all wid de Injuns!"

"Where's Madame Alice?" demanded Muir sharply.

Tom grinned widely and related his story. After passing Vincennes on the Wabash, he had recalled the post road running to Louisville. By taking this, which formed the hypotenuse of a triangle, he would save himself much paddling and would gain time. Alice, as good on the trail as most men, had readily agreed; and landing, they proceeded overland, reaching Louisville without event on the evening previous to this. Leaving Alice safely bestowed with Mr. Berthoud, Tom had obtained a canoe and had almost instantly set out down river, with the idea of reaching the Wabash and finding Muir.

"Have you seen Hogan?" cried Muir.

The negro's eyes rolled in surprise. He had seen nothing of Hogan on the entire trip to Louisville; nor, it proved, while coming down the river during the day had he sighted the scout. This fact staggered both Muir and Kenton, until one of the boatmen suggested a solution.

"M'sieu! Around the nex' bend there is a settlement. M'sieu Hogan landed, obtained a horse perhaps, took the trail to Henderson — *et voilà!*"

They paddled on in feverish haste, and this conjecture was verified on coming abreast of the settlement mentioned. On the shore was drawn up a large canoe, with four boatmen lying around it in attitudes of utter exhaustion; there was no sign of Hogan, either here or in the clearings back from the river. Muir would not stop, for there was no doubt that Hogan had gone on to Henderson, and he wanted to catch the man there.

With the comparatively fresh Tom to help with the work, the big canoe pushed faster up the stream. At nine o'clock they drew in to the Henderson landing, all hands exhausted. Leaving Kenton to engage a fresh crew to take them on to Louisville at once, Muir staggered uptown in search of Hogan.

He had no need to go farther than the first tavern. Hogan had come into town by the river trail half an hour previously, bearing news that Harrison and the Indian tribes were engaged in battle on the Wabash. Heedless of the wild excitement thus occasioned in the town, Hogan had commandeered the best horse to be found and had pushed on to Louisville by road. At this, Muir groaned. Pushing away from the eager crowd of men who surrounded him with demands for his news, he strode out of the tavern.

Being too far exhausted to ride on to Shippingport that night, he hurried back to the landing and found Kenton engaging a crew of fresh men, as the Canadians would come on to Louisville the next day and get their payment. Muir imparted his discouraging news.

“We’ll go by canoe and get there fresh,” he concluded. “Alice is safe, and whatever villainy Hogan is contemplating, it’s in vain so far as she’s concerned. And you can count on it that he’s about as worn out as we are, Sime. So go ahead.”

Muir settled down again in the canoe, and was asleep before the craft started on the final lap of her voyage. All through that night he and Kenton slept, while Tom urged on the boatmen and aided them with his giant strength. Wakening at dawn, Muir borrowed a razor and made shift to get himself in a more presentable state. It was close on noon before they passed Salt River, and an hour after noon when Sullivan’s Ferry hove in sight. Seven miles left to go!

“See Berthoud first thing,” said Muir, as he and Kenton loaded their rifles. “Then to find Hogan and settle matters.”

Kenton nodded. “Sarve the cuss out, Dave! But this ain’t forest. Thar’s law here, and law’s plumb hell on honest men like us.”

“The law be damned,” snapped Muir, his gray eyes flaming moodily.

So at last the big fur canoe drew in to the landings at Shippingport. As they came, Muir saw rivermen crowded about the landing stages, discussing in wild excitement the news which Hogan had borne in three hours previously. In order to be unhindered, Muir and Kenton disclaimed all knowledge of events on the Wabash, and disembarked with Tom. Barely had Muir stretched his cramped legs, however, when he saw Berthoud running toward the landing. The plump merchant thrust his way with scant ceremony through the crowd, quite forgetful of the fact that he had left his wig at home, and pumped wildly at Muir’s arm.

“Egad, sir — egad! And General Kenton too — and old Tom! Egad, gentlemen, I’m delighted to see you!”

A little apart from the throngs, Kenton came to a halt.

“Alice?” exclaimed Muir. “She’s with you?”

“Aye, and safe she is!” Berthoud suddenly scowled ferociously. “Ah, that damned scoundrel! She is at this moment riding with my daughter — an exercise which I recommend after the midday meal, sir. I had like to have broken his cursed neck, the rogue ——”

“Who?” demanded Muir, tempted to laugh despite his anxiety. “What mean you? Have you seen Hogan, then?”

“Aye!” Berthoud’s face purpled with rage, as the excited words tumbled out of him. “He rode in this morning from Henderson and came to me direct — the damned rogue! The cursed Democrat! He claimed the reward for finding the du Croix family and presented a document which purported to be the will and testament of John Cross, bequeathing all that he possessed to Hogan. Damme, but it was lucky I had heard the tale from the lips of Alice before he showed up!”

Muir exchanged a glance with Kenton. So this, then, was the reason for Hogan’s haste!

“Where is he?” asked Muir. His voice was very quiet, but Berthoud looked into his eyes and suddenly turned pale.

“At — at the St. Louis tavern, sir. I kicked him out of my house — damme, I had like to have wrung his neck! Leave him alone, Mr. Muir. He was quite exhausted, and I hear that he cannot even be roused to give further news of General Harrison. Has there been fighting?”

“A battle, yes; how it came out, we do not know.”

“To my house, gentlemen, to my house at



once!" urged the merchant suddenly. "You are in need of a bath and fresh clothes — dinner is yet on the table ——"

Kenton nodded imperceptibly, and Muir accepted. They need not hurry, and Muir reflected that he was sadly in need of civilized garments to replace his tattered buckskin. When, ten minutes later, he looked into a mirror while Tom and Berthoud's slaves unpacked his belongings, Muir was startled by his own aspect. He looked like some wandering wilderness specter — gaunt and haggard by this wild journey, hollow-cheeked and staring of eye.

Urging haste on the slaves, in no long while he was being helped into a blue broadcloth suit. Muir looked at his rifle, but did not pick it up. He hesitated over knife and tomahawk, but left them. The flame that surged in his brain demanded something that was beyond the power of weapons to give.

Entering the dining room, Muir bowed to Mistress Berthoud, was relieved to find that Alice had not returned from her ride with Berthoud's daughter, and waited until Kenton appeared, awkward in civilized garb. They drank a cup of tea with Berthoud, then Muir glanced at Kenton, and the two men took their departure. Perhaps Berthoud

guessed what they had in mind, for he made no offer to accompany them.

Together they left the house and turned to the St. Louis tavern, but a short distance away. Neither man spoke, but Kenton's face was grave. About the tavern was a crowd of men, all waiting until Hogan could be roused to furnish news. Muir pressed through the throng, and in the travelers' room came upon the host, a burly man who had followed the river in his day.

"Take us to Captain Hogan's room at once," said Muir, while men stared at him.

The innkeeper would have objected, but Kenton took him by the arm, and Muir put a hand to his throat. So savage was the Kentuckian's lean, keen-nosed face, so terrible were the blazing gray eyes, that the host shrank in terror. He led them away without any further protest, stating that Hogan had taken the whole loft to himself.

This tavern was no handsome place. From the upper story, a crude ladder led to the loft above, and the walls were of chinked logs covered on the exterior with planks. At the foot of the ladder, Muir halted the staring host.

"Get back downstairs."

The man went. Muir turned to the ladder and mounted, with Kenton at his heels.

Shoving up the trapdoor above him, Muir rose into a loft that was lighted by two end windows. On a pallet lay Hogan, snoring heavily; even in slumber those handsome, cruel features leaped out at Muir and roused the devils of hatred in his heart. But he only stooped, picked up Hogan's rifle, and passed it to his friend.

“Take it, Sime.”

He stood over the pallet and looked down at the sleeping man, who was covered by a blanket.

“Hogan!”

His word was quiet, but at the voice, the scout stirred uneasily.

“Hogan!”

The man's eyelids fluttered. Then, almost before Muir sensed that his enemy had wakened, Hogan was sitting up and staring at him, hands beneath the blankets.

“A word with you, Hogan,” said Muir grimly. He saw the other man go livid, saw that lurid murder-look flash into the black eyes — and now was glad of it. His own rage flashed out with sudden fury. “You're finished, you murderous cur!” he cried. “You used a knife once too often when you slew Black Sand. And do you remember my father, whom you murdered ten years ago, as basely as you murdered John Cross ——”

Hogan's hands moved slightly, but gave no warning. There was a sudden blast of fire, the thunderous roar of a pistol, and Muir staggered back, clutching at his breast. His fingers clenched on the gold eagle of the Cincinnati, driven almost into his flesh, but with the pistol ball hot in the center of the twisted metal.

Hogan leaped upright, another pistol ready — but Muir, realizing only that he was not dead, flung himself forward into the reek of smoke. He caught the second pistol, which emptied itself into the roof, bore Hogan backward, and the two men went crashing to the floor together. Almost at once they writhed up, Muir with a fierce grip on his enemy's throat; but Hogan gouged for the eyes and so broke clear.

Knowing that he must give the murderer no chance to draw knife, Muir lunged in and drove his fist to Hogan's face. He smiled with the anger that was on him, and his smile was terrible. Hogan, clutching at his belt, reeled back against the end window. Muir was upon him like an avenging flame; so furious was the onslaught that Hogan could not get his knife clear, and was forced to fight barehanded. So forced, he drove at Muir with a snarl of fury, and in this moment sustained to the full his border reputation, fighting frontier

fashion with knees and feet and hands and elbows. Yet never had he fought with such a man as this — a gray-eyed creature of gaunt bone and muscle, whose iron fists thudded into him with pitiless fury, and who smiled as he struck.

Hogan was backed against the log wall, now fighting as desperately as any wild animal at bay. Muir's fist crashed into his ribs; something snapped, and Hogan's face went ashen. He hurled himself bodily forward, but that deadly fist met him fair between the eyes and drove him back. Again Muir struck, and Hogan screamed out horribly as he staggered and clung to the logs behind. He tried to escape, but Muir followed in deadly silence, and struck again. Then the scout fled openly, screaming, and Kenton stood aside to give them fair play.

Again Muir's fist drove home. Hogan fell heavily, then dragged himself to one elbow, and Muir stepped back to let him rise. Then, too late, he saw steel flash, and drove in again, but Hogan writhed away and came erect with knife and tomahawk in either hand.

The knife went up in that same deadly underhand throw which had slain John Cross — but Muir knew that throw. He flung his left arm before his throat, felt a shock and a sting of pain, and

laughed wildly. Before Hogan could bring up the tomahawk, Muir was on him, still laughing.

Hogan cut with his weapon, but effected nothing. Muir's reddened fist smashed into his mouth with fearful force; his head snapped back; he staggered and reeled under the terrific impact of that blow. Then, abruptly, the man plunged out of sight, a scream on his lips. Just in time, Kenton leaped forward with a warning cry — Muir checked himself at the edge of the trapdoor opening, through which Hogan had gone down.

Muir's eyes followed the man, and the laugh of anger died on his lips, as he saw Hogan's body at the foot of the ladder, the neck twisted horribly. Whether the man's neck had been broken by that last terrible blow or by the fall, Muir never knew — or cared.

## CHAPTER XVII

*Spur to the quest —  
God holds the rest!*

THE dining table of Mr. Berthoud was bright with candles and gleaming silver, and his grinning negro butler held a decanter of the choicest Oporto that had ever come across the Alleghanies. At the table sat his wife, his daughter Josette, and several younger Berthouds, all scrubbed and polished and starched and radiant; Kenton, quite self-conscious in his broadcloth and high white stock; Alice Cross, supreme happiness in her dancing, gold-brown eyes; and David Muir with Uncle Tom behind his chair, gigantic and grinning. The Kentuckian was very good to look upon that evening. A twisted bit of battered metal gleamed yellow against his fresh blue broadcloth.

Yet, though Muir smiled into the girl's eyes, there was to his face a graver touch than ever before. Behind him lay dark memories — Black Sand, John Cross, Hogan, and his own old self. On the word of Kenton and the mutely eloquent testimony of the bullet in the twisted golden eagle, Muir had been cleared of all blame attending

Hogan's death, and the dinner was in celebration of that verdict.

Now Berthoud cleared his throat preparatory to the third toast, and lifted his glass, a rich twinkle in his eye as he bowed slightly toward his good wife.

"My friends," he said, beaming, "we have drunk the President and the Constitution, and the ladies have consented to sit for one more toast before departing. I am a plain business man, so I give you a merchant's toast, if you will permit me. May we all be entered apprentices to beauty; may we all be fellow craftsmen in love; and may we all be masters of our own households — or else, egad, mistresses of the same!"

The glasses clinked; the ladies rose, and Muir conducted Alice to the door. At parting he bent above her hand, and as his eyes lifted again to hers, he found there a message which he could not mistake, and which sent a song into his heart. Then, sighing a little, he returned to the table and took the pipe which Tom handed him.

At this moment Berthoud, standing by his chair, gave a sudden start of recollection and uttered a sharp cry.

"Damme if I had not forgotten it! Mr. Muir, a package was left here for you by an Indian some



three weeks since. Here, boy, go fetch that packet lying on the floor beneath my bed.”

“A package?” repeated Muir, puzzled, as the butler departed on his errand.

“Yes, with no message save that you would call for it.”

“I don’t know what it could be,” said Muir, refusing the decanter which the merchant passed him. “By the way, sir, we have not talked over private matters. Has that friend of Kenton’s ever come back from New Orleans?”

“Egad, sir, he has!” Berthoud chuckled heartily. “He returned a month after you had departed. I made what promises to be a very profitable investment of your funds, Mr. Muir, together with some other moneys. If it please you, we shall — ah, here is your package.”

For the moment, Muir forgot finances in his curiosity. The butler laid before him a bundle wrapped in doeskin, and Kenton started slightly. Muir untied the thong about the packet, and disclosed a long hunting shirt of the most beautifully tanned buckskin that ever Muir had seen. The leather, however, was scarce visible, so thickly was the shirt broidered with stained quills and beads; a superb example of the finest Indian workmanship. Yet Muir did not know what to make of

the thing, until Kenton, plucking at the fringed edge, found the round tag that was the emblem of Tecumthe.

“The chief ain’t fergot the rifle you once loaned him,” said Kenton gravely. “It’s a sagamore’s coat — huh! Them’s French and Spanish beads. The chief done had it made down south among the Creeks.”

“A fine thing, a wonderful thing, sir!” exclaimed Berthoud enthusiastically. “Wine with you, Mr. Muir! No? By the way, sir, we were speaking of an investment, I think.”

Muir looked up. He wondered at the twinkle that crept into Berthoud’s eye. Kenton, having loosened his stiff white stock, puffed placidly at his pipe.

“Yes, I had forgotten money matters for the moment,” said Muir. “And pray what is this investment?”

“You are acquainted with a Mr. Terasse of Lexington?”

“Yes. He keeps the famous Vauxhall Garden in that town.”

Berthoud smiled and sat back in his chair, as though secretly amused.

“Some weeks ago I received a letter from this Mr. Terasse informing me that some highly desir-

able lands had been offered for sale. Among these lands was a plantation which he, as one of my business friends, strongly urged me to buy. Accordingly, I did so. Your money, Mr. Muir, after I had turned over the funds in a land prospect here which paid remarkably well, were sufficient to take a certain share in that investment."

"Yes?" Muir still wondered at the lurking twinkle in the merchant's eye. "And will I have any speedy returns on this money?"

"Perhaps, perhaps." Berthoud pursed up his lips judicially. "Last night, while talking with Madame Alice Cross, she offered to buy out my larger interest in the plantation with those moneys which had been left in my care by her deceased father — that is, of course, including her brother's share, which that rascal Hogan had attempted to obtain with a forged will. I accepted this offer, sir. Therefore, as you can see ——"

"Where is this plantation?" broke in Muir, frowning. "In Kentucky?"

"Yes, sir, some miles north of Lexington. As I was about to say, Madame Alice and I had decided that, in view of your vested interest, you might consent to manage the property ——"

"What plantation is it?" interrupted Muir again. "I know all those places well."

Berthoud looked at him, tried to control himself, and then smiled broadly.

“The former Muir plantation, sir.”

Muir sat staring, his face a graven mask. The former Muir plantation — then Berthoud must know his story, the story of shame and disgrace which lay behind him. And kindly Terasse was responsible for this!

Muir dimly realized that Berthoud was speaking, and forced his attention to the words. All of Hogan's properties had been placed on the market, for what reason was unknown. The fact remained, however, and needed no explanation. Muir sat now with bowed head, as he realized the full measure of the offer that was being made him — the restitution of property which he had flung away, the trust in his judgment and ability. He lifted his head and, turning, raised his hand to Tom. Looking up into the grizzled negro's eyes, he found there a wild delight, a bewilderment, a slow comprehension.

“Tom, shall we go back home, old friend?”

Tom tried to answer, but choked on the word. Muir, smiling, turned back to the table.

“Mr. Berthoud, I thank you; I can say no more. We will go home, and it may be that with Tom's help I can build up the estate which I shattered

in my fool's vanity. You probably know my story, sir, and Sime knows it also, so I need say no more. But, sir, there is one more point on which I crave your aid."

"I am at your service, sir," exclaimed the merchant with enthusiasm. He had not spared the good Oporto, and was in high good humor.

"If Sime will accompany me on a journey which I have in mind, I would like you to send Madame Alice to the plantation in care of Uncle Tom, here ——"

"Eh?" Berthoud fell all astare. "A journey? Egad, sir, what mean you?"

"I have business in Washington," and Muir smiled a little, "where I must interview Mr. Henry Clay on a matter of some importance. I may need Sime's help in that interview. Then we can come back to Kentucky together, and then ——"

"And then, Dave?" broke in Kenton, as Muir paused. "What then?"

"Why ——" Muir hesitated an instant, until the memory of that last look from Alice struck courage into him. "Why, gentlemen, then I hope to invite you both to visit me on a very joyous occasion. Mind, I say hope ——"

He said no more. Berthoud, suddenly comprehending the drift of this, leaped to his feet and

roared at his butler to fill the glasses with wine once again.

“Egad, you shall drink one toast with me!” he cried, waving his own glass somewhat unsteadily. “Mr. Muir’s father and the father of Madame du Croix, or Cross, were both members of the Cincinnati society. In all true delicacy toward your hopes, Mr. Muir, I pledge a certain hope of my own! Drink, gentlemen, to — a son of the Cincinnati!”

Not until Kenton choked on his wine and broke into a roar did Muir understand. Then, before he could speak, Kenton rose, grinning.

“I reckon,” drawled the frontiersman, “that we’d better jine the womenfolks, ’fore Berthoud here gits any livelier! All ready, Dave?”

“It’s high time, I think,” and laughing, Muir came to his feet.

But his thoughts were all on that look he had seen in the eyes of Alice Cross, and as he passed in to the drawing room, he was smiling.

THE END





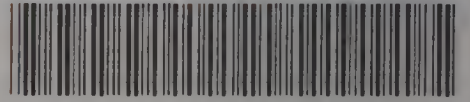








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