

## CHAPTER XXVIL

Rejoicings—The feast at the block-house—Grumps and Crusoe come out strong—The closing scene.

THE day of Dick's arrival with his companions was a great day in the annals of the Mustang Valley, and Major Hope resolved to celebrate it by an impromptu festival at the old block house; for many hearts in the valley had been made glad that day, and he knew full well that, under such circumstances, some safety valve must be devised for the escape of overflowing excitement.

A messenger was sent round to invite the population to assemble without delay in front of the block house. With backwood's-like celerity the summons was obeyed; men, women, and children hurried towards the central point wondering, yet more than half suspecting, what was the major's object in calling them together.

They were not long in doubt. The first sight that presented itself, as they came trooping up the slope in front of the log-hut, was an ox roasting whole before a gigantic bon-fire. Tables were being extemporized on the broad level plot in front of the gate. Other fires there were, of smaller dimensions, on which sundry steaming pots were placed, and various joints of wild horse, bear, and venison, roasted, and sent forth a