

WHEN WILDERNESS WAS 'ING

My mother did not answer; and now I spoke, my cheeks aflame with eagerness.

"Do you truly mean, sir, that I am to go in search of the little girl?" I asked, barely trusting my own ears.

"Yes, John," my father replied gravely, motioning me to draw closer to his chair. "This is a duty which has fallen to you as well as to your mother and me. We can, indeed, but poorly spare you from the work at this season; yet Seth will be able to look after the more urgent needs of the farm while you are absent, while he would prove quite useless on such a mission as this. Do not worry, Mary. Friend Burns is well acquainted with all that western country, and he tells me there is scarcely a week that parties of soldiers, or friendly Indians, do not pass along the trail, and that by waiting at Hawkins's place for a few days John will be sure to find some one with whom he may companion on the long journey westward. He would himself have accompanied him, but must first bear a message to friends at Vincennes. It is now some weeks since Roger Matherson died, and we shall prove unworthy of our trust if we delay longer in sending for his daughter."

Though my mother was a western woman, patient and long habituated to sacrifice and peril, still her eyes, fixed upon my face, were filled with tears, and the color had deserted her cheeks.

"I know not why it should be so, David," she