

be a favourable opportunity for smuggling out a couple for them, with a due supply of ammunition for all. Singular as was the coincidence, White had noticed that the two youngest had no rifles, and looking around had selected two of the short military kind, common at that period.

When Bent went into the fort he asked the two lads to accompany him, and loading them with his *traps*, he carefully concealed a rifle for each under their blankets, so that the careless guard permitted them to pass out without question. When they returned to their brothers, who were waiting for them outside, they could not restrain their joy at the possession of what Bent had told them should be theirs, but displayed their valued prizes, at the sight of which, the chief smiled grimly. Bent and White followed immediately after the young Indians, in complete hunting dress, and each carrying rifles of very different manufacture to those given to the young Indians. As they left the fort the guards were closing the gates, and White told them that he was going with Bent on an excursion and should not return for several days. By this time it was getting dark, and it was evident that the absence of the women and children had been quite overlooked.

As they passed down from the fort they came suddenly upon two of the St. Francis Indians seated in the edge of the bush near to the road. Dark as it was they knew Bent and he knew them, and it at once occurred to him that they were there for a purpose, and that it was highly desirable to know what that was, lest it should disconcert his own movements and defeat his intentions.

"Why," he inquired, "are my red brothers come back so soon?"

"We came to see what the pale faces are doing. Do they want their women and children?"

"But," said Bent, "the English settlers have not come here yet."

"My brother should listen in the woods, the pale faces talk too much."

Had Bent had his rifle in position, he would, at that moment, have forgotten prudence and pulled the trigger. Had he caught these men dogging his own footsteps he would not have hesitated to shoot them down as wild animals, but still he hesitated at secret attack and stealthy assassination; but there was another reason why he did not attempt immediate violence. To fire upon these men, under the circumstances, was simply to alarm the French which he was anxious to avoid.

Pondering upon these considerations, but keeping a calm, unconcerned exterior, he moved away accompanied by White; the young Indians were waiting for him some distance further in the woods, and he was just wondering where the chief and his sons were or where he should meet with them, when a cry of anguish, short, stifled, and discordant, broke the stillness of the forest for a moment, and then all was again hushed.

They hurried forward to the place of meeting at the tree, at the foot of which, in a state of no little alarm, they found the women. The little girls had fallen asleep, but the boy, only about seven years of age, was wide awake and ready to move.