

nd Charlie so glowingly that though her eyes were full of tears, her voice was more cheerful as she asked, "And will you surely bring me back?"

"As yonder star fades in the rising sun, so surely shall you go home," said Orianna. Then spreading in her lap the blanket which, with ready forethought, she had brought from home, she bade Ella lie down and sleep.

"And will you keep the bad Indians off?" asked Ella, looking shudderingly around at the dark woods.

"No one will harm you while I am here," was Orianna's reply, and with the trusting faith of childhood Ella, was soon fast asleep, while Orianna carefully watched her slumbers.

Once during her night vigils she was startled by the distant cry of some wild beast, but it came not near, and the morning found them both unharmed. Dividing with her little charge the corn bread and cold venison which had been procured at the wigwam, Orianna again set forward, leading Ella by the hand, and beguiling the hours in every possible way. The next night they passed in a wigwam, where dusky faces bent curiously above the "pale flower" as she slept, and where, next morning, in addition to the bountiful supply of corn-cake and venison, a bunch of spring violets was presented to Ella by an Indian boy, who had gathered them expressly for the "white pappoose," as he called her.

Blest season of childhood, which gathers around it so many who are ready to smooth the rough places and pluck the sharp thorns which lie so thickly scattered on life's pathway! It was Ella's talisman; for more than one tall Indian, on learning her history from Orianna, cheerfully lent a hand, and on his brawny shoulders carried her from the sun's rising to its going down.

With Ella for a companion, Orianna proceeded but slowly, and nearly three weeks were spent ere familiar way-marks told her that they were nearing Lexington. "In less than two days we shall be there," she said to Ella, as at the close of one day they drew near that town.

Lighter grew Ella's footsteps, and brighter was her eye, while darker and deeper grew the shadows around poor Orianna. She was right in her calculations, for on the afternoon of the second day they struck into the narrow footpath which led to Deacon Wilder's house, and which she and Charlie oft had trodden.

Here for a time we will leave them, while in another chapter we will read what has taken place since we in the wilderness have been roaming.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH BED.

Anxiously, as the sun was going down, did Mrs. Wilder watch from her window for the return of her daughter, and as the gray twilight deepened into night, and still she came not, the whole household was alarmed, and every house in the settlement was visited, to learn, if possible, some tidings of the wanderer. Some remembered having seen her enter the woods soon after dinner, but farther than that none could tell; and the loud, shrill cry of "Lost! Lost! A child lost in the woods!" echoed on the evening air, and brought from a distance many who joined in the unsuccessful search, which lasted all night. Morning came, and Mrs. Wilder, pale and distracted with grief, ran hither and thither, calling loudly for her lost darling.

Three hours of the sun's daily journey was accomplished, when a young Indian was seen to emerge from the woods, and rapidly approach the house of Capt. Wilder, where he communicated all he knew concerning Orianna, and ended his narrative by saying, "It will be useless to follow her."

But Capt. Wilder did not think so, and instantly mounting his horse, he started in pursuit; but the path he took was entirely different from the one chosen by Orianna, and at nightfall he returned home, weary and discouraged. For some time he had been contemplating a visit to his brother, and he now resolved to do so, hoping by this means to fall in with the fugitives. Mrs. Wilder warmly approved the plan, but made him promise that if no good news were heard of Ella, he would instantly return.

Taking with him two negroes, he started on his journey, but no trace of Orianna did he discover, and he reached Glen's Creek before she had accomplished half the distance. Assured by his brother's family of Ella's perfect safety with the Indian girl, he grew calm, although he impatiently waited their coming.

Meantime little Charlie had grown worse, until at last he ceased to speak of Ella, although he confidently expected to see her, and requested that his bed might be moved to a position from which he could discern the path which led up from the woods. There for many days he watched, and then turning sadly away, he said, "Mother, now take me back. Ella will come, but I shall be dead."

From that time he grew worse, and the afternoon on which we left Orianna and Ella in the woods was the last he ever saw on earth. Gathered around the dying boy were weeping friends, who knew that the mild spring sun which so gently kissed his