

BORDER WARFARE
BY
EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN

Chapter 1: A Western Settler.

Humphrey Angell came swinging along through the silent aisles of the vast primeval forest, his gun in the hollow of his arm, a heavy bag of venison meat hanging from his shoulders.

A strange, wild figure, in the midst of a strange, wild scene: his clothes, originally of some homespun cloth, now patched so freely with dressed deerskin as to leave little of the original material; moccasins on his feet, a beaver cap upon his head, his leather belt stuck round with hunting knives, and the pistol to be used at close quarters should any emergency arise.

He was a stalwart fellow, as these sons of the forest had need to be--standing over six feet, and with a muscular development to match his stately height. His tawny hair had been darkened by exposure to hot suns, and his handsome face was deeply imbrowned from the influences of weather in all seasons. His blue eyes had that direct yet far-away look which comes to men who live face to face with nature, and learn to know her in all her moods, and to study her caprices in the earning of their daily bread.

Humphrey Angell was not more than twenty years of age, and he had lived ten years in the forest. He had come there as a child with his father, who had emigrated in his young life from England to the settlement of Pennsylvania, and had afterwards become one of the scattered settlers on the debatable ground between the French and English borders, establishing himself in the heart of the boundless forest, and setting to work with the utmost zeal and industry to gather round himself a little farmstead where he could pass his own later years in peace, and leave it for an inheritance to his two sons.

Humphrey could remember Pennsylvania a little, although the life in the small democratic township seemed now like a dream to him. All his interests centred in the free forest, where he had grown to manhood. Now and again a longing would come upon him to see something of the great, tumultuous, seething world of whose existence he was dimly aware. There were times in the long winter evenings when he and his brother, the old father, and the brother's wife would sit round the stove after the children had been put to bed, talking of the past and the future. Then old Angell would tell his sons of the life he had once led in far-away England, before the spirit of adventure drove him forth to seek his fortune in the New World; and at such times Humphrey would listen with eager attention, feeling the

stirrings of a like spirit within him, and wondering whether the vast walls of the giant forest would for ever shut him in, or whether it would be his lot some day to cross the heaving, mysterious, ever-moving ocean of which his father often spoke, and visit the country of which he was still proud to call himself a son.

Yet he loved his forest home and the free, wild life he led. Nor was the element of peril lacking to the daily lot--peril which had not found them yet, but which might spring upon them unawares at any moment. For after years of peace and apparent goodwill on the part of the Indians of the Five Nations, as this tract of debatable land had come to be called, a spirit of ill will and ferocity was arising again; and settlers who had for years lived in peace and quietness in their lonely homes had been swooped down upon, scalped, their houses burnt, their wives and children tomahawked--the raid being so swift and sudden that defence and resistance had alike been futile.

What gave an added horror to this sudden change of policy on the part of the Indians was the growing conviction throughout the settlement that it was due to the agency of white men.

France, not content with the undisputed possession of Canada, and of vast tracts of territory in the west and south which she had no means of populating, was bitterly jealous of the English colony in the east, and, above all; of any attempts which it might make to extend its western border.

Fighting there had been already. Humphrey had heard rumours of disasters to the English arms farther away to the south. He had heard of Braddock's army having been cut to pieces in its attempt to reach and capture the French Fort Duquesne, and a vague uneasiness was penetrating to these scattered settlers, who had hitherto lived in quietness and peace.

Perhaps had they known more of the spirit of parties beyond their limited horizon, they would have been more uneasy still. But habit is an enormous power in a man's life. Humphrey had gone forth into the forest to kill meat for the family larder three or four days in the week, in all seasons when the farm work was not specially pressing. He came back day by day to the low-browed log house, with its patches of Indian corn and other crops, its pleasant sounds of life, the welcome from the children, the approval of father and brother if the day had been successful, and the smiles of the housewife when he displayed the

contents of his bag. It was almost impossible to remember from day to day that peril from the silent, mysterious forest threatened them. They had lived there for ten years unmolested and at peace; who would care to molest them now?

And yet Humphrey, who knew the forest so well--its mysterious, interminable depths, its trackless, boundless extent, rolling over hill and valley in endless billows--he knew well how silently, how suddenly an ambushed foe might approach, spring out from the thick, tangled shelter to do some murderous deed, and in the maze of giant timber be at once swallowed up beyond all danger of pursuit.

In the open plains the Indian raids were terrible enough, but the horrors of uncertainty and ignorance which enveloped the settlers in the forests might well cause the stoutest heart to quail when once it became known that the Indians had become their enemies, and that there was another enemy stirring up the strife, and bribing the fierce and greedy savages to carry desolation and death into the settlements of the English colonists.

Whispers--rumours--had just begun to penetrate into these leafy solitudes; but communication with the outside world was so rare that the Angell family, who had long been self-supporting, and able to live without the products of the mother colony away to the east, had scarcely realized the change that was creeping over the country. The old man had never seen anything of Indian warfare, and his sons had had little more experience. They had been peaceful denizens of the woods, and bore arms for purposes of the chase rather than for self-preservation from human foes, as did the bulk of those dwellers in the woods that fringed the western border of the English-speaking colony.

"We have no enemies; why should we fear?" asked Charles, the elder brother, a man of placable temperament, a fine worker with the axe or plough, a man of indomitable industry, endurance, and patience, but one who had never shown any desire after adventure or the chances of warfare. He was ten years older than Humphrey; and the brothers had two sisters now married and settled in the colony. The younger brother sometimes talked of visiting the sisters, and bringing back news of them to the father at home; but Charles never desired to leave the homestead. He was a singularly affectionate husband and father, and had been an excellent son to the fine old man, who now had his time of ease by the hearth in the winter weather, though during a great part of the year he toiled in the fields with a right good will, and with much of his old fire and energy.

Humphrey was nearing home now, and started whistling a favourite air which generally heralded his approach, and brought the children tumbling out to meet him in a rush of merry welcome. But there was no answering hubbub to be heard from the direction of the house, no patter of little feet, no lowing of kine.

Humphrey stopped suddenly short in his whistling, and bent his ear forward as though to listen. A faint, muffled, strangled cry seemed to be borne to his ears. Under his bronze face suddenly grew white. He flung the heavy bag from off his back, and grasping his gun more firmly in his hands, he rushed through the narrow pathway; and came out upon the clearing around the little farmstead.

In the morning he had left it, smiling in the autumn sunshine, a peaceful, prosperous-looking place, homely, quaint, and bright. Now his eyes rested upon a heap of smoking ruins, trampled crops, empty sheds; and upon a still more horrible sight--the remains of mangled corpses tied to the group of trees which sheltered the porch. It was enough to curdle the blood of the stoutest hearted, and freeze with horror the bravest warrior.

Humphrey was no warrior, but a strong-limbed, tender-hearted youth; and as he looked at the awful scene before him, a blood-red mist seemed to swim before his eyes. He gasped, and clutched at the nearest tree trunk for support. Surely, surely it was some fever dream which had come upon him. It could not, it should not be a terrible reality.

"Humphrey, Humphrey! help, help!"

It was the strangled, muffled cry again. The sound woke the young man from his trance of horror and amazement. He uttered a hoarse cry, which he scarcely knew for his own, and dashed blindly onwards.

"Here, here! This way. By the barn! Quick!"

No need to hasten Humphrey's flying feet. He rushed through the trampled fields. He gained the clearing about the house and its buildings. He reached the spot indicated, and saw a sight he would never forget.

His brother Charles was tightly, cruelly bound to the stump of a tree which had been often used for tethering animals at milking time just outside the barn. His clothes were half torn from off his back, and several gaping, bleeding wounds told of the fight which had ended in his capture. Most significant of all was the long semicircular red line round the brow, where the scalping knife had plainly passed.

Humphrey's stout knife was cutting through the cruel cords, even while his horrified eyes were taking in these details.

When his brother was released, he seemed to collapse for a moment, and fell face downwards upon the ground, a quiver running through all his limbs, such as Humphrey had seen many a time in some wild creature stricken with its death wound.

He uttered a sharp cry of terror and anguish, and averting his eyes from the awful sights with which the place abounded, he dashed to the well, and bringing back a supply of pure cold water, flung it over his brother's prostrate form, laving his face and hands, and holding a small vessel to his parched and swollen lips so that the draught could trickle into his mouth.

There was an effort to swallow, a quiver and a struggle, and the wounded man opened his eyes and sat up.

"Where am I--what is it?" he gasped, draining the cup again and again, like one who has been near to perish with thirst. "O Humphrey, I have had such an awful dream!"

Humphrey had so placed his brother that he should not see on opening his eyes that ghastly sight which turned the younger man sick with horror each time his eyes wandered that way.

Charles saw the familiar outline of the forest, and his brother's face bending over him. He had for a moment a vague impression of something unspeakably awful and horrible, but at

that moment he believed that some mischance had befallen himself alone, and that he had imagined some black, nameless horror in a fevered dream.

A shiver ran through Humphrey's frame. His blue eyes were dazed and dilated. What answer could he make? He busied himself with dressing the wounds upon his brother's chest and shoulders, from which the blood still oozed slowly.

"What is it?" asked Charles once again; "how did I come to be hurt?"

Humphrey made no reply, but a groan burst unawares from his lips. The sound seemed to startle Charles from his momentary calm. He suddenly put up his hand to his brow, felt the smart of the significant red line left by the scalping knife, and the next moment he had sprung to his feet with a sharp, low cry of unspeakable anguish.

He faced round then--and looked!

Humphrey stood beside him shoulder to shoulder, with his arm about his brother, lest physical weakness should again overpower him. But Charles seemed like one turned to stone.

For perhaps three long minutes he stood thus--speechless, motionless; then a wild cry burst from his lips, accompanied by a torrent of the wildest, fiercest invective--appeals to Heaven for vengeance, threats of undying hatred, undying hostility to those savage murderers whose raid had made this fair spot into a desolation so awful.

Humphrey stood still and silent the while, like one spellbound. He scarcely knew his brother in this moment of passionate despair and fury. Charles had been a silent, placable man all his life through. Born and bred in the Quaker settlement, till he had taken to the life of the forest he had been a man of quiet industry and toil rather than a fighter or a talker. A peaceful creed had been his, and he had perhaps never before raised a hand in anger against a fellow creature.

This made the sudden wild and passionate outburst the more strange and awful to Humphrey. It was almost as though Charles was no longer the brother he had known all these years, but had been transformed into a different being by the swift and fearful calamity which had swept down upon them during these past few hours.

"I will avenge--I swear it! As they have done, so shall it be done unto them. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life--is not that written in the Scriptures? The avenger of blood shall follow and overtake. His hand shall not spare, neither his eye pity. The evildoer shall be rooted out of the land. His place shall be no more found. Even as they have done, so shall it be done unto them."

He stopped, and suddenly raised his clasped hands to heaven. A torrent of words broke from his lips.

"O God, Thou hast seen, Thine eyes have beheld. If it had been an open enemy that had done this thing, then could I perchance have borne it. If it had been the untutored savage, in his ignorant ferocity, then would I have left Thee, O Lord, to deal with him--to avenge! But the white brother has risen up against his own flesh and blood. The white man has stood by to see. He has hounded on the savages! He has disgraced his humanity! O Lord God, give him into my hands! let me avenge me of mine adversary. Let the ignorant Indian escape if Thou wilt, but grant unto me to slay and slay and slay amid the ranks of the white man, who has sold his soul for gain, and has become more treacherous and cruel than the Indian ally whose aid he has invoked. Judge Thou betwixt us, O Lord; look upon this scene! Strengthen Thou mine arm to the battle, for here I vow that I will henceforth give my life to this work. I will till the fields no more. I will beat my pruning hook into a sword. I will slay, and spare not, and Thou, O God of battles, shalt be with me. Thou shalt strengthen mine arm; Thou shalt give unto me the victory. Thou shalt deliver mine enemy into mine hand. I know it, I see it! For Thou art God, and I am Thy servant, and I will avenge upon him who has defied Thee this hideous crime upon which Thine eyes have looked!"

Humphrey stood by silent and awed. An answering thrill was in his own heart. He had averted his eyes from the ghastly spectacle of those charred and mangled corpses; but they turned upon them once more at this moment, and he could not marvel at his brother's words. He, too, had been trained to peaceable thoughts and ways. He had hoped that there would soon be an end of these rumours of wars. His immediate forefathers had been men of peace, and he had never known the craving after the excitement of battle.

Yet as his brother spoke there came upon him a new feeling. He felt his arm tingling; he felt the hot blood surging through his veins. He was conscious that were an enemy to show face at that moment between the trees of the forest, he would be ready to spring upon him like a wild beast, and rend him limb from limb without pity and without remorse.

But the Indians had made off as silently and as swiftly as they appeared. Not a vestige of the band remained behind. And there was work for the brothers at that moment of a different sort, and work which left its lasting mark upon the memory and even upon the nature of Humphrey Angell.

Together the brothers dug a deep grave. Reverently they deposited in it all that was left of the mortal remains of those whom they had loved so tenderly and well: the kindly house mother, to whose industry and thrift so much of their comfort had been due; the little, innocent, prattling children and brave little lads, who were already learning to be useful to father and mother. None of them spared--no pity shown to sex or age. All ruthlessly murdered; husband and father forced to watch the horrid spectacle, himself a helpless prisoner, waiting for his doom.

Humphrey had not hitherto dared to ask the question which had been exercising him all the while--how it was that his brother's life had been spared. He also wanted to know where the old man their father was; for the corpses they had laid in the grave were those of Charles's wife and children.

Charles noted his questioning glance around when the grave had received its victims, and he pointed to the smoking ruins of the house.

"He lies there. They bound him in his chair. They tied the babe down in his cradle. They set fire to the house. Heaven send that the reek choked them before the fire touched them! They lie yonder beneath the funeral pyre--our venerable sire and my bonny, laughing babe!"

He stopped short, choked by a sudden rush of tears; and Humphrey, flinging down his spade, threw himself along the ground in a paroxysm of unspeakable anguish, choking sobs breaking from him, the unaccustomed tears raining down his cheeks.

The brothers wept together. Perhaps those tears saved Charles from some severe fever of the brain. He wept till he was perfectly exhausted, and at last his condition of prostration so far aroused Humphrey that he was forced into action.

He half lifted, half dragged his brother into one of the empty barns, where he laid him down upon some straw. He rolled up his own coat for a pillow, and after hastily finishing the filling in of the grave, he went back into the forest for his game bag, and having kindled a fire, cooked some of the meat, and forced his brother to eat and drink. It was growing dark by that time, and the blackness of the forest seemed to be swallowing them up.

A faint red glow still came from the direction of the burning homestead, where the fire still smouldered amid the smoking ruins. Humphrey closed the door of the barn, to shut out the sight and also the chill freshness of the autumn night.

He lay down upon the straw beside his brother, worn out in body and mind. But there could be no thought of sleep for either man that night; the horror was too pressing and ever present, and anguish lay like a physical load upon their hearts.

The silence was full of horror for both; in self defence Humphrey began to speak.

"When was it, Charles? I was in the forest all day, and I saw and heard nothing. The silence was never broken save by the accustomed sounds of the wild creatures of the wood. No war party came my way. When was it?"

"At the noontide meal. We had all gathered within doors. There was none to give warning of danger. Suddenly and silently as ghosts they must have filed from out the forest. We were already surrounded and helpless before the first wild war whoop broke upon our ears!"

Charles put up his hands as though to shut out that awful yell, the echoes of which rang so long in the ears of those who had heard it. Humphrey shivered, and his hands clinched themselves nervously together.

"Why was I not here to fight and to die?"

"Better to live--and to avenge their blood!" answered Charles, with a gleam lighting his sunken eyes. He was silent awhile, and then went on with his narrative.

"It was not a fight; it was only a slaughter! The children rushed screaming from the house, escaping the first rush of the painted savages when they burst in upon us. But there were others outside, who hacked and slashed them as they passed. I had only my hunting knife in my belt. I stood before Ellen, and I fought like ten demons! God is witness that I did all that one man could. But what avail against scores of such foes? Three corpses were heaped at my threshold. I saw them carrying away many others dead or wounded, Our father fought too; and Ellen backed into the corner where the gun stood, and with her own hands she shot down two of the savages.

"Would to heaven she had shot at the white one, who was tenfold more of a fiend! But he shall not escape--he shall not escape! I shall know his face when I see it next. And I will not go down to the grave till he and I have stood face to face once more, when I am not bound and helpless, but a free man with weapons in my hand. That day will come; I read it in the book of fate. The Lord God, unto whom vengeance belongeth, He will cause it to come to pass!"

Humphrey was afraid of these wild outbursts, as likely to bring on fever; and yet he could not but desire to know more.

"A white man? Nay, brother; that is scarce to be believed. A white man to league himself to such deeds as these!"

"A white man--a Frenchman. For I called upon him in our tongue, and he answered me in the same, but with that halting accent which I know belongs to the sons of France.

Moreover, he made no secret of it. He called us dogs of English, who were robbers of the soil where none had right to penetrate save the subjects of his royal master. He swore that they would make an end of us, root and branch; and he laughed when he saw the Indians cutting down the little ones, and covering their tender bodies with cruel wounds; nor had he any pity upon the one white woman; and when I raved upon him and cursed him, he laughed back, and said he had no power to allay the fury of the savages. Those who would preserve themselves safe should retire within the bounds of the colony to which they belong. France would have an end of encroachment, and the Indians were her friends, and would help her to drive out the common foe!"

Humphrey set his teeth and clinched his hands. The old instinctive hatred of centuries between French and English, never really dead, now leaped into life in his breast. He had heard plenty of talk during his boyhood of France's boundless pretensions with regard to the great New World of the West, and how she sought, by the simple process of declaring territory to be hers, to extend her power over millions of miles of the untrodden plains and forests, which she could never hope to populate. He had laughed with others at these claims, and had thought little enough of them when with father and brother he set out for the western frontier.

There was then peace between the nations. Nor had it entered into the calculations of the settlers that their white brethren would stir up the friendly Indians against them, and bring havoc and destruction to their scattered dwellings. That was a method of warfare undreamed of a few years back; but it was now becoming a terrible reality.

"But your life was spared?" said Humphrey at last; "and yet the scalping-knife came very close to doing its horrid work."

"Yes: they spared me--he spared me--when he had made me suffer what was tenfold worse than death; yet I wot well he only thought to leave me to a lingering death of anguish, more terrible than that of the scalping knife! They knew not that I had any to come to my succour. When he drew off the howling Indians and left me bound to the stump, he thought he left me to perish of starvation and burning thirst. It was no mercy that he showed me--rather a refinement of cruelty. I begged him to make an end of my wretched life; but he smiled, and bid me a mocking farewell.

"Great God of heaven and earth, look down and avenge me of mine adversary! I trust there are not many such fiends in human shape even in the ranks of the jealous and all-grasping French. But if there be, may it be mine to carry death and desolation into their ranks! May they be driven forth from this fair land which they have helped to desolate! May death and destruction come swiftly upon them; and when they fall, let them rise up no more!"

"Amen!" said Humphrey solemnly; and the brothers sat in silence for a great while, the gloom hiding them the one from the other, though they knew that their hearts were beating in sympathy.

"The war has broken out," said Humphrey at last. "We can perchance find our place in the ranks of those who go to drive out the oppressive race, whose claims are such as English subjects will not tolerate."

"Ay, there will be fighting, fighting, fighting now till they are driven forth, and till England's flag waves proudly over this great land!" cried Charles, with a strange confidence and exultation in his tones. "England will fight, and I will fight with her. I will slay and slay, and spare not; and I will tell this tale to all wherever I go. I will hunt out mine enemy until I compass his death. They have despoiled me of home, of wife, of children. They have taken away all the joy of life. The light of my eyes is gone. Henceforth I have but one thing to live for. I bare my sword against France. Against her will I fight until the Lord gives us the victory. The world shall know, and all ears shall tingle at the tale which I will tell. There shall be no quarter, no pity for those who use such means as those which have left me what I am tonight!"

Humphrey could not marvel at the intensity of the ferocity in Charles's tones. It sounded strange in one of so gentle and placable a nature; but he had cause--he had cause!

"Think you that the man was other than one of those wild fellows who run from all law and order in the townships and become denizens of the wood, and little better than the wild Indians themselves? We have heard of these *coureurs de bois*, as they are called. There are laws passed against them, severe and restrictive, by their own people. Perchance it were scarce just to the French to credit them with all that this man has done."

"Peace, Humphrey," was the stern reply. "We know that the French are inciting the Indians against our peaceful settlers, and that what has happened here today is happening in other places along our scattered frontier. The work is the work of France, and against France will I fight till she is overthrown. I have sworn it. Seek not to turn me from my purpose. I will fight, and fight, and fight till I see her lying in the dust, and till I have met mine enemy face to face and have set my foot upon his neck. God has heard my vow; He will fight for me till it be fulfilled."

Chapter 2: Friends In Need.

It was not to be surprised at that, after that terrible day and night, Charles should awake from the restless sleep into which he had dropped towards dawn in a state of high fever.

He lay raving in delirium for three days, whilst Humphrey sat beside him, putting water to his parched lips, striving to soothe and quiet him; often shuddering with horror as he seemed to see again with his brother's eyes those horrid scenes upon which the fevered man's fancy ever dwelt; waking sometimes at night in a sweat of terror, thinking he heard the Indian war whoop echoing through the forest.

Those were terrible days for Humphrey--days of a loneliness that was beyond anything he had experienced before. His brother was near him in the flesh, but severed from him by a whole world of fevered imaginings. Sometimes Humphrey found it in his heart to wish that the Indians would come back and make a final end of them both. All hope and zest and joy in life seemed to have been taken from him at one blow. He could neither think of the happy past without pangs of pain, nor yet face a future which seemed barren of hope and promise.

He could only sit beside his brother, tend him, nurse him, pray for him. But the words of prayer too often died away upon his lips. Had they not all prayed together, after the godly habit of the household, upon the very morning when this awful disaster fell upon them? Were these vast solitudes too far away for God to hear the prayers that went up from them?

Humphrey had never known what awful loneliness could engulf the human spirit till he sat beside the fevered man in the vast solitude of the primeval forest, asking in his heart whether God Himself had not forsaken them.

It was the hour of sundown, and Humphrey had gone outside for a breath of fresh air. He looked ten years older than he had done a few days back, when he had come whistling through the forest track, expecting to see the children bounding forth to meet him. His eyes were sunken, his face was pale and haggard, his dress was unkempt and ragged. There were no clever fingers now to patch tattered raiment, and keep things neat and trim.

There was an unwonted sound in the forest! It was distant still. To some ears it would have been inaudible; but Humphrey heard it, and his heart suddenly beat faster.

The sound was that of approaching steps--the steps of men. A few minutes more and he heard the sound of voices, too. He had been about to dash into the shed for his gun, but the fresh sounds arrested his movement.

He had ears as sharp as those of an ambushed Indian, and he detected in a moment that the men who were approaching the clearing were of his own nationality. The words he could not hear, but he could distinguish the intonation. It was not the rapid, thin-sounding French tongue; it was English--he was certain of it! And a light leaped to his eyes at the bare thought of meeting a brother countryman in this desolate place.

Probably it was some other settler, one of that hardy race that fringed the colony on its western frontier. Miles and miles of rolling forest lay between these scattered holdings, and since war was but lately begun, nothing had been done for the protection of the hapless people now becoming an easy prey of the Indians stirred up to molest them.

Humphrey knew none of their neighbours. Forest travelling was too difficult and dangerous to tempt the settler far away from his own holding. If it were one of these coming now, most likely he too had suffered from attack or fear of attack, and was seeking a friend in the nearest locality.

He stood like one spellbound, watching and waiting. The sound of steps drew nearer to the fringe of obscuring forest trees; the sound of voices became plainer and more plain. In another minute Humphrey saw them--two bronzed and stalwart men--advancing from the wood into the clearing. They came upon it unawares, as was plain from their sudden pause. But they were white men; they were brothers in this wild land. There was something like a sob in Humphrey's throat, which he hastily swallowed down, as he advanced with great strides to meet them.

"You are welcome," he said. "I had thought the Indians had left no living beings behind them in all this forest save my brother and myself."

No introductions were needed in this savage place; the face of every white man lit up at sight of a like countenance, and at the sound of the familiar tongue. The men shook hands with a hearty grip, and one said to Humphrey:

"You have had Indians here?"

Humphrey made an expressive gesture with his hand.

"This was a week ago as fair a holding as heart of man could wish to see in this grim forest. You see what is left today!"

"Your house is burnt down, as we plainly see. Have you lost aught beside? Has human blood been spilt?"

"The corpse of my venerable father, and that of a bold baby boy, lie beneath yon heap of ruins which made their funeral pyre. In yonder grave lie the mingled corpses of my brother's wife and four fair children, hacked to death and half burnt by the savages. And yet this work is not the work of savages alone. With them we have dwelt at peace these many years. The shame, the horror, the disgrace of it is that we owe these horrors to the white sons of France, who hound on the savages to make these raids, and stand by to see them do their bloody work!"

The two strangers exchanged glances--meaning glances--and one of them laid a hand upon Humphrey's shoulder, looking earnestly into his eyes the while.

"Is it so in very truth? So have we heard in whispers, but it was a thing we could scarce believe. We have travelled far from the lands of the south to join our brethren of the English race. We heard rumours of wars cruel and bloody. Yet it seemed to us too strange a thing to believe that here, amid the hostile, savage Indians, white man could wage war with white man, and take the bloody heathen man as his ally, instead of the brother who bears the name of Christ!"

Humphrey looked with some wonder and fascination into the face of the youth who spoke. It was a refined and beautiful face, notwithstanding the evidences of long exposure to sun and wind. The features were finely cut, sensitive and expressive, and the eyes were very luminous in their glance, and possessed strangely penetrating powers. In stature the young man was almost as tall as Humphrey, but of a much slighter build; yet he was wiry and muscular, as could well be seen, and plainly well used to the life of the wild woodlands. His dress was that of the backwoods, dressed deerskin being the chief material used. Both travellers wore moccasins on their feet, and carried the usual weapons of offence and defence.

Yet Humphrey felt as though this man was in some sort different from those he had met in the woods at rare times when out hunting. His voice, his words, his phraseology seemed in some sort strange, and he asked him wonderingly:

"From whence are you, friends?"

"From the land of the far south--from the rolling plains of the giant Mississippi, that vast river of which perchance you have heard?"

"Ay, verily," answered Humphrey, with a touch of bitterness in his tone. "I have heard of that great river, which the French King claims to have discovered, and which they say he will guard with a chain of forts right away from Canada, and will thus command all the New

World of the West, pinning us English within the limits of that portion of land lying betwixt the ocean and the range of the Allegheny Mountains," and Humphrey waved his hand in that direction, and looked questioningly at the men before him.

He had an impression that all who came from the far south, from the colony of Louisiana, as he had heard it called, must be in some sort French subjects. And yet these men spoke his own tongue, and seemed to be friends and brothers.

"That was the chimera of the French Monarch more than a century ago. Methinks it is little nearer its accomplishment now than when our forefathers, acting as pioneers, made a small settlement in a green valley near to the mouth of the giant river, waiting for the King to send his priests and missionaries to convert the heathen from their evil ways, and found a fair Christian realm in that fair land."

"Then were your forefathers French subjects?" asked Humphrey, rather bewildered. "If so, how come you to speak mine own tongue as you do?"

"I come of no French stock!" cried the companion stranger, who had remained silent until now, looking searchingly round the clearing, and examining Humphrey himself with curiosity; "I have no drop of French blood in my veins, whatever Julian may have. I am Fritz Neville. I come of an English family. But you shall hear all later on, as we sit by our fire at night. I would hear all your tale of desolation and woe. We, for our part, have no cause to love the French oppressors, whose ambition and greed seem to know no bounds. Can you give us shelter by your hearth tonight? Food we have of our own, since we find game in sufficient abundance in these forest tracks."

As he spoke he unslung from his shoulders a fine young fawn which they had lately shot, and Humphrey made eager answer to the request for hospitality.

"Would that we had better to offer! But the homestead is burnt. My brother lies sick of a fever in yon shed--a fever brought on by loss of blood and by anguish of mind. I have been alone in this place with him hard upon a week now, and to me it seems as though years instead of days had passed over my head since the calamity happened."

"I can well believe that," said the first speaker, whom his companion had spoken of as Julian. "There be times in a man's life when hours are as days and days as years. But let me see your brother if he be sick. I have some skill in the treatment of fevers, and I have brought in my wallet some simples which we find wonderfully helpful down in the south, from where I come. I doubt not I can bring him relief."

Humphrey's face brightened with a look of joyful relief, and Fritz exclaimed heartily:

"Yes, yes, Julian is a notable leech. We all come to him with our troubles both of body and mind.

"Lead on, comrade. I will cook the supper whilst you and he tend the sick man; and afterwards we will tell all our tale; and take counsel for the future."

It was new life to Humphrey to hear the sound of human voices, to feel the touch of friendly hands, to know himself not alone in the awful isolation of the vast forest. He led the way to the rough shed, which he had contrived during the past days to convert into a rude species of sleeping and living room. He had made a hearth and a chimney, so that he could cook food whilst still keeping an eye upon his sick brother. He had contrived a certain amount of rude comfort in Charles's bed and surroundings. The place looked pleasant to the wearied, travellers, for it was spotlessly clean, and it afforded shelter from the keen night air.

They had been finding the nights grow cold as they journeyed northward, and Fritz rubbed his hands at sight of the glow of the fire, and set to work eagerly upon his culinary tasks; whilst Julian and Humphrey bent over Charles, the former examining the condition of his pulse and skin with the air of one who knows how to combat the symptoms of illness.

He administered a draught, and bathed the sick man's temples with some pungent decoction of herbs which he prepared with hot water; and after giving him a small quantity of soup, told Humphrey that he would probably sleep quietly all night, and might very likely awake without any fever, though as weak as a child.

And in effect only a short time elapsed before his eyes closed, and he sank into a peaceful slumber, such as he had not known throughout the past days.

"Thank God you came!" said Humphrey with fervour; "I had thought to bury my brother here beside his wife, and the loneliness and horror had well nigh driven me mad. If he live, I shall have something left to live for; else I could have wished that we had all perished together!"

"Nay," cried Fritz from the fire, "we can do better than that: we can join those who have the welfare of the country at heart. We can punish proud France for her ambition and encroachments, and perchance--who knows?--England's flag may ere long proudly wave where now only the banner of France has floated from her scattered forts."

But just at this moment Humphrey could not be roused to any patriotic fervour. The sense of personal loss and horror was strong upon him. His thoughts were turning vaguely towards the mother country from which his fathers had come. For the moment the wild West was hateful to him. He could not face the thought of taking up the old life again. He had been uprooted too suddenly and ruthlessly. The spell of the forest was gone. Sometimes he felt that he never wished to look upon waving trees again.

As they partook of the well-cooked supper which Fritz had provided, and afterwards sat smoking their pipes beside the fire, whilst the wind moaned and sighed round the corners of the shed, and whispered through the trees around the clearing, he told these strangers the whole history of his life, and how it had seemed to be suddenly cut in half a week ago, whilst the last half already began to look and feel to him longer than the first.

There was no lack of sympathy and interest in the faces of his hearers. When they heard how a Frenchman had been with the Indians upon their raid, Fritz smote the ground heavily with his open hand, exclaiming:

"That is what we heard as we journeyed onward; that is the rumour that reached us even in the far south. It was hard to believe that brother should turn against brother out here in these trackless wilds, amid hordes of savage Indians. We said it must surely be false--that Christian men could not be guilty of such wickedness! Yet it has proved all too true. We have

heard stories during our journey which have filled our hearts with loathing and scorn. France is playing a treacherous, a vile and unworthy game. England is no match for her yet--unprepared and taken at a disadvantage. But you will see, you will see! She will arise from sleep like a giant refreshed! And then let proud France tremble for her bloody laurels!"

His eye flashed, and Julian said thoughtfully:

"Ay, truly has she stained her laurels with blood; and she is even now staining her annals with dark crimes, when she stirs up the savage Indian to bring death and desolation to those peaceful settlers with whom they have so long lived as friends. God will require their blood at the hands of France. Let her beware! for the hour of her destruction will not be prolonged if she sells herself to sin."

There was a long silence then between the three men; it was at length broken by Humphrey, who looked from one to the other, and said:

"You have not yet told me of yourselves. Who are you, and whence do you come? I have heard of vast plains and mighty rivers in the south and west, but I know nothing beyond these forest tracks which lie about our desolated home."

Fritz signed to Julian to be the speaker, and he leaned his back against the wall, clasping his hands behind his head. The firelight gleamed upon his earnest face and shone in his brilliant eyes. Humphrey regarded him with a species of fascination. He had never seen a man quite of this type before.

"Have you ever heard," asked Julian, "of that great explorer La Salle, who first made the voyage of the great river Mississippi, and founded the infant colony of Louisiana, albeit he himself perished by the hand of an assassin in the wilderness, before he had half achieved the object to which he was pledged?"

"I have heard the name," said Humphrey; "I used to hear the men of Philadelphia talk of such things when I was a boy. But he was a Frenchman."

"Yes, and came with a commission from the King of France hard upon a century ago. My great-grandfather and his father were of the company of La Salle, although they bore their part in a different expedition from that which is known to the world."

"Are you then French?" asked Humphrey, half disappointed, though he could not tell why.

Julian smiled, reading the thought in his heart.

"French in little beside name," he replied. "My great grandfather, Gaspard Dautray, was half English through his mother, an Englishwoman; and he married Mary Neville, an English maiden, from whose family Fritz there is descended. In brief, let me tell you the story. Long before La Salle had penetrated the fastnesses of the west, there had grown up in a green valley a little colony of English, outcasts from their own land by reason of their faith. They had lived at peace for long with the Indian tribes; but when more white men began invading their country, jealousy and fury were awakened in the hearts of the Indians, and this little settlement was in great danger. In their extremity this little colony sent to La Salle, and though he himself was absent, his lieutenant sent them a band of men to aid them in defending their lives and property, and in routing the attacking Indian force.

"But it was no longer safe to remain in the green valley which had sheltered them so long. They heard of the lands of the south, down the great mysterious river, and they resolved to seek an asylum there.

"With the company of La Salle, and yet not attached to it, was a holy man whom all the world called Father Fritz; a priest, yet one who followed not the Pope of Rome, but loved each Christian brother, and recognized only one Church--the Church of the baptized. He went with the little band, and they made themselves a new home in the land of the south. They were beloved of the Indians about them. Father Fritz taught them, baptized such as were truly converted, and lived amongst them to a hoary old age, loving and beloved; seeking always to hold them back from greed and covetousness, and teaching them that the hope for which they must look was the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to reign upon the earth."

Julian paused, looking thoughtfully into the fire. Humphrey heaved a great sigh, and said half bitterly:

"But the Lord delayeth His coming, and men wage war against their brethren."

"Yes, verily; yet I think that should make us long the more for the day which will surely come. However, let me tell my tale. The great enterprise of France in the south and west has come to but a very small thing. No chain of forts guards the great river. The highway from Canada to the south has never been opened up. France is speaking of it to this day. These very hostile movements towards England are all part and parcel of the old plan. She still desires to hold the whole territory by this chain of forts, and shut England in between the sea and those mountains yonder. You have heard, I doubt not, how England is resolved not to be thus held in check. Major George Washington and General Braddock have both made attacks upon Fort Duquesne, and though both have suffered defeat owing to untoward causes and bad generalship, the spirit within them is still unquenched. Fort Duquesne, Fort Niagara, Fort Ticonderoga--these are the three northern links of the chain, and I think that England will never rest until she has floated her flag over these three forts.

"We have come from far to the heart of that great struggle which all men know must come. The day of rest for us seemed ended. We have been travelling all through the long, hot summer months, to find and to be with our countrymen when the hour of battle should come."

Humphrey looked from one to the other, and said:

"There are only two of you. Where are all the rest from your smiling valley of the south? Were you the only twain that desired to join the fight?"

"A dozen of us started, but two turned back quickly, discouraged by the hardness of the way, and a few died of fever in the great swamps and jungles: Others turned aside when we neared the great lakes, thinking to find an easier way. But Fritz and I had our own plan of making our way to New England, and after long toil and travel here we are at the end of our journey. For this indeed seems like the end, when we have found a comrade who will show us the way and lead us to the civilized world again!"

"Ay, I can do that," answered Humphrey; "I know well the road back to the world. Nor is it a matter of more than a few days' travel to reach the outlying townships. I have often said I would go and visit our sisters and friends, but I have never done so. Alas that I should go at last with such heavy tidings!"

"Heavy tidings indeed," said Fritz, with sympathy; "yet we will avenge these treacherous murders upon those who have brought them to pass."

"That will not restore the dead to life," said Humphrey mournfully.

"No, but it will ease the burning heart of its load of rage and vengeance."

Humphrey's eyes turned for a moment towards his sleeping brother. He knew how welcome would be such words to him--that is, if he awoke from his fever dreams in the same mood as they had found him.

"And yet," said Julian thoughtfully, "we have been taught by our fathers that brothers should live at peace together, even as we in our valley lived long at peace with all and with one another. So long as the memory of our venerable Father remained alive there was all harmony and concord, and every man sought his brother's well being as earnestly as his own."

"Can you remember the holy man?" asked Humphrey, with interest.

"No; but my father remembered him well. He was well grown towards manhood before the venerable old man died at a great age. My grandfather has told me story after story of him. I have been brought up to love and revere his memory, and to hold fast the things which he taught us. But after his death, alas! a new spirit gradually entered into the hearts of our people. They began to grow covetous of gain, to trade with the Indians for their own benefit, to fall into careless and sometimes evil practices. Before my father died he said to me that the Home of Peace was no longer the place it once had been, and that he should

like to think that I might find a better place to live in, since I was young and had my life before me."

"Was that long ago?"

"Just a year. My mother had died six months earlier. The dissensions of the parent countries had begun to reach to us. We had been French and English from the beginning, but had dwelt in peace and brotherly goodwill for nigh upon eighty years. We had married amongst ourselves, so that some amongst us scarce knew whether to call themselves French or English. But for all that disunion grew and spread. Stragglers of Louisiana found their way to us. They brought new fashions of thought and teaching with them. Some Romish priests found us out, and took possession of the little chapel which Father Fritz had built with such loving care, and the Mass was said instead of that simpler service which he had drawn up for us. Many of us the priests dubbed as heretics, and because we would not change our views for them, they became angry, and we were excommunicated. It has been nothing but growing strife and disunion for the past two years. I was glad to turn my back upon it at last, and find my way to a freer land, and one where a man may worship God according to his conscience; albeit I have no desire to speak ill of the priests, who were good men, and sought to teach us what they deemed to be the truth."

"I am a Protestant," said Humphrey; "I know little about Romish devices. I was taught to hate and abhor them. We dwelt among the Quaker folk of Pennsylvania. but we are not Quakers ourselves. Out here in the wilds we must live as we can. We have the Bible--and that is all."

"People say of the Quakers that they will not fight!" said Fritz suddenly. "Is that so?"

"I know not," answered Humphrey; "I think I have heard my father say something of that sort. But surely they will fight to avenge such things as that!" and he made a gesture with his hand as though indicating the burnt homestead and the graves of the murdered woman and children.

"If they be men they surely will. You will go and tell them your story, Humphrey?"

"Ay, that I will!" answered Humphrey, between his shut teeth.

Fritz sat staring into the fire for some time, and then he too broke out with some heat.

"Yes, it is the same story all over. It was the French who came and spoiled our happy home. If they had let us alone, perchance we might have been there still, hunting, fishing, following the same kind of life as our fathers--at peace with ourselves and with the world. But they came amongst us. They sowed disunion and strife. They were resolved to get rid of the English party, as they called it. They were all softness and mildness to them. But those in whom the sturdy British spirit flourished they regarded with jealousy and dislike. They sowed the seeds of disunion. They spoiled our valley and our life. Doubtless the germs were there before, but it was the emissaries of France who wrought the mischief. If they could have done it, I believe they would have taught the Indians to distrust us English; but that was beyond their power. Even they held in loving reverence the name of Father Fritz, and none of his children, as they called us all alike, could do wrong in their eyes. So then it was their policy to get rid of such as would not own the supremacy of France in all things. I was glad at the last to go. We became weary of the bickerings and strife. Some of the elders remained behind, but the rest of us went forth to find ourselves a new home and a new country."

Humphrey listened to this tale with as much interest as it was possible for him to give to any concern other than his own. Something of that indignant hatred which was springing into active life all through the western continent began to inflame his breast. It had been no effect of Charles's inflamed imagination. The French were raising the Indians against them, and striving to overthrow England's sons wherever they had a foothold, beyond their immediate colonies. It was time they should arise and assert themselves. Humphrey's eyes kindled as he sat thinking upon these things.

"I too will go forth and fight France," he said at last; and with that resolve the sense of numb lethargy and despair fell away from him like a worn-out garment, and his old fire and energy returned.

Chapter 3: Philadelphia.

"I will go and tell my tale in the ears of my countrymen," said Charles, with steady voice but burning eyes, "and then I will go forth and fight the French, and slay and slay till they be driven from off the face of the western world!"

The fever had left Charles now. Some of his former strength had come back to him. But his brother looked at him often with wondering eyes, for it seemed to him that this Charles was a new being, with whom he had but scant acquaintance. He could not recognize in this stern faced, brooding man the quiet, homely farmer and settler whose home he had shared for so long.

Their new comrades were glad of the rest afforded them by the necessity of waiting till Charles should be fit to move. They had been travelling for many months, and the shelter of a roof--even though it was only the roof of a shed--was grateful to them.

Fritz and Charles took a strong mutual liking almost from the first. Both were men of unwonted strength and endurance, and both were fired by a strong personal enmity towards the French and their aggressive policy.

Julian told Humphrey, in their private conferences, something of the cause of this personal rancour.

"There was a fair maid in our valley--Renee we called her--and her parents were French. But we were all friends together; and Fritz and she loved each other, and were about to be betrothed. Then came these troubles, and the priest forbade Renee to wed a heretic; and though she herself would have been faithful, her parents were afraid. It seemed to all then that the French were going to be masters of the land. There was another youth who loved her also, and to him they married her. That was just before we came away--a dozen of us English youths, who could not stand the new state of things and the strife of party. Fritz has neither forgotten nor forgiven. The name of France is odious in his ears."

"And in yours, too?" asked Humphrey.

Julian's face was grave and thoughtful.

"I have my moments of passionate anger. I hate everything that is vile and treacherous and aggressive. But I would seek to remember that after all we are brothers, and that we all bear the name of Christ. That is what Father Fritz of old sought to make us remember. Perhaps it comes the easier to me in that I have French blood in my veins, albeit I regard myself now as an English subject. I have cast in my lot with the English."

Humphrey and Julian drew together, much as did Charles and Fritz. Julian was a year or two older than Humphrey, and Charles was several years older than Fritz; but all had led a free open-air life, and had tastes and feelings in common. They understood woodcraft and hunting; they were hardy, self reliant, courageous.

It was of such men as these that the best soldiers were made in the days that were at hand; although the military leaders, especially if they came from the Old World with its code of civilized warfare, were slow to recognize it.

A heavy storm of wind and rain--the precursor of the coming winter--raged round the little settlement for several days, during which the party sat round their fire, talking of the past and the future, and learning to know each other more and more intimately.

Charles recovered rapidly from the loss of blood and the fever weakness. His constitution triumphed easily over his recent illness, and he was only longing to be on the road, that he might the sooner stand face to face with the foe.

And now the storm was abating. The sun began to shine out through the driving wrack of clouds. The woodland tracks might be wet, but little reeked the travellers of that.

They bound upon their backs as much provision as would suffice for their immediate needs. They looked well to their arms and ammunition. They had mended their clothes, and were strong and fresh and full of courage.

The journey before them seemed as nothing to the pair who had traversed so many thousands of miles of wood and water. And the settlers had friends at the other end who would remember them, and have tears of sympathy to shed at hearing their terrible tale.

The brothers stood looking their last upon the clearing which had for so long been their home. In Humphrey's eyes there was an unwonted moisture; but Charles's face was set and stern, and his lips twitched with the excess of restrained emotion. His eyes were fixed upon the mound which hid from his view the corpses of wife and children. Suddenly he lifted his clinched hand towards heaven.

"Strengthen, O Lord, this right hand of mine, that it may be strong against the nation whose crimes bring desolation upon Thy children. Be with us in the hour of vengeance and victory. Help us to render unto them even as they have rendered to us."

Julian and Fritz had withdrawn themselves a little, respecting the inevitable emotion which must come to men at such a moment. Humphrey turned away, and took a few uncertain steps, half blinded by the unwonted smart of tears in his eyes. He had come almost to hate this place of terrible associations; and yet it wrung his heart for a moment to leave those nameless graves, and that little lonely spot where so many peaceful and happy hours had been spent.

Julian's hand was on his arm, and his voice spoke in his ear.

"I know what it feels like; I have been through it. The smart is keen. But it helps us to remember that we are but strangers and pilgrims. It is perhaps those who have no abiding city here who most readily seek that which is theirs above."

Humphrey pressed Julian's hand, feeling vaguely comforted by his words, although he could not enter fully into their significance.

To Charles Julian said:

"We must remember, even in our righteous wrath, that God has said He is the avenger. We can trust our wrongs in His hands. He will use us as His instruments if He thinks good. But let us beware of private acts of vengeance of our own planning. We must not forget the reverse of the picture--the mercy as well as the anger of God. We must not take things out of His hands into our own, lest we stumble and fall. We have a commandment to love our enemies, and to do good to those that hate us."

Charles looked fixedly at him.

"I have not forgotten," he said, in his strange, slow way; "I was brought up amongst those who refuse the sword, calling themselves servants of the Prince of Peace. We shall see which the Lord will have--peace or war. Do you think He desires to see a repetition of such scenes as that?"

Charles pointed sternly to the ruined homestead--the grave beside it, and his gloomy eyes looked straight into those of Julian; but he did not even wait for an answer, but plunged along the forest track in an easterly direction.

* * * * *

In a wide street in Philadelphia, not far from the Assembly Rooms where such hot debates were constantly going on, stood an old-fashioned house, quaintly gabled, above the door of which hung out a sign board intimating that travellers might find rest and refreshment within.

The whole house was spotlessly clean, and its aspect was prim and sober, as was indeed that of the whole city. Men in wide-brimmed hats and wide-skirted coats of sombre hue walked the streets, and talked earnestly together at the corners; whilst the women, for the most part, passed on their way with lowered eyes, and hoods drawn modestly over their heads, neither speaking nor being spoken to as they pursued their way.

To be sure there were exceptions. In some quarters there were plenty of people of a different aspect and bearing; but in this wide and pleasant street, overlooked by the window of the hostelry, there were few gaily-dressed persons to be seen, but nearly all of them wore the dress and adopted the quaint speech of the Quaker community.

From this window a bright-faced girl was looking eagerly out into the street. She wore a plain enough dress of grey homespun cloth, and a little prim cap covered her pretty hair. Yet for all that several little rebellious curls peeped forth, surrounding her face with a tiny nimbus; and there was something dainty in the fashion of her white frilled kerchief, arranged across her dress bodice and tied behind. She would dearly have loved to adorn herself with some knots of rose-coloured ribbon, but the rose tints in her cheek gave the touch of colour which brightened her sombre raiment, and her dancing blue eyes would have made sunshine in any place.

She had opened the window lattice and craned her head to look down the street; but at the sound of a footstep within doors she quickly drew it in again, for her mother reproved her when she found her hanging out at the window.

"What is all the stir about, mother?" she asked; "there be so many folks abroad, and they have been passing in and out of the Assembly Rooms for above an hour. What does it all mean? Are they baiting the Governor again? Are they having another fight about the taxes?"

"Nay, child, I know not. I have been in the kitchen, looking to the supper. Thy father came in awhile back, and said we had guests arrived, and that he desired the supper to be extra good. That is all I know."

"Something has happened, I am sure of that!" cried the girl again, "and I would father would come and tell us what it is all about. He always hears all the news. Perhaps the travellers he is bringing here will know. I may sit with you at the supper table, may I not, mother?"

"Yes, child; so your father said. He came in with a smile upon his face. But he was in a great haste, and has been gone ever since. So what it all means I know not."

Susanna--for such was the name of the girl--became at once interested and excited.

"O mother, what can it be? Hark at that noise in the street below! People are crying out in a great rage. What can it be? It was so that day a week ago, when news was brought in that some poor settlers had been murdered by Indians, and the Assembly would do nothing but wrangle with the Governor instead of sending out troops to defend our people. Do you think something can have happened again?"

The mother's face turned a little pale.

"Heaven send it be not so!" she exclaimed. "I am always in fear when I hear of such things--in fear for my old father, and for my brothers. You know they live away there on the border. I pray Heaven no trouble will fall upon them."

Susanna's eyes dilated with interest, as they always did when her mother talked to her of these unknown relations, away beyond the region of safety and civilization.

To be correct, it should be explained that Susanna was not the real daughter of the woman whom she called mother; for Benjamin Ashley had been twice married, and Susanna had been five years old before Hannah Angell had taken the mother's place. But she never thought of this herself. She remembered no other mother, and the tie between them was strong and tender, despite the fact that there was not more than thirteen years' difference in age between them, and some girls might have rebelled against the rule of one who might almost have been a sister.

But Susanna had no desire to rebel. Hannah's rule was a mild and gentle one, although it was exercised with a certain amount of prim decorum. Still the girl was shrewd enough to know that her father's leanings towards the Quaker code had been greatly modified by the influence of his wife, and that she was kept less strictly than he would have kept her had he remained a widower.

Hannah bustled away to the kitchen, and Susanna, after one more longing look out of the window towards the crowd assembled in the open space beyond, followed her, and gave active assistance in the setting of the supper table.

A young man in Quaker garb, and with a broad-brimmed hat in his hand, entered the outer room, engaged in hot dispute with another youth of different aspect, whose face was deeply flushed as if in anger.

"Your Franklin may be a clever man--I have nothing against that!" he exclaimed hotly; "but if he backs up the stubborn Assembly, and stands idle whilst our settlers are being massacred like sheep, then say I that he and they alike deserve hanging in a row from the gables of their own Assembly House; and that if the Indians break in upon us and scalp them all, they will but meet the deserts of their obstinacy and folly!"

"Friend," said the other of the sober raiment, "thee speaks as a heathen man and a vain fellow. The Lord hath given us a commandment to love one another, and to live at peace with all men. We may not lightly set aside that commandment; we may not do evil that good may come."

"Tush, man! get your Bible and look. I am no scholar, but I know that the Lord calls Himself a man of war--that He rides forth, sword in hand, conquering, and to conquer; that the armies in heaven itself fight under the Archangel against the powers of darkness. And are we men to let our brothers be brutally murdered, whilst we sit with folded hands, or wrangle weeks and months away, as you Quakers are wrangling over some petty question of taxation which a man of sense would settle in five minutes? I am ashamed of Philadelphia! The whole world will be pointing the finger of scorn at us. We are acting like cowards--like fools--not like men! If there were but a man to lead us forth, I and a hundred stout fellows would start forth to the border country tomorrow to wage war with those villainous Indians and their more villainous allies the crafty sons of France."

"Have patience, friend," said the Quaker youth, with his solemn air; "I tell thee that the Assembly is in the right. Who are the Penns these proprietaries--that their lands should be exempt from taxation? If the Governor will yield that point, then will the Assembly raise the needful aid for keeping in check the enemy, albeit it goes sorely against their righteous souls. But they will not give everything and gain nothing; it is not right they should."

"And while they wrangle and snarl and bicker, like so many dogs over a bone, our countrywomen and their innocent children are to be scalped and burnt and massacred? That is Scripture law, is it? that is your vaunted religion. You will give way--you will yield your principles for a petty victory on a point of law, but not to save the lives of the helpless brothers who are crying aloud on all hands to you to come and save them!"

The Quaker youth moved his large feet uneasily; he, in common with the seniors of his party, was beginning to find it a little difficult to maintain a logical position in face of the pressing urgency of the position. He had been brought up in the tenets which largely prevailed in Pennsylvania at that day, and was primed with numerous arguments which up till now had been urged with confidence by the Quaker community. But the peace-loving Quakers were beginning to feel the ground shaking beneath their feet. The day was advancing with rapid strides when they would be forced either to take up arms in defence of their colony, or to sit still and see it pass bodily into the hands of the enemy.

Susanna was peeping in at the door of the next room. She knew both the speakers well. Ebenezer Jenkyns had indeed been paying her some attention of late, although she laughed him to scorn. Much more to her liking was bold John Stark, her father's kinsman; and as there was nobody in the room beside these two, she ventured to go a step within the doorway and ask:

"What is the matter now, Jack? what are you two fighting about so hotly?"

"Faith, 'tis ever the same old tale--more massacres and outrages upon our borders, more women and children slaughtered! Settlers from the western border calling aloud to us to send them help, and these Quaker fellows of the Assembly doing nothing but wrangle, wrangle, wrangle with the Governor, and standing idle whilst their brothers perish. Save me from the faith of the peace makers!"

Again the other young man moved uneasily, the more so as he saw the look of disdain and scorn flitting over the pretty face of Susanna.

"Thee does us an injustice, friend," he said. "Was it not Benjamin Franklin who a few months back gave such notable help to General Braddock that he called him the only man of honesty and vigour in all the western world? But the Lord showed that He would not have us attack our brother men, and Braddock's army was cut to pieces, and he himself slain. When the Lord shows us His mind, it is not for us to persist in our evil courses; we must be patient beneath His chastenings."

"Tush, man! the whole campaign was grossly mismanaged; all the world knows that by now. But why hark back to the past? it is the present, the future that lie before us. Are we to let our province become overrun and despoiled by hordes of savage Indians, or are we to rise like men and sweep them back whence they came? There is the case in a nutshell. And instead of facing it like men, the Assembly talks and squabbles and wrangles like a pack of silly women!"

"Oh no, Cousin Jack," quoth Susanna saucily, "say not like women! Women would make up their minds to action in an hour. Say rather like men, like men such as Ebenezer loves--men with the tongues of giants and the spirit of mice; men who speak great swelling words, and boast of their righteousness, but who are put to shame by the brute beasts themselves. Even a timid hen will be brave when her brood is attacked; but a Quaker cannot be anything but a coward, and will sit with folded hands whilst his own kinsmen perish miserably!"

This was rather too much even for Ebenezer's phlegmatic spirit. He seized his broad-brimmed hat and clapped it on his head.

"Thee will be sorry some day, Susanna, for making game of the Quakers, and of the godly ones of the earth," he spluttered.

"Go thee to the poultry yard, friend Ebenezer," called Susanna after him; "the old hen there will give thee a warm welcome. Go and learn from her how to fight. I warrant thee will learn more from her than thee has ever known before--more than thine own people will ever teach thee. Go to the old hen to learn; only I fear thee will soon flee from her with a text in thy mouth to aid thy legs to run!"

"Susanna, Susanna!" cried a voice from within, whilst Jack doubled himself up in a paroxysm of delight, "what are you saying so loud and free? Come hither, child. You grow over bold, and I cannot have you in the public room. With whom are you talking there?"

"There is only Jack here now," answered Susanna meekly, although the sparkle still gleamed in her eyes; "Ebenezer has just gone out. I was saying farewell to him."

"Come back now, and finish setting the table; and if John will stay to supper, he will be welcome."

John was only too glad, for he took keen pleasure in the society of Susanna, and was fond of the quaint old house where his kinsman lived. He rose and went into the inner room, where Hannah received him with a smile and a nod.

Susanna would have asked him what special news had reached the town that day, but the sound of approaching feet outside warned her of the return of her father with the friends he was bringing to supper. She flew to the kitchen for the first relay of dishes, and Hannah left her to dish them up, whilst she went to meet the guests.

Jack and the maidservant assisted Susanna at the stove, and a few minutes passed before they entered the supper room, where the company had assembled. When they did so, the girl was surprised to note that her mother was standing between two tall strangers, one of whom had his arm about her, and that she was weeping silently yet bitterly.

Susanna put down her dishes on the table and crept to her father's side.

"What is the matter?" she asked timidly.

"Matter enough to bring tears to all our eyes--ay, tears of blood!" answered Ashley sternly. "These two men are your mother's brothers, who arrived today--just a short while back--as I hoped with pleasant tidings. Now have we learned a different tale. Their old father and Charles's wife and children have been brutally murdered by Indians, and he himself escaped

as by a miracle. We have been telling the tale to the Assembly this very afternoon. Ah, it would have moved hearts of stone to hear Charles's words! I pray Heaven that something may soon be done. It is fearful to think of the sufferings which our inaction is causing to our settlers in the west!"

"It is a shame--a disgrace!" exclaimed Jack hotly, and then he turned his glance upon the two other men who were seated at the table, taking in the whole scene in silence.

Both wore the look of travellers; both were tanned by exposure, and were clad in stained and curious garments, such as betokened the life of the wilderness. Jack was instantly and keenly interested. He himself would willingly have been a backwoodsman had he been able to adopt that adventurous life.

Ashley saw the look he bent upon the travellers, and he made them known to one another.

"These friends have travelled far from the lands of the south, and have been friends in need to our kinsmen yonder. Fritz Neville and Julian Dautray are their names.

"Susanna, set food before them. Your mother will not be able to think of aught just now. We must let her have her cry out before we trouble her."

The rest of the party seated themselves, whilst in the recess by the window Hannah stood between the brothers she had parted from ten years ago, listening to their tale, and weeping as she listened.

Ashley turned to his two guests, who were eating with appetite from the well-filled platters placed before them, and he began to speak as though taking up a theme which had lately been dropped.

"It is no wonder that you are perplexed by what you hear and see in this city. I will seek to make the point at issue as clear to you as it may be. You have doubtless heard of the Penn family, from whom this colony takes its name. Much we owe to our founder--his wisdom,

liberality, and enlightenment; but his sons are hated here. They are absent in England, but they are the proprietaries of vast tracts of land, and it is with regard to these lands that the troubles in the Assembly arise. The proprietaries are regarded as renegades from the faith; for the Assembly here is Quaker almost to a man. They hate the feudalism of the tenure of the proprietaries, and they are resolved to tax these lands, although they will not defend them, and although no income is at present derived from them."

"Have they the power to do so?" asked Julian.

"Not without the consent of the Governor. That is where the whole trouble lies. And the Governor has no power to grant them leave to tax the proprietary lands. Not only so, but he is expressly forbidden by the terms of his commission to permit this taxation. But the Assembly will not yield the point, nor will they consent to furnish means for the defence of the colony until this point is conceded. That is where the deadlock comes in. The Governor cannot yield; his powers do not permit it. The Assembly will not yield. They hate the thought of war, and seem glad to shelter themselves behind this quibble. For a while many of us, their friends, although not exactly at one with them in all things, stood by them and upheld them; but we are fast losing patience now. When it comes to having our peaceful settlers barbarously murdered, and our western border desolated and encroached upon; when it becomes known that this is the doing of jealous France, not of the Indians themselves, then it is time to take a wider outlook. Let the question of the proprietary lands stand over till another time; the question may then be settled at a less price than is being paid for it now, when every month's delay costs us the lives of helpless women and children, and when humanity herself is crying aloud in our streets."

Ashley, although he had long been on most friendly terms with the Quaker population of the town, was not by faith a Quaker, and was growing impatient with the Assembly and its stubborn policy of resistance. He felt that his old friend Franklin should know better, and show a wider spirit. He had acted with promptness and patriotism earlier in the year, when Braddock's luckless expedition had applied to him for help. But in this warfare he was sternly resolved on the victory over the Governor, and at this moment it seemed as though all Philadelphia was much more eager to achieve this than to defend the borders of the colony.

Hitherto the danger had not appeared pressing to the eastern part of the colony. They were in no danger from Indian raids, and they had small pity for their brethren on the western

frontier. Between them and the encroaching Indians lay a population, mostly German, that acted like a buffer state to them; and notwithstanding that every post brought in urgent appeals for help, they passed the time in wrangling with the Governor, in drawing up bills professing to be framed to meet the emergency, but each one of them containing the clause through which the Governor was forced to draw his pen.

Governor Morris had written off to England stating the exceeding difficulty of his position. His appeals to the Assembly to defend the colony were spirited and manly. He was anxious to join with the other colonies for an organized and united resistance, but this was at present extremely difficult. Others before him had tried the same policy, but it had ended in failure. Petty jealousies did more to hold the colonies apart than a common peril to bind them together. Political and religious strife was always arising. There was nothing to bind them together save a common, though rather cold, allegiance to the English King. Now and again, in moments of imminent peril, they had united for a common object; but they fell apart almost at once. Each had its own pet quarrel with its Governor, which was far more interesting to the people at the moment than anything else.

Julian and Fritz listened in amaze as Ashley, who was a well-informed man and a shrewd observer, put before them, as well as he was able, the state of affairs reigning in Pennsylvania and the sister states.

"I am often ashamed of our policy, of our bickerings, of our tardiness," concluded the good man; "yet for all that there is stuff of the right sort in our people. We have English blood in our veins, and I always maintain that England is bound to be the dominant power in these lands of the west. Let them but send us good leaders and generals from the old country, and I will answer for it that the rising generation of New England will fight and will conquer, and drive the encroaching French back whence they came!"

Chapter 4: An Exciting Struggle.

It was an exciting scene. Susanna stood at the window, and gazed eagerly along the street, striving hard to obtain a sight of the seething crowd in the open square.

She could see the tall, haggard form of her Uncle Charles, as she called him. He was standing upon a little platform that his friends had erected for him in front of the Assembly Rooms, and he was speaking aloud to the surging crowd in accents that rang far through the still air, and even reached the ears of the listeners at the open window.

For once Hannah made no protest when the girl thrust out her head. She herself seemed to be striving to catch the echoes of the clear, trumpet-like voice. Her colour came and went in her cheeks; her breast heaved with the emotion which often found vent in those days in a fit of silent weeping.

"Mother dear, do not weep; they shall be avenged! Nobody can listen to Uncle Charles and not be moved. Hark how they are shouting now--hark! I can see them raising their arms to heaven. They are shaking their fists in the direction of the windows of the Assembly House. Surely those cowardly men must be roused to action; they cannot hear unmoved a tale such as Uncle Charles has to tell!"

"Yet even so the dead will not be restored to life; and war is a cruel, bitter thing."

"Yes, but victory is glorious. And we shall surely triumph, for our cause is righteous. I am sure of that. And Julian Dautray says the same. I think he is a very good man, mother; I think he is better than the Quakers, though he does not talk as if he thought himself a saint.

"O mother, there is Uncle Humphrey looking up at us! I pray you let me go down to him. I long so greatly to hear what Uncle Charles is saying. And I shall be safe in his care."

"I think I will come, too," said Hannah, whose interest and curiosity were keenly aroused; and after signalling as much to Humphrey, they threw on their cloaks and hoods, and were soon out in the streets, where an excited crowd had gathered.

"The posts have come in," said Humphrey, as they made their way slowly along, "and there is news of fresh disasters, and nearer. In a few minutes we shall have more news. Men have gone in who promise to come out and read us the letters. But the bearers themselves declare that things are terrible. The Germans have been attacked. A Moravian settlement has been burnt to the ground, and all its inhabitants butchered. Families are flying from the border country, naked and destitute, to get clear of the savages and their tomahawks. Every where the people are calling aloud upon the Assembly to come to their succour."

The crowd in the street was surging to and fro. Some were Quakers, with pale, determined countenances, still holding to their stubborn policy of non-resistance to the enemy, but of obstinate resistance to the Governor and the proprietaries. The sight of these men seemed to inflame the rest of the populace, and they were hustled and hooted as they made their way into the Assembly; whilst the Governor was cheered as he went by with a grave and troubled face, and on the steps of his house he turned and addressed the people.

"My friends," he said, "I am doing what I can. I have written to the proprietaries and to the government at home. I have told them that the conduct of the Assembly is to me shocking beyond parallel. I am asking for fresh powers to deal with this horrible crisis. But I cannot look for an answer for long; and meantime are all our helpless settlers in the west to be butchered? You men of the city, rise you and make a solemn protest to these obstinate rulers of yours. I have spoken all that one man may, and they will not hear. Try you now if you cannot make your voice heard."

"We will, we will!" shouted a hundred voices; and forthwith knots of influential men began to gather together in corners, talking eagerly together, and gesticulating in their excitement.

And all this while Charles, wild-eyed and haggard, was keeping his place on the little platform, and telling his story again and again to the shifting groups who came and went. Men and women hung upon his words in a sort of horrible fascination. Others might talk of horrors guessed at, yet unseen; Charles had witnessed the things of which he spoke, and his

words sent thrills of horror through the frames of those who heard. Women wept, and wrung their hands, and the faces of men grew white and stern.

But upon the opposite side of the square another orator was haranguing the crowd. A young Quaker woman had got up upon some steps, moved in spirit, as she declared, to denounce the wickedness of war, and to urge the townsmen to peaceful methods. Her shrill voice rose high and piercing, and she invoked Heaven to bless the work of those who would endure all things rather than spill human blood.

But the people had heard something too much of this peaceful gospel. For long they had upheld the policy of non-resistance. They had their shops, their farms, their merchandise; they were prosperous and phlegmatic, more interested in local than in national issues. They had been content to be preached at by the Quakers, and to give passive adhesion to their policy; but the hour of awakening had come. The agonized cries of those who looked to them for aid had pierced their ears too often to be ignored. Humanity itself must rise in answer to such an appeal. They were beginning to see that their peace policy was costing untold human lives, amid scenes of unspeakable horror.

They let the woman speak in peace; they did not try to stop her utterances. But when a brother Quaker took her place and began a similar harangue, the young men round raised a howl, and a voice cried out:

"Duck him in the horse pond! Roll him in a barrel! Let him be tarred and feathered like an Indian, since he loves the scalping savages so well. Who's got a tomahawk? Let's see how they use them. Does anybody know how they scalp their prisoners? A Quaker would never miss his scalp; he always has his hat on!"

A roar of laughter greeted this sally; and a rush was made for the unlucky orator, who showed a bold front enough to the mob. But at that moment public attention was turned in a different direction by the appearing upon the steps of the Assembly Rooms of a well-known citizen of high repute, who had until latterly been one of the peace party, but who of late had made a resolute stand, insisting that something must be done for the protection of the western settlers, and for the curbing of the ambitious encroachments and preposterous claims of France.

This grave-faced citizen came out with some papers in his hand, and the crowd was hushed into silence.

Overhead anxious faces could be seen looking out at the window. It was not by the wishes of the Assembly that such letters were made public; but many of them had been addressed to James Freeman himself, and they could not restrain him from doing as he would with his own.

"My friends," he said, and his voice rose distinct in the clear air, "we have heavy tidings today. You shall hear what is written from some sufferers not far from Fort Cumberland, where forty white men, women, and children were barbarously murdered a few days back.

"We are in as bad circumstances as ever any poor Christians were ever in; for the cries of the widowers, widows, fatherless and motherless children are enough to pierce the hardest of hearts. Likewise it is a very sorrowful spectacle to see those that escaped with their lives with not a mouthful to eat, or bed to lie on, or clothes to cover their nakedness or keep them warm, but all they had consumed to ashes. These deplorable circumstances cry aloud to your Honour's most wise consideration how steps may speedily be taken to deliver us out of the hand of our persecutors the cruel and murderous savages, and to bring the struggle to an end."

The reader paused, and a low, deep murmur passed through the crowd, its note of rage and menace being clearly heard. The speaker took up another paper and recommenced.

"This comes from John Harris on the east bank of the Susquehanna:

"The Indians are cutting us off every day, and I had a certain account of about fifteen hundred Indians, besides French, being on their march against us and Virginia, and now close on our borders, their scouts scalping our families on our frontier daily."

Another pause, another murmur like a roar, and a voice from the crowd was raised to ask:

"And what says the Assembly to that?"

"They say that if the Indians are rising against us, who have been friendly so long, then we must surely have done something to wrong them; and they are about to search for the cause of such a possible wrong, and redress it, rather than impose upon the colony the calamities of a cruel Indian war!"

A yell and a groan went up from the crowd. For a moment it seemed almost as though some attack would be made upon the Assembly House. The habits of law and obedience were, however, strong in the citizens of Philadelphia, and in the end they dispersed quietly to their own homes; but a fire had been kindled in their hearts which would not easily be quenched.

Days were wasted by the Quakers in an unsuccessful attempt to prove that there had been some fraud on the part of the Governor in a recent land purchase from the Indians. And they again laid before the Governor one of their proposals, still containing the clause which he was unable to entertain, and which inevitably brought matters to a deadlock.

The Quakers drew up a declaration affirming that they had now taken every step in their power, "consistent with the just rights of the freemen of Pennsylvania, for the relief of the poor distressed inhabitants," and further declared that "we have reason to believe that they themselves would not wish us to go further. Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary relief and safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

The Governor, in a dignified reply, once more urged upon them the absolute necessity of waiving for the present the vexed question of the proprietary estates, and passing a bill for the relief of the present sufferers; but the Quakers remained deaf and mute, and would not budge one inch from their position.

All the city was roused. In houses like that of Benjamin Ashley, where people were coming and going the whole day long, and where travellers from these border lands were to be found who could give information at first hand, the discussion went on every day and all day long. Ashley himself was keenly excited. He had quite broken away from a number of his old friends who supported the Assembly in its blind obstinacy. Nobody could sit by unmoved whilst Charles and Humphrey Angell told their tale of horror and woe; and, moreover, both

Julian Dautray and Fritz Neville had much to tell of the aggressive policy of France, and of her resolute determination to stifle and strangle the growing colonies of England, by giving them no room to expand, whilst she herself claimed boundless untrodden regions which she could never hope to populate or hold.

Fresh excitements came daily to the city. Early one morning, as the tardy daylight broke, a rumble of wheels in the street below told of the arrival of travellers. The wheels stopped before Ashley's door, and he hastily finished his toilet and went down.

In a few moments all the house was in a stir and commotion. A terrible whisper was running from mouth to mouth. That cart standing grimly silent in the street below carried, it was said, a terrible load. Beneath its heavy cover lay the bodies of about twenty victims of Indian ferocity; and the guardians of the load were stern-faced men, bearing recent scars upon their own persons, who ate and drank in stony silence, and only waited till the Assembly had met before completing their grim mission.

The thing had got wind in the town by now, and the square space was thronged. The members of the Assembly looked a little uneasy as they passed through the crowd, but not a sound was made till all had gathered in the upper room.

Then from out the yard of the inn was dragged the cart. No horses were fastened to it. The young men of the city dragged it out and pushed it along. The silent, grim-faced guardians walked in front. As it reached the square the crowd sent up a groaning cry, and opened right and left for the dreadful load to be set in position before the windows of the great room where the Assembly had met.

Then the cover was thrown back, and yells and cries arose from all. Shouts were raised for the Assembly to come and look at their work.

There was no resisting the mandate of the crowd. White and trembling, the members of the Assembly were had out upon the steps, and forced to look at the bodies of their victims. The crowd hooted, groaned, yelled with maddened fury. The advocates of peace shrank into themselves, appalled at the evidences of barbarities they had sought to believe exaggerated. It was useless now to attempt to deny the truth of what had been reported.

Back they slunk into the Assembly House, white and trembling, and for the moment cowed. The cart was moved on, and stopped in front of house after house where notable Quakers dwelt who were not members of the Assembly. They were called to come to their windows and look, and were greeted with hisses and curses.

The very next day a paper, under preparation by a number of the leading citizens at the suggestion of the Governor, was presented to the Assembly under the title of a "Representation." It contained a stern appeal for the organization of measures of defence, and ended by the dignified and significant words:

"You will forgive us, gentlemen, if we assume characters somewhat higher than that of humble suitors praying for the defence of our lives and properties as a matter of grace or favour on your side. You will permit us to make a positive and immediate demand of it."

The Quakers were frightened, incensed, and perplexed. Their preachers went about the streets urging upon the people the doctrine of non-resistance, and picturing the horrors of warfare. The Assembly debated and debated, but invariably came to the conclusion that they must withstand the Governor to the last upon the question of taxation.

All the city was in a tumult and ferment; but when the news came that a settlement only sixty miles away, Tulpehocken by name, had been destroyed and its inhabitants massacred, even the advocates of peace grew white with fear, and the House began to draw up a militia law--the most futile and foolish perhaps that had ever been suggested even by lovers of peace--in the vain hope of appeasing the people.

But the people would not be appeased by a mere mockery. They clamoured for the raising of money for a systematic defence of their colony, and the ground was cut from beneath the feet of the Assembly by a letter received from England by the Governor--not indeed in response to his recent urgent appeals, but still written with some knowledge of the unsettled state of the country. In this letter the proprietaries promised a donation of five thousand pounds as a free gift for the defence of the provinces threatened in so formidable a manner, provided it was regarded as a gift and not as any part of a tax upon their estates, which were to remain free according to the old feudal tenure.

The Assembly upon hearing this could hold out no longer. They were forced by the clamour of public opinion to strike out the debated and debatable clause from the long-contested bill, and immediately it was passed into law by the Governor.

"Ay, they have come to their senses at last--when it is well nigh too late!" spoke John Stark, with a touch of bitterness in his tone. "They will furnish money now; but what can be done with the winter just upon us? For six months we must lie idle, whilst the snow and ice wrap us round. Why was not this thing done before our settlements were destroyed, and when we could have pushed forth an army into the field to drive back the encroaching foe, so that they would never have dared to show their faces upon our border again?"

Charles looked up with burning eyes.

"What say you? Six months to wait? That will not do for me! My blood is boiling in my veins; I must needs cool it! If these laggard rulers, with their clumsy methods, cannot put an army in the field before the spring, surely there are men enough amongst us to go forth--a hardy band of woodsmen and huntsmen--and hunt and harry, and slay and destroy, even as they have done!"

"That is what the Rangers do!" cried Stark, with kindling eyes; "I have heard of them before this. The Rangers of New England have done good work before now. Good thought, good thought! Why not form ourselves into a band of Rangers? Are we not strong and full of courage, seasoned to hardship, expert in our way with gun or axe? Why should we lie idle here all the long winter through? Why not let us forth to the forest--find out where help is needed most, and make here a dash and there a raid, striking terror into the hearts of the foe, and bringing help and comfort to those desolate inhabitants of the wilderness who go in terror of their lives? Why not be a party of bold Rangers, scouring the forests, and doing whatever work comes to hand? Men have banded themselves together for this work before now; why may not we do the like?"

"Why not, indeed?" cried Fritz, leaping to his feet. "I pine in the restraint of this town; I long for the forest and the plain once more. My blood, too, is hot within me at the thought of what has been done and will be done again. Let us band ourselves together as brothers in arms. There must be work and to spare for those who desire it."

Ashley thoughtfully stroked his chin, looking round the circle before him. He was a shrewd and thoughtful man, and there was nothing of cowardice in his nature, although he was cautious and careful.

"It is not a bad thought, Nephew John," he said; "and yet I had been thinking of something different for some of you intrepid and adventurous youths to do. I had thought of sending news of the state of parties here to our friends and kinsmen in England. When all is said and done, it is to England that we must look for help. She must send us generals to command us, and she must help us with her money. There are many families across the water who would open their purses on our behalf right generously were our sad case made known to them. Letters are sent continually, but it is the spoken tale that moves the heart. I had thought to send across myself to such of our friends and families as still regard us as belonging to them. If they made a response such as I look for, we should soon have means at our disposal to augment what the tardy Assembly may do by an auxiliary force, equipped and furnished with all that can be needed. But you cannot be in two places at once.

"What think you, my young friends? Will you serve your distressed brethren better as Rangers of the forest, or as emissaries to England?"

"Why not divide our forces?" asked John Stark; "there are enough of us for that. I have often heard Humphrey speak of a wish to cross the sea, and to visit the land from which we have all come. Why not let him choose a comrade, and go thither with letters and messages, and tell his tale in the ears of friends? And whilst they are thus absent, why should not the rest of us make up a party of bold spirits, and go forth into the wilderness, and there carry on such work of defence and aggression as we find for us to do?"

"Ay. I have no love for the unknown ocean," said Charles; "I have other work to do than to visit new lands. I have a vow upon me, and I cannot rest till it be accomplished."

Humphrey and Julian looked at each other. Already they had spoken of a visit to England. Both desired to see the lands of the Eastern Hemisphere from whence their fathers had come. Hitherto they had not seen how this could be accomplished; but Ashley's words opened out an unexpected way. If the citizens of Philadelphia wanted to send messengers to their friends across the water, they would gladly volunteer for the service.

"If Julian will go with me, I will gladly go," said Humphrey.

"I will go, with all my heart," answered Julian at once; "and we will seek and strive to do the pleasure of those who send us."

Ashley's face beamed upon the pair. He knew by this time that no better messenger than Julian Dautray could be found. He had a gift of eloquence and a singularly attractive personality. His nature was gentle and refined--curiously so considering his upbringing--and he had a largeness of heart and a gift of sympathy which was seldom to be met with amongst the more rugged sons of the north.

He had made himself something of a power already in the circle into which he had been thrown; and when it was known amongst Ashley's friends and acquaintance that his wife's brother, together with Julian Dautray, would go to England with their representations to friends and to those in authority, a liberal response was made as to their outfit and introductions, and the young men were surprised to find themselves suddenly raised to a place of such importance and distinction.

It was an exciting time for Susanna and for all in the house. John Stark came to and fro, bringing news that he had found fresh volunteers to join the band of Rangers, who were already making preparations for departure upon their perilous life of adventure.

Some of the older citizens looked doubtful, and spoke of the rigours of the winter; but John laughed, and Charles smiled his strange, mirthless smile, and all declared themselves fearless and ready to face whatever might be in store. Come what might, they would go to the help of the settlers, be the Assembly ever so dilatory in sending help.

"But you will not get killed?" Susanna would plead, looking from one face to the other. She was fond of John, who had been like a brother to her all her life; she had a great admiration for handsome Fritz, who often spent whole evenings telling her wonderful stories of the far south whilst she plied her needle over the rough garments the Rangers were to take with them. It seemed to her a splendid thing these men were about to do, but she shrank from

the thought that harm might come to them. She sometimes almost wished they had not thought of it, and that they had been content to remain in the city, drilling with the town militia, and thinking of the coming spring campaign.

"We must take our chance," answered Fritz, as he bent over her with a smile on one of those occasions. "You would not have us value our lives above the safety of our distressed brethren or the honour of our nation? The things which have happened here of late have tarnished England's fair name and fame. You would not have us hold back, if we can help to bring back the lustre of that name? I know you better than that."

"I would have you do heroic deeds," answered Susanna, with quickly-kindled enthusiasm, "only I would not have you lose your lives in doing it."

"We must take our chance of that," answered Fritz, with a smile, "as other soldiers take theirs. But we shall be a strong and wary company; and I have passed already unscathed through many perils. You will not forget us when we are gone, Susanna? I shall think of you sitting beside this comfortable hearth, when we are lying out beneath the frosty stars, with the world lying white beneath us, wrapped in its winding sheet!"

"Ah, you will suffer such hardships! they all say that."

There was a look of distress in the girl's eyes; but Fritz laughed aloud.

"Hardship! what is hardship? I know not the name. We can track game in the forest, and fish the rivers for it. We can make ourselves fires of sparkling, crackling pine logs; we can slip along over ice and snow upon our snowshoes and skates, as I have heard them described, albeit I myself shall have to learn the trick of them--for we had none such methods in my country, where the cold could never get a grip of us. Fear not for us, Susanna; we shall fare well, and we shall do the work of men, I trow. I am weary already of the life of the city; I would go forth once more to my forest home."

There was a sparkle almost like that of tears in the girl's eyes, and a little unconscious note as of reproach in her voice.

"That is always the way with men; they would ever be doing and daring. Would that I too were a man! there is naught in the world for a maid to do."

"Say not so," cried Fritz, taking the little hand and holding it tenderly between his own. "Life would be but a sorry thing for us men were it not for the gentle maidens left at home to think of us and pray for us and welcome us back again. Say, Susanna, what sort of a welcome will you have for me, when I come to claim it after my duty is done?"

She raised her eyes to his, and the colour flooded her face.

"I shall welcome you back with great gladness of heart, Fritz, and I shall pray for you every day whilst you are away."

"And not forget me, even if other fine fellows of officers, such as we begin to see in our streets now, come speaking fine words to you, and seeking to win smiles from your bright eyes? You will keep a place in your heart still for the rough Ranger Fritz?"

Susanna's eyes lighted with something of mischievous amusement, and then as she proceeded grew more grave and soft.

"My good mother will take care that I have small converse with the gay young officers, Fritz. But in truth, even were it not so, I should never care for them, or think of them as I do of you. You are facing perils they would not. You are brave with the bravery of a true hero. It is with the Rangers of the forest that my heart will go. Be sure you break it not, Fritz, by too rashly exposing yourself to peril."

"Sweetheart!" was his softly-spoken answer; and Susanna went to her bed that night with a heart that beat high with a strange sweet happiness, although the cloud of coming parting lay heavy upon her soul.

A few days later, Humphrey and Julian, fully equipped with instructions, introductions, money and other necessities, left the city, ready for their homeward voyage; and in another week the small but hardy band of Rangers, with their plain and meagre outfit, but with stout hearts and brave resolves, said adieu to those they left behind, and started westward for that debatable ground upon which a bloody warfare had to be fought to the bitter end.

Freeeditorial 