

"What is it, boss?" they asked; "that was the alarm-bell sure enough?"

"The Indians are out again," Mr. Welch said, "and in force. They have massacred the Brents, and are making towards the settlements. They may come this way or they may not; at anyrate we must be prepared for them. Get the beasts into the sheds, and then do you all take scythes and set to work to cut down that patch of corn, which is high enough to give them shelter; there's nothing else which will cover them within a hundred yards of the house. Of course you will take your rifles with you and keep a sharp look-out; but they will have heard the bell if they are in the neighbourhood, and will guess that we are on the alert, so they are not likely to attempt a surprise. Shut one of the gates and leave the other ajar, with the bar handy to put up in case you have to make a run for it. Harold will go up to the look-out while you are at work."

Having seen that all was attended to, Mr. Welch went into the house, where his wife was going about her work as usual, pale, but quiet and resolute.

"Now, Jane," he said, "sit down and I will tell you exactly how matters stand, as far as Pearson, who brought the news, has told me. Then you shall decide as to the course we had better take."

After he had told her all that Pearson had said, and the reasons for and against expecting an early attack, he went on, "Now, it remains for you, my dear, to decide whether we shall stay and defend the place till the last against any attack that may be made, or whether we shall at once embark in the scow, and make our way down to the settlements."