

A CAVALIER OF VIRGINIA

CHAPTER I

THE HOME-COMING

FOR the past six days — since first regaining the fringe of the settlements — the little force had been gradually disbanding. Woodsmen, trappers, pioneer farmers, traders, millers, planters, and gentlemen of rank and fortune — singly or by twos and threes, they had broken away and gone back to their homes and private affairs.

For two months they had campaigned in that alluring but menacing wilderness that lay, uncolonized, between the cultivated lands and the unknown West. Now, when the forest foliage was reddening under the frosts of late October, and a healthy regard for the rifles of the Virginian militia had been implanted in the shifty hearts of two tribes of savages, they felt free to return to their interrupted businesses and pleasures.