

Even the cats of the settlement were present, including that celebrated kitten which had been reduced to a state of drivelling imbecility by the furious advent of the Wild Man. Owls and other sagacious birds also came from afar to see the fun, attracted by the light of the fire; for the ballroom was the green sward of the forest, which was illuminated for the occasion by a bonfire that would have roasted a megatherium whole, and also would have furnished accommodation for a pot large enough to boil an elephant. Don't think, reader, in the vanity of your heart, that you have conceived that fire! You have not, as a Yankee would say, the most distant conception of the small end of a notion of what it was! A hundred brawny arms, accustomed to wield the broad axe, had lent their aid to rear the mighty pile and feed the ravening flame.

It was kindled on a wide level plot in the outskirts of the settlement, around which the trees spread their sheltering arms. On a plank raised on two casks sat the blacksmith with his fiddle. The carpenter sat beside him with a kettledrum, more literally a kettledrum even than the real thing, for that drum *was* a kettle! On a little mound that rose in the centre of the plot sat, in state, Dick and Mary, March and the vision in leather, their respective thrones being empty flour-casks. Around them danced the youth and beauty of the settlement. These were enclosed by a dense circle, composed of patriarchal, middle-aged,