

and finding himself in the midst, not of rude traders and rangers, but of easy, smiling, periwigged gentlemen, handsomely dressed and accoutred, dropped the butt of his gun upon the ground, and took off his squirrel-skin cap.

"You are deep in the wilderness, good fellow," said the man who had beckoned, and who was possessed of a stately figure, a martial countenance, and an air of great authority. "How far is it to the mountains?"

The pioneer stared at the long blue range, cloudlike in the distance. "I don't know," he answered. "I hunt to the eastward. Twenty miles, maybe. You're never going to climb them?"

"We are come out expressly to do so," answered the other heartily, "having a mind to drink the King's health with our heads in the clouds! We need another axeman to clear away the fallen trees and break the nets of grapevine. Wilt go along amongst our rangers yonder, and earn a pistole and undying fame?"

The woodsman looked from the knot of gentlemen to the troop of hardy rangers, who, with a dozen ebony servants and four Meherrin Indians, made up the company. Under charge of the slaves were a number of packhorses. Thrown across one was a noble deer; a second bore a brace of wild turkeys and a two-year-old bear, fat and tender; a third had a legion of pots and pans for the cooking of the woodland cheer; while the burden of several others promised heart's content of good liquor. From the entire troop breathed a most enticing air of gay daring and good-fellowship. The gentlemen were young and of cheerful countenances; the rangers in the rear sat their horses and whistled to the woodpeckers in the sugar-trees; the