

## HOW WE ESCAPED.

"Talk about Indians!" said my Grandmother Weir, looking out over her heavy gold-bowed spectacles. "You know nothing about Indians now-a-days. Little can you imagine what it is to live year in and year out, in deadly fear of an attack by bloodthirsty and merciless savages; to have every little unusual sound strike terror into your heart; to be prepared at any instant, night or day, to drop everything and run for your life. That's the way we lived when I was a girl; and bad as it was, when all white people were united against the common foe, it was worse when the Revolution broke out. Then the settlers were divided among themselves, and your dearest friend or your nearest neighbor might suddenly become your worst enemy, ready to betray you to the Indians or the British, or even to rob and murder you themselves. So bad are the passions roused by war. Life was hard, and full of terrors then."

My Grandmother Weir was one of the pleasantest figures of my childhood. I can see her now, a grand and stately dame, erect and elegant, carrying herself like a queen till the day of her death, at ninety-nine.

Her dress was always the same, for she never favored modern fashions. I remember I used to look with admiration at her feet, in daintiest of black silk stockings, with embroidered cloaks, and high-heeled slippers, when everybody else wore shoes without heels. Her black silk petticoat, or, as we should say, skirt, and short gown of the same, were of the best, and the white muslin kerchief around her neck was the finest to be had. Over her dress she wore a long, wide white apron, and under it hung the wonder of my youth—her pocket.

This pocket, which always held the quaint old "housewife" and other treasures we youngsters looked upon with keenest interest, was made of brocade, and tied around her waist over the dress. It was half a yard long and a quarter of a yard wide, and it hung flat against her side. The opening was a straight slit in the middle of the front. Another thing that hung from her waist by a long string was a pair of scissors, always ready for us to use, but never to be lent to us, or taken off.

Her abundant silvery hair was rolled back in waves on her head, and over it she wore a mob cap, with a double fluted ruffle held in place by a ribbon put around her head and fastened by two gold pins.

Around her neck she always wore a string of gold beads, which it was my delight to look at and handle. She never took them off, day or night, but she promised them to me because I was named for her, and I have them before me now. Great, solid, heavy things, that I wonder any one could endure to wear.

But the most peculiar thing about my grandmother's dress was her red cloak. It had been the most elegant thing to be had when she was in her prime, and nothing would induce her to change it. This, added to her queer dress and gold beads, made her a real fairy godmother to us youngsters, especially as we were taught to rise when she came into the room, to show respect to her.

This Grandmother Weir was better than any story book you little folks have, for her stories were all true; and if I can tell you one that we always legged for, with half the vividness that she put into it, I'm sure your hair will rise, and you will turn cold with horror, as we used to do.

"When I was only sixteen," went on Grandmother Weir, laying down her knitting. "I had a fright from Indians that I shall never forget. I was living with my brother, not far from where Saratoga now stands.

"His house was a queer little affair, very common then, but now only to be seen in the woods, or in new countries. It was built of logs, with few windows, and those not large. Small as they were, however, they were further protected against Indians by blocks fitted to the inside, so that in case of danger the house could be turned in a few minutes into a respectable log fort. The door was very heavy, to resist savages and other enemies, and the fastening was like that you hear of in the story of Red Riding Hood, a large wooden latch, on the inside, lifted by pulling a string which was put through a hole and hung down outside. At night the string was pulled inside, when the door could not be opened from without,

"This house was snug and cozy inside, and there I lived with my brother, his wife, and their five children. Of course my brother belonged to the Continental Army, and we often did not see him, nor hear of him, for weeks at a time.

"There was no telegraph at that time you know, to carry news, good or bad, at lightning speed; no daily papers, with items from all over the world; and worse, there were no post-office conveniences, which are so common now-a-days that you can hardly conceive what it is to be without them. The only way we heard from my brother was by special messenger, or by chance news from a neighbor who had heard, or by a traveller passing through. Even then the reports could not be trusted; and so when he went away, we bade him farewell, and at once put ourselves in a state of siege.

"Every night the windows were blocked up, the lights carefully hidden so as not to be seen by any prowling savage, and the only fire-arm the house contained, an old flint-lock musket, carefully inspected to see if it was in order for a surprise, and stood up against the door, where was a small hole to peep through, and also to fire through if necessary. Then we would creep into our beds and get what sleep we could, excepting one, who was always left up to watch and listen for danger.

"When my brother was away, this duty devolved entirely upon the women and older girls. In our house only three could be depended upon not to go to sleep: Sister Mary, — another, — Dinah, the one slave (the only white slave in those days), who was too much afraid of Indians to be very sleepy, even after a hard day's work, and myself.

"You probably think you could not sleep either, but after weeks of constant anxiety one gets used to it, and mercifully can forget long enough to sleep.

"In the course of time the two armies moved about so that our house was exactly between them, Gen. Burgoyne on one side, and Gen. Gates on the other. Living then became harder than ever, since the common soldiers, and the Indians in the pay of the British, considered that they had a right to anything they chose to take, and helped themselves to whatever they liked, in the house or out of it.

"They would come in at any time they could, night or day, without so much as asking leave, take our dinner out of the pot, or blankets off our beds, and walk out, even laughing at our remonstrance.

"Of course the Indians were worse, or we were more afraid of them. Many a time we all stood trembling around in the corners, while some great savage red man, with ugly painted face, big rolling eyes, and long black hair hanging down his back, warmed himself at our fire, ate our food, what little there was, and looked through cupboards and chests to see what we had that pleased his savage fancy. Once I remember a real tragedy in my soul, when a big, greasy Indian, half-drunk and half-wild, came to look upon, spied among my treasures a doll.

"I had long ago ceased to play with dolls. When life is so serious and full of dangers, young girls grow old fast. But this was a precious relic of my childhood, and I valued it more than all the rest of my possessions. It would look strange enough beside your grand French wax dolls, but it was very elegant then; scarcely any girl had anything better than a rag doll. It had come to me from relations in England, and was carved of wood, with a sweet face, painted, and real hair.

"It was dressed in stiff brocade satin, with narrow skirt, very short waist and sleeves, wide belt and white kerchief over the shoulders. It had a white muslin turban on the head. I remember every detail of the dress as well as if I had seen it yesterday.

"When the Indian's great eyes fell upon this treasure, he was suddenly interested. He took it up in his dirty hand, and with many grunts of approval, examined the dress, turning it around and inspecting all sides with great attention. Then with one sound, which of course I could not understand, he cruelly tucked my beloved Polly into his belt.

"How my heart sank! I instinctively sprang forward to rescue her, but one glance of his wild eyes, as he laid his hand significantly upon his tomahawk, frightened me into silence. I covered my face, and when I looked up, he was gone, and my beloved doll with him.

"The next night it was my turn to watch,

and I was sitting down, thinking of my doll and wondering where she was at that moment, when I heard footsteps outside. In an instant I was on the alert, listening with all my powers. It sounded like the guarded steps of several men, and my heart was in my mouth, as I thought of our household of women and children, and only one gun to defend ourselves.

"I slipped my feet out of my shoes, stole to the door, and put my ear to the peephole provided.

"Yes, it was plainly men, and they were coming near the house. But it was men in shoes, and not the stealthy moccasined feet of savages. Thank God for that! Any civilized foe was preferable to them.

"I hastily and silently awakened Sister Mary, and then crept back to my place at the door.

"I heard subdued voices, and at last a halt directly before the door. Then came a gentle tap and a low 'Mary! are you awake?'

"A great sense of relief swept over me. It was my brother! To make certain, and guard against tricks, however, I answered back, through the hole, in a whisper, 'Who are you?'

"It is I sister; open the door.'

"Yes, open it," said Sister Mary, as I hesitated, 'I know his voice.'

"I lifted the latch and opened the door slightly, while my brother and four soldiers filed in, and then closed and fastened it as before.

"Soon we had a light, and then my brother told us he had come with the men to move us away, and we must go the next day, because he could not be away long, and besides there were rumors of an attack at any moment.

"He said we better try to sleep the rest of the night. The soldiers stretched themselves before the fire on the floor, and we did try to sleep, but we really spent the night in exciting talk over the events of the war, home-news, and the future.

"Early the next morning we were up and preparing to go. We had but one wagon, the horses long ago given to the army, and into that vehicle must be put all we should save of household goods, for we well knew that the house once abandoned would become a stable, or whatever happened to be most convenient for the lawless soldiers.

"Big Indian baskets were brought out, great round or square things, made of birch bark with covers, each capable of holding a bushel.

"Now in one corner of the house, to keep them away from marauders, we had a large family of hens. To carry them was impossible, to leave them to feast the enemy was repugnant to our feelings. We determined to make them all into a large pot-pie and to have one full meal before we started.

"Accordingly every feather-top was laid low, greatly to the grief of all the children, the big kettle was hung upon the crane in the big fire-place, and Dinah was very busy getting ready. Soon a delicious odor began to pervade the house, and at last packing was nearly done, and the pot-pie in a big pan was steaming away on the table.

"The hungry household gathered around, soldiers and all, in pleasant anticipation of a feast. The long grace had been said, and my brother dipped a ladle into the dish.

"At that instant the latch flew violently up, the door burst open, and a friendly neighbor threw himself in, falling full length on the floor, and crying earnestly between his gasps for breath, 'For God's sake run! the Indians!'

"We were on our feet in an instant, and I ran to the door. O children, I can never forget what I saw at that moment! I often see it in my sleep to this day.

"Opposite our house, in the river, was an island, and on it a house, the home of friends. I saw that house on fire, surrounded by yelling savages, Mrs. Osborn running for her life, and close behind her an immense Indian with tomahawk raised to strike. I saw another painted fiend snitch up the baby, a dear little creature whom I had often held. He seized it by one foot and swung it around—oh, I could not see more!

"I turned away, sick and ready to faint. But I did not faint; I thought of our baby, sleeping quietly on the bed. I ran across the room, snatched the precious bundle, blanket and all, and ran madly out the back door, calling to my brother, 'I'll go ahead with baby!'

"The rest of the family were hastily hurried into the wagon, and a straw bed flung in for Sister Mary, who was ill. The

soldiers took hold of the pole, and away they went into the woods behind the house.

"Nobody thought of that pot-pie, left smoking on the table for our terrible enemies. No doubt they grunted approval, surrounded the table and dipped their fingers into the pan till every morsel was eaten.

"I had gone far ahead with my dear burden, in my panic, when it suddenly occurred to me that baby slept wonderfully well. I stopped, lifted the cover—an O God! It was not the baby—it was a bundle of clothes!

"Then the baby was left! It was too late to go back. I had done it!

"For the only time in my life I uttered a shriek of despair, and sank to the ground. That moment's agony I cannot describe. The figure of Mrs. Osborn's baby was before me. The world turned cold and black, and I really believe I was dying, or losing my senses.

"My brother's voice aroused me.

"Sister, be still! he said, sternly. 'What is the matter?'

"The baby!" I gasped. 'He is left behind!'

"It cannot be!" he said, heartily, as white as death, and hastened back to where the wagon was slowly dragging along.

"Again I was lost and unconscious, with a terrible feeling that the world was slipping away from me, but in a few moments my brother, as the best cure for my critical state, placed in my arms the laughing, crowing baby himself.

"The relief was so sudden that I was instantly roused, and a violent burst of tears relieved my brain and saved me from going wild.

"The baby himself did not approve of this greeting, and set up a frightened cry, when my brother returned him to the wagon, and I tried to go on. But I found myself so weakened by my excitement that I could not stand alone, and I was obliged to be added to the already heavy load in the wagon.

"Through the woods we jolted till it began to grow dark, and we found that a storm was coming up. By that time we were in deep woods, and my brother decided to camp for the night.

"The straw bed was taken out of the wagon and laid on the ground, for the sick mother, and the wagon-box turned upside down over her for a sort of roof.

"That was a night of horrors, my dear, that you cannot imagine. We dared not have a fire because of Indians. We had nothing to eat but a little dry, coarse bread. A severe thunder-storm drenched us through, crowded together in a heap on the wet ground. And there, in that most dreadful night of our lives, homeless, cold, hungry, in terror of wild beasts on one side, and wild savages on the other, the sick mother came very near to death.

"The next morning, seeing her a little revived, my brother went on to try and find help and a team to get us out. We stayed hidden there, in such misery, suffering and terror as I hope you will never know.

"On the third day he returned with horses, and we went on to a settlement where the best house was owned by a rich man, who had been a friend, but being a Tory, was now a bitter enemy.

"My brother could not believe that old friendship was all dead, and that he would not be at best decently hospitable in our terrible condition. So he drove up to the door, and to host and hostess told his story and pleaded our need of help.

"The man turned away without a word, but the woman spoke, with a haughty tone of her head.

"I wouldn't turn away a dog that was starving," she said, 'but if any of that party want anything to eat, they may take it out of the swill-pail! Swill is good enough for rebels! and she went in and closed the door behind her.

"We were about turning away, though well aware that the people all took their cue from this family, and if they turned away, no one would help us. But some of the old black servants came to us and begged us to come into the kitchen and sit and eat. And so desperate were our circumstances that we accepted the hospitality of the kitchen.

"Those kind hearted creatures brought out the swill-pail, for they dared not disobey the letter of their mistress's words, scoured it till it shone, inside and out, and then filled it with milk for the half-starved children, and afterwards with more and more food for the older ones. In fact we were

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