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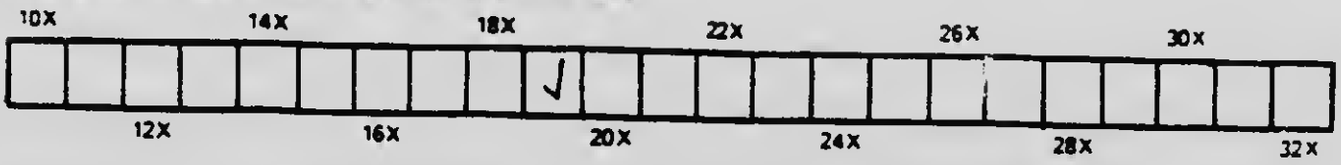

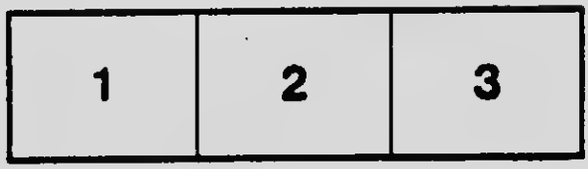

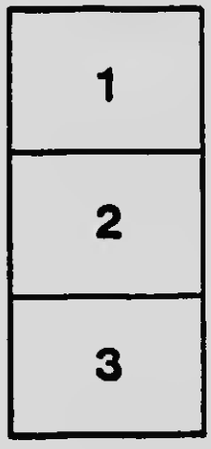

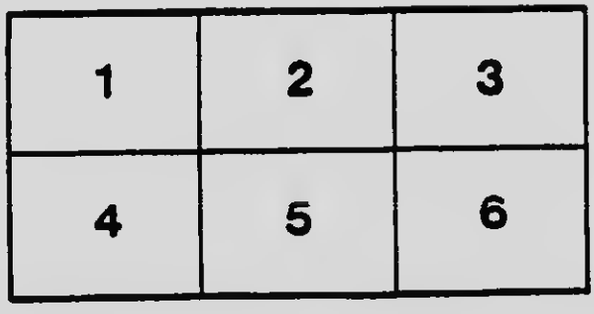

THE SEARCH FOR MOLLY MARLING

'AFTER THIS YOU MUST COUNT YOURSELF OUR SON.'

(see p. 28.

THE SEARCH FOR MOLLY MARLING

By EMILY P. WEAVER

WITH THREE ILLUSTRATIONS BY LANCELOT SPEED

Toronto
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

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The Search for Molly Marling

INTRODUCTION

It was a still, warm evening, rather more than a hundred and forty years ago. Scarcely a breath of air was stirring amongst the trees, which were just beginning to put on their autumn splendours. The smoke rose gently from the lonely log-cabin in the centre of the clearing, and no sound broke the stillness but the tinkling of a distant cow-bell and the merry laughter of a child at play beside her mother's knee.

But a storm was threatening. The sun, sinking behind a heavy bank of clouds, touched the hills and the forest with a fiery glow; then all grew dark.

The mother carried off her still laughing child to bed, but it was long before she could stop her little chattering tongue and induce her to lie down and go to sleep.

She herself did not feel light-hearted. The loneliness of the great woods oppressed her, especially when a storm was gathering. For two days she had spoken to no one save her husband and little Molly, and she sighed as she looked round the rough-walled room, only half lighted by the dying embers on the hearth and the flickering candle.

Her husband glanced at her anxiously.

'What grieves you, Mary?' he asked.

'It is so lonely, Robert,—I am afraid.' Her voice sank to a whisper,—'Think of our little Molly.'

'We will go back to Philadelphia, Mary. We will start to-morrow,' said Robert Marling. But he did not tell her what he had heard that day—that the Indians were gathering all around them.

'We must needs begin to pack our goods at once then?'

'Nay,' said Robert, 'we will travel as light as we can.'

'Robert, you have heard something. Tell me quickly—what is it?'

'Nothing, only General Braddock's defeat has made the Indians somewhat insolent, and I think we shall live more happily nearer neighbours.'

'Robert, I cannot sleep to-night. I must bake something to carry with us, and put Molly's clothes together.'

'Nay, Mary, leave everything till morning. You will want all your strength. There is no need for such great haste.'

But he was mistaken.

An hour after midnight Mary Marling was awakened from a troubled sleep by the sound she dreaded—the horrid Indian war-whoop. The next moment the door of the little hut was battered in, and the room was full of savages.

One snatched poor baby Molly from her mother's arms; the others did a still more cruel deed. In ten minutes Molly was an orphan, and the red flames were beginning to creep and crawl round the little log-cabin in the clearing.

Soon the woods glowed once more in hot light. Clouds of black smoke rolled up towards the black skies. Then the long-threatened storm burst. The thunder crashed over the hills, and the rain beat down in torrents upon the smoking ruins of Robert Marling's home.

Meanwhile, little Molly, frightened but exhausted, had sobbed herself to sleep in her captor's arms, and was being carried rapidly away deeper and deeper into the wilderness.

CHAPTER I

ILL NEWS

At the time when my story opens, early in the year 1764, there was in the City of London a tall old-fashioned building close to the Thames. It was owned by a wealthy merchant, and, with the exception of the rooms occupied by his family and apprentices, was filled from top to bottom with a rich store of silks and shawls, tea and spices.

Night was coming down over the noisy city, and that part of the building devoted to business had been securely locked and barred; but in a little room overlooking the river a bright fire was burning, and candles in silver sconces shed a soft light over curious things brought from many distant lands.

In front of the hearth sat a lady dressed in a brocaded silk gown, and a white cap, which fitted closely round her sweet old face. She was alone. Her knitting had fallen from her hands, and she was gazing sadly into the dancing fire.

Presently there was a tap on the door, and a tall lad of eighteen entered the room.

'Is that you, Dick?' she asked, hastily wiping away the tears that had gathered in her eyes.

'Yes, ma'am.'

'Then sit down. I want to talk to you.

Did Mr. Marling reeeive any letters from Ameriea to-day?'

Diek hesitated. 'Yes, ma'am,' he answered at last. 'I thought he would have told you.'

'Is there anything to tell, Diek?' and Mrs. Marling fixed her eyes earnestly on the boy's downeast faee.

'Dear lady, Master Marling will be baek in an hour,' said Diek evasively.

'I must know now, Diek. Come, what is it?'

'Well, ma'am, some one—I don't know who—thought he had heard something of—of——'

'Master Robert?' asked Mrs. Marling in a tone that went to Diek's heart.

He nodded. He eould not find voiee to speak just then.

'Diek,' said his mistress reproaehfully, 'I protest it is no kindness to keep me thus in suspense. Speak out. Tell me all you know.'

Diek elenehed his hands and eleared his throat. At last he blurted out:

'Master Robert is dead, ma'am.'

'I knew it,' said the old lady in a low voiee—'I knew it. He would not have forgotten to write to us all these years if he had been living. Now, Diek, tell me all. When was it?'

'Years ago, ma'am. Before I eame to you. It was the Indians——' and Diek dropped his voiee to a whisper.

Mrs. Marling shuddered.

'It was soon after General Braddoek's defeat, the letter said,' continued Dick. 'Did you know, ma'am, that Master Robert had gone to live far away in the wilderness?'

'Yes, yes,' sobbed Mrs. Marling. 'You must

never speak of it, Dick; but Robert angered his father by refusing to help him in the business, though he was our eldest son. John and Will were living then, and Robert wanted to see the world, poor lad. I prayed his father to let him go—perhaps, if I had not, he might have been safe and well now. At last Mr. Marling consented, but he wanted him to come back, so supplied him but sparsely with money. I don't think Robert understood how much his going away had grieved his father, but he never said one word of coming home. At last he wrote that he had married—a Philadelphia lady; and she wrote to me too, most sweet little letters. I know I should have loved her well. You have not told me, Dick—was there news of her in the letter that came to-day?'

'Yes,' replied Dick; 'they died together.'

'And little Molly too? Dick, sometimes it seems to me that God has sent on me a sorrow greater than I can bear. For years, after the last letter came, I hoped against hope, and watched and waited for news. I was sure that God would send them back to me, especially after He took away my other brave lads.'

Dick would have given anything to be able to comfort Mrs. Marling in her sorrow; but words seemed too poor to express what he felt, and so he kept silence. But his look was enough. His mistress answered him as if he had spoken.

'I know, Dick,' she said, taking his strong young hand between both her own, 'you have been my very dear son these five years; but still, I cannot forget. They wrote so happily for three or four years after they were married. They were so proud of little Molly. Mary's letters were full of her pretty sayings

and doings. I hoped that Mr. Marling would bid me write and beg them to come home—he loved Robert fully as well as I, Dick; then they wrote that Robert had lost his work, and that they had no choice but to go deep into the wilds. That was the last we ever heard of them, Dick; but oh! they might have trusted us, and come home, instead of going so far away.'

'I have not told all, ma'am,' said Dick slowly. 'They do not think that the baby was killed too. They think the Indians took her.'

'Oh, Dick!—what makes them think that? It is the worst of all.'

'I don't know, ma'am. I only heard parts of the letter.'

'I wish Mr. Marling would come home. Ever since we lost sight of them, nine years ago, we have been writing to this person and the other, who, we thought, might be able to tell us something; but all has been in vain. And to think that all these years that poor little lamb has been growing up like a savage, perhaps!'

'I thought, ma'am, you would rejoice that she had not died.'

'Nay, Dick, there are things worse than death. Besides, we do not know; and if she is living, how can we save her?'

'I don't know,' said Dick. 'Mr. Marling may think of something. Never fear; we will save her, ma'am.'

But Mrs. Marling refused to be comforted, seeming to grieve more for the fate of the child than for that of her son and his wife.

'Poor, sweet little Molly,' she moaned. 'She must be well-nigh twelve years old now, Dick, if she is

living indeed. Oh, if I only had her here! But doubtless they have trained her to worship their idols, and to deck herself out in beads and feathers like themselves.'

And at the thought of the picture she had conjured up Mrs. Marling began to weep most bitterly, rocking herself to and fro in the chair. Dick stood beside her with a helpless, puzzled expression.

Suddenly the door opened, and an old gentleman, with a clean-shaven face and powdered hair, arranged in a queue, entered. His handsome, kindly face wore an expression of anxiety, and his manner, as he hurried across the room towards his wife, was nervous and excited.

'Tut, tut, Sally, my dear, what's all this?' he exclaimed, with an air of surprise.

'It's the letter, sir,' explained Dick.

His master turned on him impatiently.

'And what business was the letter of yours, eh?'

But Dick was not alarmed. He knew what a kind heart was concealed beneath Mr. Marling's testy manner.

'My mistress asked me,' he said.

'Yes, John; don't blame the lad. I asked him. Make haste, my dear: where is the letter?'

Really Mr. Marling was not sorry, when he came to think of it, to be spared the painful task of breaking the sad news to his wife. He took a worn little packet from his pocket, and commanded Dick to read the letter aloud.

It was from an old friend of Mr. Marling's, who had been trying for years to learn what had become of Robert. The confusion caused by the French war, which was now happily at an end, had rendered the

task peculiarly difficult; but at last, by an accident, he had discovered when and where Robert Marling and his wife had met their deaths. With regard to poor little Molly, however, he could find out nothing but that she had been carried off by the savages.

'Do not weep, Sally—pray, do not weep,' murmured the old gentleman. 'After all, my dear, we have long known that Robert must be dead.'

'But that poor baby——'

Mr. Marling began to walk hurriedly up and down the room.

'Sally,' he said at last, coming to a stand-still before his wife's chair, 'I protest I believe she's dead too. A delicate babe like that—how could she bear being brought up like a little savage? It's not possible.'

'We don't know, John. She may be living. Think of it—Robert's child, a heathen and a savage!'

Mr. Marling hastily began his wanderings again. The idea was most repulsive to him.

'Well, Sally, what shall we do?' he exclaimed suddenly. 'I might offer a reward for further information, I suppose?'

'Do, John. I would give anything to get that poor child. Offer a thousand pounds; nay, we could well spare fifteen hundred in such a cause. Think, it is for her soul's sake as well as for our love to Robert. Oh, do say fifteen hundred!'

Mr. Marling laughed and patted his wife on the cheek.

'Nay, now, Sally, you had best leave that to me. If we offer so much, we shall have all the rogues in America manufacturing stories to cheat us.'

'Well, but, John, don't be too sparing.'

'It is not that I grudge the money, sweetheart—but you know that. Robert's child, I doubt not, would make sunshine in this old house for us, which is dull enough—despite our boy Dick here,' he added hastily, fearful lest he should grieve the lad, who was still standing silently beside his mistress. 'Nay, I'll spare nothing to find the child—never fear, wife! But I'll talk to Newcombe about it. He's the most knowing man of our acquaintance, and between us we will make out some good scheme to find the child.'

'I'll come with you, John. I have not seen Mrs. Newcombe for ten days.'

Mr. Marling laughed, and bade Dick get a chair for his mistress, as the streets were 'mighty dirty.'

CHAPTER II

DICK'S PLAN

DICK helped Mrs. Marling into the sedan-chair, and then went back up the stairs to the sitting-room; for though legally he was only Mr. Marling's apprentice, his actual place in the establishment was rather that of an adopted son. He had many privileges not accorded to the other apprentices, but his responsibilities were great in proportion.

His father and mother had both died before he was twelve years old, and for a year he had almost starved. At the end of that time he had chanced to be sent on an errand to Mrs. Marling. His worn garments, thin face, and pleasant manners had combined to touch her heart, which was always very tender towards children.

She had questioned the lad closely, and to her equal surprise and satisfaction was able to make out that Dick's mother had been a distant connection of Mr. Marling's. Of course after that nothing would do but that the child must be provided for, and she persuaded her husband that the most effectual way of doing this would be to take him as an apprentice into their own house.

To say the truth, Mr. Marling was nearly as ready as his wife to admit Dick Herriot's claims upon

them; for it was only three months since he had laid the fourth of his own children in the grave, and the house seemed inexpressibly dreary without any young people.

At first Dick was unnaturally still and quiet for a child; but after a few months of Mrs. Marling's motherly care, he had grown merrier and brighter, and had lost the pinched, half-starved look which so much distressed his mistress. Now he was a fine, tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, with a quick, intelligent manner that retained all its old pleasantness. Mrs. Marling was very proud of him. She even went so far as to think him handsome; but most people did not agree with her on that point, and Dick himself would have been much amused at the thought that any one could see beauty in his sandy curls, grey eyes, and somewhat irregular features.

Mrs. Marling also thought him clever; but Dick, though he had an aptitude for figures that won the favour and respect of his master, had no great love for books. The practical part of his education had suited him better than toiling over grammars and text-books; and though he worked hard to please his kind protectors, he was much delighted when they decided that he was fit to leave school and learn the business. Since then he had found life very happy and enjoyable, and every year he seemed to Mr. and Mrs. Marling more like a son.

On the evening of which I am writing, he threw himself down in front of the fire with his arms under his head, and lay staring up at the ceiling, thinking of Robert Marling and the lost child.

He had often talked to the sea-captains and sailors who carried Mr. Marling's goods across the ocean in their ships, and from them he had heard terrible stories of the Indians—how they worshipped evil spirits, treated their women like beasts of burden, and tortured and maimed their captives. It filled him with horror to think of sweet Mrs. Marling's little grand-daughter's being in the power of such men, and he wondered whether she really was growing up a heathen and a savage. What was she like by this time? Over the fireplace, amongst quaint paper fans and china vases, hung a picture of Mrs. Marling as a little fair-haired, blue-eyed child, dressed in white and adorned with blue ribbons; and somehow, in spite of his knowledge that Molly would not be wearing muslin dresses and silk sashes, he fancied the child as the counterpart of the picture. It was intolerable to think that such a sweet, pretty little maid was a slave to savages. If he were Mr. Marling, he would spend his whole fortune, if necessary, to find her.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright, and poked the fire vigorously. Why should not he go to America to bring back Molly? He had always longed to do something to show his gratitude to his benefactors, and surely the chance had come at last to serve not them only, but Him Who had said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.' How could Molly come to Him, brought up as a heathen from her babyhood, unless some one found her and showed her the way?

His mind was still full of this thought, when he heard Mr. and Mrs. Marling coming up the stairs.

'Well, sir, what does Mr. Newcombe advise?' he asked, rising and standing respectfully until Mrs. Marling bade him be seated.

'He says, as I do, make it widely known in all the great towns of America that we will pay nobly for information that may lead to the recovery of the child.'

'His lady suggested that we should send some trusty man to make inquiries,' said Mrs. Marling.

'Whither, ma'am?—to America?' cried Dick, with an eagerness that he could not conceal.

'Yes, Dick,' said Mrs. Marling.

'Oh, ma'am—oh, sir, send me!' cried Dick. 'I would do anything to serve you and to save little Molly.'

But his master said slowly, 'No, no, Dick; you are too young; it would never do. We have as yet no information to go upon; and though I would gladly spend a fortune to find the child, I hold it more proper to see first whether there is any hope of success. Besides, so much the better if we find her without spending any very great sum,' he added drily. 'Get me a pen, Dick, and the ink, and we will make out an advertisement for the papers brought out in America.'

Dick obeyed in silence, though he longed to urge that his plan should be tried.

When he came back with the ink, Mrs. Marling was saying earnestly:

'Well, John, at least promise me this—if the advertisements fail, send out a man. What matter if we do spend largely on the search?—there is but one person in the world, save Molly, to think of after we are dead and gone.'

'We will see, Sally. Now, Dick, sit down and write what I bid you as plainly as you know how.'

The advertisements were written and posted, and long before an answer was possible Dick began to watch for the replies.

He had almost grown tired of waiting, when Mr. Marling one day called him into his room, and told him to carry up a certain letter to his mistress.

'Is it about Molly, sir?' demanded Dick breathlessly.

'Yes; but it is not all that we could wish. However, Mrs. Marling will want to see it. You may read it to her, Dick.'

Dick hurried off, and found his mistress deep in the making of a huge meat pasty; but when she heard what his errand was, she did not even stop to wash her hands.

'Come in here, Dick,' she said, sinking down on a couch in the parlour. 'Now, read quickly.'

And Dick did read, blundering and stumbling over the crabbed writing and queer spelling, but contriving in some fashion to make plain the meaning.

'Is that all?' asked Mrs. Marling in a tone of bitter disappointment.

'Every word,' said Dick, turning the letter round and round, as if he thought he might thus get further information. 'You know, ma'am, that the man says at the beginning that he doesn't know much. But, after all, it's something to know that there was a white child with those Indians near the Ohio, even three years ago.'

'But we don't know that it's our Molly,' objected Mrs. Marling.

'No, we don't,' admitted Dick. 'Oh, ma'am, I believe the word I couldn't read is the chief's name; it looks like Chief Red-Star.'

Mrs. Marling put on her spectacles, and studied the letter long and earnestly.

'Well,' she said at last, 'we must think what it will be proper to do. I shall not have my pasty cooked in time for dinner, I fear.'

But Dick still lingered.

'Oh, ma'am,' he exclaimed, 'do persuade Mr. Marling to let me go to America. I feel sure I could find Molly.'

'Oh, Dick, I couldn't spare you,' said Mrs. Marling. 'You are my only son now.'

'But, ma'am, I should not be long away. Do, do beg Mr. Marling to send me. It wouldn't cost much. Why, I could go out in the Pretty Sarah next time she goes, and I wouldn't spend a penny more than I could help. I would try ever so hard to bring the little girl back to you; and I don't think we ought to waste a day.'

Mrs. Marling looked at him gravely, and said:

'Dear lad, it would not be right; you are too young.'

'I am nearly nineteen, ma'am.'

'Ah, well, Dick, I thank you for your wish to please us, but I fear it cannot be. Mr. Marling has other plans for you.'

Dick was silent. It was not for his own sake that he desired to be sent to seek Molly, but he was bitterly disappointed at the thought that he might not be permitted to go. He did not guess that

Mrs. Marling could read his feelings in his face, until she put her arm round his neck and kissed his cheek.

Then he said hurriedly as he turned away:

'I can never thank you enough, ma'am. I'll try to do as you wish.'

He did not guess that, while Mrs. Marling's fingers were putting the finishing touches to the pasty, her mind was busy over the suggestion he had made. He reminded her of Robert—he was so eager to be up and doing; and once again she wondered whether it would be right or wrong to urge her husband to let the lad have his way.

Besides, who would be so likely to bring back the child, if she were alive, as Dick Herriot?

That evening, when they were alone, she broached the subject to her husband.

'The lad is beginning to make himself mighty useful here, Sally,' the merchant said, when she ventured to suggest that they might do worse than send him.

'But, John, it would be folly to send a stupid or idle man on such an errand,' she said. 'If Dick were of no use here, I for one would not send him to seek our Molly.'

Mr. Marling smiled.

'To my mind he is too young.'

'So I thought at first; but whom else could we send?

'What about Jacobs?'

'He might cheat us, John.'

'Well, there's Joseph Armitage.'

Mrs. Marling shook her head.

'He cannot do the simplest errand right, John.

Why, when you sent him to Cook's, did he not bring you back chocolate instead of cinnamon? Nay, I sometimes think he is little better than half-witted.'

'I doubt not we could find some one besides those two and Dick. I wonder how Markham would do?'

'He might have done all right if he did not drink so much and so often,' replied Mrs. Marling.

'Then it's clear that, if any one goes, it must be Dick Herriot—eh, Sally?'

'I think we could have no truer messenger.'

'But you forget, Sally, how grievously we shall miss the lad at home here.'

'I don't forget, John; but we must try to save the child.'

'After all, Sally, that girl may not be Molly. Besides, in three years, who knows what may have happened?'

'We may hear more.'

'Why, yes, I think we may. Let us do this, Sally—say nothing to Dick for a day or two, and I will try to find some trusty man to send, if send we must.'

'And if you fail, shall we send Dick?'

'I scarcely know. Perhaps we shall hear further of this girl in some other way. Let us be patient for a day or two at least.'

But Mr. Marling could not find any one to send so sure as Dick to be painstaking and faithful; and when a second letter came from America, telling again about the white girl in Red-Star's camp, he decided to let the lad go if his wife still wished it.

This time he himself took the letter up to Mrs. Marling.

'Sally,' he said, 'here is another letter from America, speaking of the child among those Delaware Indians. Do you still wish to send Dick to seek her?'

'If he desires to go, I do,' she answered.

'I will call him up and ask him. Dick,' said the old man slowly, 'Mrs. Marling tells me that you are willing to go for us to America to try to find our grandchild—is that the case?'

Dick's cheeks flushed.

'If you will trust me, sir. It is horrible to think of such a sweet little maid as that' (he glanced involuntarily at the picture) 'amongst the savages. Besides, after all your kindness, which indeed I never can repay, I should rejoice to do something for you and Mrs. Marling.'

'Nay, I have no doubt that you will do your best, answered the merchant kindly. 'My only fear is that you may rush hastily into peril, for it will be a dangerous errand.'

'Oh, sir, I will be careful; and if I can only bring back Molly to you, I don't care what happens to me.'

'That is the difficulty, Dick; but if you go on this errand, you must needs learn to think enough of danger, for our sakes, for your own, and for little Molly's.'

'I promise, sir, I will do my very utmost neither to be cowardly nor foolhardy.'

'And you think you would like to go?'

'Yes, sir,' said Dick, 'unless Mrs. Marling desires me to stay at home.'

'Nay, Dick, on the whole I would have you go,' said Mrs. Marling.

Thus it was settled; but Dick had to receive many a caution and warning from Mr. Marling in the weeks that passed before he and the Pretty Sarah were ready to set forth on the voyage across the Atlantic.

CHAPTER III

PERILS BY THE SEA

THROUGH all the hurry and bustle of preparation for his journey, Dick scarcely realised what was before him, till he went in the dusk of the early morning to bid Mrs. Marling farewell.

'Dick,' she said, 'I cannot bear to let you go. I shall never forgive myself if any evil happens to you.'

'Nay, ma'am, have no fears for me. I will be very prudent, very careful, and—think of the little maid.'

But at that moment Mrs. Marling seemed able to think of no one but Dick himself. She could not say much to him, but the thought of that short half-hour in her room came often to his mind in after-days. Nay, more than once it stood between him and some grievous temptation, and he was stronger to resist the wrong because he knew that Mrs. Marling loved him and was praying for him at home.

'Good-bye, dear lad,' she whispered. 'May God be with you, and bring you safe home to me again!'

'With little Molly, I trust,' said Dick, wisely

anxious to keep the bright side of things in view.

'I hope so,' said Mrs. Marling, smiling through her tears. 'Is it time for you to go already?'

'Mr. Marling is calling me, ma'am.'

'And I have never told you, as he bade me, that when you come back, Dick, you are to be our son, not an apprentice any longer.'

'Come, Dick, come,' called Mr. Marling from below. 'The Pretty Sarah will be going down the river without you, if you don't make haste.'

'You must go, Dick,' said the old lady, but she still held him fast to whisper, 'Never forget that God is with you and cares for you in every time of danger and temptation.'

'I never will. Good-bye, dear mother,' said Dick, flushing hotly, as he used the unaccustomed name for the first time. Then his master called again, and he ran downstairs.

''Pon my word, Dick, you'll miss the boat,' cried Mr. Marling. 'Have you got everything? There's not a moment to lose.'

For a few minutes he hurried Dick along as if they were running a race, but gradually his pace slackened and his manner grew calmer. Once again he repeated the instructions, which Dick already knew by heart. Where he was to stay in Philadelphia, how he was to obtain more money when the supply he carried with him was exhausted, to whom he was to go for information—concerning all these points he evidently feared that Dick might make some grievous mistake.

But when they reached the wharf, and had singled out the Pretty Sarah from the crowd of other

vessels that lay at anchor, Mr. Marling's manner changed.

'Dick,' he said, 'did my wife tell you? After this you must count yourself our son.'

'I thank you, sir,' said Dick simply; but it was not till long afterwards that he understood how much Mr. Marling meant by what he said.

In half an hour more Dick and his belongings were on board the little vessel, which was as full as it could hold of all sorts of merchandise for the English colonies in America. He felt very lonely as he stood on the crowded deck and waved farewell to Mr. Marling. But even at that moment he took pleasure in his new dignity and responsibility. In his own eyes he had stepped from boyhood into manhood; and he felt that Dick Herriot, well dressed, with plenty of money in his pocket, and such a weighty commission upon his mind, was scarcely the same person as the 'prentice lad who but yesterday had waited on his master's customers and carried his master's parcels. Other people seemed to think the same. Even the captain called him 'sir,' and asked his opinion on the state of trade as respectfully as if he had been Mr. Marling himself. But they had not been long at sea before Dick had other matters to think of besides his new dignity.

A head-wind sprang up against them before they were well out of the English Channel, and for a week they were tossed about without making any progress. Then the wind changed, but increased in violence to a hurricane; and Dick, cooped up below with his two or three fellow-passengers, learnt

that even a brave man may find something to fear in a storm at sea.

In those weary days of imprisonment in the little cabin Dick envied the sailors, and begged to be allowed to go on deck. But the captain, in spite of his respectful manners, was a man of firmness, and was determined that no landsman should be in the way of his crew in such a time of danger.

Dick found it harder than he had imagined to be calm and cool and quiet, with nothing to occupy him, when even the officers of the ship confessed that they had rarely seen worse weather. One awful night, when it seemed impossible that the poor little Sarah could any longer withstand the beating of such enormous waves, Dick felt that he would have given anything to be safe in his own plain little room again, but he contrived to keep his fears to himself. Next day the wind and waves moderated, and, to his astonishment, the captain congratulated him on his courage. He was pleased enough, but in his own heart doubted whether he deserved the compliment, for he knew he had been horribly afraid until he had thought of Mrs. Marling's last words, and had knelt down to ask help of the Almighty.

For the rest of the voyage they had comparatively good weather, but Dick's courage was to be put to another severe test.

The passengers were all on deck, and the captain had just told them that he expected to sight land in about four days more, when one of the sailors called him aside.

It was beginning to grow dusk, but far away on

the horizon they could descry another vessel. What was suspicious in its appearance Dick could not guess, but all at once every one seemed to be whispering the ugly word 'Pirates.'

Evidently even the most experienced of the crew thought there was occasion for alarm. In another moment all was confusion and excitement. The captain ordered them to put on all sail, and presently the Pretty Sarah was flying before the wind at her utmost speed.

Dick found the race exciting. He thought they were making good headway, until he heard the sailors grumbling that the boat had not been built for speed.

'What will happen if they overtake us?' he demanded.

'Can't say,' replied the man he had addressed. 'How would you like a fight, young master?'

Dick made no answer, but went below, and, taking out a brace of pistols with which Mr. Marling had provided him, looked over them most carefully. At the moment he regretted, like young David with Saul's armour, that he had not proved his weapons.

No one on board had much rest that night, but when morning dawned the suspicious vessel was nowhere to be seen, and every one made fun of every one else for having been so ready to believe in 'pirates.'

Three or four days later they sailed up the Delaware to Philadelphia.

As they came in sight of the wharf, the sailors began to make all kinds of jokes on the appearance of a rather strangely built vessel, scarcely larger than their own.

'What is it?' asked Dick.

'Something worth looking at. Nothing less than the pirate herself.'

'What do you mean, sir?'

'Why, there's the ship we ran away from on Monday night—more fools we. But I told the captain she was nothing to be afraid of. She hasn't the build nor the rig of a pirate.'

The absurdest part of the adventure was, as they learnt afterwards, that the crew of the other vessel had been equally alarmed at the appearance of the innocent little Sarah; and instead of chasing her, had been only anxious to get out of her way as soon as possible.

In spite of the various alarms and inconveniences which he had suffered on the voyage, Dick did not leave the Pretty Sarah without regret. She had been his home for nearly ten weeks; and though they had been neither short nor pleasant, he left some friends on board, and had not one in the land whither he had come.

He lingered on the vessel some little time. At last it occurred to him that he was forgetting his trust, and that he could not begin too soon to take steps to look for little Molly.

Mr. Marling had given him an introduction to an old friend of his, a certain Mr. Overbeck, who was a wealthy merchant in Philadelphia; but when Dick found his house, he learnt that its owner had lately gone to New York.

The lad was thus thrown upon his own resources; and it was not till he had explored a considerable portion of the town that he found a lodging for the night.

It was a clean little house, close to the market-place, in the busiest part of the town; but coming from London, Dick did not fear being disturbed by the bustle.

His hostess was a widow with one son, a stern-looking man about twice Dick's age. Dick tried to enter into conversation with him, partly for the sake of politeness, and partly because he wished to gain information. But Mr. Archer did not appreciate his attentions, and seemed to regard his questions about Philadelphia and its inhabitants as impertinent curiosity.

This treatment abashed Dick, and he ate his supper in a state of utter discomfiture, that did not affect his appetite, however.

Mr. Archer did not seem hungry, and presently, with a muttered apology, rose and left the room. Both his mother and Dick were relieved by his departure. As soon as the door closed after him, the woman laid her hand on Dick's arm, and said apologetically:

'Don't you mind him, sir. He's a right good fellow, is Joseph; but his troubles have turned him. Why, I can remember when he was as full of his pranks as a kitten.'

'Indeed, ma'am,' said Dick, still trying to be polite, though as yet he felt very little interest in his taciturn host; 'pray, what has changed him?'

'It's a long story, and a horrible one. If I tell you now, you'll never sleep to-night, and I can see you need rest badly. Oh dear, oh dear, my poor Joseph will never be the man he was!'

And the widow sighed and shook her head in

a manner that Dick found extremely depressing. He felt it incumbent on him to attempt some consolation, though he did not well know how to begin.

'Has he suffered some accident, ma'am?'

'Well, you might call it an accident in some ways, I suppose, sir. I don't see, I am sure, what made the wretches choose to burn Joseph's house; he had never done them any harm——'

'Ah, I suppose it was the Indians, then?'

'Yes, it was; but how could you guess it, sir? You may live long enough in Philadelphia without once seeing an Indian.'

Dick was interested now in earnest.

'Tell me all about it, ma'am.'

But the widow sighed and shook her head again.

'I can't. You must guess, sir,' she said. 'Joseph had everything that heart could wish; then he took a notion that he must needs go west. That's what hurts him now. It was his own fault, taking his wife and babies into the very teeth of danger. Well, poor lad, he was grievously punished. They were killed—every one; and he came home to me half mad.'

'How long ago was it, ma'am?'

'Eight years next fall. He has never lifted up his head since.'

'Mrs. Archer, I want to talk to him. Has he gone out?'

'No, sir; but, as you saw to-night, he won't answer even a civil question if he can help it.'

'I think he will, ma'am, when he knows all. Those who sent me here lost a son by the Indians, and I want to get back his little girl for them. But I scarce

know how to begin. I have never seen an Indian in my life as yet,' said Dick humbly, for all day long a sense of the difficulties of his task had been growing on him.

'Very well, sir. I'll see if he will come.'

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNING OF THE SEARCH

'WELL, what do you want of me?' demanded Joseph Archer curtly.

'Pray, sir, may I tell you what has brought me here?'

'I care not to listen to idle tales, lad,' replied the elder man. 'Your business is your own.'

'But, sir, I need help. Listen.'

Years ago it would not have seemed strange to Joseph Archer to be asked for help, but he had selfishly wrapped himself in his own great sorrow, and now he wondered that any one should expect aid from him. But he sat down to listen in spite of himself.

'Sir, my name, as I think I told you, is Dick Herriot,' began the lad.

'Be pleased to cut short your story,' interrupted Archer.

Dick was annoyed at his persistent rudeness, but answered:

'Very well, sir, I'll begin at the other end. Nine years ago a set of Indian savages came down on a little log-cabin far out in the wilderness, and killed the man and his wife who had settled there, and carried off their only child.'

Archer lifted his hand and shaded his eyes from the light of the candle on the table.

'Go on,' he said.

'It was my master's son; but the news only came to us five months ago. A little later we heard a rumour that three years earlier a white girl had been seen amongst the Delaware Indians, and we think it might be little Molly.'

'It might be any of a hundred children,' said Archer bitterly.

'Well, what must I do to find out?' demanded Dick.

'How old was the child when she was carried off?'

'Three or four.'

'You might as well look for a needle in a haystack,' was the encouraging reply.

'That's not the point, sir,' said Dick. 'I've come all these many hundred miles to look for Molly, and I mean to do it. The only question is, how am I to begin?'

'If it hadn't been for this trouble with the Indians, I should have advised you to get a pack and go into the woods to trade. As things are, I have no plan to propose.'

And Archer relapsed into silence.

Dick looked gloomily at one after another of the many little pictures and sketches that adorned the walls.

'Can't you suggest anything, sir?' he said at last. 'I must find Molly. Did you ever hear of a chief called Red-Star? Mr. Jewett, the man who wrote to my master, seemed pretty sure she was with his people.'

'With Red-Star!' gasped Archer.

For a moment he said no more, and Dick rightly guessed that his host blamed Red-Star for the cruel murder of his wife and children.

'Why didn't you tell me this before?' demanded Archer at last. 'If the girl's with him, I swear that, by one means or another, we will get her away. He's the veriest brute that ever walked the earth.'

'How shall we proceed?' asked Dick, after another long pause.

'I don't know yet. We must watch and wait. Let us do nothing hastily. Above all things, we need caution.'

'Is there nothing that I can do at once? I have money, and I feel that I ought to set to work without delay.'

'Well, lad, if you must be doing, you might make inquiries among the trappers as to whether anything has been seen of the child since Mr. Jewett visited Red-Star's camp. Perhaps she isn't there at all. Perhaps she never was there.'

'Where shall I go to find the trappers?' asked Dick.

'Why, to the Black Bear over yonder and the rest of the taverns,' said Archer with unutterable scorn. 'For the most part they are all idle drunkards and good-for-nothings.'

Early the next morning Dick began his tour amongst the inns frequented by the fur-traders. But his English accent and English dress marked him out as a butt for their amusement, and the trappers vied with each other in telling him marvellous and even impossible stories of the Indians and the

back country. He was by no means ready to believe all he heard, but it was so difficult to distinguish the true from the false that at noon he returned to his lodgings utterly disgusted.

When he reported his ill success, Archer said sternly:

'Fools that they are! I'll go with you myself this afternoon, and they shall tell all they know, or I'll have the reason why.'

For the second time that day Dick made the weary round of the inns of Philadelphia; but in the face of Archer's stern looks and sterner manner the trappers no longer jested over the lad's questions. Archer catechised them with lawyer-like severity and acuteness, especially with regard to Red-Star and his band.

'Jewett may be right,' he said, as they left the last of the inns. 'You had better go and see him. But he will not mock you, and I have business that I must attend to, so you will have to go alone. Be careful to pay good heed to all he says.'

Dick felt indignant at this slight on his prudence, but before he had thought of a reply which would be at once dignified and courteous Archer was out of hearing.

Mr. Jewett was not altogether encouraging.

'You could scarcely have hit on a worse time for the business you have in hand,' he said. 'Red-Star and his braves are up in arms at this moment, at their old work of robbery and murder, but they have taken care to put their women and children out of harm's way. I heard to-day that they have carried them far west, beyond the Muskingum, where no civilised force can follow them.'

'But what must I do, sir?' asked Dick in sore perplexity. 'I cannot stay here in Philadelphia frittering away my master's money and my own time.'

'Better do that than lose your scalp. I tell you, the Indians in their present mood are not to be trifled with. Why, sir, even our peace-loving friends, the Quakers, are persuaded that strong measures must be taken to secure order. The Assembly has decided to raise three hundred men to protect the frontier, and a thousand to march with Colonel Bouquet. Had they but had wit enough to give him the three hundred he asked for last year this expense would have been spared, and many a poor wretch who has been hacked or burnt to death would now have been alive in peace and safety. I suppose you heard in London of the great battle of Bushy Run?'

'Yes, it was a splendid victory, and we thought it would have taught the Indians a sufficient lesson.'

The merchant shook his head.

'The victory was not followed up, sir, as it should have been, and work half done always needs, in my experience, to be done over again. It was not Colonel Bouquet's fault either. As I told you, he begged for three hundred men to pursue the Indians to their lurking-places, but the Assembly would not stir hand or foot to send him help. In consequence the redskins plucked up heart, and have been burning, torturing, and murdering as furiously as ever. Why, sir, the frontier people have had to leave all they possessed and fly for their lives. Lucky for them if they could save them. At last, when the mischief

is done the Assembly thinks it time to interfere, and votes men, sends to England for bloodhounds to chase the Indians, and offers rewards for the redskins' scalps — of men, women, and children alike.'

'What, sir! do civilised gentlemen descend to such barbarities?'

'If you go west, Mr. Herriot, you will see many a thing to shock your feelings. I say not that I approve of all these measures, but it is certain that something had to be done. Our rulers have been most blamably dilatory throughout this affair.'

'But, sir, if the Indians are so mad against the English, does it not make it the more needful that I should seek Molly Marling without delay? Is she not in peril every hour?'

'I think not, Mr. Herriot. By this time they probably count her almost as one of themselves. The child I saw was more Indian than English, save for her fair hair and white skin.'

'What made you think that she was little Miss Marling, Mr. Jewett?'

The trader smiled.

'It sounds odd to me to hear of "little Miss Marling." The child I saw was wrapped in a ragged blanket, and thought herself very finely attired, because she wore a string of glass beads about her neck.'

Dick winced at the thought of dainty Mrs. Marling's grandchild thus bedizened; but he said quietly, 'Was she the only white girl in Red-Star's camp? How should I recognise her, Mr. Jewett?'

'That's a difficult matter. I am no hand at description. I recognised her likeness to her mother,

whom I knew when she was no higher than the table.'

'But how shall I know her? I never saw her mother.'

Mr. Jewett looked puzzled.

'She's as pretty a little maid as I ever saw,' he began. 'She has little hands and feet, light yellow hair, and big blue eyes; but as for your knowing her——'

'Were they kind to her, sir?'

'No worse than to their own girls, Mr. Herriot—not what you or I should call kind, perhaps. She has to work. When I saw her, she had a great load of firewood on her back.'

Dick frowned, and set his mouth with an expression of resolution.

'Do you suppose that she'll come away with you if you do find her?' asked the merchant curiously. 'I offered a good price for the little baggage, but she was not willing to leave her mother, as she called the old squaw she lived with.'

'I know not. I never thought of that, Mr. Jewett. But if I can only reach her, I trust I shall be able to persuade her to come away.'

'Well, don't be too hasty, my lad. You can do nothing at present. Your best plan is to look about and enjoy yourself. There is much well worth seeing in this new land of ours. It was a mistake, in my opinion, for you to come out at this time; but now you must make the best of it.'

Dick was quite determined that he would make the best of it. He had no notion of owning himself beaten so soon, and he smiled rather scornfully over the advice to look about and enjoy himself. What

did Mr. Jewett take him for that he should think that he would spend on his own pleasure the money that his master had entrusted to him for such a different purpose? Again and again he vowed that he would never rest till he had found the child; but how was he to begin the search?

CHAPTER V

HUNTER JIM

AFTER his rather unsatisfactory interview with Mr. Jewett, Dick was not inclined to report himself to Joseph Archer, to whom he was beginning to feel as if he were in some way accountable. It still wanted an hour of supper-time; and not knowing what else to do, he strolled up one street and down another, looking curiously into the shop-windows and at the passers-by. At last he wandered out of the town, till he reached the burying-ground of the Church of England. The afternoon was very hot, and he stopped for a moment to rest, leaning on the gate.

As he stood there, he began to read the curious tributes to the virtues of the dead which sorrowing relatives had carved over the graves. He found the occupation so absorbing that he was startled when some one touched his arm.

He turned, and saw at his elbow a big rough-looking man, clad in a half-Indian costume of a fringed hunting-shirt, cloth leggings, and mocassins.

'What do you want of me, friend?' asked Dick in astonishment.

The man asked another question in reply.

'Wasn't it you, sir, that came this morning into The Iroquois public-house with Joe Archer?'

'Yes,' said Dick eagerly. 'Can you give me news of Robert Marling's child?'

'Nay, but I can tell you how to find her. I'll help you to find her, if you say the word.'

'How? Do you know the Indian country?'

'Ay, that I do. I have lived in the woods, man and boy, for little short of forty years. I know every Injun village in the valley of the Ohio. There's not a Seneca chief, nor a Delaware, nor a Shawnee that ain't good friends with Hunter Jim. That's their name for me, 'cause, though I hate to boast, I'm a mighty good shot. Why, many's the time that I've feasted a whole tribe on what I've shot in a half-day. They love me, jest as if I was their brother.'

'Do you know Red-Star?'

'Ay, indeed. Red-Star, of all the Delaware chiefs, is my best friend. He's a real fine fellow, is Red-Star.'

'But you say you don't know where Molly Marling is?'

'Nay, only I've not taken proper notice—that's all. Now I think on it, there is a remarkable pretty little white gel in Red-Star's camp—no doubt it's Molly. But if it ain't, white gels is as common up there as blackberries, and we're bound to find her, first or last.'

'But they tell me there's no chance of getting into the Indian country just now.'

'Indeed, sir; and why not?' demanded Hunter Jim, with a very good assumption of astonishment.

'Because of the war.'

Hunter Jim used some very ugly words, as he was in the habit of doing, and declared with a loud laugh:

'The war won't begin to hinder us. Let 'em teach their grannies if they can. Trust me, sir; I'll take you safe, there and back, to Red-Star's camp; or if you're scared with these 'ere tales of scalping and burning, I'll go for you, an' bring back the little gel.'

'What is your plan?' inquired Dick, who was by no means pleased with the manners and appearance of his new companion, but feared losing any opportunity of gaining his object.

'Jest this. We'll get together a few things suitable for the Injun trade, an' then we'll make up one or two large packs, and go into the woods.'

'I was told it was useless to attempt to trade just now.'

'Then, young master, you was told wrong—that's all there is to it. If you takes the right things, you can allus trade. We'll go around from camp to camp; an' if we don't find the little miss inside o' six months, you may call Hunter Jim a liar.'

'Who's to find money for all this?' said Dick quietly, looking the big man in the face.

Hunter Jim looked startled for a moment; then laughed again in his uproarious fashion. 'That's a good un, young master. Why, you, of course, sir.'

'And what will it all cost?'

'I can scarcely answer so off-hand. Look here; give me five guineas to set things a-going with, and then I'll meet you again, and show you what I've bought, and all about it.'

'There are two difficulties in the way, my good friend. In the first place, I cannot make over my master's money to you without being sure of a proper

return; in the second, I should like to know what you will want for your services, supposing we come to an agreement.'

Jim frowned; then began to play the bully.

'You are mighty suspicious, my lad. I ain't a-going to cheat you. Ask any man round town whether Hunter Jim ain't to be trusted. 'Pon my word, if it wasn't for your being such a slip o' a lad, I'd have had satisfaction for them insinuations.'

'Very well, if you choose to bluster, I will wish you a very good-evening,' and Herriot walked briskly off.

In two seconds, however, the big hunter overtook him.

'Not so fast, lad; I was jesting. Fact is, I'm a bit hard up just now; and if we can come to terms, it ud be an advantage to me as well as to you an' yer master.' Jim said this with the air of one making a great concession. 'I'll go either with you or without you to find the gel for half the profits o' all the trading we do. Come, I couldn't say fairer than that.'

'And you want me to find all the money?' asked Dick.

'Well, yes, sir. Ain't I going to find all the experience? Where would you be without me?'

'Well, I'll think the matter over,' said Dick. 'Where can I see you if I decide to make the venture?'

'It should be somewhere we can talk privately. Couldn't you meet me here an hour later than this to-morrow night?'

'But if I decide not to venture——'

'Come anyway, sir. But let me tell you, you'll

never get the gel if yer don't go the right way to work; an' old Red-Star 'll do anything fur me.'

Dick made no answer.

'I know of a splendid lot o' Injun goods going at a dead bargain. If I had a guinea or two to-night, I could make sure of them, and save Master Marling's pocket,' continued the hunter persuasively. 'But of course, if you can't trust me, I'll have to let 'em go.'

'What sort of things?'

'Oh, beads, an' knives, an' hatchets, an' a few old-fashioned guns (good enough for Injuns), an' a keg or so o' powder. I tell you we'd make a fine profit of 'em, young sir. Ribbons o' all colours, pins, needles, an' I don't know what.'

'Well, you may see what you can buy them for,' said Dick slowly.

'How about the money?'

'Here's a guinea, then. I have no more in my pocket. If you pay that down, you could surely arrange with the men to keep them for you. But understand, I must see the goods before I buy.'

Hunter Jim's countenance expressed the keenest delight as Dick dropped the guinea into his dirty palm.

'I'll fix things, never you fear, sir. Look here, if you'll meet me just opposite the court-house to-morrow night at seven, I'll take you right on to see the goods. Maybe, if we have good luck, we'll get away into the woods this week.'

Dick had imbibed some notions of business from his master, and he had no idea of buying goods of which he did not know the value. He spent the next morning amongst the stores, pricing ribbons

and beads, guns, hatchets, and powder, and made careful notes concerning the different articles in his pocket-book.

Thus fortified with information, he went to meet Hunter Jim with a calm and cheerful demeanour. He found him pacing the pavement before the court-house like a soldier on duty.

He greeted Dick with an effusion that that young man was inclined to resent, for he was not prepossessed with the bushranger's appearance. Indeed, the longer he thought about it, the less he liked the idea of going to seek for Molly in his company. But if the man spoke the truth, his plan was hopeful, and it seemed to Dick that he had no right to reject any honest means, however disagreeable, to find Molly.

'I've fixed everything,' said Hunter Jim. 'We're getting them goods dirt cheap.'

'But I told you I couldn't buy till I had seen them!' protested Dick.

'Well, lad, come along and see 'em.'

And Hunter Jim, taking Dick by the arm, led him a little way along Market Street; then turned aside into a narrower street. After that he took so many turns and short cuts that Herriot became quite bewildered, and was beginning to think he would refuse to go farther, when the man led him down a dark, dirty alley, and opened the door of a tumble-down house that completely blocked one end of the passage.

Dick was not pleased to find three or four ill-looking men sitting round a shaky table in the middle of the room. They had a couple of bottles before them, and a miscellaneous collection of

drinking-horns and broken cups. They were in the midst of a noisy song, but stopped abruptly when the door opened.

'This 'ere's my young friend I told you of, Dick Herriot by name, as is come to buy your Injun goods, Sam. Now mind you don't go fur to try to cheat him. If you do, you'll have to settle with Hunter Jim.'

'Give the young master a seat, Jim. No doubt he's thirsty after his walk. It's a good piece from here to the court-house.'

'That's so,' said Jim. 'I know I'm as dry as a lime-pit.' And taking up one of the horns from the table, he swallowed its contents without taking breath.

Some one filled a great blue mug for Dick, but he set it down untasted.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I came here on business, and I had rather attend to that without delay.'

A shout of laughter greeted this speech, and again they pressed him to pledge them. He firmly refused. Indeed, he wished himself well out of their company. But he could not go without looking at the goods of which Jim had spoken.

'Please to show me the things you wish to sell,' he said; 'I am in a hurry.'

'Very well, sir; come this way.' And the man they called Sam Turner took a candle from the table, and led him along a narrow passage to a little room at the back of the house. Jim followed them.

'Now, sir, here you are,' exclaimed Sam briskly. 'Everything yer want fur the Injun trade, all complete. Them's the ribbons, blue, yaller, and scarlet, all widths. My, the squaws will go wild

over 'em! Then this 'ere package is beads, best quality. On them two articles alone you will jest double yer money, if you manage right; an' let me tell yer, Hunter Jim is the most knowing man 'bout Injuns that I ever see.'

'Beads an' such trash is all very well, but show him the rest of the goods, Sam,' put in his friend.

Sam accordingly pulled out a strange assortment of old firearms of all ages and patterns.

'If you ain't in too much hurry to set off, we might clean these 'ere up a little. A bit o' brickdust an' a trifle o' varnish would make 'em as good as new, as far as the Injuns is concerned.'

'Do you mean that they'll buy these old things?' asked Dick in surprise.

'Yes, indeed, anything in the shape o' firearms or powder or shot goes, as the sayin' is, like hot cakes.'

'But what can they do with them?'

''Taint our business what they do with 'em; I ain't a parson, young master. But if you want to know, you might inquire from the settlers whether they can use 'em or no.' And Sam laughed noisily. 'Without them guns,' he continued, 'I don't know as I'd advise you to venture into the Injun camps jest now, but with 'em they'd welcome you like a brother, an' you ought to make a mighty good thing o' it. There never was a time when they was more eager for guns an' powder an' the like.'

'Do you mean that you supply them with arms for the war?' asked Dick.

'Why not, sir?—an', as you say, them guns ain't the most deadly kind o' firearms,' replied Sam, with another loud laugh.

Dick was silent; but Sam, throwing down the old

blunderbuss, with a tremendous clatter, began to remove the lumber from a corner of the room. In another moment he displayed to view three or four great stone jars.

'Now, young master, here's another thing you are bound to have if yer to trade with Injuns—good hot rum—an' I'll give you a bargain on it. I guess I've shown you everything you'll need now. If you'll come and sit down a bit, I'll get a piece o' paper an' calc'late what I'll let you have the lot for. I s'pose you'll want the beads an' ribbons—oh, an' I'll throw you in a lot of han'kerchers and odds an' ends real cheap. Then there's the rum an' the guns——'

'I won't trouble you any further, sir. These goods will not suit me. Indeed, I shall give up the trading plan altogether.'

'What, young master? Do you mean you ain't going to trouble about the little gel?'

'I mean that I won't carry rum and firearms to the Indians,' said Dick.

'It's yer only chance o' getting back the little gel, young man.'

'Even if it is, I can't do it,' said Dick. 'Good-night, gentlemen.'

'Not so fast, sir. I've kep' the things fur yer, an' yer've got to take 'em.'

'Nay,' said Dick; 'I told Mr. Jim positively that I would not buy until I had seen the goods.'

'Nay, lad, what you said last night was, "Go right away an' make sure o' the things!"'

'You are mistaken. Good-night.'

'Now, my lad, you ain't goin' till you've paid me my price for the things.'

Dick was secretly rather uneasy, but he tried to put a bold face on the matter, and answered steadily:

'I have told you I don't mean to buy. If you keep me here till midnight, it will do you no good, for I have no money with me.'

'That's your own fault. You will have to write a note to your lodgings an' send for some. Look here, as there's been a mistake, an' you don't really want to travel into the Ohio Valley, we'll let you off for twenty sovereigns in gold.'

'I can't do it. The money isn't mine,' said Dick, walking with dignity towards the door.

'Oh, well, we'll give you a little time to think the matter over. I'll be back in a moment, Jim.'

As Sam left the room, Jim laid his heavy hand on Dick's shoulder, and the lad struggled in vain to free himself.

CHAPTER VI

A NARROW ESCAPE

DICK soon came to the disagreeable conclusion that Jim was a much stronger man than he, and, resigning himself to his fate, waited passively for Sam's return. Ten minutes passed, and then he entered the room, carrying a heavy old elbow-chair and a coil of rope.

'I dessay you'll be willin' to do the right thing by-and-by, an' in the meantime we'll make you as comfortable as we can,' he said with a grin, as he forced Dick roughly into the chair.

Dick set his teeth, and said not a word; but he bitterly blamed his own folly and self-confidence, when they left him in the dark, unable to move hand or foot.

In the distance, at the other end of the passage, the shouts and laughter grew continually louder and more furious. Suddenly the door was burst open, and the whole crew pressed into the room, mocking and jeering at their victim.

'Well, lad, have you come to your senses yet?' demanded Sam. 'Promise that you'll pay me fifty pound the first thing in the morning, and I'll untie the rope.'

Dick made no answer.

'Speak, lad, or it will be the worse for you!' exclaimed Sam. 'I've brought many an obstinate feller to reason, but I've no wish to be hard on yer.'

'I tell you I've no money here,' said Dick.

'But if you wanted, you could find it. Will you write what I tell you to Joseph Archer?'

'No,' said Dick firmly, 'I will not. If you murder me, you will gain nothing.'

'Ay, ay, lad, it's easy to talk—but wait till you try it. Now, I'll give yer till morning in this 'ere chair; then if you haven't come to yer senses, I tell you what it is, you'll wish you were being scalped and cut to pieces by the redskins. We'll leave yer to Jim there, an' he's a man that ain't exactly tender or squeamish. Do yer see that dark mark on the floor? Afore he begins with you, Jim shall tell what made that.'

Jim laughed brutally.

'Nay, words is wasted on the lad,' he cried. 'I'll give him a taste of the real thing.'

Snatching the candle from the fellow that held it, he took it in his unsteady hand, and held it close against Dick's bare wrist. The boy winced with the pain, but would not please his tormentors by uttering one cry for mercy.

Sam watched him with an ugly smile.

'Did I not tell thee, lad? For my own part I'd sooner be done to death by any redskin alive than by Hunter Jim. There,' he added, 'that'll do, Jim. Leave the rest till morning. He knows now what he may expect.'

Presently most of the men left the room; but, to Dick's horror, Jim laid himself down to sleep across the door with his head on a bale of stuff.

In his utter helplessness the lad was almost ready to despair. He could see no way of escape unless he consented to ransom himself with his master's money. And even if he agreed to the demands of these men, what certainty was there that they would keep faith with him? It seemed hard that at the very beginning of his search he should come to such a grievous mishap; and Dick felt worried and angry that he should have allowed himself to be taken in so easily. Suddenly, in the midst of his pain and weariness (perhaps because of it, for she had comforted him many a time when sick or sorry), came the thought of Mrs. Marling and her farewell words. If she was right — and he firmly believed she was — God was with him, here and now. It was a blessed thought; and Dick bowed his head, said his evening prayer, and tried to rest, confident that after all he was not really at the mercy of his enemies.

But Jim tossed and tumbled on the floor like some restless beast; then, staggering to the window, opened it wide, grumbling loudly at the heat. For a while his comrades continued to sing and shout in the outer room, and Jim staggered restlessly up and down the creaking floor. At last he flung himself down in his old position, and Dick heard him breathing heavily in his drunken sleep. Soon afterwards the sounds from the other room died away, and Dick guessed that the other fellows must also be sleeping soundly.

Hunter Jim had brought back the candle. It was now guttering down into its socket with a flickering light; and Dick, after a short sleep, woke to find

himself gazing at the face of his tormentor with a kind of fascination.

Presently he roused himself. Now, if ever, was the time to make the effort to escape. When Sam left him, after tying him to the chair, he had done his utmost to break his bonds; but the rope was strong, and the knots secure, and he had done nothing but hurt himself. This time he tried more cautiously.

Regardless of the pain it caused to his burnt wrist, he twisted and turned his hands this way and that. Suddenly, to his great delight, the rope broke with a snap that he feared would awaken the sleeper on the floor. But it would have taken the report of a cannon to rouse him from his stupor; and he had so charred the rope with the candle flame that it made less noise than Dick fancied.

Fortunately he had a strong knife in his pocket, and he reached it at last with his free hand. Then he opened it with his teeth, and soon released himself from his bonds.

He was so stiff that he could scarcely move, but somehow he contrived to scramble up to the narrow window-ledge. It was a mere slit, and for one dreadful moment Dick feared it would be impossible for him to get through it. However, he did squeeze himself through; and landed, feet foremost on the ground, with a thud that happily startled no one but himself.

He was in a small yard, with high palings, but in a few moments he was lucky enough to find a door, by which he escaped into a narrow lane.

All now seemed plain sailing, and he fled at the top of his speed down one squalid street after another till

he found himself at last in the more respectable part of the town.

Here he stopped to take breath, and to find out if possible where he was; for the whole town seemed asleep, and there was no one from whom he could ask directions.

Presently he saw a watchman in the distance; but distrusting his own disreputable appearance, he hurried away in the opposite direction.

It proved to be the wisest thing he could have done, for the next moment he came in sight of the court-house, and from that point he had no difficulty in finding his way back to his lodgings.

He hammered loudly at the door.

'Who's there?' cried Mrs. Archer.

'Me, Dick Herriot; let me in.'

'Why, sir, what has been the matter?' demanded the woman as the light fell on his pale face and disordered dress.

'Please, ma'am, give me a drink—I'm dreadfully thirsty; then I'll tell you all.'

'What have you done to your hand?' inquired Mrs. Archer. 'Why, it's one great blister!'

'Burnt it,' said Dick—'at least, some one did it for me.'

'Now, mother, couldn't you give us a cup of coffee and get Mr. Herriot a bit of meat before you talk?' said Joseph.

But in spite of his long fast, Dick did not enjoy his supper.

As he turned away from the table, Joseph Archer said:

'Now, lad, tell us everything. Where have you been all night?'

'I don't know,' said Dick. 'I went with a fellow that I met yesterday, who told me that he could trade with the Indians even now—more fool I! He said he could buy a lot of goods cheap, and I went to see them. But they were mostly old guns and powder and rum, and I refused to take them.'

'Didn't I tell you that no honest trade could be done just now with the Indians?' said Archer, unable to resist the temptation to remind the lad of his neglected warnings.

'Oh, I know. I can tell you, Mr. Archer, I soon repented of my folly. There were some half-dozen ruffians, and they bound me to a chair and swore not to let me go until I paid them what they demanded. Then they threatened to torture me, and one burnt my wrist with a candle. Luckily, as it turned out, he burnt the rope too, and so I got away through the window while they were sleeping off the effects of the spirits they had drunk. I must say, I think that, had I been unable to escape, I should have been in great peril of further torture, and perhaps death.'

'Let it be a warning to you, lad, not to trust yourself in the power of strangers.'

Dick smiled.

'Were you not strangers when I came to you? But I will admit that Hunter Jim, as he calls himself, is by no means amiable in appearance.'

'I should think not, Dick. He's a disgrace to the town—I had well-nigh said, to the earth. If I were you, I should be cautious for a day or two at least. They will probably make another attempt to rob you.'

'I am grieved to say that I foolishly let them know where I was staying,' said Dick.

'I don't think they will trouble you here. We have too many good neighbours for that. But beware of going alone into the low streets, or out into the country. You have had a narrow eccape.'

Dick did not think that he needed to be told that; but he was too tired to talk any longer, and he went to bed and slept till nearly noon next day

CHAPTER VII

ENLISTED

FOR the next few days Dick was extremely careful where he went. But he had more than one alarm, through catching sight of some fellow whom he recognised as belonging to the same band of ruffians as Hunter Jim. Once he saw that gentleman himself approaching, and, to avoid him, took refuge in an inn near by. It was crowded with people, and a man in military costume was vehemently addressing those about him on the subject still uppermost in Dick's mind. He was urging his hearers to protect the people in the west, and to be avenged on the Indians; and Dick pressed forward to hear better.

'This is the best chance you will ever have to be avenged, my men, on the wretches who have burnt your houses, murdered your wives, and are now bringing up your children as savages, like themselves, if they did not torture them to death when they first carried them off! What! — so no one here has suffered anything from the redskins?'

The man stopped and glanced keenly from one to another.

'I have a wife amongst the Delawares—God help her!' murmured one man.

'And yet you would leave her in their hands without striking a blow, eh? You don't deserve to have wives or children or homes, cowards that you are!'

'I would go,' said another, 'but my wife and children are here. I cannot leave them. The young fellows should go. There are plenty who have no ties to hold them back.'

'Go where?' demanded Dick.

'To chastise the Indians with Colonel Bouquet. Come, will no one volunteer in so noble a service?'

'I will,' shouted Dick. 'Shame it were to leave the women and children in such horrid slavery.'

The recruiting officer looked at him doubtfully.

'Are you not from England, sir?' he said.

'Yes,' said Dick.

'Then you know nought of Indian-fighting?'

'No, sir, but I can learn.'

'Not in one year or two, much less in two or three short months.'

'But I must go,' cried Dick. 'I have a friend in the Indian country, and I must save her. I was sent out to save her.'

'But, my lad, Colonel Bouquet wants strong men who know the country. I do not doubt your courage, but I must obey my orders.'

'Well,' said Dick, glancing at the men, who were talking to each other in low voices and with doubtful faces, 'surely it would be better to have inexperienced men than none?'

'True, sir. I would most gladly take down your name, but I fear I should be blamed.'

'I'll go at my own expense,' said Dick; 'but go I must, one way or other.'

'Gentlemen, do you hear this?' cried the recruiting officer. 'This lad puts you all to shame. He wants to go even at his own charges. Shame on you all!'

'Sir, do be pleased to put my name down without more ado!' entreated Dick.

'Gentlemen,' exclaimed the officer, 'I am ashamed to say that the only man here who cares a straw for the honour of the country, the only man in whose breast is a spark of humanity, is this young Englishman. I am glad I have not to leave this place without one recruit on the roll. Sir, be pleased to tell me your name.'

The little ceremony of enrolment was soon over; but Dick lingered to ask:

'Is there much hope of our being sent out quickly against the Delawares, sir?'

'Most surely there is. To my certain knowledge, Colonel Bouquet means to march against them as soon as he can gather a sufficient force.'

Dick's example seemed to have a good effect. In ten minutes half a dozen more men had volunteered for service, and the recruiting officer's sneers changed to compliments.

In his excitement Dick forgot that it was supper-time; but though his new friend ordered wine for all who had joined the company he was raising, the lad refused to drink. Unhappily most of the recruits were not so prudent, and several of them could hardly find their way home when they at last turned out of the inn.

Dick was rather ashamed of being so late, and

Joseph Archer met him at the door with an expression of indignation.

'Fine doings, lad,' he exclaimed sarcastically. 'How did you enjoy your supper at the Black Bear?'

'You mistake. I have not yet supped, Mr. Archer,' replied Dick. 'I am truly sorry to be so late, but I forgot the time.'

'Forgive an old woman for warning you, sir,' interposed Mrs. Archer; 'but if I were you, I would not spend the precious hours in such a place as that inn. You little guess the evil that may come of it.'

'Indeed, ma'am, I was careful to touch nothing that could harm me. But, oh, Mr. Archer, I have splendid news. At last I do believe that I am in a fair way to find Molly!'

'What! have you made it up with Hunter Jim?' asked Joseph grimly.

'No, sir, I have not. I'll tell you what I have done, though—I have enlisted for the Indian war.'

'Enlisted, lad!'

'Yes, the officer tells me that we are sure to be ordered to make an attack on the camps of the Delawares. Don't you think this time that I have done wisely?'

Archer said nothing for several minutes. At last he muttered:

'Well, I'll say this—I don't think this plan quite so foolish as it would have been to carry out your plan of going with that precious scoundrel Jim. It puzzles me, though, how they came to enlist you.'

Dick was annoyed at this.

'Pray, sir, why should they not?' he demanded.

'Because any one can see that you know nothing about frontier life.'

'Surely I can learn to do what the rest can?' protested Dick. 'I mean to try anyway, and this seems to me the only chance of seeking Molly for the present. I am persuaded that Mr. Marling would approve.'

'Well, lad, if you are going soldiering, you will need to get your sword-arm into use as soon as possible.'

'It's healing fast,' said Dick; adding eagerly, 'Mr. Archer, if you can spare the time, I wish you would teach me a few things.'

'What things? There are many you could teach me better than I you, I suppose.'

'Well, possibly,' said Dick, 'at least, if you ever come to London; but what I want to know is how to manage in the woods. I do know the sword exercise pretty fairly'; and, catching up a stick that was conveniently near, Dick gave an impromptu exhibition of his skill in thrusting and parrying. 'I learnt it from a friend in London.'

'That's all very well, lad; but what you'll want to learn is, to walk over dry twigs as noiselessly as a cat over a carpet, to make yourself invisible when you ought not to be seen, and to be able to hit a mark so far away that you can scarcely see it.'

'If that's all, I can practise shooting, and going about noiselessly,' said Dick cheerfully.

'It is harder than you think, insisted Joseph.

'A true woodsman is as observant as a hawk, and as good at following a trail as a blood-hound. You can't learn these things in a week or two.'

'Now, Joe, don't worry the lad,' said the widow. 'Mr. Herriot, he is not so mighty clever in these things as he would have you believe. Keep your eyes open, and you will do—so at least my father used to say.'

'I think it's time I said "Good-night,"' said Dick. 'Certainly, I am very tired.'

'Mother,' said Archer, as soon as the boy had left them, 'would it grieve you if I went with the lad? I would gladly help him to find this Molly of his, if possible.'

Mrs. Archer was a brave woman at heart, and she was thankful to see her son making an effort to rouse himself from his own troubles.

'Go, my son,' she said, 'and God be with you.'

Early next morning Archer offered himself for service in the Indian war, but, with strange inconsistency, almost immediately regretted the step he had taken.

'After all,' he asked himself bitterly, 'what is this lad to me, that I should make myself his guardian? If he comes to grief through his ignorance or folly, 'tis the fault of those who sent him here.'

'I believe, mother,' he said with an air of vexation, two or three days after he had volunteered for service, 'that you will be glad to bid me farewell, to take my chance of being scalped by the redskins.'

'Nay; but I shall be glad, I trust, to welcome you back a new man.'

'Mother, don't you know that many of those who go into the Indian country return, new men perhaps, but worse men than they went? That is one thing that I dread — if I come across Red-Star or any of his band, God only knows whether I, too, may not prove myself a savage.'

Archer's face was livid even in the red fire-light.

'My son, that must not be,' replied his mother firmly. 'Does not our Master bid us forgive our enemies? Did He not Himself forgive His murderers? No, no, Joseph; I believe that after these many wasted years you will yet make a noble use of the time that remains to you.'

Joseph Archer did not answer. Something in his mother's words reminded him of the old hopes and resolutions of twenty years ago. Everything good seemed to have crumbled into dust with the awful wreck of his home; but, for almost the first time since the blow fell, he wished that he had played his part more nobly, and had refused to be so utterly beaten by misfortune.

As his mother watched him, a new light came into his eyes, and a new colour into his cheeks. He looked brighter for that moment than he had looked for many a long dreary year.

'I'll do something yet, mother,' he said slowly. 'If I can do nothing else, I'll strive to help this lad.'

'Well, there's a blessing for those who give even a cup of cold water to one of Christ's little ones, and

it's plain enough that Dick needs looking after, said Mrs. Archer. 'He's a good lad, but easily imposed on.'

'That's because he has spent all his life in London. What can one expect?'

CHAPTER VIII

THE MARCH INTO THE WILDERNESS

WHEN Dick enlisted, he fondly hoped that the army would march upon the Indian encampments without delay, but he was doomed to disappointment. Evidently the people of Pennsylvania were not enthusiastic concerning the campaign, for eight or nine weeks went by, after the passing of the Bill to raise the thousand men, before the number could be completed. The delay was not altogether disadvantageous to Dick, however, for he learnt many things that were afterwards useful to him.

Archer played the part of instructor with zeal, and was almost more pleased than Dick himself, when he showed signs of becoming a good shot, and a passable woodsman in other respects.

The Pennsylvanian men were to assemble at Carlisle, a place about a hundred and twenty miles west of Philadelphia ; and on the morning after their arrival there Dick came to Joseph Archer with a troubled face.

'Joe,' he said, 'I have just discovered that Hunter Jim and his friend, Sam Turner, are here amongst the troops.'

'Well, they'll have no chance to harm or hinder you in your search,' replied Archer calmly. 'Take no notice of them.'

'That they won't permit. When Jim caught sight of me, he broke out into swearing, and vowed he'd "be even with me." Why he should count I've injured him 'tis hard to see.'

'I suppose the gang blamed him for your escape; and, most likely, their reproaches were none of the mildest.'

'It is true enough that, if it hadn't been for him, I might have starved to death in that chair,' said Dick. 'I had hoped, when we left Philadelphia, that I should have seen the last of him.'

'Don't worry over him, lad. He is not worth it. Keep up a brave heart and obey orders, and all will go well. By-the-way, I hope you wrote to Mrs. Marling before you left Philadelphia?'

'Yes, indeed I did. I told her everything. Oh, I do hope I shall succeed in finding Molly! These delays are maddening.'

Two or three days later Colonel Bouquet, a fine-looking man of about forty years of age, arrived to take command. He was accompanied by Governor Penn, who, on the anniversary of the notable battle of Bushy Run, addressed the two battalions of troops from Pennsylvania.

'The necessity is laid upon us,' he said, 'of chastising the Indians for their repeated and unprovoked barbarities on the inhabitants of this province—a just resentment of which, added to the remembrance of the loyalty and courage of our provincial troops on former occasions, I do not doubt will animate you to do honour to your country. You cannot but hope to be crowned with success, as you are to be united with the regular troops, and under the same able commander, who by themselves on this very day,

the memorable 5th of August in last year, sustained the repeated attacks of the savages, and obtained a complete victory over them.'

The troops cheered him enthusiastically. Even Joseph Archer joined with the rest, while Dick shouted himself hoarse in his wild excitement at the thought of so soon beginning his long-delayed search for Molly.

But Governor Penn had something more to say. When the last huzza had died away, he added:

'I like not to think it needful, but I must remind you of the exemplary punishments that will be inflicted for the grievous crime of desertion, if any of you are capable of so far forgetting your solemn oath and duty to your king and country, as to be involved in it.'

'Surely,' said Dick afterwards, 'it was not necessary for his excellency the governor to warn us of the punishments due to deserters. Who would be so base?'

'Probably one out of every four or five at the least, said Archer drily. 'I trust it will not be you or me, lad.'

'I have no fear of that.'

'But,' continued Archer, 'it is not every one who has his Molly or Bessy or Sally to think of, and talk of fighting is very different from the doing of it. I suspect the first few days' march will be enough for some.'

'The cowards!' said Dick. 'When they enlisted, they should have expected hardships.'

'Why, yes, that's all very well, but the imagination of a thing is a mighty different matter to the reality. If you don't feel as if you would like to run away

yourself at the first puff of smoke, my name's not Joe Archer.'

'Sir, I don't see why you should thus insult me,' cried Dick indignantly.

'I'm not insulting you, lad. I don't say—no, nor expect—that you will run. I believe you'll stand to be shot at, with your legs quaking under you, and your heart in your mouth. I don't think that man is the bravest who has no appreciation of danger; and that there is danger with a few hundred Indians popping at you from behind the bushes no sane man can deny. I well remember the first time I was under fire.'

'Do you? and did you quake?' asked Dick, somewhat mollified.

'That I did. I was afraid some one would see me a-shaking; but, at least, no one remarked on it.'

'Well,' said Dick, after a pause, 'if any one runs, I hope that Sam and Hunter Jim may be of the party, though I fear it is scarcely loyal to wish any of his majesty's forces to desert.'

'I don't think you need hope it, Dick. Those two have plenty of brute courage, and they dearly love fighting for fighting's sake. But strive to forget them, lad.'

The next few days passed in busy preparation for the march. At last all was in readiness, and the troops set out, carrying with them as little baggage as possible. They only marched ten or twelve miles a day, but Archer's prediction was more than verified. By the time they reached Fort Loudon, a ruinous little wooden building, not quite fifty miles from Carlisle, over two hundred of the thousand men were missing, having deserted by the way; and to fill their

places Colonel Bouquet was obliged to beg help from the sister colony of Virginia.

At Fort Loudon he heard that Colonel Bradstreet, who had been appointed to lead another army against the Indians on the lakes, had made peace; but as the savages were still murdering any white men who fell into their hands, and as Bradstreet had no right to make peace on his own authority, Bouquet refused to recognise his treaty, and still pressed forward.

The progress of the little army was very slow, in spite of the energy of its commander.

It seemed to Dick that they were months on the way. The monotony of the long march through the wilderness was broken by a week's delay at Fort Bedford, where they waited for a body of Indian allies, who never came; but that week tried Dick's faith and patience more than any other part of the journey. He feared that they would never have time to march into the Indian country before winter. And Archer, like one of Job's comforters, constantly assured him that he might as well give up all thought of finding Molly that year.

So far the Indians had made no attempt to prevent their advance, though they had killed a few stragglers; and Dick had still to learn what it was to be under fire, when they reached Fort Pitt in the middle of September.

This strong fortification, with it great ramparts of earth and brick, was built in a picturesque situation on a little tongue of land dividing the waters of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, ere they met to form the magnificent Ohio. When Dick first saw the place, the surrounding forest had scarcely begun to lose its summer green; but before he left it, two weeks

later, the trees had put on all the glory of their autumn garb. Dick, fresh from the dingy streets and sombre hues of London, spent many an hour of the days during which they lingered at Fort Pitt gazing and wondering at the brilliancy of the forest-clad hills. But still he longed to be at work, and still he feared that it would be impossible to reach Red-Star's camp in time.

He did not dare, and indeed the soldiers were forbidden, to wander from the shelter of the fort, for fear of the Indians, who were hovering about, doing all the mischief they dared. But for his own part Dick feared Hunter Jim and his companion more than any number of Indians—probably because, as Archer said, 'he knew what they were capable of, and had scarcely seen an Indian at close quarters,' save a few unhappy converts of the Moravians who had taken refuge in Philadelphia, to avoid the cruelty of some of the border ruffians.

Three Delaware Indians had indeed ventured into the camp; but being evidently spies, two were kept close prisoners, and the third was sent back to his people with a message of warning and a promise of mercy, if they kept the peace and brought back the prisoners.

In the meantime additional forces had arrived at the fort, and on October 2nd Colonel Bouquet gave orders to march. His little army now numbered fifteen hundred men, and was accompanied by droves of sheep and cattle, and a long train of pack-horses, laden with baggage and provisions.

Dick enjoyed the march through the woods, which were often so thick that the pioneers had to cut a way with axes; but the men were ordered to observe the

strictest silence, and again and again the lad was tempted by some strange sight or sound to break this hard command. All went well, however, till the fourth day of the march, and Archer was becoming almost complimentary over Dick's soldierly qualities, when a sudden misfortune happened to him.

CHAPTER IX

LOST AND FOUND

THE army had just crossed a tributary of the Ohio, called Beaver Creek, by a somewhat deep and stony ford. It had been a difficult matter to induce the poor beasts, brought to furnish subsistence for the men, to enter the cold and rapid water, and when they had crossed it their drivers attempted in vain to get them into marching order. Suddenly two or three of the creatures broke through the line and dashed wildly off into the woods. Their drivers gave chase; and Dick, though it was no business of his, followed them, thinking it necessary to give assistance, and still unable to grasp the principle that a soldier must not presume to act without orders.

The woods were thick and the trees tall, and in the interest of the pursuit Dick soon lost sight of his companions; but one of the unfortunate animals, brought so far to be slaughtered, was still plainly in sight; and the lad, making a circuit, contrived to turn it back in the direction of the ford. He was following at full speed, when he tripped over a fallen branch, and knocked his head so sharply against a tree that for a few moments he was quite stunned.

When at last he rose to his feet, neither man nor

beast was to be seen. He set off briskly in the direction in which he supposed the army to have gone; but after walking for a full half-hour, he saw no sign of the troops, nor of the three parallel lines in which they always marched.

It was very evident that he had lost himself, but he had no idea yet that the matter could be serious, and after resting a moment he set off in a new direction, as he supposed. Alas! another half-hour's walk brought him round to the very tree against which he had struck his head.

Dick sat down on the log he had stumbled over, and thought deeply. The result of his meditations was that he climbed a tall tree, and tried from that elevated position to make out either the creek or the army's line of march. But he could see nothing to guide him.

He came down rather crestfallen, and perhaps feeling a little alarmed. For the third time he started from the fatal tree; but remembering that he had heard that, by fixing the eye on some particular point in advance, it was possible, even in the woods, to proceed in a straight line, he tried to follow this new principle. It was so far successful that he never saw his old tree again; but as for finding the tracks he wished, he was forced to admit that it was a failure.

By this time the light was fading, and he began to contemplate the prospect of having to spend the night alone in the woods with anything but pleasure. The air was growing damp and chilly; but fearing that Indians might be lurking close at hand, he did not attempt to light a fire, though he had both flint and steel in his knapsack.

Fortunately he had also a supply of provisions, which, with good care, might be made to last for a day or two.

After his meagre supper he made one more attempt to find the path. He walked till it was quite dark, and then lay down on a heap of dry leaves that had gathered in a hollow, with his head on his knapsack. He had carefully weighed the relative dangers of lying on the ground exposed to the attacks of bears or Indians, or climbing into a tree, with the risk of going to sleep and falling out of it, and had at length decided in favour of the former alternative.

He did not sleep very well, however. He was cold, and the strange rustlings and creakings of the forest made him fancy all sorts of uncomfortable things. When he did fall asleep, he dreamt that Hunter Jim was sitting on his chest, while an Indian tried to scalp him; and he jumped up with a start, to find himself alone beneath the stars.

When morning dawned at last, he was so stiff that he could hardly walk; but he plodded slowly on till he reached a little creek, where he refreshed himself with a good wash and a draught of water. He tried to follow its winding course, thinking that it probably flowed into Beaver Creek, and that he might find the path the army had taken; but the underbrush was so thick that he made very slow progress.

A few more weary hours of daylight, and then came another night in the forest; but this time he slept heavily, and did not wake till the sun was high in the heavens, for he was completely exhausted.

Once more he rose and dragged his bruised feet through the tangle of fallen branches and prickly briers. The way scemed harder than ever. He was almost in despair, when, after pushing through a thicket of raspberry bushes, growing tall and high in the virgin soil, he came suddenly on a road.

The road; for side by side, not far apart, ran the three distinct paths. For an instant Dick stood wondering which way the army had gone; then with a sudden inspiration stooped down and looked at the tracks of men and beasts. Yes, it was plain enough! He was so overjoyed to think that there was no longer nced for doubt in which direction to travel that he actually tricd to run. But his energy was short-lived. By noon he could hardly crawl, though he struggled on, hoping against hope that he might overtake the army.

For the third time since he had lost himself thc sun sank down. In the dusk Dick stumbled forward, till a sudden fear crossed his mind that he might lose the path again. Thcn he once more lay down to slecp.

At dawn he was awakened suddenly by the sound of voices close beside him, and he sprang up to find himself in the centre of a group of Indians, with painted faces and heads decked with feathers. They spoke quickly, and Dick guessed that they were discussing him. Slightly refreshed by his night's sleep, he looked about for some means of escape, but was convinced that it was hopeless.

From their wild looks and gestures he gucssed that one or two of the savages were for killing him outright, but he fancied that some of the party thought this imprudent. One dignified-looking old

Indian, with an imposing head-dress of turkey feathers, made a long speech, which was of course unintelligible to the young Englishman. Nevertheless, the old man's tones were so calm and argumentative that Dick had no doubt that he was pleading on the side of mercy. At last there was a general grunt of assent. Dick was helped to his feet, his sword was taken away, his knapsack was rifled, and his few possessions were divided among his captors.

Dick bore all this patiently, hoping that submission would induce the Indians to be merciful. Their next proceeding, however, was to tie his hands and fasten a thong round his neck, by which it appeared he was to be led like some dumb animal. He felt, indeed, very much like one, for when he tried to protest against this treatment they could not understand him.

Happily for Dick, the Indians went that day neither far nor fast; and when they stopped to rest at noon, the old man who had befriended him fed him liberally with some strange-looking but not unpalatable stew. At night he was tied to a stake securely fixed in the ground, but slept so well, in spite both of his bonds and his anxiety, that his strength began to return. This was fortunate, for after the first day the Indians made such long and rapid marches through the woods that the lad had much difficulty in keeping up with them. Once or twice, when he stumbled or halted, his driver tried to quicken his steps with a club; but Dick still strove to conceal his indignation.

He lost count of the days spent on the journey; but two or three times, when he was beginning to

despair of escape, fresh hope was kindled in his heart by some faint sound in the distance, that made him fancy they were following closely on the track of the English army. The behaviour of the Indians confirmed this impression. They marched with extra caution, lighting no camp-fires even to cook their food, and at night took double care to secure their prisoner. This was all the more irksome to Dick because it seemed that he must be so near those who would have rescued him, had they but known of his unhappy position. He was miserable, too, to think that, after all his travelling and all his efforts, he must fail in his mission. He was as powerless as Molly herself.

As he toiled along the narrow forest paths, he thought often of Mrs. Marling, and wondered whether he should ever see her again, or whether he too, like the child he had come to seek, would have to spend a great part of his life amongst the Indians.

Presently a change came in his fate. One evening, just at sunset, they entered a little Indian village on the bank of a small stream. The whole population came out to welcome the party with wild demonstrations of joy. Dick had what he fancied a very bad quarter of an hour; but if he had known how the Indians often treated their prisoners, he would have thought he had escaped lightly.

True, he was ignominiously led from tent to tent, and exhibited as an object of interest; but he was not beaten nor tortured, as would probably have been the case if the Indians had not known that Bouquet was steadily pushing his way into the country they had thought impregnable.

A crowd of children followed him wherever he

was taken, laughing and jesting at his woebegone appearance. Suddenly, to his great astonishment and disgust, he caught sight of a fair-haired, white-skinned girl of about twelve years old, absolutely shrieking with laughter, as she pointed him out to her companions.

The child was dressed like the Indian women, in a wretched old blanket, and the very sight of her made Dick's heart stand still. Could it be that Molly would be anything like that? If she was, how could he take her back to dear old Mrs. Marling?

After a while his keeper grew weary of the amusement of playing showman, and, to Dick's dismay, tied him to a tree, and left him to the tender mercies of the children.

To his horror, the little white savage shouted some Indian words at the top of her voice, and many more children came running out of the tents and from the woods around. They began to dance round the captive, with a very good imitation of the war-dance practised by their elders. But this was too mild an amusement, and an instant later some one was struck with the bright idea of using him as a target at which to aim sticks and stones.

Dick felt like a baited bear, and it might have gone hard with him, but at that moment a woman came out of one of the tents, and indignantly sent the children about their business.

Then, to Dick's astonishment and pleasure, she addressed him in English, and he saw that she too was white.

'God help you, sir!' she murmured. 'They dare

not really harm you, now that Colonel Bouquet is so near; but they love to torment anything that has life.'

Dick had not heard a word he could understand since the unlucky day he lost his way, and now he could hardly find voice to speak.

'Madam, I thank you,' he answered. 'Are you sure that Colonel Bouquet is close at hand?'

'I hope so. I pray every day that he may be brought here safely, to rescue me and all the other poor captives. I have been here four long years, as nearly as I can reckon.'

'I have been a prisoner little more than as many days, but they have seemed months to me. Madam, whose village is this?'

'It is a Delaware village. The English call the chief Red-Star.'

CHAPTER X

IN CAPTIVITY

DICK would gladly have told the English woman the story of his search for Molly Marling, but she was on her way to fetch a load of firewood from the forest, and dared not linger. The lad watched anxiously for her return; but as he saw her in the distance, his keeper came back, and, leading him into one of the odd-shaped, conical tents near by, fastened him as usual to a strong stake. Dick passed a restless night, for the little tent was soon crowded with Indians, and was so close and hot that he could scarcely breathe; but under more favourable circumstances he would not have slept. He was so much excited with the discovery he had made.

In the morning, to his great relief, he was again taken into the open air. Happily most of the women and children had gone into the woods to gather blackberries, so the captive was left in peace, after the men of the tribe had had another discussion concerning his fate—at least, so he judged from their looks and gestures. There seemed to be a difference of opinion concerning him; but, whatever it was, all agreed that it was necessary to keep him still 'in durance vile.' Before the men went away

they shouted to the child whom Dick called the little white savage, and ordered her to watch that he made no attempt to escape.

She was evidently proud of the trust reposed in her, and, sitting down on a fallen tree in front of Dick, for a full half-hour she hardly took her eyes off him.

Dick returned the gaze with interest. He decided at last that some people might call her pretty, and he wondered sadly if she could be Molly Marling. But he put away the idea with disgust. It seemed like desecration to think of this dirty little savage in connection with Mrs. Marling, and he forgot that he had come to seek for Molly chiefly because she was supposed to be growing up in darkness and ignorance.

Presently the girl grew weary of watching him so passively, and, rising from her seat, broke a long switch from a tree, and advanced towards him. Dick thought she meant to beat him, and, though he did not fear what she could do, it made him miserable to see a white-skinned maiden so cruel. During the next half-hour, however, he began to respect her powers as a tormentor, and fervently hoped that he would never again be left at her mercy. She danced round him, laughing musically enough, now tickling his face with her long wand, now the back of his neck. Then, by way of variety, she struck him with all her force, or pelted him with fir-cones that lay too conveniently near. He began to wonder, with the superstition of the time, whether she was possessed by some evil spirit, and as she danced about him in the sunlight he gazed at her with ever-deepening horror. Suddenly she threw

away her switch, and, perching on the log again, began to sing a wild Indian song. Her voice echoed through the forest as clear and sweet as that of a bird, and Dick wondered at her heartlessness more than ever.

After a while she tired of her singing, as she had tired of her cruel play, and, throwing herself down on the turf in the sunshine, she was soon fast asleep. Now she really did look pretty, with her fair hair falling round her, and a half-smile on her rosy lips. And Dick, in a kind of agony, prayed to God that this might not be the child he had come to seek.

In spite of the bright sunshine there was a touch of frost in the air, and he tried in vain to draw the few rags his persecutors had left him closer round his shivering body. If it had not been for the cold he could have slept, but as he could not move from the shadow of the tree sleep was impossible.

It was nearly noon now. The straggling row of dark-coloured conical tents stood boldly out against the background of gold-and-crimson maples. The little stream flashed and flickered in the sunlight, and overhead was a sky so deeply, brightly blue that Dick almost forgot his misery in wonder at the glory of it. In his childish days he had learned from Mrs. Marling to associate blue skies with thoughts of God and heaven, and now, in spite of his utter weariness of body and soul, a strange peace stole over him. Once more he was sure—what he sometimes forgot—that God was able and willing to take care of His children in the best way, and that, if He allowed them to suffer pain or to fail in their work, it was

for their good. Dick never doubted that he might claim this fatherly love from the God Who had created him, and had sent His Son to die for his sins; but till now he had hardly realised that this glorious truth must be equally true for every other child of man. With this new thought in his mind, he looked at the wild little figure at his feet with different eyes. What right had he to turn away from this child because she was unkempt and untaught? The Son of God had not despised the lowliest of His creatures—nay, it was for the lost sheep He came. So Dick tried to reason with himself; and yet, when he thought he had conquered his feelings of repulsion, he still hoped that this particular little savage might not be Molly Marling.

His jailer had been sleeping for an hour, when he saw a solitary figure coming towards him from the little village. It was the English woman. In her hand she carried a wooden bowl, and she whispered, with a warning glance at the sleeping child:

'I have brought you something to eat, sir.'

'Thank you, ma'am,' said Dick gratefully.

'Hush, be careful, or you will wake her. Happily she knows no English, so that if she hears she will not understand.'

'Madam, I am very thankful to you; but what would happen if they found you here?'

'They would not hurt me. I have some knowledge of medicines, and they think I know more than I do. Since the first month or two they have treated me with kindness; but I long to see my husband and child again (two of my little ones

were killed the night I was taken), and were it not for this news of Colonel Bouquet I should try to escape.'

'Then you think he will surely reach us?'

'I hope so—at least, I mean to wait and see. And, sir, I advise you to be patient. I might set you free, but at present I fear you would surely be retaken, and I trust neither your bondage nor mine can last long now.'

Dick sighed. 'I feel as if I can scarcely endure it, even for a few hours more; but of course, if I must, I can. Indeed, I would not have you run into danger for my sake.'

The woman watched him for a moment in silence; then said:

'If you wish, I will take the risk; but should you try, and fail, to escape, your case might be harder than you can guess. I have seen things since I came here that even now make me faint to think of. However, I will untie those cords if you desire.'

'In one sense I can't deny that I do most earnestly desire it,' said Dick, with a rueful glance at his bonds; 'but I know you are right, and I will be as patient as I can. Besides, of all places in the world, I have long wanted to come to Red-Star's camp. Indeed, I have run much risk to get here, though now I can do nothing.'

'Why did you wish to come here? Have you a friend amongst the captives?'

Dick briefly told his story, asking, as he finished:

'Do you think, ma'am, that there is any fear that that is the child?'

'I can't tell, sir; but there are half a dozen children

here about her age, who have some time been stolen from the settlements.'

'Well, from all I have seen,' said Dick, 'I hope it may be one of the others. This morning she acted as if she were possessed by some cruel demon.'

'What can you expect?' asked the woman bitterly. 'That child, whoever she is, was brought here so young that she has forgotten her name, her parents, and her mother-tongue. To all intents she is an Indian, as much as any child born in the camp. God help her, poor thing! I thank Him, sir, that my sweet babes were slain rather than brought into this place of evil. At the time I would have given anything to save them from the lingering cruel deaths they suffered, but now I know that even that was merciful compared to what might have been. I think I should have gone mad, had I seen them taught the horrid deeds that I have witnessed here. The only wonder is, that any grow up merciful and kind.'

'I sometimes forget all that, ma'am. It was so horrid to me to see a maiden tormenting a poor wretch, just because he was helpless, that I was ready to hate her, and even now I hope she is not Molly Marling.'

'I blame you not for that, sir. I, myself, should dread having to teach Sun-in-the-Hair, as they call her, to live as a white maiden ought. Poor child! she is wilder than any little redskin in the camp. Now, there is another child of about the same age, who has been brought up here, and, in spite of all the evil she has seen, she is sweet and gentle still. The name they have given her means "Violet-Eyes." I

wish you could see her. She is a pretty child. Perhaps she may be your Molly—at least, she was stolen away from the settlements about the same time as the other.'

'From what you say, I do hope she is Molly. Oh, I wish I could see her!'

'If I have opportunity, I will send her to you. Look, the children are returning. I must leave you; for if the Indians see me talking to you, they may take it into their heads to put it out of my power to help you.'

'You have helped me wonderfully, ma'am. You have given me hope that some good may come after all my toils. Please don't forget to send Violet-Eyes to see me.'

'No. Good-bye!' and Dick's one friend, as it seemed, in Red-Star's camp hurried away.

A few moments later his little jailer awoke, but, wilful as she was, did not dare to leave her post, until she was called away by one of the men who had set her to watch the prisoner.

She had not been gone many minutes when another girl of about the same age came running towards him from the camp, which was no longer noiseless and deserted. She, too, was white-skinned and fair-haired, and her eyes were of so bright a blue that Dick was quite sure that she was Violet-Eyes. She was a little taller, and much prettier, in his opinion, than Sun-in-the-Hair, and the lad was suddenly convinced that the new-comer must be the child he sought.

She looked pitifully at him, and held to his lips a bowl of cool water fresh from the brook. Dick was not thirsty; but he would not seem ungrateful

for this little act of kindness, and drank to please her.

The girl smiled at him shyly, and then sat down close beside him, and gently stroked his cheek; but she said nothing, and Dick fancied that she did not understand his thanks. Surely there could be no doubt — this was Mrs. Marling's grandchild!

CHAPTER XI

VIOLET-EYES

THAT night there was wild excitement in the Indian camp. Late in the afternoon three men, apparently strangers, entered the little village. They were breathless with haste. Before the sun set all the elders of the tribe were called together, and a solemn conclave was held in a tent, considerably larger than the rest. It was not far from Dick's tree. He could hear the subdued murmur of voices, and he wondered anxiously what could have happened.

To his great delight, the white woman, returning from her second journey into the forest for firewood, stopped as she passed to tell him that the English army was within a day's march of them.

'Then we are as good as free!' exclaimed Dick eagerly.

The woman shook her head.

'Not yet,' she answered. 'Look at that squaw yonder with the little fellow in her arms. She has no children of her own, and she has nursed and cared for that little lad since her husband murdered his parents three years ago. She loves him as if he were her own. There is nothing she would not do for him, and now she is heart-broken at the

thought that he may be taken from her. So it is with many other families; and if the captives are not beloved, they can be made useful. I have carried wood and water for my tyrants these four years. I have worked for them, taken care of their children, and tended them when they were sick. I tell you, sir, they will not give us up without a struggle.'

'What do they propose to do, madam?'

'They talk of moving farther west; but if so, they would lose their winter corn, for they could not carry it off with them at such short notice. They are in grievous trouble what to do. The hot-headed young men are for holding the captives at all risks, but the older men think they cannot do it. I hope and pray that their councils may be followed.'

That night Dick's keeper forgot him, but an hour later the English woman came back, bringing a bowl of hot soup.

'I fear,' she said, 'that they have decided on carrying us farther into the wilds. Oh, I shall die, I think, if Colonel Bouquet does not reach us! It would be too hard to be disappointed now.'

'Ma'am,' said Dick eagerly, 'if you will dare unfasten my bonds, I will strive to reach the army and inform Colonel Bouquet of our plight.'

'But you are no woodsman, sir. Is there any hope of your finding your way? If you fail, our condition will be worse than ever.'

Dick sighed.

'I will do my best, ma'am. I can but try.'

The woman hesitated. A horrible vision of the burning of a prisoner who had tried to escape haunted her; but surely the lad would be careful.

'Oh, ma'am, be quick!' urged Dick. 'We may never have another chance like this.'

At his entreaty she bent down and tried to untie the leather thongs, but the knots were drawn so tight that she could do nothing with them.

'It's of no use,' she said at last; 'this is only wasting time. I will get a knife, but don't be alarmed if I cannot come straight back. I fear I may be watched.'

A dreary hour passed. The woman did not return; but the sound of debate in the 'council-house' did not cease, and while the speech-making continued Dick felt that there was still hope of escape.

He had begun to think that some accident must have happened, when some one touched his elbow.

'Is it you, ma'am? Have you got the knife?' whispered Dick eagerly.

'No, it's me,' said a voice, with what Dick thought a foreign accent. 'Mrs. Freeland couldn't come. They kept her to look after a sick baby, but she sent me instead.'

'Who are you?' said Dick, with a sudden thrill of hope.

'Violet-Eyes,' said the girl. 'Here's the knife; it's very sharp. Now, where shall I cut?'

'Stop,' whispered Dick. 'Are you not afraid they'll punish you?'

'I don't care; they will never know, if we are careful. Tell me what to do.'

Sharp as the knife was, the girl found it hard to cut the thongs; but she managed it at last, and Dick stretched his stiffened limbs with a sense of wild pleasure in his freedom. Then he blamed himself for his folly in lingering even for a moment so near the place where his enemies were assembled.

'She says you must go north until you come to the wide creek about half a mile from here. Then you must cross it, and go east till you reach the camp of the English,' explained Violet-Eyes rapidly. 'Look; here is meat and corn-cake for your journey. Don't linger.'

'But how must I reach the creek? And I hate to leave you here. They are so cruel; they may kill you if they find out,' said Dick. 'Come with me, Violet-Eyes, and I will take you back to your own people. They sent me all across the Big-water for you,' he added impulsively.

'Mrs. Freeland will weep if I leave her,' said the girl, hesitating.

'She wants us to go to the English camp and tell the leader she is here. Oh! do come; I fear I shall lose my way again, and be brought back here,' said Dick, for he felt instinctively that to appeal to her pity was the surest plan for getting his own way.

'Well, I will,' said Violet-Eyes. 'Come'; and, taking him by the hand as if he were another child, she led him rapidly into the woods.

Dick wished to talk; but Violet, as he soon began

to call her, held up her hand warningly, and, feeling that they were safer under her guidance than his, he meekly obeyed her gesture.

She walked quickly but noiselessly along the narrow path worn through the forest to the creek of which she had spoken. Dick tried to follow her example; but go as cautiously as he would, he always seemed to step on any dry branch that lay across the track, and caused an appalling rustling amongst the dead leaves. More than once Violet looked at him anxiously; but as he was evidently doing his utmost to make no noise, wisely forbore to add to his nervousness by useless admonitions.

Suddenly she pressed his hand more tightly, and, again signing to him to be silent, drew him away from the path into a thicket. She crouched down on the ground, and Dick did the same, though he wondered what she had heard or seen to alarm her.

He had not long to wait. Peeping through the stems of the bare raspberry canes, he saw what made him thankful that he had not had to trust to his senses. Only a few yards away there was a little spot clear of trees; and, as they watched, there moved across this space at least half a dozen Indians.

Their feathered head-dresses showed black against the sky; but Dick, trembling at their narrow escape, was in no mood for very accurate observation. Sooner than he would have thought it safe Violet rose to her feet, and they went quickly on their way towards the creek. They crossed it without further adventure, though the girl evidently feared that they

might stumble on some one whom they would wish to avoid.

Here Dick would have been hopelessly puzzled without his companion, for five different paths branched off into the forest, and to him there seemed no better reason for taking one than another. But Violet wasted no time. They pushed rapidly on, and before dawn were three or four miles on their way.

Dick's spirits were rising, and at last he ventured to break the silence in which they had been travelling all night; but his guide would have none of such imprudence, and deigned no reply to his remarks but an imperious sign for silence. The fact was, she knew that they were approaching another village of Delaware Indians, and feared that at any moment they might come unawares upon some of the tribe. So far, however, she had seen no signs of them, but she made a considerable detour to avoid them.

Presently they came to another open space in the forest, like a great meadow. Violet hesitated for a moment whether to cross it, or to go round through the woods; but as they were sure to be pursued, every moment was precious, and she decided to take the risk.

They were just about half-way across, right in the open space, where there was not even a knoll or a bush for cover, when Dick caught sight of a little procession of Indians emerging from the forest on the opposite side of the meadow.

Violet broke silence now.

'They have seen us,' she said. 'Pretend not to be frightened, and I think they will let us pass. Look,

THERE WAS A FEW MINUTES' CONVERSATION BETWEEN VIOLET AND THE OLD CHIEF.

there are women and children as well as men, and they have their pots and kettles and all the corn they can carry. They are flying from the English. I trust the army is close at hand.'

Dick did his best to look brave, but the memory of his sufferings was so fresh upon him that, if it had not been for his companion, he would have fled at once.

'Are you sure this is the best thing to do?' he asked humbly, as the long procession came slowly nearer.

'The only thing,' said Violet. But she herself looked anxious. 'Talk now—say anything you like.'

Dick heroically strove to obey, but under the circumstances conversation was too much of a strain. He was relieved when at last they met the cavalcade.

There was a few minutes' conference between Violet and an old chief decorated with a necklace of bears' claws; then, to Dick's intense surprise, they were allowed to pass unmolested.

'How did you manage it?' asked Dick, in wonder and admiration.

'I told them that Red-Star had sent you with a message to the English chief, and that I had come to show you the way.'

'But that wasn't true, Violet.'

'They wouldn't have let us pass if I had told them what was true,' said Violet, with the air of one uttering an unanswerable argument. 'But now we must hasten all the more; for when they meet Red-Star's men, as they will, they will tell them where they saw us. There is one comfort, Big-Crow told

me where to find the English captain, and he says we may meet some of the soldiers in about six hours from now, if we walk fast.'

The prospect of walking fast for another six hours was not encouraging; but Dick did not intend to let himself be outdone by a girl if he could help it, and a few minutes later his stern task-mistress called a halt for rest and refreshment.

CHAPTER XII

THE HOLLOW LOG

THREE hours after their repast they reached a stream, which was deep, but not very wide, and the girl asked abruptly:

'Can you swim, Dick?'

'Yes,' he replied, thankful to be able to answer in the affirmative.

'We shall need to swim here,' she continued; 'but I fear I hear some one following us. Make haste; let us get over, if we can, before they see us.'

They did their utmost, but the current was so strong, and the opposite bank so high, that they lost some precious moments in landing.

As they scrambled up the steep slope, Violet exclaimed:

'There they are! Red-Star amongst them. They have seen us. Make haste; we must hide quickly.'

'Where?' asked Dick in dismay.

The girl did not answer, but hurried forward along the river-bank, looking eagerly to right and left for some possible place of concealment. Suddenly she stopped, and pointed to the hollow trunk of a great tree that lay on the ground.

'Could you squeeze in there?' she said. 'Be quick.'

'But where will you go?'

'Never mind me. I can easily hide. Be quick,' she repeated.

Dick obeyed.

One end of the trunk was still solid, but Dick pushed his way as far down as possible. Fortunately he had gone in feet foremost.

'Can you go no farther?' demanded Violet.

'No,' said Dick, after an ineffectual struggle that threatened to break his uncomfortable refuge open.

'Then be still. Don't stir. I'm going to fill up this end with leaves.'

'But why don't you hide yourself?'

'There isn't room for both in here. I'm all right. Whatever you do, don't stir till I come back for you, unless you hear me shrick three times. I shall make as much noise as I can, if they catch me; but you must not think they are hurting me. Poison-Arrow is with them, and he is always kind to me. But if I do shriek, you will know that I cannot come back, and you must lie quiet here till you are sure they are gone; then you must keep straight on along the river till you see a path into the woods, between two big cedars, and that will take you straight to the English camp.'

Not waiting for Dick to make any reply to all this, Violet threw a great bundle of dried leaves into the open end of the log; then hurried away with so light a step, that Dick heard no sound from the moment the leaves ceased rustling.

His hiding-place was exceedingly cramping and uncomfortable, but he was so anxious about the safety of his companion that he almost forgot his own feelings.

He dreaded and expected to hear Violet's three

shrieks; but the weary moments wore on, and he heard nothing save a squirrel busily gathering its winter store of nuts, and the ripple of the river against the rocks in its course.

Dick could see as little as he could hear, thanks to Violet's precautions to conceal his hiding-place. He began to think he would be too stiff to walk, if he had to remain in the log much longer; but he heroically resolved to obey his guide's instructions to the letter, cost what it might.

Suddenly he moved involuntarily; for though he had heard no one approach, some one uttered a loud shout, close to his head, as it seemed. For a moment he was so startled that he fancied it must be Violet, in danger after all. But this was only for a moment, for the voice was harsh and hoarse, and very different to the girl's sweet tones.

Dick's alarm was increased when the shout was repeated, louder than ever. He was sure that his hiding-place must have been discovered, but he lay like one paralysed, and scarcely dared to breathe.

Presently there was an answering shout from a little distance. Then the rest of his pursuers came nearer, and he heard a long whispered consultation, of which the only intelligible sound was the word 'Dick,' which his captors had picked up from Mrs. Freeland.

There was one comfort—they evidently did not yet know where he was; but by this time Dick had gained such respect for the acuteness of the senses of the redmen that he hardly dared to hope that they would fail to find him. As the talk went on above him, he occupied himself with gloomy forebodings as to his fate. It seemed to him that death

itself would be little harder than to have to go back to the miserable captivity he had endured for the last few days.

Soon, to his horror, some one flung himself down heavily on the very log where he lay concealed. Dick trembled, and prayed to God that his frail shelter might not give way altogether. A second later the hollow shell received another shock, as Poison-Arrow seated himself beside his friend, a little nearer the rotten end of the log.

Dick could not move now, even if he had not had such strong motives to keep still, for the weight of the men above him had pressed the hollow trunk all out of shape, and Poison-Arrow was really sitting on their late captive's back.

Fortunately the Indian was not a heavy man but Dick feared that he and the old tree might give way together. He braced himself on his elbows as well as he could, but it was a tiring attitude. Poison-Arrow seemed painfully well satisfied with his position, and though the others moved he did not. Judging from the sounds, the men must have stopped to take refreshment before continuing the search, and Dick thought their hunger would never be satisfied.

Meanwhile, the unintelligible debate continued. Poison-Arrow had much to say, sometimes bringing his fist down on the old log with an emphasis that Dick thought most misplaced.

But there was worse to come. The next speaker was a nervous man, like some more civilised orators, and when he tried to express his thoughts his fingers began to play involuntarily with his tomahawk. At first he was excited, and waved his weapon wildly

round his head in a fashion that might have struck terror into Dick's soul, had he been able to watch him. But, of course, he was not; so he was spared that alarm. By-and-by, however, the speaker became argumentative, gently tapping his tomahawk against the tree. Dick thought the Indians were kicking it, and wondered indignantly that grown-up men could act so childishly. The next instant he felt a sharp prick in his arm.

He jumped to the conclusion that, after all, they had discovered him, and were just keeping him in suspense from their love of torturing. He expected that the other tomahawks would be through the rotten wood in a moment, and was inclined to risk letting Poison-Arrow come down with a crash. But the orator was droning on so sleepily, and the second little prick, which occurred at that instant, was so much more gentle than the first, that the poor victim in the log acquitted his tormentor of bad intentions, and concluded that he had merely been prodding the soft bark in absence of mind. At that instant Dick felt, however, that absence of mind absolutely amounted to a crime. If the speech continued, it was evident that one of two things must happen, both unwelcome to Dick—either he would be stabbed where he lay, or his precious shelter would be split open.

Fortunately it did not continue. After a grand flourish, in which the tomahawk was again flying round its owner's head, the speaker ceased. Poison-Arrow at last arose, and Dick breathed more freely; but, alas! the danger was not yet over.

Some one officiously began to rustle the leaves at the mouth of his retreat. The lad almost gave

himself up for lost; but, with a brief prayer for help, he drew himself more closely together, and, covering his face with his hands, laid his head in the dust into which the wood had crumbled.

The rustling continued; then a voice at the very entrance of his hole said something in the Delaware tongue. Dick would have given anything to know what. However, a moment later, his unconscious persecutors moved away; but he did not dare even to raise his head for many minutes after their departure.

At last he looked up, and was surprised to see that all the leaves had been moved, and that one of the Indians must have been looking right in upon him. The fact was that the trunk looked so dark, the hollow was so small, and Dick had been so motionless, that they had scarcely thought it worth while to look. They never guessed that an ignorant young Englishman, as they thought him, could show so much self-control and endurance.

Both these good qualities were pretty nearly exhausted, when Violet's sweet voice whispered:

'Are you all right, Dick?'

'Yes. May I come out?'

'Yes; come. They have gone back across the river. They may return; but I don't think they will. Can't you get out?'

'Yes; but I am very stiff. This hiding is terrible work.'

'I'll help you,' said Violet. 'Give me your hand. Now!'

Dick scrambled out at last.

'It was a capital hiding-place,' he said gratefully. 'I never should have thought of it.'

'Ah, but you see I've lived in the woods all my life,' said the girl modestly.

It was still early in the afternoon, but the forest was dark and gloomy.

Violet looked at her friend anxiously.

'Tell me all about it, Dick,' she said. 'How did you get that mark of blood on your sleeve?'

'It was a scratch,' said Dick. 'Some of our kind friends began stabbing the old tree—just for fun, it appeared. How did you get wet?'

'Come, we must go on,' said Violet, with one of her imperious gestures. 'I got wet with lying amongst the rushes in yonder little pond,' she explained. 'They came within a yard of me; but old Poison-Arrow doesn't see as well as he used to do, though he won't believe it, and he declared that no one was anywhere around in the rushes.'

'Perhaps it was he who looked in on me,' said Dick.

'Very likely. He used to be a very good hunter once, they say; but now he makes all kinds of mistakes, and some day I fear the young men will grow impatient and kill him.'

'Poor old fellow! He does seem better than most of them. If it had not been for him, I fancy the young men would have killed me the day they found me in the woods.'

'Hush!' said Violet. 'We mustn't talk any more. We don't know who may be listening.'

The woods were very thick just there; but ten minutes later, when they emerged into another open space, Violet herself broke the silence.

'I laughed so much while I lay in the water that I nearly drowned myself,' she said.

'What could you find to laugh at?'

'Old Poison-Arrow. I thought they had gone, so I lifted up my head to listen, and heard him talking. He was describing how they had decided in the council to send you with a letter to the English chief to beg his mercy, and how dreadfully vexed they were to find you gone. And he blamed Red-Star for treating you so badly, and he blamed me for running away, too. I thought he might have blamed himself for leaving you all night under the tree.'

'Oh dear, what a pity I did not wait!' said Dick; 'but Mrs. Freeland said they were going farther west.'

'That's what they said at first; but it seems they did not like to leave their corn behind, nor the sick people, and there was no time to take everything. Poor old Poison-Arrow! he's dreadfully afraid that you'll make the English chief burn up the village and kill a lot of the old men, because, he says, you'll say all you suffered was their fault.'

'Why didn't you tell him where we were, Violet?'

'I didn't want to,' said Violet. 'You don't know the Indians, Dick. Perhaps, after all, it wasn't true. Perhaps he thought I was listening, and wanted to make me tell. They will say anything to deceive one. And I don't want to go back to the camp. I want to be a white woman—not an Indian any more.'

'You are a white girl, and I believe your name is Molly—Molly Marling,' said Dick impulsively. 'Do you like it, Violet?'

'Molly Marling,' repeated Violet slowly. 'I never heard that name before. Yes, it is pretty.'

'Well, it's yours—I am sure it is; and I'll take you home to your own people. Oh, you'll be a grand

white lady some day, Molly! You shall have everything you want.'

But Dick's enthusiasm was a little damped by Violet's next question. She had learnt to talk such pretty English from Mrs. Freeland that he had no idea how ignorant she was.

'Do you think,' she said in a tone of joyous wonder, 'that they'll give me a new red blanket like Red-Star's squaw has, and lots of pretty beads?'

'Oh no, Molly,' replied Dick in a voice sharp with disappointment; 'you won't want beads and blankets in England. You shall have a grand silk dress, and lace and a gold necklace, and some satin shoes, and a big cap, and some feathers to put in your head.'

But it was only the last article in Dick's list of feminine finery that appealed to Violet's imagination She knew nothing of silk dresses and lace and satin shoes, but there was something tangible about the feathers.

'What sort of feathers? Turkey feathers, Dick?' she asked innocently.

'No, ostrich feathers. You've never seen them, Molly. English ladies don't wear turkey feathers in their heads. Then you'll live in a big house, with pictures on the walls, and carpets on the floors, and books, and arm-chairs——'

'I don't know what you mean, Dick,' she said, rather wearily. 'Will they make me carry the wood in from the forest, and catch the fish, and fetch the dead deer home, like Mrs. Freeland, when the men have been hunting?'

'No, no; you'll never have to do anything you

don't want to,' said Dick rashly. 'English ladies don't do those things; but I can't explain. Everything is different. You'll soon see, and you're sure to like it.'

By this time they were deep in the woods again, and Violet once more signed to Dick to be silent.

'Hush!' she said; 'I hear something.'

CHAPTER XIII

HOW DICK RETURNED TO THE ARMY

VIOLET proceeded very cautiously for the next few yards. Then she stopped altogether, and, stooping down, put her ear to the ground, as she had seen the Indians do.

'Some one is following us,' she whispered. 'Perhaps Poison-Arrow has seen our tracks, and has turned back to look for us. But it sounds like a great war-party. Come, quick, but make no noise. They will certainly track us if we are not careful.'

Once more the girl led the way, gliding almost noiselessly from one thicket to another. Once more Dick tried to follow as swiftly and silently, but tried in vain. He was still a few steps behind, when Violet pushed her way through an opening in the clump of bushes.

Suddenly, to Dick's dismay, she gave a wild shriek, and came tumbling out of the thicket again in frantic haste. She seemed to have quite forgotten the Indians, for she ran towards the path as fast as she could go.

In the same instant a huge bear crashed through the bushes. Violet, who was now recovering herself, uttered a cry of warning.

'Take care, Dick. Run!' she called.

She dashed on, Dick followed, with the bear in hot pursuit. The race had lasted half a minute. Violet had nearly reached the path. Dick was not two yards behind, when he looked back, and tripped over a branch as he ran.

Violet screamed again, and turned back towards her prostrate companion, drawing a short, sharp knife out of a sheath at her waist. But it would have been a poor weapon in a struggle with such a strong fierce beast.

Dick scrambled to his feet, and, taking the knife from Violet's outstretched hand, turned to face the bear.

'Run, Violet,' he cried in his turn.

But she did not move, and the bear came on, growling fiercely.

Just as he reached them, and rose on his hind legs for the unequal contest, the report of a gun sounded close at hand, and the great beast fell forward, shot through the heart.

This deliverance from the terrible danger that threatened them was so unexpected that Dick and Violet looked at each other in utter bewilderment.

'Thank God; it is a miracle,' muttered Dick.

'More likely Red-Star,' said Violet. 'Look, we may escape yet. They will be so taken up with the bear that no one will want to chase us.'

It was not Red-Star, however. A man in the dress of a Virginian volunteer advanced towards them, and Dick exclaimed eagerly:

'We are all right now, Violet. This is one of the English soldiers. Sir,' he added, 'we thank you for saving us from so great a peril.'

'Yes, you were in peril, sure enough,' replied their

rescuer. 'How come you, lad, to be wandering in the woods so ill armed? That is a big, fierce-looking old fellow,' he added, looking at the dead bear with quiet satisfaction. 'I've killed many a bear, sir, but I've never had quite so easy a shot. The brute's attention was so much taken up with you, he forgot to keep his eyes open for any other danger.'

We were going into yonder thicket, and I almost fell over him,' said Violet.

'Yes,' said Dick; 'we heard footsteps, and thought it was the Indians, and so were going to hide. Are we far from the camp?'

Before their new friend had time to answer, half a dozen other men came running towards them. For a few seconds there was a general hubbub, but Dick and Violet stood listening quietly to the eager questions as to how Silas Crane had fallen in with the beast.

'The girl here will tell you,' replied Silas.

He was busy drawing some brushwood over his prize, to conceal it till could take time to skin it. Just now they had been ordered on an errand over which they dare not linger, for their leader required an implicit obedience, which, to say the truth, the American volunteers found somewhat distasteful.

Violet was repeating her story, when she was interrupted by some one saying rudely:

'It's lies from first to last. I know the lad. He deserted from the Pennsylvanian Volunteers ten days ago.'

Dick recognised Hunter Jim's voice, though in the dark he had not noticed that he had joined the group. He was too much startled to contradict the accusation, and the trapper continued:

'His name is Dick Herriot, and he's a regular young vagabond. He tried to git me to come into the Injun country with him, and when I wouldn't fall in with his schemes he jest goes and 'lists. A pretty soldier he is. Why, he took good care to run off afore there was any risk o' fightin'.'

'That's not true,' said Dick indignantly. 'You know it isn't.'

'Well, you can't deny that you only come at all 'cause you wanted to get back some white gel, that you'd heerd was with Red-Star.'

'I don't mean to deny it, but that would not be any reason for running away.'

'No, an' neither was them wild brutes o' cattle. They was none o' your business; but you must needs run after them—to get lost all o' purpose. Oh, he's a mighty deep feller, for all he looks so inncreent.'

Silas Crane, who seemed to be in command of the party, here interposed.

'Now, now, my men,' he said, 'we have no time for idle gossip. Mr. Herriot, I fear you must consider yourself under arrest as a deserter, but I hope you will be able to clear yourself of the charge against you.'

Dick did not answer. It seemed to him at that moment that he had been marked out as a special butt for misfortune ever since he set foot in America. However, it was one comfort to think that Molly was safe beyond the reach of the Indians at last.

'Sir,' he said, appealing to Silas, 'will you see that this lady is properly cared for? She was carried off by the Indians when a child.'

'I'll see to her, lad. Come along, little miss,' said Silas kindly.

But Violet had no notion of allowing them to separate her from her friend. She took no notice of Crane; but pushing through the soldiers who had surrounded Dick, she grasped his hand.

'What is wrong?' she asked. 'I thought they were your friends.'

'I thought so too; but I was mistaken, Violet.'

'They are wicked. I hate them,' she said passionately, as the little procession began to move through the woods.

Hunter Jim, who was walking close behind, laughed loudly, and muttered:

'It's him as is wicked, missy. He's the worst liar I ever see, though he prides himself on being a Christian.'

'Hush, Jim,' muttered his friend Sam warningly. 'Don't try to plaster on the mud too thick, for most folks will be readier to believe that lad, wi' his decent civil manners, than an old grizzly like you.'

'What! are yer goin' back on yer old chum, Sam?' demanded the hunter angrily. 'Didn't yer vow you'd help me to punish him for cheating us so abominably?'

'Yes, an' I will stand by you, if you'll not make sich a big fool o' yerself. You spoil yer own game. It's easy to see that you've a spite agin the lad. Don't say another word against him till yer asked. He's bound to be tried to-morrow, an' the colonel's none too easy on deserters. Besides, I've found out something that will put a spoke in his wheel, even if he should get off. He don't need to think he'll get the reward for taking that girl back to those who sent him. She ain't Molly Marling, or my name ain't Sam Turner.'

'How do you know, Sam?'

'When I tell yer all, you'll think I've the best reasons for knowing.' And Sam whispered something into his companion's ear.

'Well, that beats all!' exclaimed Jim. But after a pause he added, 'I don't see how yer goin' to fix this great discovery o' yours to be any real good, arter all, barring that you may feel a bit lonesome now yer gitting up in years. Though she is a wild gel, she'll cost you suthin to keep, an' she won't bring in much.'

'I don't mean to be out o' pocket with her, trust me; nor to keep her, if she's more bother than she's worth. I might find I'd made a mistake, an' pass her on to them Marlings in the end—eh, Sam? I guess they'd pay me fur my trouble.'

'But what good will all this do me?'

'If you'll stand by me, I'll see it does you some good. Have I ever failed yer yet?'

'No,' said Jim. 'You've been a good friend to me through thick an' thin.'

It was true. Some strange attachment held the pair together; and however they might cheat other people, they always kept faith with one another.

'She's a fine, handsome, spirity gel,' said Jim meditatively, as he lay staring up into the sky. 'She puts me in mind o' Patty at times,' he added, after a long pause. 'I've told yer of her, haven't I?'

'Yes,' said Sam, rather gruffly. ''Taint no use thinking o' them old days; they only trouble one for nought. You talk o' your Patty, but didn't I have a wife an' three young uns killed about the same time? Leastways, I've allus thought so till now.'

'Ay, but if Patty hadn't died, I don't think I'd

ever a-took to the woods, an' lived sich a life. But there, everything allus has bin agin me. I never had no chance from a boy.'

'Bah, Jim! sich talk is jest fit for gels an' boys. You've had the same chance as the rest o' us.'

'I don't know that, said the big hunter feebly. It's like as if I've got to do what you wants me to; but I've sometimes wished I'd never heerd yer name, nor seen yer face.'

'Nay, lad, you should be the last to put on saintly airs. Positively you sometimes make me sick wi' your brutal ways. Who but you would 'a' burnt that lad's wrist, setting him free, jest for love o' seeing some poor crittur in pain?'

This was generally a sore subject, and Sam knew it; but Jim made no answer, wishing once again in his dim, stupid fashion that he had not been forced to be so bad. It was the most hopeless thing about him that he seriously believed that his ugly, wicked life had been, not his choice, but his misfortune. It never dawned on him that even now he might break loose from evil, if he would; but Sam Turner knew better.

CHAPTER XIV

THE COURT-MARTIAL

THE English army had encamped on a very high bank, overlooking the Muskingum, which at this place was a fine broad stream. The surrounding country was rich and beautiful, well wooded with stately trees, but comparatively free from underbrush. The whole scene was peaceful, save for the hum and stir of the camp.

When the little cavalcade, with which Dick and Violet had fallen in, passed within the lines, the white maiden looked about her with wonder. She had never seen so many people together before, and in spite of her own fair skin the light complexions of the soldiers added to her amazement. The camp-fires were blazing cheerily, and the men were busy preparing their evening meal.

'Dick,' she said, 'I did not think there were so many white men in the world.'

But Dick neither heard nor answered. His head was bowed down in bitter shame that he should be thus brought back to the army, accused of the crime he so much despised. And supposing he could not prove his innocence—what then? He forgot that even if his officers believed him guilty, there was another Judge (and a merciful One), Who would either make his innocence clear as the noonday, or would give him

strength to bear patiently the cruel trial of suffering undeserved punishment. At that moment he felt that the doom of the deserter was more than he could endure. The disgrace that seemed so near him filled his mind to the exclusion of every other definite idea, and his eyes rolled wildly hither and thither in vague hopes of escape. He was at last roused from his gloomy thoughts by some one's attempting to take Violet away. She resisted angrily, clinging to Dick the more anxiously because of his evident distress.

'I won't go! Let me stay with Dick,' she protested.

'Nay, Violet. A good lady like Mrs. Freeland will take care of you to-night, and to-morrow they will perhaps let me see you again.'

'But I don't want to go, Dick. I mean to stay with you.'

"Ah, but, Violet, you must go. Look, if you don't go, you will make them more angry with me.'

'Well, I will go, if they will let me come back to you in the morning.'

'Yes, my lass, you shall see him again, sure enough—once at least,' added one of Dick's comrades under his breath.

'Good-night, then, Dick.'

'Good-night, Violet.'

An hour after Violet had left him, Dick heard some one talking to his guards, and presently Joseph Archer came into the tent.

'Oh, lad, I'm glad to see you again!' exclaimed the elder man. 'Do you know I had given you up for lost?'

'Perhaps—who knows?—I am lost still,' said Dick. 'Have you heard what they accuse me of?'

'Yes, I know. The colonel will hold a court-

martial on you the first thing in the morning, and then all will be cleared up. Don't look so melancholy.'

'But suppose it isn't? Oh, Joe, it will be such a shameful death to die!'

'Nonsense, lad. I tell you, you won't die. What are you doing?'

'I'm writing to Mrs. Marling. You will be sure to send the letter on, Joe, if I die? It's to say good-bye, and to tell her I've found Molly for her.'

'What, lad? Have you? Where is she?'

'Here in the camp'; and poor Dick's face brightened. 'Joe, you will see that she gets to England safely—won't you? She talks English beautifully—she learnt it from a woman in Red-Star's camp; but she doesn't know much in some ways, and I should be glad to think that she had a good friend to take care of her.'

'Dick, I have no patience with you. Why will you talk as if you were on your death-bed? Is there not a God Who sees and judges between the innocent and his oppressor? But indeed I have little right, after all my faithless years, to talk of faith to others.'

'If the colonel believes Hunter Jim's lies, I am as good as dead,' persisted Dick.

'Do you think the colonel has no sense? Do you suppose he'll kill a man on that rascal's accusation?'

'But part Jim says is true. I did only enlist for the sake of seeking Molly.'

'That's nothing. The only thing that troubles me is, that you did not wait for orders before chasing those unruly beasts. However, if they punish you at all, I don't suppose that your sentence will be very severe for that. Honestly, Dick, I am not in the

least alarmed for your safety, and I could not love you better if you were my brother.'

The young fellow's face brightened at these reassuring words. He held out his hand to his friend with a thankfulness he could not speak. At last he said with a laugh:

'I believe this is as bad as being under fire, Joe: I confess I am horribly afraid of what to-morrow may bring.'

'I shall have to go in an instant. Tell me how you found Molly.'

Dick grew quite excited in recounting his adventures; and before Archer left he persuaded the lad to put his papers away, and to lie down and take the rest he so sorely needed.

He lay awake so long, however, that he fancied he had only just fallen asleep, when he was rudely awakened by the men sent to take him before the much-dreaded colonel.

He and several of his chief officers were sitting in a semicircle at one end of a large tent, when Dick was led in.

The boy looked anxiously at his judges, and the hope which Archer had tried so hard to encourage died again out of his heart. Colonel Bouquet evidently judged him guilty, he thought, and his stern tones promised no mercy to those under his displeasure.

'Now, lad, remember that your only hope is to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I have been informed that you left the army immediately after we crossed the ford, on Saturday, October 6. Is that true?'

'Yes,' said Dick; and then he told his story, adding,

'The girl who came away with me from Red-Star's town can tell you, sir, that my only aim and desire was to make my way back to the army as speedily as possible.'

'Bring the girl here,' said the colonel, to one of the soldiers in attendance. 'We will hear what she has to say.'

Violet looked round on the group of officers with a defiant air; and when Colonel Bouquet inquired where Dick had asked her to lead him, she turned to her friend before replying, and said coolly, 'Must I tell him, Dick?'

He was rather shocked at this open disrespect to his dreaded commander, and said, 'She doesn't mean to be rude, sir; it's only she doesn't quite know who you are.'

Violet listened with wide-open eyes.

'No,' she said, 'I don't know. Who is he, Dick?'

'Hush,' said the lad reprovingly, 'I'll tell you by-and-by. Now tell Colonel Bouquet everything he wants to know.'

'Quite truly?' she asked in a whisper, but most of those present caught the words, and there was a general smile.

'Yes, truly,' answered Dick.

Thus adjured, Violet told her story fearlessly.

Colonel Bouquet made no comment, but sent for Hunter Jim, and obliged him to repeat his accusations against the prisoner. But he hesitated and faltered and stumbled and contradicted himself till the officer impatiently cut him short.

Bouquet's expression was severer than ever, and Dick, misunderstanding the cause of his anger, begged that Joseph Archer might be called.

'He knows me better than any one else in America,' he added.

Archer in his narrative by no means spared Jim and his accomplices; and, to Dick's surprise and joy, Colonel Bouquet not only pronounced him guiltless, but shook hands with him before all his officers, and told him 'he would make a good soldier after he had had a little more training.'

Then he turned to Jim, who, to his great annoyance, discovered that he was now in the position of the culprit, and rebuked him so sharply that even the usually shameless trapper scarcely dared to meet his comrades' eyes when he was at last permitted to depart.

As they left the tent, Dick passed him without speaking, but he muttered angrily:

'I'll be even with you, young feller. Yer needn't think you've done with me yet.'

Violet heard his threats, and exclaimed:

'He is a wicked man! Why don't they kill him, Dick?'

'Hush, Violet; ladies don't talk of killing people like that, and you know you are an English lady now.'

'But he tried to have you killed,' protested Violet, with truth. 'Why shouldn't you kill him?'

'Because it isn't right. The Bible says we are to forgive our enemies,' answered Dick, thinking of dear old Mrs. Marling, and wondering whether Violet's wild notions would make her regret that the child had been found. And then he was ashamed of himself for fancying such a thing, for he knew that Mrs. Marling was one of the most unselfish women in the world, and would only rejoice to have the

chance of teaching and helping a poor girl who needed help so sorely.

'What do you mean by the Bible?' demanded Violet.

Dick tried to explain; but it was more difficult than he would have thought, for Violet's notions about God were so strange, and, as Dick thought, so irreverent, that he hardly knew where to begin his instruction. Moreover, he had been ordered to rejoin his comrades, and had no time for talking to any one.

Violet could not be made to understand this, and was highly indignant when she was sent back to the woman brought by Bouquet to look after the rescued women and children. But when she found that crying and pouting was of no use, she resigned herself to her fate, and gave no further trouble.

CHAPTER XV

OUT OF BOUNDS

ALMOST immediately after Dick's ease had been decided, six Indians eame to the English eamp and begged to see Colonel Bouquet. Their errand was to tell him that their ehiefs had assembled about eight miles away, and that they earnestly desired peace.

Bouquet replied that he would meet them next day at a place two or three miles distant from the camp.

In the meantime he ordered his men to build a small stockaded fort, where the prisoners could be left in safety; for, in spite of the Indians' conciliatory tone, he meant to marеh still farther into their country, to compel them to give up every one of their captives.

Diek and Joe Archer were working side by side.

'Did I not tell you there was no eause for alarm?' said Archer. 'I knew the colonel would not slay thee on Hunter Jim's word only.'

'Well, you were right this time,' said Dick, 'but I still think you easily might have been wrong, for I was a fool to go ehasing the cattle, when it was none of my business.'

'Yes, I agree with you there. You were bound to lose yourself alone in the woods. However, all's well that ends well.'

'Has it ended well?' said Dick. 'I have at least the pleasure of knowing that that rascally hunter is more mine enemy than before.'

'Nay, better have his enmity than his friendship, in my judgment,' said Archer. 'You think too much of his ill wishes towards you. For my part, I believe that if you put your trust in God, and honestly do your duty, He will allow no evil to befall you, save such as you need for your proper training. But my mother would tell you I have no right to preach, seeing it is a truth I have forgotten all the days of my sorrow.'

And Archer began to hammer a stake into the ground with such sounding blows that for a time conversation was impossible.

When the noise stopped, Dick said slowly:

'Well, Joe, I can already see good from my various trials and humiliations. I have at least found Molly, and I don't know that I should otherwise have done so.'

'You can't be sure of that,' said Archer, always ready to provoke an argument. 'If Colonel Bouquet should suceeed in obtaining the release of all the captives amongst the Indians, your Molly would have come back with the rest; and I most firmly believe he will reseue every one. He's a splendid officer. Why, he knows what to do in the woods as well as if he had been born in the settlements.' His tone was positively enthusiastic.

'If he had been such an one as General Braddoek, the chanees are that we should have been cut to pieees before we reaehed Fort Pitt,' continued Archer. 'Luckily, Colonel Bouquet not only knows how to guard against Indian surprises, but he sets a proper

valuc on experienced woodsmen, and does not trust everything to the regulars, as if they were the only soldiers who could fight.'

Dick agreed heartily with all that Archer said of their commander, but another subject was weighing heavily on his mind.

'Joe,' he said, after a pause. 'I have been thinking that I ought to try to obtain proof that Violet is really Molly Marling. You see, some day she will be very rich; and if all is not clear and plain, it may give trouble afterwards. But what can I do?'

'You are quite right, lad,' was Archer's reply; but Dick waited in vain for the advice he expected.

'What am I to do, Joe?' he repeated at last.

There was a long silence; then Archer said slowly:

'I really don't know, Dick.'

'I've been thinking I'll take her to see Mr. Jewett, when we get to Philadelphia,' said the lad, after another interval of thoughtful considcration.

'Yes, but that won't be enough,' said Archer. 'How would it be to try to get some information out of Red-Star? I expect he will come up with the rest of the chiefs to-morrow.'

'Yes, I will; but do you suppose the Indians will remember where they captured the different children?

'I think it likely. You see, the savages don't spoil their memories with trusting everything to books and writing as we do. I have little doubt that Red-Star can tell you when, where, and how he became possessed of every prisoner in his camp. That is a very small matter compared to what some of the Indians can remember. Years ago, I often visitcd their towns, and I have been astonished to hear the old man who had charge of the wampum belts of

some tribe explain what each meant and when it had been given. To me they looked much alike.'

'Why should a wampum belt mean anything?' asked Dick.

'It's a custom of the Indians to give one another belts when we should sign papers; I daresay you will see lots of belts to-morrow if you are permitted to go to the bower, but I heard that the Pennsylvanian troops are to remain in camp.'

'How shall I see Red-Star, then?' said Dick. 'I wonder if I could get leave to go if I asked for it?'

'I don't know. You might try,' replied Archer.

Long cultivation had rendered Archer's senses almost as acute as those of an Indian; and that night, as he was cooking his supper over the camp fire, he heard Sam Turner and Hunter Jim whispering together. That was nothing, for every one in the camp knew that they were close friends; but when Joe caught the names of Violet and Herriot and Red-Star, he felt quite justified in hearing all he could. And he remembered afterwards that he had seen Jim close beside him the moment after he spoke to Dick of consulting Red-Star as to Violet's parentage. He determined to keep a strict watch on the pair, but said nothing of his vague suspicions to Dick, for he had no wish to add to his fears or difficulties concerning Violet.

Jim and Sam were quartered in the next tent to his own, and towards midnight Archer heard some one stirring. He rose, and, peeping through a tiny hole in the tent, saw Turner gliding away like a snake into the darkness.

Archer was usually a prudent man, but he was so full of the idea that the two trappers were plotting

some mischief against the lad he had taken under his protection that he cast away all thought of his own safety. He crept noiselessly after Turner; and seeing that he had passed the sentries, he watched his opportunity and followed him, though he was perfectly well aware that he was exposing himself to the risk of severe punishment if discovered.

Turner was evidently in haste, and, in spite of his wish not to be observed, was no sooner fairly out of hearing of the camp than he began to run along the forest path as fast as he could go. Archer followed, determined at all hazards to keep him in sight.

At last Turner lost his breath, and proceeded at a more reasonable rate; but he still pressed on, and his pursuer wondered whether he was bent on desertion, and, if so, whether he himself ought not to make his way back at once, and try to regain his tent unseen. By this time he blamed his own inconsiderate folly, and wished that instead of following Turner he had given the alarm. But curiosity and obstinacy were both strong; and though he was annoyed with himself for having left the camp at all, he still followed his comrade-in-arms deeper into the woods.

Suddenly Turner stopped and gave a low, peculiar whistle. The next moment three Indians appeared from the shadows, but at this place the trees grew so far apart that after all his trouble Archer could not get near enough to them to hear what they said. He could see something, however.

His indignation was great when Turner emptied his powder horn into those of the Indians. In like manner he distributed amongst them several pounds

of shot and bullets and tobacco; then began a long and earnest conversation.

Archer crept on his hands and knees a little nearer to the group of black figures against the trees; but though he guessed that one of the Indians was Red-Star, he could not be sure, and for some time he could hear nothing of importance.

'You will not fail me?' he heard Turner say at last. 'You see, it will not make the least difference to you how we——' But the man dropped his voice at the last word, and Archer could not catch it.

'Yes,' said the Indian, 'there's no doubt of it—we carried her off from down by the Bear river. The lad is quite mistaken.'

'Quite,' said Turner. 'The truth is, he don't mean to go home without some girl. However, he shan't have my lass—that's clear.'

There was a loud laugh from the three Indians; then Turner bade them a hasty farewell, and turned to go back by the way he had come. Archer had scarcely time to move out of his path, but he threw himself flat on the ground, and lay like a log beneath the shadow of a great tree until Sam had passed.

After giving him two minutes' start, Archer rose and followed; but Turner was walking so slowly that he almost overtook him. At last he decided to make a circuit and get ahead of him if possible; but in the meantime Sam quickened his steps, and they narrowly missed a meeting that would have been awkward and possibly dangerous for both.

As it was, Turner heard Archer's footsteps, and even caught a glimpse of his thin figure; but Joe hoped that he had not had time to recognise him.

Archer found it more difficult to get back within

the lines than it had been to leave them, and again and again he blamed his own folly as the sentry walked backward and forward on his appointed beat.

At any moment Turner might come up; but Archer had the comfort of thinking that for his own sake he would hardly attempt to expose him. However, he saw nothing of him, and at last contrived to crawl past the sentinel when his back was turned, and make his way unobserved to his own tent. As he lay waiting anxiously for morning, he again confessed to himself that his adventure had been utterly foolish and useless—more worthy, in fact, of Dick than of an old soldier and woodsman like himself.

CHAPTER XVI

AN UNLOOKED-FOR MEETING

ARCHER had been mistaken, and Dick had no need to ask special permission to be present at Colonel Bouquet's meeting with the Indians.

A large rustic bower of boughs and saplings had been erected, and early in the morning the whole army, with the exception of the few men left to guard the camp, marched down the river. Bouquet well knew the advantage of impressing the Indians with the strength of the force at his command. He accordingly drew up his little army in front of the bower where he and his chief officers were awaiting the chiefs in such a manner as to make the most imposing effect.

To the simple Indians it was indeed a sight to be remembered. The glittering arms and the gay uniforms of the Highland and Royal American regiments impressed them with the wealth of their adversaries, and the order and silence of the troops awed them with a sense of resistless power.

But in their own way the forest warriors were as proud as the haughtiest European nobles. Carefully arrayed in barbaric ornaments wrested from the beasts and birds of the woods, their faces painted in gaudy colours and strange devices, the 'kings' of the

Delawares, Shawnees, and Senecas marched sternly through the English troops, disdaining to cast a glance on the great military display which had been prepared for them. They brought with them eighteen white prisoners, and were attended by about forty of their braves. In the woods near by were hundreds of other Indians longing yet fearing to attack the white men, who had thus dared to force their way into the country where they had hitherto held undisputed sway.

The Indian ambassadors seated themselves on the ground opposite the officers, and before the conference opened they sat for a few minutes solemnly smoking. Then Turtle-Heart rose. He was one of the chiefs of the Delawares, and was spokesman of the embassy. In his hand he had a bag containing several belts of wampum, and he boldly addressed the dreaded English leader as 'brother.'

'I speak,' he said, 'in behalf of the three nations, whose chiefs are here present. With this belt I open your hearts and your ears, that you may listen to my words.'

He laid the blame of the raids on the wild young men, and on the nations to the westward, and he solemnly declared that it was now 'the will of the Great Spirit that there should be peace.' He promised that all the prisoners should be given up; and as a convincing proof of their sincerity, he then and there delivered to the colonel the eighteen captives, whom he and his brother-chiefs had brought to the council.

In a matter of such importance an immediate reply would not have been according to Indian etiquette, so the council was now adjourned to the following day.

The chiefs and their followers retired to their encampment with an air of sullen dignity, but the English army marched away joyfully. Many in the ranks had been longing for the return of the prisoners for years, and now it seemed that all would soon be released.

Dick was disappointed to find that he was obliged to stand like a statue at so great a distance from the bower that he could hear nothing and see little of the interview between Colonel Bouquet and the chiefs.

'I had hoped to be able to get speech of Red-Star,' he complained to Archer, when they again reached the camp.

'You will have another chance, I doubt not,' said Archer soothingly; 'but, lad, did you notice that amongst the captives brought back by the Delawares, was another little white girl, to whom Mr. Jewett's description might apply as well as to Violet?'

'Yes,' said Dick, 'I saw the child they call Sun-in-the-Hair, and truly she has fair hair and blue eyes, but I think no man could call her strikingly pretty.'

'I don't know,' said Archer; 'were she nicely attired, she would look better than many girls people are ready enough to call handsome.'

'Oh, nonsense, Joe,' cried Dick, all the more irritably, perhaps, because he too had once fancied that Sun-in-the-Hair might be Molly. 'It can't be that she is Molly. She is a regular little savage. Mrs. Marling's grand-daughter couldn't act as she does. Why, she spent one long morning in tormenting me.'

'What can you expect, lad? Did you think, when you came to seek her, that your Molly would show

nothing of her bringing up? Why, even Miss Violet thinks it no shame to lie to your face, and——'

Dick turned impatiently upon him.

'I don't care, Joe. You don't understand—there's all the difference in the world between the two girls. Of course Violet needs teaching, but Sun-in-the-Hair couldn't be more cruel if she had been Hunter Jim's daughter.'

'It's of no use getting so hot, lad—only I would have you prepare for disappointment. You may not be able to establish Violet's claim to Mr. Marling's name and fortune. I wonder what is going on yonder?'

'Come and see,' said Dick, not unwilling to change the subject.

A crowd of Pennsylvanian men, who had lost wives or children in the Indian raids, had pressed round the little group of released captives, and were eagerly scanning their faces. Some of the children, who had spent almost all their lives amongst the dark-skinned people of the forests, were screaming with terror at the white men. Of the older captives, some looked anxious, others listless, and a few sullen.

Violet had made her way into the midst of the group, and was hanging on Mrs. Freeland's neck, sobbing for joy to see her again. On the other hand, Sun-in-the-Hair was screeching and dancing like a little fury, because her new protectors would not let her run off into the forest.

'Look at that girl,' cried Dick, pointing out Sun-in-the-Hair with all the old disgust.

'She is greatly to be pitied,' said the older man. 'You are hard on her, Dick. How can she know better?'

'But look at Violet,' replied Dick. 'Why should she be so much gentler? They have had the same training.'

Archer did not answer. A far-away look had come into his face, and Dick fancied that he did not see those on whom his eyes were resting. Doubtless his thoughts were full of his own ruined home. Perhaps he was thankful that his children were not amongst the little white savages who shrank in terror from their own kith and kin; perhaps he was not sorry now that they were dead.

Dick still had his eyes and thoughts fixed on his friend, when a strange thing happened. A wild cry rang through the woods; and a woman, one of the rescued, pushed her way through the crowd, and threw her arms round Archer's neck.

'Joseph!' she screamed, 'don't you know me? Oh! don't you know me?'

Archer looked in bewilderment at the poor creature, and tried to draw himself away from her frantic embrace. She let him go, and, dropping her arms by her sides, murmured sadly:

'I should have known you anywhere, but I forgive you for not knowing me. They tortured me at first till I scarcely knew myself.'

Joseph pushed back his hair from his forehead with a puzzled look, and gazed intently at the scarred face and grey hair of the woman before him.

'Who are you?' he demanded. 'Woman, speak plainly.'

'Don't you know your own wife, Joseph?' she said falteringly.

'My wife has been in heaven these nine years.'

'Nay, she has been on earth, in a place of torture,' was the reply.

Archer still stared at her, with his hands fast clenched together, and his face whiter than Dick had ever seen it before.

'Joseph,' repeated the woman, 'I was once Bessy Morison—don't you remember?'

Strange to say, the sound of his wife's maiden name suddenly convinced him that the worn, scarred woman, in her miserable rags, was really his wife.

He tried to speak, but his parched lips made no sound, and he still stared at her with the same fixed look.

It was a hard moment for the poor thing, who for years had dreamt of this hour of meeting as the one thing to live for. With a great and 'exceeding bitter cry' she suddenly flung herself down at his feet, sobbing as if her heart would break.

This brought Joseph to his senses. He stooped and lifted her up.

'Hush, Bessy; don't weep so,' he murmured. 'It was only that it seemed too good to be true. I never [illegible]ed for one moment that you were dead, or do you think that I would have left you all these years in misery?'

'Joseph, the children are all dead!' moaned the poor mother. 'I could not save them.'

'No, no, Bessy. Come away, my poor girl!' And taking his wife by the arm, Archer led her out of the crowd.

Dick did not see him again that day, but when next he met him he looked a different man.

'I never dared, Dick, to hope for such mercy,' he cried. 'Indeed, it is most wonderful that she has

lived through all. I am more glad I came hither with you than I can say. I don't know how to thank the Lord for sending you to us and touching my hard heart with a desire to help you.'

Dick said nothing, but he pressed his friend's extended hand.

'Neither shall I ever cease to feel grateful to Colonel Bouquet,' continued Archer. 'If it hadn't been for his firmness, my Bessy might have gone on living in her wretchedness amongst the Delawares for many a long year. But, oh, Dick, she is so changed! The last time I saw her she looked as young and pretty as Violet yonder.'

CHAPTER XVII

SUKEY OR MOLLY

WHEN morning dawned, the rain was pouring from a leaden sky, that promised no early break in the storm, so the second meeting with the Indian chiefs had to be postponed.

Everybody was disappointed, and through the long deary day there was much grumbling over the discomforts of camp life and the bad weather.

The women appointed to take charge of the released prisoners had no easy task. The children were fretting for the dark-skinned guardians who were the only parents they had known, and their elders were so anxious and excited that they could neither rest nor do the little work that was needed.

Sun-in-the-Hair alternately teased her companions and moped in one corner of the tent. Violet tried to talk to her, but she was so cross that it seemed impossible to bear with her.

'When are they going to let me go back to the camp? I hate palefaces!' she exclaimed.

'I am glad I am a white woman,' replied Violet, in the Delaware dialect, which was the only language Sun-in-the-Hair understood.

She had never fraternised with those of her own race in Red-Star's town; and having rudely repulsed

Mrs. Freeland's advances towards her, had missed learning the little that Violet knew.

'I hate palefaces!' repeated Sun-in-the-Hair. 'I want to go back to Red-Star. I won't go with the soldiers.'

'But Dick says we shall have everything we like if we go with them,' said Violet, applying the young man's magnificent promises more broadly than he had intended.

'I don't care. I won't go,' persisted the child. 'Pah! get away. I hate you, nasty paleface!'

Sun-in-the-Hair was so rude and violent, and was so determined to make her companion as miserable as herself, that at last Violet fled out into the rain.

She amused herself for a while by swinging from a strong branch just within reach of her hands; but when she stopped for breath she was vexed to hear some one say:

'Bravo, missy! you're a rare active youngster. I'll make yer a swing as soon as it goes finc.'

'Who are you?' demanded Violet, looking over her shoulder at thc speaker.

'My name's Sam Turner, lassie, an' I like gels like you. You've got a real pretty face.'

This compliment mollified Violet, in spite of her distrust of the man's appearance, and she turned to look at him.

'Well, my maid, an' what d'ye think o' me?' asked Sam at last.

'I don't likc you. I'm going to Dick,' was the answer.

'Nay, now, missy—what have I done? Look here, what I've got in my pockct for you.' And Turner

dangled before her eyes a long string of bright blue beads.

They were beautiful in Violet's estimation, and she put out her hand to take them ; then drew it back.

'I'm an English lady, Dick says,' she said proudly, 'and English ladies don't like beads.'

'Don't they, though? That's all he knows. Don't you believe him, little un. Here, catch ; they'd become you wonderful. See, they're all ready to hang round yer neck, or twist up in yer hair.'

He threw them towards her, but Violet let them fall at her feet.

'Dick doesn't like them,' she repeated ; but in spite of herself there was an accent of wonder in her tone.

Sam changed his tactics.

'So yer mean to do all that lad tells yer—eh, missy?' he said with a sneer.

'Yes,' said Violet. 'He's good—he knows a lot ; but in the woods I know best, and then I tell him.'

'Oh, so that's the way, is it? Well, did he ever tell yer not to eat sweets? Here's some lovely sugar-candy. See, it's jest what little gels like.'

Violet hesitated, but at last condescended to accept the stick of candy he held towards her, and during the rest of the conversation held it in one hand, and nibbled at it with undisguised enjoyment.

'It's good,' she said after a while.

'That's why I brought it to yer,' said Sam. 'Do yer know what yer name is?'

'Dick calls me Violet, but he says he ought to call me Molly—Molly Marling,' the girl answered promptly.

'Oh, that's all a mistake. Master Dick don't

know everything. I know yer name, an' I'll tell it yer. It's Sukey Turner—that's what it is.'

'It isn't. It's Molly Marling.'

'No, you are my own little gel—an' yer name's Sukey. I'm goin' to have yer come an' live with me, an' you shall have lots of candy.'

Violet looked troubled, but repeated:

'I'm Molly, and it's wicked to say I'm not. Dick says it's wicked to tell lies, an' I'm never going to do it any more.'

'It ain't lies, my gel. Why, all these years since you was took away I've been looking fur yer, an' now I'm a-going to take yer right home.'

'I'm going to England with Dick.'

'No, no, Sukey. I wants yer awful bad.'

'I'm not Sukey, and I'm going to Dick now.'

So saying she ran off through the rain, calling 'Dick' in a tone that brought half the inmates of the tents to their doors to see what the matter was.

'Dick, where are you?' she called.

'Here,' cried Dick, running to meet her. 'Has some one hurt you, Violet?'

'A man has been telling me lies,' she said indignantly. 'He says I'm Sukey Turner!'

'Sukey *what*?'

'Sukey Turner. Am I not Molly Marling, Dick?'

'Tell me all that happened, Violet. But first let us go somewhere out of the rain. Look, there is a nice little shelter by yonder fire where the men have been cooking their breakfasts. You will get dry there.'

The fire in question was rapidly being put out by the rain, and was smoking fearfully; but Violet had

been used to smoke all her life, and did not object to it, if it was not excessively thick.

She cuddled down on a dry spot of ground between some sacks of meal or flour, while Dick seated himself close by on a small log.

'Now, Violet, tell me all about it,' he said again.

'Well, the women and babies in the big tent were cross, and Sun-in-the-Hair called me ugly names; so I ran out into the woods. I didn't mind the rain a bit, and I was swinging from a big branch, when a man spoke to me—one of the Pennsylvanian men, Dick. He pulled out a big, long string of beads, and he wanted me to take them; but I told him no, you didn't like them, and that English ladies didn't wear beads.'

'That's right,' said Dick approvingly. 'Always remember that you are an English lady, Violet. What happened next?'

Violet did not answer for a moment, but gazed into the smoky fire with her chin on her hands and her elbows on her knees.

'Dick,' she said at length, 'do English ladies like candy?'

'Some of them do,' replied Dick. 'Why?'

'Because he gave me some, and I ate it,' replied the girl. 'You know you never told me not to eat candy.'

'No; but if I were you I would never take anything from that man.'

'Why not, Dick?' said Violet, opening her eyes.

'Because he isn't good.'

'I should have thought, Dick, that, if he isn't good, I might take his things all the more. Bad people ought not to have nice things, I think.'

Dick found it difficult to explain his views on the acceptance of presents; but Violet gazed at him inquiringly, till he said:

'You see, this is the way of the thing. If you take his things, he'll feel as if you ought to give him something back.'

'But I haven't anything to give,' objected Violet.

'Well, you may be sure he will want something even for that candy,' muttered Dick. 'He's not the sort of fellow to make presents for nothing.'

'Shall you want something for all the things you give me?' asked Violet, to Dick's perplexity. 'I never thought of that.'

'No, no; I like to give you things,' he said—'that's quite different. But never mind that now. I want to hear what happened after you took the candy.'

'Well, then, he said my name was Sukey Turner, and that he'd been looking and looking for me, and that I was his own little girl, and would have to go and live with him, and that he'd give me lots of candy.'

'That was not true,' said Dick.

'No, I told him my name was Molly Marling, and that I was going to England with you, and that it was wicked of him to tell lies.'

'Yes, that was right; but, Violet, don't run off alone into the woods again. He might try to make you live with him.'

'I wouldn't go,' said Violet defiantly. 'I'd run away from him.'

'Perhaps you wouldn't be able to get away, Violet; so don't talk to him, or go near him. Promise me.'

'Well, I promise. I hate him, Dick.'

It rained all that day, and all the next; and

forgetful of Dick's warnings, Violet again escaped from the crowded tent into the woods, and was again followed by Sam Turner.

'That's my good little gel!' he exclaimed, with a disagreeable smile, as she turned and saw him. 'See, here's another fine large stick o' candy, and a red ribbon, fit for the Queen o' England herself.'

But Violet put both hands behind her, and would have passed him without a word, when he caught her arm.

'Hey, Sukey—what's the meaning o' this? Little gels shouldn't show bad tempers; it ain't pretty.'

'Dick said I mustn't talk to you, and I won't,' she said, suddenly breaking away from him, and running at full speed back to her refuge in the women's tent.

Sam Turner followed more slowly, scowling darkly, and muttering:

'I'll pay the young cub for his insolence!'

CHAPTER XVIII

WHAT RED-STAR SAID

ON the third morning after the meeting between Colonel Bouquet and the Indians, the rain ceased, the clouds cleared away, and the sun shone brightly over the turbid and swollen river.

For the second time the troops were drawn out in martial array in front of the bower, where the English commander received the chiefs of the savages. He had come to give them his answer to their speeches, and they waited with well-concealed anxiety to hear what he had to say.

He would not deign to call them 'brothers,' but addressed them as 'Sachems, war-chiefs, and warriors,' and reproached them with their bad faith and their cruelties. He warned them that the army would remain in the country till all the captives were given up, adding, 'I have brought with me the relations of the people you have massacred or taken prisoners. They are impatient for revenge, and it is with great difficulty that I can protect you against their just resentment, which is only restrained by the assurances given them that no peace shall ever be concluded until you have given us full satisfaction.'

He required them to deliver up all their prisoners within the next twelve days, and to furnish them with

clothing, provisions, and horses for their journey to Fort Pitt; but added that, if they faithfully kept the condltions imposed on them, they might hope for peace and mercy.

With sullen, dejected faces, the chiefs promised obedience; but if they had not been over-awed by the strength of Bouquet's forces, they would certainly have attacked him then and there.

Again Dick had no opportunity of speaking to Red-Star, and that afternoon Sam Turner came up to where he was standing with Joseph Archer, and exclaimed in a loud angry tone:

'I've something to say to yer, lad, an' I don't care who hears it. The gel you call Molly Marling is my daughter, an' I ain't a-goin' to have you settin' her agin me.'

'I don't believe it,' said Dick.

'Oh, don't yer? But pray what difference does that make? She's my gel, an' I'm going to have her. She was carried off by the Injins nine years ago; an' now, when I do find her, this 'ere wretched young rascal is a-turning her against her poor old father. What would you 'a' felt,' he added, turning to Archer, 'if yer wife had come back an' refused to speak to yer?'

Archer made no direct answer, but asked:

'How can you prove that the child is yours, sir?'

'How can he prove that the child is that Molly he talks of?'

'I hope to be able to prove it soon,' said Dick, trying to speak calmly. 'Probably Red-Star could tell us something of her?'

'Will yer agree to abide by what the old Injun says?' said Sam eagerly.

'I don't say that,' said Dick; 'it depends what it is.'

'What I yer mean that if he says she's your Molly, you'll agree wi' him; an' if he says she's Sukey, you will stand in my way?'

Dick was silent. Stated in that way, his attitude hardly seemed fair; but he meant to fight to the last against Violet's being put into the power of this bad man.

'Answer me, lad. Shall we let Red-Star decide between us? If he says she's Molly Marling, you shall take her to England; an' if he says he took her from the settlement on Williams Creek, where I lived till my wife died, I'll keep her. Come, now—that's a bargain, fair and square, ain't it?'

'It sounds well enough; but why do you want her?' asked Dick.

'Because she's my gel—what else?'

'I wish you'd give up bothering her,' said Dick. 'You know very well she wouldn't be happy with you.'

'I don't know any such thing. If that's all, you may make yer mind easy.'

'You're not fit to have anything to do with her,' said Dick, getting angry as he thought of Sam's cruelty to him in Philadelphia. 'As I say, I'm sure she's Molly Marling; but even if she isn't, you shall never get her if I can help it.'

'Oh, very wel' we'll see about that. I ain't a-goin' to be done out o' my gel after all these years without a fight for it.'

A few minutes later Dick received a peremptory summons to appear before Colonel Bouquet.

'What can be the matter?' he said to Joseph

Archer in alarm. 'Do you think it's that lie about my deserting again?'

'No. More likely Turner has complained about Violet.'

It was true. He had gone to Colonel Bouquet immediately after leaving Dick; and had told his story, and requested that Red-Star might be examined concerning the child's parentage. That chief, as it happened, was close at hand, for he was one of the hostages given by the Indians as a pledge that they would fulfil their engagements.

Bouquet spoke more graciously to the chief than he had done in the morning, and then sent for Dick and Violet, but the man brought Sun-in-the-Hair by mistake.

'Is this the girl you claim as your daughter?' asked the colonel.

'No, sir,' answered Turner. 'It's another little lass about the same age.'

The messenger was accordingly sent to seek Violet.

In the meantime Bouquet made some inquiries about Sun-in-the-Hair.

'Who claims her?' he asked.

'No one, sir, as far as I knows,' said Turner. 'She's a reg'lar wild little savage. She don't know a word o' English, sir.'

'What do you know of her?' asked Bouquet, turning to Red-Star. 'Where was she taken?'

The chief stoutly declared that he had no idea where she had come from, as she had been given him by a brother-chief in the stead of a captive he had accidentally killed.

All the time she was being discussed Sun-in-the-Hair stood biting her nails, and looking out from

under the tangle of bright curls that had given her her name with an expression of mingled curiosity and wonder.

A moment later Violet was brought into the great tent, where the colonel was holding his informal little court.

'So this is the girl about whom there is so much dispute?' said Bouquet, looking at her attentively. 'I think, little maid, I have seen you before?'

'Yes, sir,' said Violet; 'and, oh, please let me go to England with Dick!'

'Not so fast, my child; we must see whom you really belong to. Perhaps Chief Red-Star can tell us.'

Thus appealed to, the Indian gave a long, rambling account of a raid on one of the settlements nine years ago. He described with impudent zest the slaughter of several white men, and the torture of their wives and children, and declared that Violet had been carried off from the place Sam Turner had spoken of on Williams Creek. Altogether his evidence was a remarkable confirmation of Turner's story.

Dick's face fell, and the observant colonel said, 'I see, my lad, that you are satisfied that you have made a mistake.'

'Nay, sir, I'm not satisfied. Please ask the Indian if he knows anything of the daughter of a settler at at the head of Bear Creek who was killed about the same time. He was an Englishman, and his name was Robert Marling. There was just one little girl in the family.'

Red-Star answered without hesitation that the child had only lived a year after she was captured.

'I wish I knew if he was speaking the truth,' said

Dick sadly. 'Indians do tell such lies. Oh, Mrs. Marling will be grieved, if I have to go back and tell her this! And I was quite sure that Violet was Molly.'

Bouquet, busy though he was, was a good deal interested in the case by this time. He asked Dick many questions about his journey, and about those who had sent him.

'So you hoped that Violet yonder was to be a great heiress?' he said.

'Yes,' said Dick; 'I was sure she was Molly, and I promised her all kinds of fine things. But, indeed, I can't believe Red-Star is telling the truth.'

'I am sorry for you, lad,' replied the soldier, 'but I have no doubt of it whatever, and I shall be obliged to give the child into her father's custody.'

'But, sir, he is hard and cruel and not honest.' And Dick plunged into a somewhat confused account of his ill-usage in Philadelphia. 'It would be better for Violet to die than to live with him,' he finished incoherently.

'Nay, lad—why should he want the child, unless he means to treat her kindly? I wish you well in your search for Molly Marling, but I have no right nor power to separate parent and child.'

Then he turned to Violet, and Dick had the mortification of hearing her exhorted to behave as a good and dutiful daughter to Turner.

'But, sir, Dick told me I was not to speak to him,' protested Violet, shrinking away from Sam as he advanced towards her.

'Dick has made a mistake,' said Colonel Bouquet. 'You must be a good girl and do what your father tells you.'

'Can't I go to England with Dick?' asked poor Violet sadly.

'I fear not, my girl. Dick has made a mistake.'

'I wanted to be an English lady,' said Violet, as Turner took her hand, and led her away, with her head hanging down, as if she had received a terrible blow; and indeed she had. But Sam's disagreeable face wore a look of triumph that promised ill for the daughter he was so determined to claim.

Before they reached the tent where the women were lodged Dick passed them, and Sam took the opportunity to remark:

'Now, Sukey, don't you ever dare to speak to that young feller again. He ain't fit to have aught to do wi' ye. Do yer hear?'

'Yes,' said Violet, 'but it's not true. Dick's good.'

'Don't yer dare to contradick yer father, my lass, or it'll be the worse fur yer. If yer a good gel, you shall have some real pretty beads and lots o' candy; but if you don't mind what I say, I'll make you, Sukey.'

That night Dick saw Mrs. Freeland, and asked her to tell Violet not to despair.

'I am quite sure Colonel Bouquet has made a mistake,' he said. 'I know she's Molly Marling, and she shall go to England yet, in spite of Sam Turner.'

But Violet lay in her little bunk sobbing bitterly, and even Mrs. Freeland could not comfort her.

'I'd sooner be Red-Star's daughter than that ugly man's,' she moaned; 'but Dick says I'm Molly, and I won't do what Sam Turner says.'

'Well, my dear, I think it will all come right in the end.'

Violet shook her head.

'I don't believe it will,' she sobbed. 'I never thought Colonel Bouquet would tell lies too. It's wicked of him to say I'm Sukey.'

'But, my dear, I fear you must be Sukey,' said Mrs. Freeland. 'There, don't cry.'

After that Violet would not say another word; and when the woman went to look at her an hour later, she pretended to be asleep or really was asleep; and Mrs. Freeland fancied that she was already becoming resigned to her disappointment.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHAIN OF PEACE

DICK saw nothing of Violet all the next day; but thinking she feared Turner's anger, made no inquiries about her.

Late in the afternoon, however, Mrs. Freeland came to speak to him, saying, 'Have you seen Violet?'

'No. Isn't she with the other girls?'

Mrs. Freeland shook her head.

'She was not anywhere to be seen when we got up this morning, and she hasn't been at any meal to-day.'

'I wonder if that wretched Turner has hidden her away anywhere?'

'I think not. He came to ask after her, and was very angry when we couldn't find her.'

'I wonder if she has run away?' said Dick.

'Perhaps she has gone into the woods. She said last night she would rather be Red-Star's daughter than Mr. Turner's.'

'I think,' said Dick, 'that I will ask leave to seek her.'

He went accordingly to Colonel Bouquet's tent, but his request was refused.

As he returned to his own quarters he met Archer, and said bitterly:

'It seems hard that I may not go to seek her, when that is what I came to do. After all, I don't see that I am of any use in the camp.'

'More, at least, than you would be in the woods, lad,' said Archer grimly. 'I think it is just as well she should be away if she is to be forced to accept Turner as her father.'

'Then you don't believe it?' said Dick eagerly.

'No, I don't. Have patience, Dick. The truth will come out some day.'

'Have you got any proof that Turner is lying?' asked Dick.

'I have and I haven't,' replied Joseph oracularly.

'I wish that you would tell the colonel what you know. He was somewhat annoyed with me to-day for asking leave to seek the child, but I am sure he would listen if you know anything of importance.'

'There are difficulties in the way of my speaking,' said Joe slowly, 'but I'll see.'

'Colonel Bouquet says it's none of my business where Violet goes or what she does,' said Dick in an injured tone, 'but indeed I think it is.'

'I daresay he'll say it's none of mine either,' said Archer. 'However, I'll risk it.'

But Dick was surprised to see that he passed and repassed the colonel's tent several times before he could make up his mind to seek admittance.

Colonel Bouquet kept him waiting some minutes before he spoke to him. When he came at last he said quickly:

'Now, my good fellow, I have but a few minutes to spare. What do you want?'

'It's about this girl Violet, sir.'

'What! do you claim her too? She seems to have bewitched you all.'

'No, sir, only I happen to know that Red-Star and Sam Turner have some kind of plot together about her.'

'How do you know it?' demanded Bouquet sharply.

Archer gave a sort of gulp, as if something were choking him.

'The fact is, sir, he went out of the camp several nights ago, and met Red-Star in the woods. They talked the thing over together, and as far as I could hear Turner asked Red-Star to say the girl was his.'

Bouquet frowned.

'As far as you could hear? So you left the camp too without leave?'

'Yes, sir,' said Archer humbly. 'I know I was a fool.'

'A soldier who can't obey orders is worse than a fool. Here am I doing my utmost to bring the Indians to their senses, and you must go and risk everything by such child's tricks as these.'

Archer waited, wondering what would be the result of his confession.

Presently Bouquet continued:

'You all seem determined that this Turner shall not have the child; but do you really know anything against him?'

'He is well known to be one of the greatest ruffians in Philadelphia, sir. He and his friends nearly murdered Dick Herriot, in the hope of forcing him to make over some of his master's money to them.'

'Well, if the girl comes back, I will inquire further into the case,' said Bouquet impatiently. 'But understand, I cannot and will not have you or any one else wandering off without orders. The savages are even now waiting for an excuse to fall upon us, instead of bringing back their captives.'

'How did you get on?' said Dick, who was waiting when Archer left his commander's presence.

'Better than I might have expected, Dick. The fact is I was fool enough to slip by the sentries the other night, and to follow Turner into the woods, where he met Red-Star.'

'Ah! then there is a plot between them. Why didn't you tell me before, Joe?'

'Because I couldn't talk of it without endangering my neck,' said Archer. 'I had no more right than Turner to go out of bounds.'

'Well, will the colonel give his consent to our seeking Violet?'

'No, but he says, if she comes back, he will look into her case again.'

'That won't bring her back,' said Dick indignantly. 'Sometimes, Joe, I think I ought to seek her, let Colonel Bouquet say what he will.'

Archer was much alarmed at this suggestion.

'It would be madness, Dick. The Indians would surely bring you back again, and our colonel as surely would have you shot without mercy. He is not a man to be trifled with, my lad.'

'But is not the finding of Molly my first duty?' said Dick obstinately. 'Why, that's what I came to America for, and I can't go back to Mrs. Marling and tell her I've seen the child, but wouldn't

take the necessary trouble to carry her home with me.'

'Was ever any lad so obstinate and pig-headed?' said Archer, apostrophising a great tree. 'Don't you see, Dick, that, as surely as you attempt to put this precious scheme of yours into effect, you will not go home at all? You will be shot; and what comfort will it be to Mrs. Marling that you died in well-deserved disgrace?'

Dick winced at this plain speaking.

'You talk of Molly's recovery being your first duty,' continued Archer. 'But don't you see that the moment you enlisted it became your second?'

'Well, would you have me let Molly go without a struggle?'

'No. Have patience—that is all. Besides, you don't know that Violet is Molly, even if she isn't Sukey.'

Dick made no answer. He was tired of saying that he knew that Violet must be Molly, but he still believed it. However, Archer had convinced him that he was not justified in setting his commander at defiance, and going to seek the lost girl in spite of him.

On the following day the army began its march still farther into the country of the Indians, for Bouquet was determined to do his work thoroughly. Two or three days later they reached a suitable camping-ground, about a mile from the forks of the Muskingum, which was almost in the centre of a cluster of large Indian villages. Here Bouquet set his men to work to clear the ground, and to build houses for the officers and captives, and redoubts for

the defence of the camp. In a very few days a busy little town had sprung up in the wilderness, and everything, even to the building of a council-house, had been prepared for the meetings between the white commander and the 'kings' of the redmen.

The chiefs whom Colonel Bouquet still kept with him were sullen and unwilling witnesses of his proceedings, but as they watched their respect for his power and authority increased.

For a fortnight after the new camp was established small parties of prisoners came in daily, and soon the houses provided for them were full.

Dick scanned the faces of the new-comers eagerly, hoping against hope that Violet might return; but the days passed, and she did not make her appearance. He made many inquiries amongst the prisoners about her, but none of them had seen her, whilst the Indians of Red-Star's camp declared that she had not gone back to them.

Dick was in despair, but all around him there was great rejoicing, for many a man besides Archer had recovered his wife and children, and in some cases whole families had been reunited after years of separation. On the other hand, some who had made the long journey through the wilderness with hearts full of hope, learnt at last, after sickening suspense, that those they loved had passed away.

Many a time, when a fresh party of prisoners arrived, the scene was most painful. Men ran hither and thither vainly seeking some friend they had lost, asking questions, which those they addressed were too excited to answer, and weeping bitterly when at last assured that the time for hope was over.

The Indians, too, showed the keenest regret on having to part with the captives who had so long lived amongst them. The squaws wept aloud as they tore themselves from the clinging arms of some fair-skinned child who remembered no other home than the wigwam of the forest; and even the stern warriors, who scorned to let fall a tear, could not conceal their grief on being forced to part with those whom once they had used with revolting cruelty.

At last all the prisoners who could possibly be collected that season had been brought into the camp. Colonel Bouquet now consented to treat with the chiefs; and on the second Friday of November he and his officers assembled in the rustic conference-house of boughs and unhewn tree-trunks to meet the Indian 'kings' and their warriors.

Hiyashuta, a Seneca chief, was the first speaker. Taking in his hand a string of beads made of shells, he said:

'Brothers, with this belt of wampum we wipe the tears from your eyes. We gather together and bury all the bones of the people that have been killed during this unhappy war, which the Evil Spirit occasioned amongst us. We cover the bones that have been buried, that they may never be remembered. We again cover the place with leaves, that it may never more be seen. As we have been long astray, and the path between you and us has been stopped, we extend this belt, that it may be again cleared, and we may travel in peace to see our brethren, as our ancestors formerly did. While you hold it fast by one end, and we by the other, we shall always be able to discover anything that may disturb our friendship.'

'I have heard you with pleasure,' answered the colonel, 'and I join in burying the bones of those who have fallen in the war, so that their place shall no more be known. The peace you ask for you shall now have. The king, my master and your father, has appointed me only to make war, but he has other servants who are employed in the work of peace, and to them you are to go.' And Bouquet explained the steps they were to take that the peace might be concluded; then, to the great joy of the assembled Indians, he took the chiefs by the hand for the first time since he had appeared amongst them.

Two or three days later there was a great conference with the chiefs of the Shawnees. On that occasion there were more than a hundred warriors present, and the speech of the Indian Red-Hawk was a strange mixture of pride and submission.

'Brother,' he said, 'you will listen to us, your younger brothers. We now wipe away everything that is bad between us, that you may clearly see. You have heard bad stories of us; we clear your ears that you may hear. We remove everything bad from your heart, that it may be like the heart of your ancestors, when they thought of nothing but good.' And to accomplish all these strange results the chief solemnly presented to Bouquet a belt of wampum.

'Brother,' he continued, 'when we saw you coming this road, you advanced towards us with a tomahawk in your hand; but we, your younger brothers, take it out of your hands and throw it up to the Great Spirit to dispose of as He pleases, and thus we hope never to see it more. Now, brother, we beg that you, who are a warrior, will take hold of this chain of

friendship' (once more symbolised by a string of wampum), 'and receive it from us who are also warriors, and let us think no more of war, in pity to our old men, women, and children.'

Thus the Indians at last submitted, and probably Dick was almost the only person in camp who felt inclined to think their bloodless campaign a failure; for he still heard no news of Violet.

CHAPTER XX

A MOCK TRIAL

THE English army did not leave their camp near the forks of the Muskingum for nearly a week after Bouquet's conference with the Shawnee warriors. During this time the Indian friends of the rescued white people came constantly to the camp, bringing them food and other presents. Red-Star and his people were constant visitors.

For some reason Sam Turner avoided the Delaware chief, though he was evidently anxious to have an interview with the trapper. At last Red-Star and old Poison-Arrow came into the camp one evening, when the men were all lounging about the fires, exclaiming in his own dialect, which many of the soldiers understood, 'Where is that rascal Turner?'

Half a dozen hands were officiously pointed towards the figure of a man disappearing round the corner of a tent, and half a dozen voices shouted in chorus, 'Sam! Sam Turner! an old gentleman wants yer.'

'He's deaf,' said one. 'We'll have some fun. Let's make him come.'

After a scuffle, which, though good-humoured

enough on the part of his two assailants, was taken somewhat seriously by Sam, they brought the trapper back to a spot where the firelight fell full on his face.

'Look here,' suggested one jolly red-faced fellow, 'we'll hold a court-martial. Who'll we have for the colonel?'

'I'll be colonel,' cried out a tall, thin woodsman from Virginia, with a face so melancholy in expression that even the recovery of its owner's wife and children had scarcely perceptibly lightened its gloom. 'Where's the conference-house?'

One of his friends rushed at him, and pushed him backwards on to a log, exclaiming, 'The conference house is right here!'

The Virginian was presently supported by two men on his right, and two on his left, representing Bouquet's chief officers.

The Indian watched all this preparation doubtfully; but the excessive solemnity of the self-elected judge deceived him, and he believed that the mock tribunal before him was really preparing, in the noisy, undignified fashion which the traditions of his race ascribed to the white men, to hear his complaint, and perhaps to do him justice.

Sam Turner, on the other hand, struggled to escape; but his comrades, with shouts and laughter, held him fast. At length he stood still, and began to abuse his tormentors with all the energy at his command. A crowd of those not on duty was gathering, and Sam Turner soon found himself the centre of a circle of human beings two or three deep.

Presently the Virginian rose, and with a stately gesture commanded silence.

'Now let the accuser speak,' he exclaimed.

This permission was translated to Red-Star, who immediately began a long and earnest harangue.

'What does the old fellow say?' asked the Virginian.

'He says, most honourable colonel, that he hopes your eyes will be clear to see, and your ears to hear, and that your heart will be good and honest to judge.'

'Mighty considerate of the old chap,' muttered the judge, with an impassive gravity that sent the audience into shouts of laughter.

Red-Star looked from one face to another with an air of offended dignity, but the interpreter continued:

'He further says that Sam Turner has done him a grievous wrong—hold on to him, you fellows. I can't stop to give you all the poetry; but the plain English is this, as far as I can make out; that Red-Star here told a lie or two to oblige him about some girl ("Sweet Violets" he calls her, I think), and now our friend Turner refuses to pay the price he promised.'

'It's a lie!' shouted Turner. 'Besides, Red-Star didn't say all that. I heard what he said.'

'I think I have given the full sense, if not the exact letter, of his remarks,' said the interpreter modestly. 'Hush! King Red-Star does not seem to have finished his parable.'

The Indian this time addressed himself to Sam, urging him to give him the gun and the tobacco he had promised.

'I never promised you anything, you old fool!' said Turner, almost beside himself with rage, and still struggling to escape from the firm grasp with which his companions held him.

'What do they say? Translate,' commanded the Virginian.

'Red-Star says Turner promised him a gun and six pounds of tobacco, and Turner says he didn't.'

'Ask Red-Star what these things were to be given for.'

Red-Star gave a lengthy explanation, during which Turner absolutely stamped his feet with rage.

Dick, who had only joined the ring a few moments before, edged his way close to the interpreter.

'Be quick, sir—what does he say?' he asked.

'King Red-Star says that Turner wanted to get one of the white captives for his own—he doesn't know why—so he asked him to make up a story that he got her at such a time and such a place.'

'I knew it!' cried Dick. 'Oh, sir, ask him where he really did get her?'

'Young man, be silent. Don't interrupt the proceedings of the court,' said the Virginian.

'He's telling you lies!' exclaimed Turner. 'The gel's my own daughter, ungrateful little wretch that she is!'

'Where is the girl?' was the judge's next question.

Dick listened breathlessly for the answer, but it was only:

'No one knows. She was brought into the English camp once, and has not been seen since.'

'Ask King Red-Star whether he can prove that he's telling the truth now?'

At this point the other Indian took up the story. He made a long speech, but once more the translator condensed greatly.

'He says that the girl was brought from one of the Virginian settlements with her father, and that he died just after they reached Red-Star's town.'

'Do you hear that, Dick?' whispered Archer. 'She can't be your Molly after all.'

'Perhaps they are lying now,' said Dick. 'Oh, what a thing it is not to be able to believe a word they say!'

'Why don't you ask them about the other child, Sun-in-the-Hair?' said Archer. 'Perhaps after all she is the girl, whom Mr. Jewett saw.'

'I don't believe it,' said Dick obstinately, 'but I'll ask.'

He had no chance to ask then, for the men were tired of their sport, and, to the disappointment of the Indians, let their victim escape.

'I thought,' said Red-Star, 'that you would have made him give me the gun and the tobacco.'

'Nay,' said the Virginian, 'I could not order that you should be rewarded for lying.'

'Well,' said the Indian, after a pause of thoughtful consideration, 'at least I have punished him.' That seemed to comfort him, and, as he turned and saw Sam Turner scowling at and threatening the men who had held him, his grim face relaxed into a smile.

'Dick,' said Archer, 'if I were you I would invite those fellows into your tent and learn from them

what you can concerning both girls. I'll be interpreter this time, and we will get the solemn Virginian yonder to act as scribe and take down all they say.'

'Perhaps I ought to do it,' said Dick; 'but I promise you that it will take more than the words of those fellows to make me believe that Sun-in-the-Hair is Molly.'

Archer was master of the ceremonies. He offered the two Indians tobacco before he suggested business, and they smoked out their pipes in silence.

'Dick,' said Archer, 'you had better give them a little present of some kind, to loosen their tongues, as they would say.'

'Give them whatever you like, only be quick.'

'We want to know all you can tell us about Violet-Eyes and Sun-in-the-Hair,' said Archer. 'One, we think, is the daughter of a great chief across the "Big Water," but we don't know which. But first, is it true that the little girl you carried off nine years ago from the house at the head of Bear Creek is dead?'

For an instant the Indians consulted together in low voices. Then Poison-Arrow said:

'Brothers, I will tell you all. Your tobacco has washed the lies out of my mouth, and my heart is open to you. We have told you what is not true. The little girl from the house at the head of Bear Creek is not dead. She is in the camp to-night with the other white women, and we call her Sun-in-the-Hair.'

'I don't believe it,' said Dick once more. 'Ask him again about Violet, Joe.'

'Red-Star spoke truly to-night,' said Poison-Arrow.

'Violet-Eyes'' father has been in the land of souls for many, many moons. But we saw that the white man's heart was set on her, and he promised us guns and bullets and tobacco if our tongues lied to please him.'

'Well, write it all down,' said Dick in a tone of resignation—'only, when they are such liars by their own showing, it is hard to see what use it will be.'

The talk lasted for another hour, but the old Indians told them nothing further of importance.

'What are you going to do now, Dick?' asked Joseph, as soon as they had gone.

Dick hesitated. He was unwilling to admit that there was even a possibility of truth in the Indians' story, but he was honestly anxious to do right.

'If I can find Violet, I will take both girls home,' he said at last—'that is, if any one really believes this tale—and I shall leave it to Mr. and Mrs. Marling to decide between them.'

'But what will be done with the other—the one, I mean, whom they decide against?'

'I don't know,' said Dick, 'but I am very sure they will use her kindly and tenderly. There is one comfort—I don't think Sam Turner will dare to trouble Violet again after the scene of to-night.'

'Of that I am not so sure,' said Joe. 'He is a mighty ugly-looking fellow when he is angry.'

'What puzzles me is, why did he choose to interfere with Violet?' said Dick.

'I don't know. He probably had some evil scheme in his head.'

'I wonder if it was just to thwart and anger me?' said Dick.

'Well, never mind him,' answered Joe. 'You will soon be free of his company for good and all. We are to break up camp here in three days' time.'

CHAPTER XXI

MAKING FRIENDS

DICK was much depressed by what the Indians had told him, for it seemed to him that there was a conspiracy to cheat Violet of her rights. About noon on the following day, however, he went to look if he could find Sun-in-the-Hair. To his disgust, he saw her talking to Hunter Jim, so he did not attempt to speak to her then. But he was determined to try to make friends with her; for if there was any possibility of her proving to be Molly, he ought to look after her for Mrs. Marling's sake, if not for her own.

A few hours later he again sought the child, in company with Mrs. Archer, who had promised to act as interpreter for him.

The girl was sitting by herself on the long slender branch of a fallen tree, which swayed up and down at her slightest motion. She was singing the old sweet song with which Dick had such a disagreeable association; and though he tried to forget that day, he was conscious that, in spite of himself, his face had not a very pleasant expression.

When Sun-in-the-Hair saw him, she laughed long and loudly, and Dick blushed.

But he had come to make friends, and it should not be his fault if he failed.

From his pocket he produced a gay handkerchief of scarlet silk. This he spread carefully on the ground, and on it he arranged a little store of sweetmeats.

'Now, Mrs. Archer, please tell her that these things are for her, and that I wish to be friends,' said Dick, retiring a few paces from his peace-offering, and looking earnestly at the girl.

She answered Mrs. Archer volubly, tossing her arms about and stamping her feet; then she took up the sweets one by one, and threw them with an unerring aim directly at the giver.

'She is angry,' explained his coadjutor rather unnecessarily. 'I think you had better go away.'

Dick accordingly departed; but he had the consolation of seeing that his gift was better appreciated than had appeared, for Sun-in-the-Hair, regardless of her dignity, carefully gathered up her missiles and ate them. Like Violet, she seemed unable to resist sweets.

This emboldened him to try again. About the same time on the following day he went once more to her favourite tree, and found her swinging and singing as usual. This time he took no interpreter, nor did he spread his offerings at the lady's feet.

As soon as she saw him she began to talk very fast, and, as Dick supposed, very rudely; but as he did not understand one word, he bore her abuse calmly. Presently he held up one of his sweets, and threw it towards her. Sun-in-the-Hair caught it dexterously, but, to his surprise, threw it back. He tried again, and the second time the girl put it in her mouth, and

held out her hand for another. This was encouraging; but Dick, profiting by Colonel Bouquet's example, resolved not to be too conciliatory, so, though Sun-in-the-Hair evidently expected to receive more, he shook his head and walked slowly away.

Early the next day the troops set out on their return towards Fort Pitt. There was great lamentation amongst the Indians when they were obliged to bid farewell to their captives, and some obtained permission to march with the army towards the fort whither it was bound.

Dick was dismayed to see Sun-in-the-Hair with her arms round the neck of a particularly dirty old squaw. Both were sobbing and crying as if their hearts would break, and every now and then the child uttered a wild, piercing shriek. What would Mrs. Marling think if he had to take her to England?

But when she looked up, with her blue eyes filled with tears, and her poor little face distorted with grief, a sudden wave of pity swept over him. After all, little savage as she seemed, she had a heart, and for the second time since he made acquaintance with her Dick looked at her without repulsion. He would gladly have comforted her, had he known how; but he was still gazing helplessly at her when he heard the bugle-call, which obliged him to take his place in the ranks.

All morning the thought of the woebegone little figure in its thin blanket haunted him, and, for once forgetting Violet, he tried to think of some plan by which to win the child's confidence, for it was clear to him that he could do her little good while she distrusted him. He might have added, while he hated and despised her; but he did not yet realise

the hopelessness of trying to serve a fellow-creature in any spirit but that of love.

The wind was piercing, as it swept through the bare woods, and rustled the dried leaves under their feet. Dick wished that his coat was thicker, and felt conscience-stricken to think of Sun-in-the-Hair in her tattered blanket. If he was cold, what must not she be suffering?

When they stopped for the night, he went to one of his comrades, as soon as his necessary duties were done, and bought a large striped blanket. Armed with this, and with a tin cup of steaming broth, he once more sought Sun-in-the-Hair.

To his dismay, she was huddled up in a heap on the damp ground, still crying bitterly. Her thin, bare arms were blue with cold, and the wind fluttered her miserable rags remorselessly. Again Dick wondered what Mrs. Marling would think, if she could see her; and the memory of his dear mistress made his voice very gentle, as he pronounced the child's long Indian name, which he had learnt with so much difficulty.

Sun-in-the-Hair obstinately refused to move for several seconds; but just as the lad was beginning to despair of doing anything with her, she lifted up her head and shook her tangled hair out of her eyes

'Drink this,' commanded Dick in English. 'It will do you good.'

The girl understood his gesture, if not his words, and, after a little hesitation, accepted the bread and broth he had brought her. When the cup was empty, she flung herself down on the brown turf again; but Dick lifted her up, and, wrapping the blanket round her shivering little body, led her to the camp fire, where Mrs. Freeland and Mrs. Archer were sitting.

'I wish, ma'am,' he said to the latter, 'that you could buy her some more comfortable clothing than that she has on. I scarcely know what is fitting for her, but I have money to pay for all that is needed.'

'I will gladly do my best for her, but I doubt if she'll wear better clothes if she has them,' said Mrs. Archer.

Dick still lingered, for he had another request to make.

'If you could persuade her, ma'am, to wash her face, it would mightily improve her appearance,' he added.

'Yes, sir, and to comb out her hair—it's beautiful, if it were only properly dressed; but it will be no easy matter to induce her to do either. She is a regular little Indian, poor child!'

The subject of these remarks was still standing beside Dick, and to his astonishment he discovered that she was feeling in his pockets. He grasped her wrist, and drew her hand out of the pocket with a touch of roughness, in spite of his new resolutions.

'What can she want?' he exclaimed.

'Sweets, I think,' said Mrs. Archer.

'Tell her I have none now, ma'am.' Then he added, with a sudden inspiration, 'But I'll get her some gladly, if she'll come to me clean and tidy to-morrow.'

Sun-in-the-Hair made an ugly grimace on hearing this hard condition, and, to Dick's disappointment, appeared before him in the morning with her face unwashed, and her hair as tangled as ever. She held out her hand with a smile, but the lad frowned.

She stamped her foot, and talked faster than he had ever heard her before. It was very clear she was in a great passion, but he still stood gravely shaking his

head. Still she pretended not to understand, and Dick, in desperation, began a dumb-show of washing his own face, and combing his own hair. She chattered at him like an angry monkey; then, with two or three shrill screams, ran off into the woods. But she did not run far; for happening to catch sight of some short thick sticks, she filled her arms, and, going back to her would-be benefactor, she flung them at him one by one.

He tried in vain to dodge her missiles; and though he was not seriously hurt, he received one blow heavy enough to raise a large swelling on his forehead. Some of his comrades witnessed his discomfiture, and met him, when he returned to his duties, with shouts of laughter.

At night the same scene was repeated with slight variations; but Dick, being on his guard, contrived to avoid her blows.

Next day he had his reward, however. He was busy getting ready for the march, when Sun-in-the-Hair appeared before him, dressed in a long-sleeved gown of dark blue. Her face at least showed its natural fairness, and her long hair was combed back over her shoulders and tied with a ribbon.

He smiled this time with genuine pleasure, and filled her hands with sugar and raisins. She stood beside him for a few moments, enjoying the coveted sweetmeats; then, to his great surprise, held out her hand.

Dick was so much astonished that for a moment he did not take it; then, mindful still of his new duties as general educator and instructor, he bowed as respectfully as if his little white savage had been a great lady. He did not at all like it, though; for he

felt, as he had never done before, that it was possible after all that this child, and not Violet, was the girl he had come to seek. Why it should be more likely, because she had at last deigned to wash her face and dress her hair, he did not stop to think. Probably his alarm on Violet's account was due to the fact that Sun-in-the-Hair no longer looked so utterly unworthy of being Mrs. Marling's grandchild.

'Bravo, lad,' said a voice beside him; 'art thou turning dancing-master?'

It was the colonel of his regiment, and Dick blushed as he answered:

'No, sir, I should make no figure at that trade; but this child may prove to be a wealthy lady, and I would gladly see her cast away her savage ways.'

'Whether wealthy or not, she will be a beauty, lad. So she's that Molly Marling of whom we have heard so much?'

'Oh, sir, I hope not!' cried Dick.

'Ah, I remember you favour another fair claimant. Where is she, lad?'

'I don't know. I wish I could get tidings of her.'

'But, like a prudent fellow, you do not mean to go home without one Molly or the other, eh?'

Colonel Francis did not wait for an answer, but passed on, laughing heartily, and Dick thought once again that, though some care for Sun-in-the-Hair might be a duty, it was by no means a pleasure.

But the girl herself felt that, to use the favourite metaphor of the Indian orators, the chain of peace had been brightened, and that she and Dick now held it fast between them.

The next time she came to ask for sweets she brought a handful of scarlet berries, which she

presented to Dick with a bright smile and a long speech in her unintelligible language. Then she added, in broken English, 'Eat, Dick—good!'

And Dick ate, like a brave man, privately hoping that the pretty-looking fruit was not actually poisonous. He had no wish to reject Sun-in-the-Hair's first voluntary step towards friendship; but he afterwards regretted his complacency, for during the next two days she frequently brought him strange edibles from the woods, which she evidently regarded as delicacies.

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE TRACK OF THE ARMY

On the slow march through the wilderness many of the rescued captives took the opportunity of escaping to the woods, in the hope of making their way back to the wild life they had learnt to prefer to the greater luxuries and more irksome restraints of civilisation. Some, indeed, had married amongst the Indians, and had been forced against their will to leave their best beloved behind, and to return to the white kindred, with whom they had lost all sympathy.

Dick would not have been at all surprised any morning to hear that Sun-in-the-Hair was not to be found, but they had almost reached Fort Pitt before it was reported that she was missing. It was then discovered that she had not been seen for several hours, and Dick begged permission to search for her in the woods. This time his request was granted, and he and several of his comrades turned back to look for her.

Archer strongly advised him not to go himself, but he had learnt so much woodcraft in the last few weeks that he felt quite competent to undertake the task. All the afternoon he had no success.

By this time it was getting dusk, and, having

found the path the army had taken, he was pushing forward as fast as possible, when he saw some one in a fluttering blanket just in front of him. He quickened his pace to a run, calling, 'Sun-in-the-Hair, stop!'

The girl glanced over her shoulder, and then disappeared into a clump of bushes. Perhaps, after all, it was not Sun-in-the-Hair, but some poor wretch who had left an Indian husband in one of the Delaware towns. And if it should be the child, why should he force her to go with him if she did not wish? Had she really been Molly indeed, the case would have been different; but the girl whom he thought of as Molly was no one knew where—perhaps lying dead in some strange hiding-place, whither she had fled to escape Sam Turner's groundless claims. Like many other people, Dick often only believed as much as he chose, and he was quite satisfied there never had been such a person as Sukey Turner.

Far in the distance he could see the warm glow from the camp fires; but he was footsore, weary, and weighed down with the heavy responsibilities of his duty towards the Marlings, and he walked slowly.

Suddenly a little glad cry rang from a clump of bushes on the right side of the path; then a low voice said softly:

'Dick, is that you?'

'Yes. Oh, Violet! where did you spring from?'

'Hush! speak quietly. I was so afraid that it was that man Turner. I am always fancying that he is following me, so when I hear any one

coming I hide. I am afraid for you, Dick. Do be careful.'

'I shall not be near him much longer, Violet; but, tell me, where have you been all these days?'

Violet laughed.

'In the woods. I have seen you many a time when you didn't see me. I have been following you all the way.'

'Well, you can come back into camp now. Do you know that Red-Star confessed that he was telling lies to please Turner when he said you were his child?'

'No,' said Violet, frowning; 'but I won't come back, Dick, until Colonel Bouquet says I may go with you. I won't be Turner's Sukey, even for a minute.'

'What do you mean to do, then?'

'I'll follow the army, as I have been doing these other days.'

'But what do you find to eat?'

'Oh, lots of things,' said Violet; and Dick wondered if she liked the same queer things as Sun-in-the-Hair.

'Where do you sleep?' demanded Dick.

'In all sorts of places,' said Violet. 'I'm used to the woods, you know.'

'But don't you find it very cold?'

'I'm used to the cold,' she answered as before. 'I soon get warm when the sun comes out.'

'Are you sure that it wouldn't do to come back?' said Dick, looking anxiously into the gloomy recesses of the forest. 'How can you bear it, Violet?'

'I can bear anything rather than go back to Sam

Turner,' said Violet. 'But, Dick, if I follow you all the way, you will take me to England, won't you? You are sure I am Molly, aren't you?'

'Pretty nearly,' said Dick; 'but I'll take you to England, anyway.'

'Why aren't you quite sure?'

'Because Poison-Arrow and Red-Star say Sun-in-the-Hair is Molly.'

'Then shan't I be a grand English lady?' asked Violet in a tone of bitter disappointment. 'I do so want to be Molly.'

'Well, I hope you are,' said Dick. 'I really think you are. But I must go. I wish you would come too.'

'I can't, Dick.'

'Well, I'm afraid I must go,' repeated Dick, 'or they will think again that I have run away; but, Violet, I shall always try to put something for you near where the big fires have been, so that you won't need to be hungry.'

'Come,' said Violet, taking his hand. 'I am going with you till we get close to the camp. Why did you come out all alone? I have tried to speak to you many times, but you would never listen or come near me.'

'I didn't know you were there, Violet.'

'Where did you think I had gone, when you couldn't find me?'

'I thought perhaps you had gone back to Red-Star.'

Violet indignantly shook her head. 'I am never going to be an Indian any more, Dick. I told you so. I have been near the camp all the time. Did you try to find me?'

'They wouldn't let me, though I begged hard.'

'Weren't you looking for some one to-day?'

'Yes, Sun-in-the-Hair ran away this morning.'

'And did they say that you might look for her?'

'Yes. They are not quite so strict now peace is made, and they have made up their minds that she is Molly Marling, so you see they think in a way she belongs to me.'

Violet did not answer for a long time. Then she said:

'I don't like Sun-in-the-Hair; she is a wild girl. She should go back to the Indians.'

'Nay, Violet, she is white too, and I hope she has not gone back to the savages again.'

Violet hung her head, and looked as if she were ashamed of herself.

'I saw her to-day, and told her to go back to Red-Star's town,' she said. 'But if I see her again, I'll tell her you want her—shall I?'

'Yes, do,' said Dick. 'I must make haste back to the camp; but, Violet, if you want to speak to me again any time, whistle when you see me pass, and I will seek you as soon afterwards as I can.'

'Very well. Good-night now.'

'Are you not afraid of being alone in the dark forest?'

Violet shook her head and ran off laughing, while Dick went slowly into the circle lighted by the great camp fires. The next moment Sun-in-the-Hair came dancing up to him with a very friendly and innocent air.

'Where have you been all day?' asked Dick.

'In the woods,' answered the girl, who was be-

ginning to pick up a few simple English phrases. 'I liked it.'

'Do you know I have been looking for you for many hours?' said Dick, trying to impress her with the error of her ways.

'Why?'

'Because I didn't want you to get lost.'

The girl laughed merrily.

'Sun-in-the-Hair not get lost—Dick get lost—Red-Star find him.'

Two or three days after this adventure they reached Fort Pitt. The little army was now broken up. The regular soldiers were sent to garrison different posts in the wilderness, while the provincial troops, with the rescued prisoners, went on towards the settlements of Virginia and Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER XXIII

TWO 'WHITE LADIES'

AT Fort Pitt Mrs. Freeland was met by her husband, and Dick arranged with them to take charge of Violet. They intended to visit Philadelphia on their way to one of the little towns in that neighbourhood, where they meant to make their home. Dick had a good deal of difficulty, however, in finding the girl to tell her of his plans for her, and still more in persuading her to go forward without him.

They all made the journey without any misadventures by the way, and before the close of November Joseph Archer and his long-lost wife were safe beneath his mother's roof.

'It seems too good to be true, Joe,' she sobbed. 'I never, never hoped to see poor Bessy again. But oh, lad, how could you know her? She is woefully changed.'

'I didn't know her,' said Archer bitterly. 'She knew me.'

There was a long pause; then Joe spoke again.

'Mother,' he said, 'I thank God for sending that lad here, and for touching my hard heart to desire to help him. If it hadn't been for that, Bessy would have had no one to welcome her back. But I am

forgetting—Dick begged me to ask you if he might bring his two Molly Marlings here for a while. Can we make room for all?'

'They are here now,' said Mrs. Archer. 'The girl they call Violet has been here these two days, and the other came an hour ago. Did you not hear? Of course we will make room. It does me good to see the poor things rescued from that awful fate. It seems dreadful to think of two such pretty little maids being brought up like savages. How they must have suffered!'

'I don't know, mother. It's not the children that have suffered most. Poor little wretches; they didn't want to leave their mothers, as they called the squaws.'

'Then they are kind to them?'

'That they are, when once they have washed the white blood from their veins, as they say. Oh, at this minute, there's many a sad heart in the Indian towns, mourning for their white brothers or daughters lost to them for ever.'

Just then Dick knocked at the door, saying:

'I want Joseph's advice, ma'am. May I come in?'

'Yes. Must I go away?' said Mrs. Archer.

'No, ma'am; please stay. My difficulty is this: how am I to find out which of the two girls is Molly? Either of them answers to Mr. Jewett's description. I would take them down to him, but I fear we might be molested by Turner and his ruffians. Besides, I think they need something better than blankets in which to walk the public streets.'

'You are right, my lad,' said Mrs. Archer. 'If

you could keep them indoors even for a few days, we could clothe them so that they would not make quite such sorry figures on the streets.'

'Madam, would it be trespassing too much on your kindness to beg you to buy for them such garments as they need? Were I to do it, I fear there is danger that they would look little less odd than they do now.'

'I will do my best, sir. Should you like them to be dressed alike?'

'Why, yes,' said Dick; 'at least, till we are certain which one is Miss Marling, 'tis well to give neither advantage over the other. If I may presume so far, I would have them dressed neatly but plainly.'

The request was not without reason, for the fashions of that time were rather extravagant.

Two days later Mrs. Archer proudly led the two girls into the kitchen, where Dick was talking to her son.

'See, good sirs,' she said; 'don't these two little misses look neat and pretty?'

Dick looked from one to the other gravely. His wish for plainness and neatness had received due attention; and nothing could have been simpler than their blue dresses, white aprons, and spotless collars and cuffs. Except for the colour of the gowns Mrs. Archer might have taken as a model the Quaker costume, which was so familiar to all eyes in that time and place.

Violet held up her head proudly, conscious that her appearance was now worthy of a 'white lady': but poor little Sunny-Hair, as they had begun to call her, looked unhappy and restless in her new

attire. She twitched her sleeves, plucked at her apron, and stood first on one foot and then on the other as if her new shoes burnt her.

'Well, sir, what do you think?' repeated Mrs. Archer. 'Have we not done wonders in the time?'

'Indeed you have. I am most greatly obliged to you, ma'am.'

'Do I look like a white lady now?' demanded Violet.

'Indeed you do, Violet. No one would know that you had ever been anything else.'

'I wasn't anything else, sir,' said the young girl, with an air of offended dignity. 'I always knew I was not an Indian, even before Mrs. Freeland came to the camp and taught me to speak English.'

'How do you like your new dress, Sunny-Hair?' asked Dick.

'Sunny-Hair doesn't like it,' said Violet in a tone of superiority. 'She says a blanket is more comfortable.'

'I don't like it—it hurts,' said that young person, wrestling frantically with her stiff collar.

'What's the matter, little one?' said Archer soothingly. 'Let me see. Have they fastened it too tight?'

'Yes, they have. It hurts.' And Sun-in-the-Hair was on the verge of flying into a passion, when Archer created a diversion by suggesting that they should go to see the horses in the streets and the 'big canoes' on the river.

'Couldn't we go to Mr. Jewett's to-day?' said Dick anxiously.

'I suppose we might,' said Archer. 'Mother, have you provided any outdoor apparel for these two little maids?'

'Yes. Come, girls, get your hoods and cloaks.'

Archer led the way to Mr. Jewett's house, holding Sun-in-the-Hair fast by the hand; for he suspected her, with some reason, of a desire to escape from the restraints of civilisation, which at present seemed to her only useless and uncomfortable. As they walked along the streets she gazed at the people and the houses with an air of wild astonishment; but Violet was determined not to show surprise at anything. She marched by Dick's side with an impassive air that would have done credit to an Indian warrior; and she and her escort flattered themselves that her new manners accorded excellently with her new dress.

To Dick's great disappointment, they found that Mr. Jewett was unable to see them. He was at home, but had been ill for many days, and was now so weak that he could scarcely speak above a whisper.

'What shall I do?' said Dick, when they reached home. 'I had counted on Mr. Jewett's knowing which was which of the two girls; and I received a letter to-day bidding me come home with all possible speed.'

Archer was silent for a few moments. At last he said:

'Surely there must be others in the town who have known Molly Marling's parents?'

'How am I to find them?' said Dick. 'To say truth, I am much afraid of Sun-in-the-Hair's giving me the slip if I take her round the town.'

'Perhaps we could gather them together here,' suggested Archer. 'Let us call my mother and Bessy into consultation. It may be that four heads will prove better than two.'

'I believe that I have heard that Mrs. Marling used to attend the old Presbyterian church in her youth,' said Mrs. Archer. 'Probably some of the people who have long attended there may remember her.'

'If you'll give me their names,' said Dick, 'I'll go and call on them, and see if I cannot learn something to solve this mystery.'

'Why, yes,' said Mrs. Archer hospitably; 'and if any have much information to offer, or think they could judge which of the twain is Miss Marling, you might bid them come hither to supper to-morrow evening.'

'But suppose many remembered Mrs. Marling?'

'You may invite them all—twenty if you like. 'Tis a most important matter, and I would do anything in reason to put the poor child in possession of her rights.'

Dick was much surprised to find how many people professed to remember Mrs. Marling, while not a few declared that they also remembered her husband. He soon grew weary of explaining his strange errand, and went home with much less faith in the success of the experiment than he had set out with. He felt bewildered with the variety of the descriptions he had received of Molly's mother, and he heartily wished that her old friends had been less loquacious and more definite in their recollections.

Early on the following afternoon the guests began to assemble in great force. The first to arrive was

an old lady, almost blind, but she laid great stress on her fine ear for voices. She was led into the room by her grand-daughter, a girl of fourteen. Next came three sisters, who had attended the writing school at the same time as Mrs. Marling. Then came the minister who had baptised her. Altogether, the party numbered nearer thirty than twenty, but Mrs. Archer was in her element. She sailed downstairs in her best cap and gown, and marshalled the company in a great circle all round the room.

She had wished her daughter-in-law to do this; but poor Bessy shrank from meeting so many strangers, and busied herself in preparing for the refreshment of the guests after the ceremony of the day should be over.

The solemnity of the occasion seemed to be oppressive. The guests sat as silent as if they were in a meeting-house; and though Mrs. Archer made remarks on the weather and the condition of the streets, she did not encourage conversation of a more absorbingly interesting nature. In the very middle of the room Joseph Archer was established at a small table, upon which were set forth a great ink-horn, a quill pen, and a large sheet of paper. Possibly these preparations for preserving their utterances impressed the guests with the fact that words are weighty and should not be used without due consideration.

The room was full, even to overflowing. The silence and solemnity were becoming almost unbearable. Joseph was wondering why his mother did not bring down the girls and get the tedious business over. Some of the guests were apparently

under the impression that they were at a funeral, and were beginning to feel for their handkerchiefs. Suddenly the spell was broken.

A frightful shriek from the room overhead broke in on the stillness with dramatic effect. There was a sound of dancing and stamping; then a general scramble; but the company in the parlour was still silent and motionless, for there was something weird and unearthly about the whole entertainment.

Before they had time to recover themselves, there was a succession of screams, then Sun-in-the-Hair dashed into the room with her long locks flying loose, and a patchwork quilt, of marvellous design, clutched round her shoulders. She danced up to Joseph, sweeping the ink-horn from the table in her course, and, stamping her little bare foot, began to tell him some long tale in her familiar Indian.

Still the company neither spoke nor moved; and even Mrs. Archer was too paralysed to do anything for the preservation of her best mat, on which the ink had been poured out in one huge blot.

At that moment, while every man and woman in the room was gazing open-eyed on the madly dancing little figure in its queer garb of patchwork, Violet slowly entered and took her place on the other side of Joseph. Her hair was dressed in careful plaits and coils, and her blue gown and white collar set off her fair complexion to the best advantage.

She was followed by Dick, who, according to the original programme, arranged by Mrs. Archer, took his station behind Joseph. If all had gone well, he was to have made a little speech, repeating the main

facts of Molly Marling's story, and asking the opinion of the company as to which of the two young ladies appeared most likely to be the lost heiress. But, I am grieved to say, he too lost his presence of mind, and gazed helplessly at Sun-in-the-Hair, whose rage seemed but to increase with the relation of her woes.

'Mother,' said Joseph at last, 'we had best have supper first. 'Tis useless to attempt other business now.'

'Really, that is a very naughty child,' said Mrs. Archer, feeling more indignant than she could express at the upsetting of her nicely arranged plans.

'Leave her to me, mother. I'll pacify her.'

And while the company went to supper, the host carried Sun-in-the-Hair upstairs. A few minutes later he called his wife, and between them they coaxed and scolded the girl back to good humour. They even persuaded her to give up the patched quilt, which she had snatched from her bed, as a substitute for her beloved blanket; and when next she appeared downstairs, she was dressed, like Violet, in a blue gown and a white apron. But she flatly refused to put on a collar; and it appeared that it was Violet's attempts to dress her properly, according to Mrs. Archer's instructions, that had caused the whole uproar.

Meanwhile, the guests had found their tongues. Every one seemed to be talking and no one listening except Dick, who heard a good deal that did not please him. Forgetful that Violet could hear and understand, deaf old gentlemen shouted criticisms of her appearance to equally deaf old ladies; but

what annoyed Dick most of all was a remark he heard about Sun-in-the-Hair.

'She's the image of her mother,' he heard. 'When she was a mere slip of a girl, she would go into just such rages, dancing and stamping like a mad thing; but she grew out of it, ma'am—she grew out of it; and when Robert Marling married her she was as sweet a girl as you could wish to see.'

'I don't believe in children growing out o' their sins, sir,' was the answer. 'I believe in training 'em out o' them. If I'd my way, I'd keep that girl on bread and water for a while.'

'Poor little maid! she has had no chance. She's just a little white Indian.'

'Yes, and I'd take the Indian out of her, or know the reason why,' was the harsh rejoinder.

At that moment Joseph Archer led Sun-in-the-Hair into the room, and the old gentleman said:

'I think Mr. Archer has already taken the Indian out of her, ma'am. She seems now in her right mind, and a mighty pretty little maid she is.'

'More like her poor dear mother than ever!'

Dick heard no more then; but after supper, when the guests were once more ranged round the low parlour, there was a great deal of talk, which was not satisfactory from his point of view.

At his mother's request Joe resumed his seat at the table, while the girls took their places on each side of him. Dick's little speech was dispensed with, but Mrs. Archer rang a bell for silence; then, beginning with the person whom she considered most influential, she said:

'Sir, we shall be greatly obliged for your opinion as to which of these two girls most nearly resembles

Mr. or Mrs. Marling, who left this city about ten years ago.'

The gentleman addressed answered unhesitatingly, 'The little maid, ma'am'; but to Dick's relief both the second and third judges decided in favour of Violet. Several cautious individuals made lengthy speeches without venturing to commit themselves. Others declared that the case was so plain that there could be no doubt which was Molly Marling; but these positive people contradicted one another, and argued so earnestly for their respective candidates, that they seriously interfered with the carrying out of the programme.

Joseph carefully noted down the opinion of each member of the company, and Dick looked over his shoulder as he wrote. He was so excited that he could hardly force himself to listen in silence to the long, droning speeches. Violet was almost equally nervous; but Sun-in-the-Hair, when she grew tired of standing, dropped in a heap on the floor, and went peacefully to sleep, quite undisturbed by the attention that was being bestowed upon her.

At last it was over, but Dick could not wait for the guests to depart before he asked:

'What is it, Joseph? What do they think?'

'Four refuse to give any opinion, seven think that Violet is Molly, fourteen that Sun-in-the-Hair is, and three say that neither of them is in the least like Mrs. Marling.'

'Do you mean to say that fourteen of these people think that Sun-in-the-Hair is Molly, and only half as many say that Violet is? After all, Joe, I doubt if we are any nearer the truth by this day's work.'

'It's hard to say,' said Joseph. 'For my own part, I think it likely that the majority are right.'

Dick sighed.

'Well, Mr. and Mrs. Marling must decide for themselves.'

At this moment Violet came up to them.

'Am I Molly?' she asked eagerly.

'I fear not,' said Archer.

'I still hope you are,' said Dick.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN ADVENTURE ON THE RIVER

FOR the next few days Dick had a very busy time. One evening he went to Mrs. Archer with an anxious face.

'Madam,' he said, 'I shall be greatly obliged if you can persuade both girls to stay indoors, unless they have some one to take charge of them. This morning I saw Sam Turner hovering about the corner of the street, and I think, when I came home last night, some one was hiding in the yard. Indeed, I believe he has kept a watch on us ever since we got to Philadelphia.'

'Surely they would not dare to molest you in the city?' said Mrs. Archer.

'Nay,' said Dick, 'they have dared so much with me, and have not been brought to punishment, that I fear they may be emboldened to try to work some other ill. I shall be glad now to be well away from Philadelphia, though I can never thank you and your son enough for your great kindness to me.'

'I am glad to have been able to do something for the poor little souls, who have been so long uncared for,' replied Mrs. Archer. 'But, indeed, despite Sun-in-the-Hair's wild ways, I shall miss you all

greatly. The house will not seem like the same place without you. Hark! what is wrong now? Surely that child must have slipped into the street.'

Dick sprang to the door, and Sun-in-the-Hair came running towards him, calling:

'Dick, Dick!—bad man hurt me.'

'Where is he?' cried Dick.

'Gone down street.'

'I believe, ma'am,' said Dick, with an air of desperation, 'that it must be one of those rascals again. I shall take our passage to-morrow in the Mohawk Queen. I saw the captain to-day, and he told me that his wife would take charge of the girls.'

'It is a bad time of year for a long voyage,' remarked Mrs. Archer, 'but Captain Arnold and his wife are good friends of ours. You could not find any one kinder or more discreet than Mrs. Arnold to take charge of your little maids.'

'Well, I'll certainly do it, then. The ship sails on Monday,' said Dick. Then he turned to Sun-in-the-Hair again. 'Why did you run out into the street where it's all dark?' he asked. 'That bad man will run away with you some day if you don't take care.'

The girl shook her head.

'He's afraid,' she said; 'as soon as I screamed he ran He's not a warrior; he's only a squaw.'

'Well, be a good girl, and do what you are told, like Violet. You don't know what may happen if you are naughty,' said Dick vaguely, wishing that the time had come when he could turn over his responsibilities to some one else. Violet was generally

manageable, but there was no telling from one moment to another what Sun-in-the-Hair would take it into her head to do.

Mrs. Archer seemed to have the same idea.

'You'll be lucky,' she said aloud, 'if you get her over alive. She'll surely fall into the water.'

Next day Dick arranged everything to his satisfaction, but Archer met him with a gloomy face.

'I fear you are going to have trouble yet, Dick,' he said. 'Some meddlesome fellow has been suggesting that you ought not to be allowed to carry off those two girls until there has been an inquiry into the case.'

'Well, but I've taken my passage,' said Dick. 'There's no time for inquiries and such nonsense. Why, if they are going to keep me till they find out who the girls are, we may wait for years.'

'I know all that,' said Joe; 'but if I were you, I'd hurry on board as soon as you can. Get your passport signed before there comes an order from the governor to stop you.'

'I will,' said Dick. 'Oh, I wonder why people will trouble their heads about what doesn't concern them? Can Turner's finger be in it again? Some rascal frightened Sun-in-the-Hair last night, or at least made her shriek. I am constantly afraid when I go out that I shall find her gone when I come in.'

'Don't be down-hearted. I believe that God will take care of you and your charges, and I fully expect you'll get them both safe and sound to London,' said Archer with unwonted cheerfulness. 'What you'll do with them when you do get them there is another question. I only hope Mrs.

Marling will not think your two little Indians too much of a burden.'

'I'm not afraid of that,' said Dick. 'My troubles will be over when we have once crossed the sea.'

Mrs. Archer was much occupied during these days in providing all that she thought necessary for the travellers to take with them. The voyage at that time of year would probably last for eight or nine weeks, and might take a very much longer time.

At last everything was in readiness. The girls, who only half understood what lay before them, were in wild excitement when the time came to bid their kind friends good-bye. Violet cried quietly, but Sun-in-the-Hair lifted up her voice and screamed as the Indian women did in times of mourning. Mrs. Archer was much touched by this mark of feeling, but Dick became impatient at the noise and fuss, for he was feverishly anxious to be off, and could not rid himself of an uncomfortable notion that even yet something might prevent their sailing that night.

The Mohawk Queen lay at anchor some distance down the river. She was to sail at dawn; but the passengers, of whom there were only two besides Dick's party, had been requested to come on board before midnight.

It was almost the darkest season of the year; and though Dick had intended to go aboard in daylight, it was dusk before they left the house.

Just as they crossed the market-place, Sun-in-the-Hair exclaimed, 'The bad man! Look, Dick'; and she pointed to a dark archway.

'I don't see any one,' said Dick. 'Never mind him now.'

Nevertheless, the girl's remark added to his nervousness and discomfort.

They were soon at the waterside, where they found the boat Dick had ordered earlier in the day already piled high with their belongings.

Its owner—a man named Garry—grumbled at having been kept waiting in the cold so long; but his assistant, who had his head bundled up as if he had toothache, did not speak till they were all seated in the boat. Then he suddenly objected to Archer's being of the party, saying:

'The boat has all she can carry without you, sir.'

'The boat is all right,' replied Archer. 'I am going to see my friends aboard.'

'You'd better bid them farewell here,' was the reply. 'I tell you it ain't safe to crowd so many into the old boat with such a heap of luggage.'

'It's safe enough,' said Archer. 'I know what a boat can carry, my man.'

'Let the gentleman go, Jack,' said Garry. ''Tain't our fault if they overload the old tub. They've had fair warning, an' I guess we knows how to swim.'

'We hadn't ought to go, Tom; but if the lad that hired us says so, why——'

Dick wondered that Archer should insist on accompanying them under the circumstances; but as he evidently did not intend to give way, the lad said rather sharply:

'Go on, then, my men. Are we to idle here all night?'

'I don't want the drow[illegible] f you on my conscience,' muttered the man with the bandaged head.

'Go on; make haste,' repeated Dick; and, still

grumbling, the oarsmen pulled slowly out into the stream.

'Look! another canoe!' cried Sun-In-the-Hair, pointing to a boat that crept slowly after them out of the black shadow of the wharf.

'More passengers,' muttered the surly oarsman.

'The bad man! Mr. Sam Turner!' said Sun-in-the-Hair, pointing at the speaker, and separating the syllables of the name in her quaint, foreign fashion, while she laughed as if she thought it an excellent joke.

The man uttered an angry exclamation, then tried to look unconscious, while Dick started, and glanced anxiously at Archer; but neither spoke.

Soon, when they were well out on the misty river, both men stopped rowing, and Garry gave a loud shout.

'Go on,' said Dick once more. 'Why are you stopping? We have no time to lose.'

'My oar has broke short off,' explained the boatman; then he raised his voice again, and called to the occupants of the boat which was still following them, 'Hulloa there! have you an extra oar?'

'Yes,' was the reply, and the other men began to pull towards them with long rapid strokes.

'I don't like this,' whispered Dick, as the second boat came alongside.

'Neither do I,' replied Archer. 'If I am not much mistaken, that is our old friend Jim,' and he pointed to one of the new-comers.

'It looks like a regular plot. What do they want, I wonder?'

As if in answer to his question, Sam Turner suddenly threw off his disguise, exclaiming:

'Now, my lad, we're four to two, but if you give in quietly we'll hurt none of you. I warn you, it will be the worse for you and the lasses too, if you make any fuss.'

'What do you want?' demanded Dick.

'You'll soon see. All you have to do is to obey orders. Get into the other boat, and be quick about it. You, too,' he added, turning to Archer, 'or I'll pitch you into the river.'

They did not stir, and Sam, throwing himself upon Archer, endeavoured to put his threat into execution, while Hunter Jim attacked Dick and tried to drag him from his place. Fortunately they feared to use firearms lest the report should attract inconvenient attention to their proceedings.

In the struggle both boats came perilously near being capsized, though two of the men gave all their attention to keeping them steady. Violet, almost beside herself with terror, clung with both hands to the seat, and shrieked again and again for help; but Sun-in-the-Hair seized a boat-hook, and took energetic part in the fray.

Archer was getting the worst of it. His enemy's strong arms were crushing the breath out of his body, when Sun-in-the-Hair brought down her weapon with a crash on Turner's head. He lurched forward, lost his balance, and fell head-first into the water, carrying Archer with him. Sun-in-the-Hair uttered a wild cry, and began to tear off some of her heavy clothing with the intention of going to the rescue; but Dick, still struggling with Hunter Jim, did not even know what had happened.

A second later, however, Jim's choking grasp on his throat relaxed, Garry flung himself hastily into

the other boat, and in a moment it was lost to sight in the mists.

'Help, help!' cried Violet, again and again, only interrupting herself to say, 'Yes, some one is coming. I see a light. It is another boat.'

But Sun-in-the-Hair never took her eyes from the water.

'There he is!' she shrieked at last. 'Mr. Archer is alive.'

'Where are the oars?' demanded Dick excitedly.

'Gone overboard—lost!' said Violet. 'But look, he is all right. He swims like a wild duck.'

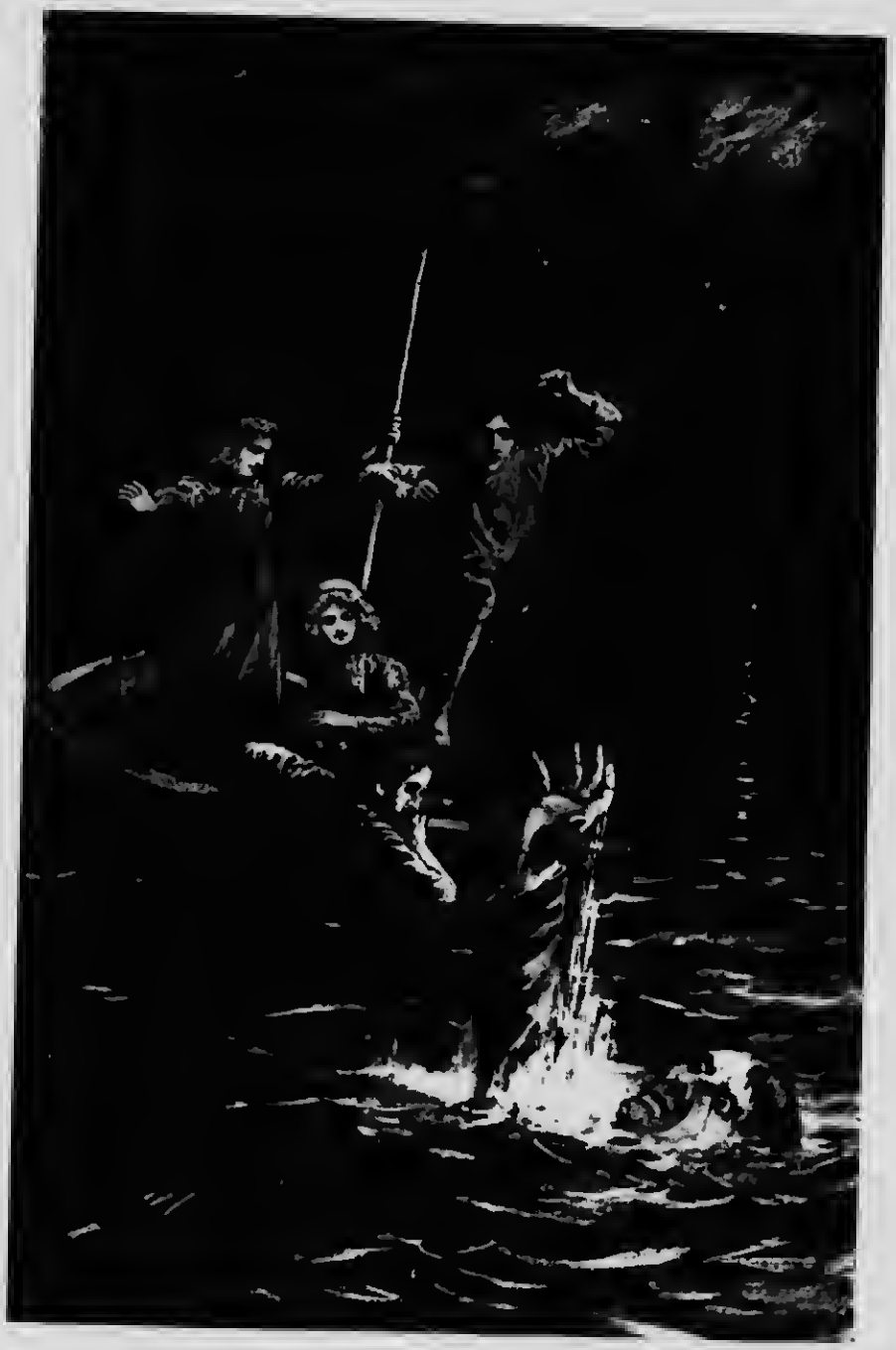
It was true, and even Sun-in-the-Hair was satisfied that he did not need their aid. But as Dick prepared to help him into the boat, a feeble despairing cry for help smote on his ear, and, glancing over his shoulder, he saw a dark object struggling, not far off, in the swirling water.

'The bad man. He'll die,' said Sun-in-the-Hair placidly, as she stretched her arms towards the approaching swimmer.

But Dick hastily threw off coat and shoes.

'Be still, Dick—be still,' said Violet, grasping his arm. 'Indeed, it is only Turner, and he deserves to die.'

In an instant, as she spoke, all the cruel injuries that he had suffered at Turner's hands flashed through Dick's mind, and he felt inclined to echo, 'He deserves to die.' He tried to shut his ears to those frantic cries; but as they died away it seemed to him that another voice—the voice of Him Who on His cross of agony prayed for His enemies—sounded sorrowfully from the mists, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments. Love your enemies; do good to



DICK SPRANG INTO THE WATER AND STRUCK OUT.

them that hate you'; and shaking off Violet's detaining hand, Dick sprang into the water, and struck out towards the drowning man, to reach him just as he was sinking out of sight.

Sam clutched wildly at his rescuer, and for a moment it seemed that they would both go down to death together; but Dick managed to free himself from his grasp, and, seizing him by the hair, contrived to keep his head above water till some one (he knew not whom) came to their aid, and lifted them both from the icy water.

CHAPTER XXV

ON THE MOHAWK QUEEN

WHEN Dick woke, after long unconsciousness, he found himself in a little cabin on the Mohawk Queen, with Joe Archer bending over him.

'That's right, lad. I'm glad to have a word with you before I go,' he said. 'I began to fear that I should be forced to go ashore before you awakened from your swoon, and I should have been grieved to carry bad news of you to my mother—though perhaps she would not have counted it altogether bad news that you were ready to give your life for your enemies. It was a noble deed, Dick. I could not have done it.'

'Hush, Joe; you do not know how near I came to letting him drown—only, just before it was too late, it seemed to me I heard the voice of Christ Himself bidding me go to his help. He is safe, is he not?'

'Turner? Yes; he's aboard too. He'll go ashore with me.'

'And the girls?'

'They are at the door, crying their eyes out for fear that you would never open yours again.'

'Bid them come in, Joe.'

Archer did as he was asked, and the girls showed

their gladness in characteristic fashion. Violet knelt beside Dick, and softly stroked his hand, while Sun-in-the-Hair laughed and danced, and began a long Indian song.

At last Archer interrupted her, exclaiming:

'Hark! they are calling again. I must bid you all farewell.'

'Stop, Joe,' said Dick. 'I want to tell you how much I thank you for all your kindnesses to me—for this night's work not the least. I fear I was somewhat impatient over your desire to accompany us, yet without you I should have been overpowered, and those fellows would have had their way.'

'I must admit that I thought both had a scoundrelly appearance,' replied Archer; 'neither did I like their frivolous objections to my going with you; but I had no notion myself that we were setting out under the conduct of thine old enemy.'

'I hate to think of your remaining behind, Joe, in the very place where you have gained so much ill-will for my sake and for that of these little maids.'

'Nay, have no fear. Have not these men failed in their every plot? I believe that God still orders it that the wicked fall into the pits they dig for the innocent. Besides, if I mistake not, you have disarmed Turner at least.'

'I thought Turner was dead,' said Sun-in-the-Hair lightly. 'I hit hard.'

'Hush, hush!' said Dick; 'it isn't pretty for little maids to talk in that fashion.'

'Did you hit him?' said Archer wonderingly. 'I was surprised at his sudden fall.'

'Yes, I hit hard with the big hook,' said Sun-in-the-Hair boastfully; 'but I didn't mean to make you fall too. The boat jumped so. Why did you go after him, Dick? He's bad.'

Dick's cheeks flushed.

'Because Jesus says, "Do good to your enemy."'

Sun-in-the-Hair opened her blue eyes in wonder at this strange doctrine, but before she could ask one of the many questions in her mind a man came to tell Archer that the boat was going ashore that minute.

Then Dick bade Joe farewell in haste, but Sun-in-the-Hair clung to him and wept passionately.

'Good-bye, little maid; God bless you,' he said huskily. Then he turned to Dick: 'If she should not be Molly Marling, will you let me know?—and I will come and fetch her home. It grieves me sorely to part with her. She would have made up to us for the babes we lost.'

'I will let you know everything,' said Dick, grasping his hand with an almost painful pressure; but even at that moment he was a little hurt on Violet's account that Archer did not seem to want her.

Afterwards, however, he was glad that it was Sun-in-the-Hair, and not Violet, who was thus provided for; for in spite of the opinions of Mrs. Archer's friends, he was more and more convinced, as time went by, that the latter was Miss Molly Marling.

When Archer at last disappeared over the ship's side, Sun-in-the-Hair refused to be comforted, and for a day or two she moped, and would neither talk nor eat.

As soon as they got into the open sea they had very rough weather. Dick and Violet were both ill;

but Sun-in-the-Hair suddenly recovered her spirits, and, whenever the sailors would let her be with them, she stayed on deck, watching the great waves, and shouting with delight when the spray dashed in her face. In her way she tried to be kind to her companions, but her attentions were more well meant than well judged, and unconsciously she teased them greatly.

When they had been a week at sea, the wind and waves both moderated, and Violet began to enjoy the voyage as much as Sun-in-the-Hair; but Dick was so overburdened with his responsibilities that he found enjoyment impossible. Sun-in-the-Hair had improved the occasion of his inability to attend to her by making the acquaintance of all the sailors, and they teased and played with her as if she were a pet bird or monkey. Indeed, she often resembled the last-named animal in her tricks.

Dick was dismayed one day to find that she had climbed almost to the top of one of the masts; and while in that exalted position was treating the sailors to a medley of songs. Most of them were snatches of the airs they sang at their work; but Sun-in-the-Hair's odd mistakes and quaint pronunciation of the words sent the men into shouts of laughter.

'Sun-in-the-Hair, come down!' commanded Dick, breaking in on the entertainment with a stern voice and severe manner.

But the girl knew he could not follow her, so she did not obey till she was ready.

'She is a wild girl,' said Violet. 'Do you think she will ever be an English lady, Dick?'

'I don't know,' replied Dick wearily. 'How would

you like me to teach you to read, Violet? All English ladies can read and write, you know.'

'I'd like it. Begin now,' said Violet.

When Sun-in-the-Hair saw that Violet had a new occupation, she promptly came down from her perch and entreated to be taught too. To Dick's astonishment and Violet's annoyance she proved to be the quicker scholar of the two, but she was lazy and would not take much trouble to learn. If Dick scolded her, she was sure to take refuge high on the mast, and he had such a dread of her seriously hurting herself that he generally avoided contentions, and allowed her to have her own way. He had hoped at first that the captain's wife would keep her in order; but though she taught Violet many things, she was quite unable to control Sun-in-the-Hair.

After a time the child grew very tired of the confined life on board the Mohawk Queen, and it seemed to Dick that she became daily more unmanageable. They had contrary winds almost all the way, and were three weary months crossing the Atlantic.

At last came the happy hour when they sighted land, and then Dick forgave his wild young charge for singing and shouting.

Two or three days later they sailed slowly up the river. It was a gloomy February afternoon, just about a year from the time when Dick first left home, but he could scarcely believe that so much could have happened in so short a time.

The clouds were thick and dark. The water was black; the buildings on the banks seemed sombre and dreary; and even the shipping lying at anchor

by the wharves and the little boats moving hither and thither looked sad-coloured and uninteresting on that dark damp day.

'Is this England?' asked Violet, with an air of disappointment.

But Sun-in-the-Hair was more outspoken.

'It's wet and dark,' she said. 'I hate England, Dick.'

CHAPTER XXVI

A CLUE TO THE MYSTERY

Two hours passed before the passengers from the Mohawk Queen could leave the vessel. By that time it was almost dark, and Dick felt it was rather a cheerless home-coming after his adventurous journey. Amongst all the crowd on the wharf there was not one face he knew, for Mr. Marling had not received his letter saying that he was coming home.

'Who is that?' Sun-in-the-Hair kept asking, and she was much astonished when he shook his head and answered, 'I don't know.'

'Don't you know any one? Isn't this London, Dick?' she said.

'Yes, but I don't know these people. Now, when we've said good-bye to the captain and his wife, we'll go and find the people I do know.'

He held their hands tightly, for he constantly feared still that Sun-in-the-Hair at least might run away and be lost, but she was so much subdued by the jostling crowds that she clung to him as anxiously as he to her.

'Are you sure you know the way, Dick?' asked Violet, after they had made several turns, for she

remembered how difficult he had found it to follow paths through the woods, which to her seemed perfectly plain.

'Yes, here we are,' said Dick, stopping and clanging the knocker on the door of Mr. Marling's tall old house. But he could not wait till his noisy summons was answered.

He tried the handle, found the door unlocked, and marched upstairs, still holding the girls fast.

'Mrs. Marling!' he shouted in wild excitement; 'I've come home, and here's Molly.'

A stout old lady in a snowy cap hurried out of a room near by, and Dick, dropping the hands he had held so long, took her in his arms, and kissed her on both cheeks. He did not forget that when he came back he was to be her son.

The girls stood shyly looking on. Then the old lady turned, and, taking one by each hand, drew them into the strange old room where Dick had first resolved on going to seek her grandchild. The candles were not yet lighted, but the bright firelight danced on the walls and on the queer Chinese fans and vases.

'Now which is my little Molly?' said the old lady, looking earnestly from graceful Violet to eager little Sun-in-the-Hair.

'I don't know, ma'am,' stammered Dick, feeling rather foolish.

'Don't know?' repeated Mrs. Marling, in a tone of intense astonishment.

There was an awkward pause; then Violet said softly, 'Indeed, madam, I hope I am—I think I am.'

'Light the candles, Dick,' said the old lady. 'Now, little maids, let me look at you both.'

They stood side by side, and Mrs. Marling gazed at them with hungry, longing eyes. Alas! neither of them bore the least likeness to the son she had loved and lost so long ago.

'Oh, Dick,' she said at last, 'what do you mean? Are you sure that either is my child?'

'Yes, ma'am; there is no doubt of that. 'I'll tell you all as soon as may be.'

'Listen; there is Mr. Marling,' said his wife. 'Come here, John. Here's Dick home again.'

'Well, my lad, this is a pleasant surprise! Why, Dick, you've come back a man—you look twice as well as when you went away.'

Mr. Marling shook hands with Dick and clapped him on the back, and shook hands again. Then he turned to the wondering girls.

'Now, lad, whom have we here? Which of these little lassies is Molly?'

Again Dick blushed and stammered.

'Oh, sir,' he said, 'it's very strange, but I really don't know.'

'You don't know! Good gracious, lad, what do you mean? Don't know, did you say?'

'He will tell us presently,' said Mrs. Marling gently. 'Which do you think most like Robert, John?'

'Come here, little maids,' said the old gentleman. 'Now, look at me. H'm, both are pretty enough, and 'pon my word, Sally, this one really has a look of you.'

'This one' was Sun-in-the-Hair, who was standing before the old man with her hands meekly

folded and her bonny blue eyes fixed on his face. Dick thought that he had never before seen her look so sweet and pretty. Indeed, for a moment the little wild thing looked like some fair young saint pictured on an old church window.

'I don't see much likeness to Robert in either,' he continued. 'What was the matter, Dick? I suppose the Indians got their captives a bit mixed up, eh? And it's no easy matter to sort them out again.'

'Yes,' said Dick, 'it seemed to me it was surely between these two. I thought you would not blame me for letting you see for yourselves.'

'No, indeed, Dick—unless some poor bereaved creature is seeking one of these little maids, I am well content to have both,' said Mr. Marling. 'What think you, wife? But hadn't you better have supper in? They must be starving.'

'I daresay it is laid downstairs,' said Mrs. Marling. 'Come, my dears, I'll show you where to put your hoods and cloaks.'

She put an arm round the waist of each, and led them into her own room. Then she brushed back their fair hair, and made various little changes in the arrangement of their dresses, doing all so tenderly that both poor, motherless girls fell in love with her from that moment.

'I like you, ma'am,' said outspoken Sun-in-the-Hair, drawing Mrs. Marling's arm about her again.

But Violet suddenly began to cry.

'I have always wanted to be Molly since I heard,' she sobbed, 'and now I want it more than ever.'

Mrs. Marling drew the weeping girl towards her and held her fast.

'I suppose you cannot both be Molly,' she said, 'but you shall both be my very dear girls. Don't cry, my child. I am glad to have two granddaughters when I only expected one.'

Mr. Marling said the same, after he had shaken his head once more over his wife's impulsive ways. Nevertheless, there was a grand consultation that night, when the girls had gone to bed, as to how the mystery was to be solved.

'You were quite right to bring both, Dick,' said the old gentleman at intervals; 'but from what you say, and from her look of Sally there, I am inclined to think that the little one is our Molly. Don't you think so yourself, lad?'

'I don't know. I wish it had been Violet,' confessed Dick; 'but—it seems—as if every one thinks it's Sun-in-the-Hair.'

'Well, lad, after all, it won't make much difference,' said Mr. Marling. 'We have enough for both—for all three of you, I mean.'

'Only Violet cares more,' said Dick. 'She does so want to be an English lady, and I do believe Sun-in-the-Hair had rather have been a savage. She does like to wear a blanket.'

Mr. Marling laughed long and loud.

'She shall have one, then. She's a sensible girl, Dick.'

'I like to see a lady dressed like a lady,' returned the lad. 'You wouldn't be so fond of blankets, sir, if you had seen as much of them as I have.'

Mrs. Marling smiled.

'Never fear, Dick; the child will soon learn to be as nice and neat in her ways as Violet. *She* is wonderful, I think.'

'Well, all this is beside the point,' said Mr. Marling. 'Shall we give the riddle up, and be content that both should be Miss Marlings?'

'I should like to know which is Robert's child,' said the old lady, 'though I'm sure I shall feel the other just as much my little grand-daughter. I can truly say I have no wish that one should be ours more than the other.'

'We are fairly divided, then,' said Mr. Marling. 'Dick here would have Miss Violet prove to be our Molly, and I would have the other, despite her love for those unseemly blankets, because she has a sweet look of what you once were, Sally. To my thinking, she might have sat for that picture,' he added, with a glance towards the painting over the fireplace.

'How can we find out?' said Dick. 'Do you think much of the opinions of those who met together at Mrs. Archer's?'

'Something,' said Mr. Marling. 'The vote for Sun-in-the-Hair was fourteen against seven, was it not? Two to one. Look here, Sally, where are the old letters written by Robert and his wife after they were married? If I mistake not, there is enough of the child in them. We may glean some hint to help us.'

'They are here,' said the old lady, unlocking a little cabinet close beside her favourite chair. 'Not a month passes but I look them over. Strange, I never thought of them. See, here is a lock of the little one's hair.'

Mr. Marling twisted the little fair curl round his finger ; then laid it down, saying :

'That might have belonged to either. Both are fair-haired. Is there nothing else ?'

'Only letters,' said Mrs. Marling with a sigh.

'Have you catechised the girls properly, Dick ?' asked Mr. Marling after a pause. 'Can they remember nothing to guide us ?'

Dick shook his head.

'Their memories seem to be so much alike, and so vague, I can make nothing of them.'

Mr. Marling screwed his forehead into a half-humorous frown. Dick stared at the fire, but Mrs. Marling read eagerly through one worn sheet of closely written paper after another.

Suddenly she looked up.

'Have you noticed any mark or scar on the arms of either, Dick ?—the right arm, I mean.'

Dick started.

'I don't know ; yes, I believe Sun-in-the-Hair has several marks on the right arm between the elbow and the shoulder. They look almost as if some creature had bitten her badly, but I remember wondering when first I saw her whether the Indians had cut or burnt her when she was first amongst them.'

'Be still a moment,' said Mrs. Marling in great excitement, taking up a candle and hurrying from the room.

'Surely she thinks she has the clue,' murmured her husband. 'I never saw a cleverer woman than Mrs. Marling. She would have made a fine lawyer if she had been a man,' he added with quiet admiration.

But Dick sat still, staring at the fire. He did not hear one word.

Five minutes later Mrs. Marling returned.

'Violet has not a mark on either arm,' she said, 'but Sun-in-the-Hair has three distinct bites close to the elbow; so you see, Dick—I am very sorry you are disappointed, dear lad, but we'll make it up to Violet—she must be Molly.'

'Now, my dear old lady, what do you mean?' cried Mr. Marling; 'Dick and I are all at sea. Which is Molly? and what have the bites to do with it?'

'Sun-in-the-Hair is Molly, and the bites are as plain as plain can be. Three of them, Dick.'

'But, ma'am, we don't understand——'

'Dear, dear; didn't I read you the letter? I thought I had. Look, it's at the top of the page. You read it, Dick; I've lost my glasses.'

'What is it? Let me see,' said Mr. Marling, taking the paper by one corner. But Dick in his eagerness still held the other, and together they read from the queerly spelt old letter, written by Mrs. Robert Marling so many years before:

'I have nowe to tell you, dear mother, of a Most Painful Occurance. Little Molly was Playing last Nighte before the doore with her pet Dogge, Frisk, when a Grate Dogge, owned by Widow Sanson, came up and beganne to Chase Frisk. Molly thought he was Hurting her Pet, and insted of Running away, Boldly caught the Big Dogge by his Hare. Upon that, he fell into a Rage, and Bitt her little Arme most Cruelly between the Elbowe and the Shoulder—three Distincte Bites. I fear, Mother, she will Bare the Markes of this

Encounter to her Dyeing Daye. I Rejoice to tell you, however, that though this Grievous Accident tooke Plaice but a weeke since, she is nowe About againe as Merry as Ever, but it is a Piteous Sighte to see her with her Pore Little Right Arme bound up and Helpless.'

'That settles it,' said Mr. Marling; 'but never mind, Dick; if Sun-in-the-Hair is Molly, Violet shall be Miss Marling too.'

CHAPTER XXVII

SUN-IN-THE-HAIR AGAIN

NEARLY four years had gone by; and Miss Marling and Miss Molly Marling, as the girls were generally called, had grown used to the new life. Violet was now a fashionable young lady; but Molly still secretly rebelled against many of the restraints to which she was subject; and at times broke loose from them in a manner that scandalised Violet and delighted Mr. Marling. On one of these occasions he presented her with a rich Cashmere shawl, telling her that he was sure it was the 'prettiest blanket she had ever seen.'

'Indeed it is,' she had answered; and sometimes, when she felt more than usually tired of stiff skirts and stiffer collars, she put it on instead of her fine stuff gown.

On the day of which I am writing she was suffering from one of these rebellious fits; and when Violet came down late in the afternoon, she found Molly standing by the window with the Cashmere shawl gracefully draped about her person, and her long hair flowing down her back.

'Oh, Molly, what are you doing?' demanded Violet.

'I'm not Molly—I'm Sun-in-the-Hair to-day,' she answered; and as she threw up her arms with a wild

gesture, Violet saw that they were adorned with a miscellaneous assortment of silver chains and strings of beads.

She laughed in spite of herself.

'Truly, I believe you would have liked to be left in the forest to your own devices,' she said. 'You want some feathers in your hair, and then you would look like the prophetess who used to come to make rain for Red-Star!'

Molly glanced round the room with a mischievous look; then darted to a little writing-table, and with the help of some string contrived a wild-looking coronet of two or three quill pens, and some feathers plucked from a goose's wing, which was used to sweep up the hearth. There was a little dark-framed mirror in the room, and, standing before this, she carefully arranged her new head-dress above her shining hair.

'It is vastly becoming,' said Violet sarcastically.

'Oh, vastly,' said Molly. 'Don't you think I am a good Indian wasted? Sometimes I pity myself that I have lost all chance of wedding some great chief, and being an Indian queen, as they say here.'

'A queen, indeed; they little know what they are talking about,' said Violet. 'What would they think if they could see their queens bearing great loads of wood on their backs, or yoked to a heavy sledge, like a dog or a horse? Ay, and there are worse things than that. Molly, I wonder we ever lived through it. Do you know your speaking, even in jest, of wedding an Indian chief fills me with horror?'

Molly laughed and danced about the room singing. Suddenly she came to a standstill at Violet's side, saying with a comical glance:

'Whom would you have me marry? Dick?'

Violet blushed, and, taking Molly by both hands, said slowly:

'No, I haven't told you, I suppose, but I thought you knew. I'm going to marry Dick.'

'Of course I knew. I'm very glad,' said Molly, laughing, and beginning her wild dance again. 'I should have sent him frantic, but you'll just suit him. Do you know, I believe he still regrets that you were not Molly after all; but it makes no real difference—does it, Violet?'

She didn't answer. She thought it did, though she did not like to say so. Presently she exclaimed:

'Molly, do be quiet and listen. I quite forgot. Dick sent word that two old friends of ours were coming in to supper, and they'll be here directly.'

'Two friends of ours! I wonder who they are?'

'He didn't say; but do go and take off that ridiculous dress. You have no idea what a little savage you look.'

'If they're old friends of mine, they will surely like to see that I haven't forgotten old times,' said Molly, going to the glass to put her coronet straight on her head, for her wild antics had disarranged it.

'Molly, please go,' said Violet in distress.

'Oh, Violet, but I am so comfortable and happy. Indeed, I will go in a few minutes, but there is no hurry.'

'There is, Molly. Granny would not be pleased if you showed yourself to any one in that guise.'

Thus adjured, Molly moved slowly towards the door, but it was opened before she reached it, and Dick ushered in a thin, elderly man, and a woman who looked older still.

The new-comers gazed at the girls. Violet sank into a chair, blushing hotly at the plight in which her adopted sister had been caught. But Molly stood her ground: the next moment she rushed forward and threw her arms round the neck of the man.

'It's Mr. Archer!' she cried.

'Little Sun-in-the-Hair!' he said. 'I did not expect to see you so little altered,' he added, with a laugh. 'Dick, is this all your years of training have amounted to? I wish now I had brought with me a present I thought of—that dear old patchwork quilt.'

Molly drew herself away with a sudden little flash of dignity.

'You need not blame Dick,' she said. 'He has done his best. Please sit down, and I will tell Mr. and Mrs. Marling you are here.'

They came in immediately to see Dick's old friends, but Molly did not return until she had changed her dress and arranged her hair. They were then at the supper-table. She took her place very quietly, and listened to the conversation for some minutes in silence.

'I suppose you remember Turner and Hunter Jim, Dick?' Mr. Archer was saying. 'They have turned over a new leaf since your departure; and when they heard I was going to England, they begged me to carry to you some money—here it is—of which they once cheated you, it seems. They also desired me to entreat your forgiveness for all the wrong they did you, and all they tried to do.'

'It is wonderful,' said Violet; but Dick said nothing. He remembered with shame how sorely tempted he had been to let Sam Turner drown without an effort to save him.

'Under God, it is Dick's doing,' said Archer, laying his hand gently on the young man's shoulder. 'As Turner puts it, when a man, who calls himself a Christian, is ready to risk his life to save his worst enemy, then a fellow begins to think there's *something* in Christianity; and, as far as I can hear, the two of them, Turner and Hunter Jim, are both working hard to earn an honest living, and to make reparation, as far as they can, for their old crimes. Poor fellows! it's uphill work for them.'

'God will surely help them,' said Mrs. Marling softly; then she turned to Dick, and whispered, 'I am proud of my boy.'

Dick shook his head, and answered:

'Nay, I have to thank you, ma'am, for everything.'

After this they all sat silent for a few minutes; then Mr. Marling exclaimed cheerily:

'Have you no friends to ask after, Molly?'

'I don't think Mr. Archer knows my friends,' she said, with a mischievous look. 'I suppose you have seen nothing of Red-Star, or Poison-Arrow, or my old Indian mammy?' she added in a gentler tone. 'She was very good to me in her way.'

Archer shook his head, saying:

'I have at least heard no ill of them. There has been peace on our borders since Colonel Bouquet's expedition into the Ohio country.'

'Violet thinks I'm foolish, but I should like to see them all again,' said Molly.

'I'll take you, if you'll come back with us,' said Archer. 'The business that brought me hither will be settled in three or four months' time, I hope; then we will go together to see your old friends.'

Molly looked as if she found the proposal tempting; but her grandfather shook his head.

'No, my dear sir; it won't do. Dick is going to be married this year, so we should have no one to send if Molly were lost a second time.'

'Well, I hope I shall have another chance of seeing you and the grand old woods again,' persisted Molly.

But she never crossed the sea again, and, instead of marrying an Indian chief, she wedded a rich London merchant, a little older and much graver than Dick; but, strange to say, her whims and wild ways never distressed him—perhaps because he knew how nearly his 'Sweet Molly' had been altogether lost among the savages.

THE END

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