

negroes grinned broadly; even the Indians appeared a shade less saturnine than usual. The golden sunshine poured upon them all, and the blue mountains that no Englishman had ever passed seemed for the moment as soft and yielding as the cloud that slept along their summits. And no man knew what might be just beyond the mountains: Frenchmen, certainly, and the great lakes and the South Sea; but, besides these, might there not be gold, glittering stones, new birds and beasts and plants, strange secrets of the hills? It was only westward-ho! for a week or two, with good company and good drink —

The woodsman shifted from one foot to the other, but his wife, who had now crossed the grass to his side, had no doubts.

"You'll not go, William!" she cried. "Remember the smoke that you saw yesterday from the hill-top! If the Northern Indians are on the warpath against the Southern, and are passing between us and the mountains, there may be straying bands. I'll not let you go!"

In her eagerness she clasped his arm with her hands. She was a comely, buxom dame, and the circle on horseback, being for the most part young and gallant, and not having seen a woman for some days, looked kindly upon her.

"And so you saw a smoke, goodwife, and are afraid of roving Indians?" said the gentleman who had spoken before. "That being the case, your husband has our permission to stay behind. On my life, 't is a shame to ride away and leave you in danger of such marauders!"

"Will your Excellency permit me to volunteer for guard duty?" demanded a young man who had pressed