

'Oh, Uncle Phil. Yes, do. You always tell such splendid stories. But perhaps there won't be anything in a Thanksgiving story about bears.' And Rob's face grew a trifle anxious.

'How about Indians?'

'Oh, Uncle Phil, if you 'can' tell a Thanksgiving story about Indians, I'll be the happiest boy in town.'

'We won't promise, but we'll see about it. Go and call the rest of the children, Rob.'

'Come, Dan and Walter and Nellie!' called Rob. 'Uncle Phil is going to tell a rousing Indian story.'

'Did I say so?' asked Uncle Phil, trying to look savage.

'I know so! You can't fool me!' Rob answered, wisely.

'You can begin, now, Uncle Phil,' Nellie said, coaxingly, leaning her curly head over the arm of Uncle Phil's chair. 'The company's all gone, and it'll be so nice to wind up the day listening to a thrilling Indian story.'

Nellie shivered in anticipation of the horrible things she expected to hear. Uncle Phil, noticing, said: 'Don't get to shaking, Nellie. My story will be more laughable than thrilling, I fancy. And lo! I begin. There were eight of us who had our home in that Western hut, made of cottonwood logs. But, children, I thought I saw a pair of black eyes, with a good deal of white about them, peering into the door just now. Perhaps there is somebody there wants to hear the story.'

'It's nobody but Alf,' laughed Rob; 'but I say, Uncle Phil, why can't Alf come in and listen to the story? He hasn't anything to do just now.'

'That's thoughtful of you, Rob, and just what I wanted. Call him in, please.'

And so, a moment later, Alf's eyes grew rounder and whiter than ever as he listened to the Thanksgiving story.

'Those were troubled times with Western folks. The Indians were not very near us; indeed, Father never had a fear in regard to the Indians attacking us. No one whom we knew of, living within twenty miles of us, had been troubled by the Indians. One day in October we children had been out all afternoon, having a happy time. We gathered yards and yards of creamy-white clematis and beautiful wild columbine; even Bathsheba tucked up her skirts and waded like a born water-bird to get the columbines from the bank opposite.'

A rippling laugh from Nellie, and Uncle Phil stopped story-telling, to ask: 'What is it, Nellie?'

'Such a funny name, Uncle Phil. Who was Bathsheba?'

'Bathsheba was our only sister. A pretty girl, too, I do assure you, notwithstanding her outlandish name. She had blue eyes and golden hair, and we boys almost worshipped her, because she was so beautiful and good. She didn't dress much like you, Nellie; but she looked pretty enough, in her plain blue flannel dress, which came down half way between knees and ankles, leaving her white feet bare. I told you that there were eight of us. There was Father, Mother, Aunt Huldah, and the hired man, Nick Vose, Bathsheba, Ephraim, Jeremiah, and myself. Well, that October day, after we had gathered all the clematis and columbines we wanted, we carried them home to Mother, tacked the pretty vines all around the cotton-wood logs and filled a big jar with the columbines. Then we were off again—Jeremiah and I shooting wild game and Eph going with Bathsheba to gather some beautiful ferns, which grew in the belt of woods a quarter of a mile from the hut.

our home. The short day was drawing to a close and Eph and Bathsheba had not yet joined us.

'Come on!' I said to Jerry. 'Let's go home. I'm as hungry as a hunter.'

'And you are a hunter,' laughed Jerry, gleefully, as he pointed to the string of wild ducks which were suspended from my shoulders.

'But, Phil,' he added, 'I think we better wait for the others. Mother might be anxious, if we should get home without them.'

'What would make her anxious?' I asked, scornfully.

'Indians!' Jerry bawled in my ear.

'Indians!' I answered. 'You know better. There ain't a Red Skin within fifty miles of us.' But even as I spoke Eph came toward us with Bathsheba in his arms. His face was white with fright, and hers white with what? Was it death? We did not know. Jerry threw down his gun and his prairie chickens, and I my ducks, as we ran to meet them.

'What's the trouble, Eph?' we both asked at once.

'Bathsheba's fainted. Can't you see?' he answered, in a troubled voice. 'Run for some water. Quick!' And he laid her down on the dead maple leaves which covered the greensward, still holding his arm tenderly under her head. Jerry ran for water, while I rubbed my sister's hands and asked, anxiously: 'What made her faint, Eph?'

'Hush!' he said, sternly. 'I can't tell you now. Wait until we get Bathsheba safe back with Mother. Then I'll have something that is something to tell you.'

Eph's tragic tone roused all my curiosity; but I knew him too well to question any further. Jerry came with the water from the brook, and he and I bathed her face vigorously. She awoke with a gasp, and looked into Eph's face with a startled, questioning look.

'Don't worry, Bathsheba,' Eph said, soothingly. 'We're most home, and we're safe, too.'

'Safe, too. What could he mean? Jerry asked him, but received no answer, except a warning look. Well, Jerry and I made a seat out of our hands, with a back of two arms, and Eph lifted her up into it. Then we carried her home, Eph bringing our game and other things. Father and Nick Vose were away from home, but Mother and Aunt Huldah met us at the door.

'There's nothing the matter, Mother,' was Eph's cheery greeting. 'Only she's pretty well frightened at—nothing.'

'Oh! Eph, at 'nothing!'' Bathsheba said, in a remonstrating voice, as she sat up and realized where she was.

'Oh! Mother, 'twas a great, big, fierce-looking Indian who frightened me so. Eph didn't see him, because he was bending over a great, beautiful fern, that I wanted so much; but I saw him distinctly. His big, feathered head loomed up out of a clump of young trees, and I'm sure his big mouth was grinning in delight over us—two children alone in the woods. Eph was a little way off, and I didn't dare call to him, for fear the Indian might scalp us; and so I threw my basket at Eph's head. That's all I know about it.'

Mother looked at Eph, and he said, with a laugh: 'And she hit me, too, Mother, a sounding thump. I thought maybe the "cow with the crumpled horn" had got hold of me, and, turning to see, I saw Bathsheba motioning to me. I understood, by the way she pointed and worked her fingers, that she meant there were Indians around. Then I

saw her tumble over, and I picked her up and came home.'

'Well! well!' Mother said, in a tone which meant 'not' well. 'I shall be afraid to go to bed, if there are any Indians about, and Father away and Nick Vose too.'

'It's my opinion that there ain't an Indian within miles of us. Bathsheba's an imaginative girl. I've no doubt that 'twas the tree-branches swaying in the wind that she took for a Red Skin's head.'

'You can think what you're a mind to, Aunt Huldah; but I know 'twas an Indian,' Bathsheba said, decidedly.

Bathsheba was right; for the very next morning the sad news came that a whole family, less than a mile from us, had been murdered in the night and their log-hut left bare and desolate. After that Father and Nick came home every night, whether convenient or not, and it was often very inconvenient to come home when they were miles away, cutting logs; but, as days and weeks passed by, we heard nothing more of the Indians and we begun to breathe easy again. It lacked only two days of Thanksgiving, when Father received word from a man over in the next settlement to come over and attend to some urgent business. He took Nick Vose with him and also Eph, he being the oldest, as it was necessary to bring back several loads of lumber, and Eph could manage oxen as well as Nick could. Well, that very evening, Jerry and I hurried through our chores, to help Aunt Huldah pick some ducks for Thanksgiving. Mother was sick with a cold and she did not help; but she talked and laughed with us as we worked. Pretty soon we heard steps outside, and Aunt Huldah said:

'Perhaps our men are back. I do hope they are.'

But Jerry jumped up quickly, and drew the bars across the door. Bathsheba's blue eyes grew round with amazement, and she said: 'Why, Jerry, do you mean to lock father out?'

'Look!' he said, pointing to the little window. Ah! that look! How it frightened us, and our sick, timid mother fairly shrieked. As for Bathsheba, she wrung her hands in agony.

'Hush! every one of you,' Jerry said, in a commanding tone, as if he was general of an army. 'Here, Phil, you get Mother and Bathsheba over in that corner and keep guard, while Aunt Huldah and I run up the ladder and look out the loop-hole, and see if there's many of them.'

Alf's curiosity could wait no longer. 'What did ye see, Massa? Was it b'ars, big, black b'ars lookin' in at de windy?'

'No, Alf,' answered Uncle Phil. 'Not bears, but savage Indians. We looked out the loop-hole (that's what we called a little round hole over the door), and we saw one Indian near our house, and another, with his back to the house, a little way off. Father, Nick, and Eph had taken the guns, and we were at a loss to know what to do, if the Indians should try to break in. Suddenly there was a loud pounding on the door. We went down, and Aunt Huldah asked what was wanted. They wouldn't answer, but whacked away, until I thought every minute the door would give way. Aunt Huldah rushed down the ladder, and motioned to Jerry and me to follow her. We went with her into a little room, partitioned off from the kitchen, where a barrel of the strongest kind of soft soap stood. We each carried a pail of that terrible soap up the ladder into the loft, and then crept up from the loft to the roof. Then, creeping along softly to the edge of the roof, we saw the two Indians