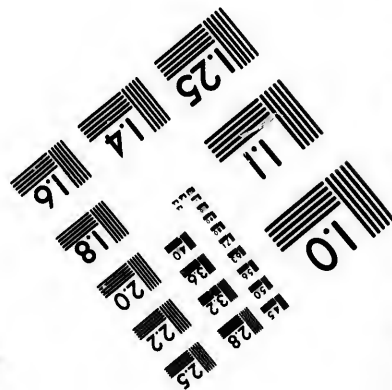
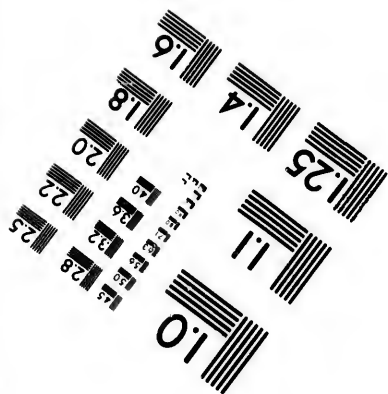
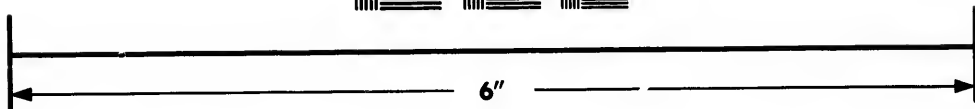
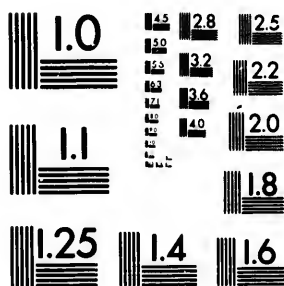


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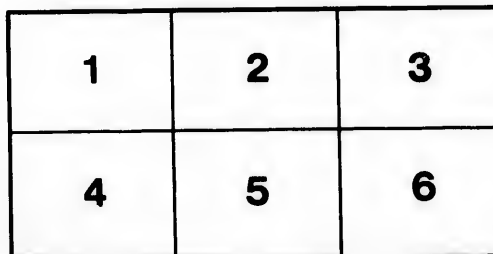
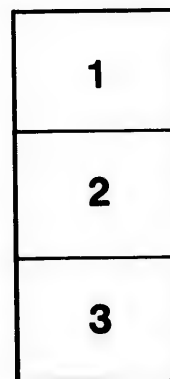
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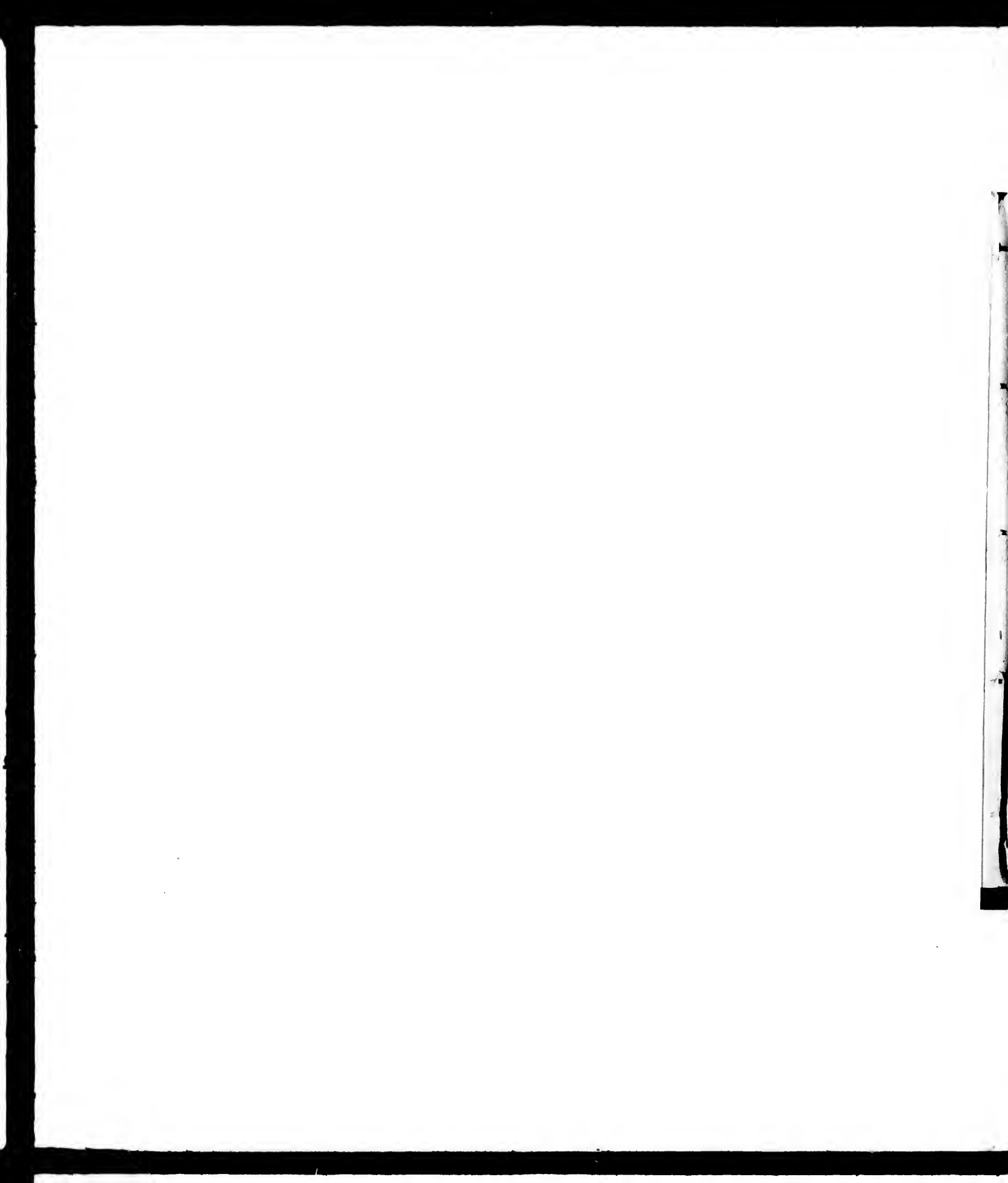


"Horse and rider both left the bluff."
Page 217.



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WAR OF 1812 SERIES

TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVES

A STORY OF THE CREEK WAR

BY

✓
EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

AUTHOR OF "THE SEARCH FOR ANDREW FIELD" "THE BOY
SOLDIERS OF 1812" "THE BOY OFFICERS OF 1812"
"THREE COLONIAL BOYS" "THREE YOUNG
CONTINENTALS" ETC.



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TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVES

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1812

to
THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS
OF THE
SOCIETY OF THE WAR OF 1812



PREFACE

THAT portion of the War of 1812—the struggle with the hostile Creeks—which furnishes the historical setting of this story, has been strangely neglected by historians and story writers alike.

And yet few chapters in our national history have furnished more examples of personal courage and daring. The intelligence and tenacity of the warriors, the influence of the English and Spanish plotters, the character of the leaders among the Creeks and Americans, all combined to make this struggle a memorable one. Heroic action, fiendish cruelty, plot and counter-plot, were mingled more after the style of romance than of actual events.

But many of the deeds which I have endeavored to weave into this story are vouched for by the best historians, and even in the most exciting portions of this book I have kept within the limits of the records.

The visit of Tecumseh and his band from the Northwest, the fight which Sam Dale had in the large canoe, the leap of Weatherford and his horse from the high bluff at the "holy ground," and even the escape of a prisoner who remained under the

water, breathing through the long joint of a cane, are dwelt upon in the early records, and many of the deeds long remained as the themes of fireside stories and border songs.

In the historical references I have drawn freely from Lossing, Pickett, Drake, Jenkins, and Halbert and Ball, and here wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to them.

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON.

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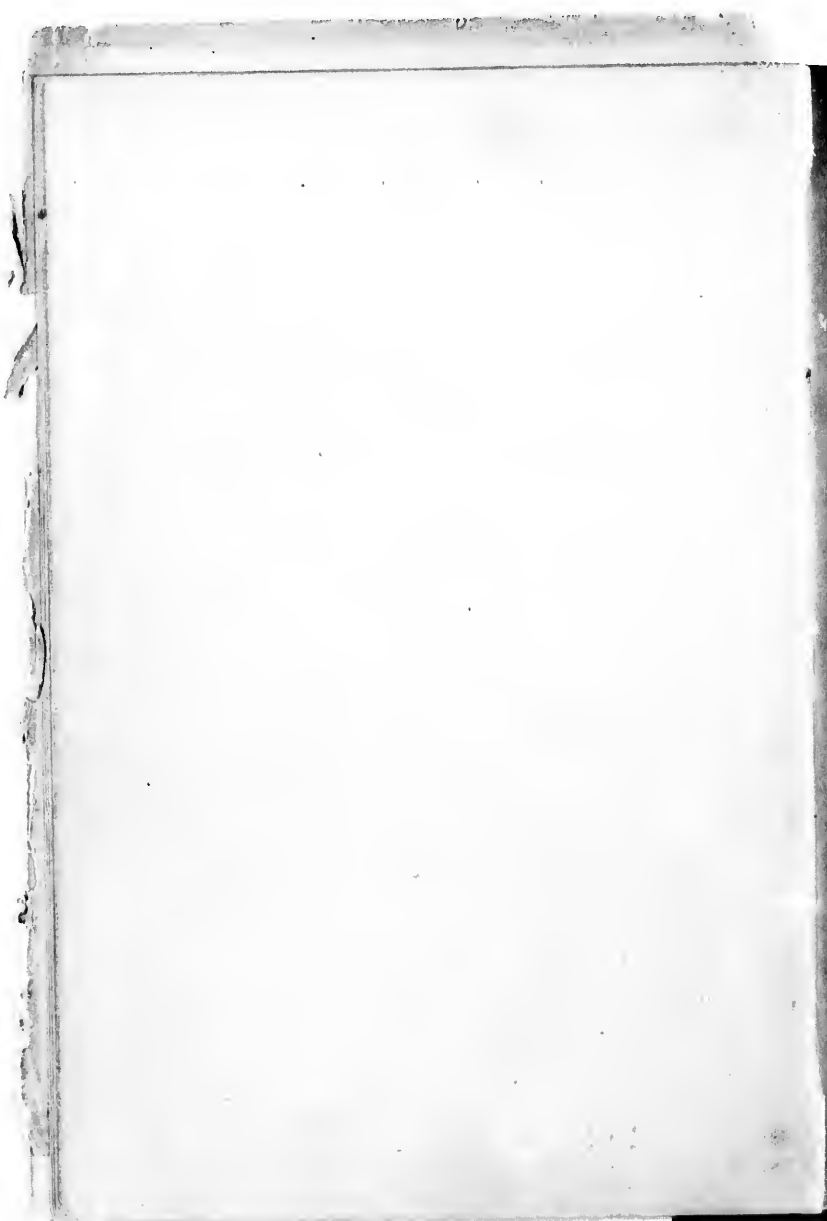
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TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVES

CHAPTER I

LEAVING HOME

"PUSH her off, Tom. Let her go."
"All right, Jerry, but it's hard to get this strange-looking craft started."

At the words of his brother, Tom Curry pushed the "strange-looking craft," as he called it, out from the bank, and slowly it moved into the river. And strange-looking, indeed, it was!

It was a crude craft in which the logs had been fastened together with thongs of deer-hide, and over which rough boards had been nailed to the logs beneath. A rough bow had been fashioned, and near the stern what might have been called a little house, or cabin, had been erected. This, more properly still, perhaps, might have been termed a shelter, as it was enclosed on three sides, and was the only place which had been provided within which the members of the party could sleep.

Long poles and rough-looking oars were on the sides of the raft, and altogether the structure bore more of a resemblance to some of the modern house-boats than it did anything else, only a "house-boat" had never been heard of in those days. Perhaps it might have been likened to some of the floating homes that to-day are to be found on the lakes and canals, providing at the same time a shelter, a home, and a means of transportation from one place to another.

Yet, strange as was the craft, far stranger were the crew and the passengers. Over the rough boards that covered the raft a few chickens were moving, and a pig also could have been seen there; but in addition to the live-stock, there was among others the young individual we have already heard addressed as "Tom."

He was one of two boys, or young men, on board, about seventeen years of age, who very strongly resembled each other. In fact, it had been a standing joke with them for some time that each was constantly liable to mistake himself for the other, and that frequently in the morning when he awoke he addressed himself as his brother.

They also declared that so many mistakes concerning their identity had been made since their childhood, that the only thing each was certain of now was that he must be the other one and not himself.

The resemblance was not to be wondered at, for they were twin brothers, and rejoiced in the names of Tom and Jerry.

There was, however, nothing in their make-up to remind one of that strange sign, "Tom and Jerry," frequently seen in the streets of our cities to-day, and the only account they had of the origin of their names was the fondness of their father in the years past for that much-advertised beverage.

Near these boys was standing a girl, perhaps a year and a half younger than they, and yet she was nearly as large; and from her features any one at once would have perceived that she was a sister of both. She was strong and fearless, and could wield an oar with either of them, and more than once she had carried a gun when the boys had started into the forest to search for a bear which had carried off some helpless "grunter."

This girl was frequently addressed as "Nance," and apparently the boys were depending upon her as one of their aids in this expedition upon which they were so strangely starting.

Two younger children also were on the raft, and a woman who evidently was the mother of all the young persons we have mentioned. She, however, appeared to be the least interested member of the party. She seemed to be worn and weary, and as she held the younger children in her lap, frequently look-

ing back at the bank they were leaving, she uttered many complaints, and in a fretful, scolding way bewailed the misfortunes which had overtaken her. But the girl was as cheery and brave as her mother was fretful, and the younger children were more interested in the departure than in the complaints they heard, to which it was evident they long had been accustomed.

The time when our story begins was on a bright summer day in 1813. The broad river on which our party had set sail was the Alabama. Along the shore, which they were now leaving, grew rushes rank and tall, while in places marshes and bogs could be seen, and behind all stretched the woods, fading away in the distance.

It was early in the morning, and even the slow-flying birds apparently had a little more life than usual. The ever-present crow made all aware of his presence, and with his hoarse calls followed our voyagers, either from curiosity as to their movements or in the hope that something would be left by them for him.

Although it was early in the morning the heat was intense, and the yellow glare of the sun spread over the river and the forests alike, and soon the members of our party were sweltering beneath it. It was a strange voyage which they had begun, but adventures far more strange were before them.

The boat, propelled by the long oars, moved steadily

onward. The boys had kept her all the time near the shore, and even though they were going down stream they had not dared to venture out into the channel. A light wind was blowing, and they were talking of taking advantage of it by rigging a small sail which they had brought with them.

As the boys handled the oars, the girl, whom, as we have said, they frequently addressed as "Nance," used a long pole, and with it not merely guided the raft, but assisted in sending it forward.

Their streaming faces and panting breath soon compelled them all to stop for a time, and the only force that sent the strange craft onward was the little sail near the bow which with much difficulty they at last had succeeded in rigging.

"Why do you stop?" asked the woman, in a complaining tone. "We never ought to have begun at all. It's all your fault, boys, for if you had followed my advice we never should have left our home on this wild-goose chase. Oh, dear! I don't believe there ever was a woman who had such misfortunes as I. It's nothing but bad luck and sorrow every day."

Tom was silent while his mother spoke, but after a moment's pause he cheerily replied, "It's too hot for such hard work, mother. We must save our strength, for there is no knowing when we shall have to use it all."

"But I've no strength to save," replied the complaining woman. "Nothing but bad luck has come to us ever since your father fell under that tree. He would drink so much, and that's what he got for it all. I don't know but this is worse than the broken leg he had, and the long fever through that winter before he died. Oh, dear! He was too fond of 'Tom and Jerry.'"

"But you know we're doing the best we can now," replied Tom.

"I suppose you think you are," said his mother. "If I was one that ever complained, I suppose I should say something about the foolish way in which we have left everything we owned behind us and started out on this river. Nothing but bad luck," she added, moaning and shaking her head, "ever since we came here. I don't know why we ever left York State. We were well enough off there, and in the place which we've just left the Injuns never threatened us."

"But you were poor, mother," replied Tom, who, although he was accustomed to the constant complainings of his mother, yet looked at her with a feeling of compassion, for her lot had been a hard one, and many trials and bitter experiences had come to her during the ten years in which they had lived on the little plot of land they had taken near the Alabama river.

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"But we were poor," repeated Tom, "and father thought there would be no chance for you at all there in York State, and you know how he listened to the stories they told of what could be done here. I've heard him tell it from beginning to end, lots of times."

"Yes, he was poor then, but he is dead now; and here we are out on this river poorer than ever we were. We've not even a home now, and everything we own in the world we've left behind us." And without a tear, but with a prolonged whine, she turned and looked towards the place which she had called home, and which still could be seen in the distance.

The little hut, or house, of logs in which they had lived for ten years was yet visible to all, standing out as it did on the bluff behind them, and they stood for a moment sadly looking back at the scene. The two cows which they had owned, and the poor old horse also, were within sight, and appeared to be watching the departing party as if surprised that they should be left behind.

"They'll not go far away, mother," said Tom, speaking aloud the thought that was in his own mind, and which he suspected was in his mother's also. "They'll not go far away. We've often turned them out for five or six weeks at a time, and left them to shirk for themselves. The creek is right above, and

just below our place is the best feed there is along the river for miles."

"But suppose they don't keep near the river," said his mother.

"Oh, but they will!" replied Tom. "The feed is better there, and besides they'll keep near home, and the alligators will stop them from swimming the creek."

"Oh, but the Injuns may get them!" again complained the woman, as if determined to see nothing but the dark side. "Those awful Injuns! — though to me they always seemed good enough. I never had any trouble with them, and I don't believe half the stories that are told about their cruelty. Ever since we nursed Kanawlohalla through his long sickness they've been the best neighbors we've ever had."

But Tom became silent again, and watched the waters over which they were passing. He had little hope that they would escape the notice of the Indians on their voyage, and yet it was for that very purpose that our party were embarked on their strange craft, and were leaving behind them almost all their possessions.

It was a heavy care for boys no older than they, and yet they had kept from their mother the full knowledge they had of the dangers to be feared from the Indians of that region.

"There are a couple of Indians down on the shore

now," said Jerry to his brother as he approached. "Do you see them?"

"Yes; but what are we to do? We can't steer this raft out into the river," replied Tom.

"No; the only thing we can do is to go on, and act as though we were not afraid. If these two are all there are, there won't be any trouble."

"I know who they are," said Jerry, a moment later. "It's Kanaw and Captain Jim, and yet it would be hard work to recognize them if we didn't know them pretty well."

The young Indians, who stood upon the shore in their war-paint, and motionless as the trees, looked the very personification of savage life. They were both young, not much if any older than the boys in our party. They waited until the raft came opposite, and then, with a wave of the hand down the stream, as if indicating the necessity of haste, they themselves quickly turned into the forest and disappeared.

"Yes, they are Tecumseh's young braves, that's sure," said Jerry, "though I didn't see where Con-dawhaw was. He certainly wasn't with them."

"I don't care where he was," replied his brother. "They wouldn't have come down to the bank and waited for us to pass if there hadn't been some need of it. It means that we've got to hurry, and it won't do for us to crawl along with just this little breath of

wind." And both boys with new zeal and a deepening fear once more took up the long oars and began to row.

Tom looked about to see if his mother had noticed the hail they had received from the shore, but she had gone inside of the rude shanty they had erected, and taken the children; and as the need of greater haste had not been discovered by her, Tom encouraged his brother, and both began to exert all their strength at the oars. The clumsy raft began to move more rapidly, although to the eager boys it seemed as though their speed had not perceptibly increased.

"What is it, Tom?" asked Nance, as a few moments later she approached her brother.

"Oh, nothing much, but we've got to jog on," replied Tom. "Don't be frightened, Nance; it's nothing new, only the same reason that made us leave home, makes us want to leave it farther and faster behind us now."

"Nobody knows what the next few miles will show," said Nance, "but you can't fool me, either one of you. I know you've seen something that's frightened you, and you're trying to go faster on that account. What can I do to help?"

"Well, to be honest, Nance," replied her brother, "I am in a hurry to get beyond that point yonder as soon as I can, for there's no knowing what may happen to us there."

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"I'll take the pole again," said the resolute girl; "I know I can help some." And suiting the action to her word, she began to work again with the long and clumsy pole. They kept on in their course, watchful of the shore and apparently forgetful of the heat, which every moment became more and more intense.

The "point" to which Tom had referred was a little peninsula jutting out into the river, and was about a mile and a half farther down the stream. It was covered with trees which would afford an excellent hiding-place for any party that might wish to attack them and yet remain concealed themselves. The river was narrower there, and as the channel made in nearer the shore, the danger would be greatly increased. The warning signal of the young braves added to the fear of the boys, and they knew that they were approaching one of the perils of their voyage.

CHAPTER II

THE VISIT OF TECUMSEH

IN order to understand something of the meaning of the incident related in the previous chapter, it is necessary for us to describe some of the movements of the nations which then were struggling in the southern part of what is now the territory of the United States.

Mississippi was already a Territory, having been organized in 1798, and at this time had a regular assembly and a full political organization.

By an act of Georgia, in the spring of 1802 about a hundred thousand square miles, which now constitute the State of Alabama, came into the possession of the United States. It was very sparsely settled, and the Indians were numerous and powerful. In the east were the Creeks and Cherokees, and in the west were the Choctaws and Chickasaws.

France had owned the vast and not very clearly defined region of the valley of the Mississippi, and the domain that was watered by its tributaries. This region extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the

forty-ninth parallel of latitude, and westward to the South Sea (Pacific Ocean). But in 1763, France, after the European struggle in which she had not been successful, ceded to England all of the region east of the Mississippi except Florida, and to Spain all that was west of the river.

In 1802, however, it was learned, to the great chagrin of the Americans, that Spain, by a secret treaty, had given to France all of Louisiana that was in her possession, and also east and west Florida. This would give France, now powerful and ambitious, the control of the navigation of the Mississippi, and would be a perpetual menace to the United States.

Thomas Jefferson, clearly foreseeing all that this would mean, at once entered into negotiations with Mr. Livingston, then our ambassador to France, for the purchase of New Orleans, at least.

By wise movements, and the secret threat of an alliance with Great Britain, the Americans were surprised as well as delighted when they found the French ready to sell all they had of Louisiana, and for the sum of fifteen million dollars the purchase was effected. It was then that Bonaparte uttered that oft-quoted sentiment: "This accession of territory strengthens forever the power of the United States; and I have just given to England a maritime rival that will sooner or later humble her pride."

But all this was exceedingly distasteful to the

Spaniards. They were left in possession of the Floridas, but began in a very treacherous manner to act with the British, and many complications arose about the time of the War of 1812. Movements had been inaugurated previous to the war which finally led to the possession of both Floridas by the United States, and while Louisiana was admitted as a State on the 8th of April, 1812, insurrection and constant trouble followed. General Wilkinson had gained Mobile, and the Spaniards had withdrawn to Pensacola, where the British also were very active.

In the autumn of 1812, after Hull had surrendered the Michigan territory, Tecumseh, who already had been among the southern Indians, again went south. With him went his brother, "the Prophet," and about thirty warriors. There can be little doubt that the great Indian was a devoted patriot and lover of his own kindred, and that his supreme desire was to drive the white men from the country and restore the land once more to his own people. But he was aided by the British, and incited by them to do his utmost to arouse in the Indians a spirit of revolt against the Americans.

As the party passed on, the Choctaws and Chickasaws refused to listen to their words, but among the Creeks and Seminoles they found many eager to join them.

Tecumseh and his party journeyed on to Coosawda,

on the Alabama, and at the "Hickory Ground" he addressed a great assembly of the Creeks. This was late in October, 1812. His eloquence, zeal, and burning enthusiasm, in addition to the fame he already had won as a warrior, gained him many followers.

He then crossed the Coosa and went on to Toockabatcha, the ancient capital of the Creeks. There Colonel Hawkins, the United States Indian agent, had called a great council, and five thousand Indians had responded. In the assembly there were also many negroes and white men.

Among the latter were our two boys, Tom and Jerry Curry. Their home was not many miles distant from the meeting-place, and thither they had come with three young Creek Indians who for years had been their playmates and friends. These Indian boys rejoiced in the names of Kanavlohalla (which meant a head on a pole), Quilutimac, and Condawhaw; but their white companions never called them by their proper names, either because the names themselves were almost unpronounceable, or because the custom of the times was to give the red men a "white" name. As a consequence the boys always called Quilutimac "Captain Jim"—in honor of Captain Jim Fife, a noted half-breed warrior.

Tom and Jerry long had been warm friends of these Indian boys, and spoke their language almost

as well as the Indians did theirs, which is saying a good deal. They had hunted and fished and camped together, and at their home Captain Jim had been nursed through a long illness. Their kindness and care seemed to have been appreciated by the young Indians, and as we shall see farther on in our story became the cause of many deeds that greatly aided them, and perhaps saved the life of more than one.

The boys were seated on the ground with their friends when the great Tecumseh approached the assembly. He and his warriors had remained among the outer spectators until the close of the first day's address of the agent. Then at the head of his thirty warriors, all naked except for their ornaments and flaps, their heads adorned with eagles' feathers and their faces painted black, with great dignity, they marched into the centre of the square. Buffalo-tails dragged behind them, suspended from their waists, and also were hung from their arms.

Their appearance was hideous in the extreme, and yet as they marched around and around in the square, the boys noticed how attentive the Indian assembly was, and how impressed their young friends were by the appearance and movements of the great chief and his party.

After they had gone around the square a number of times they approached each chief and gave the Indian salutation, which was a shake of the hand at

arm's length. Then they exchanged tobacco, which was a token of enduring friendship.

"Captain Isaac doesn't seem to warm up to Tecumseh very fast," said Jerry to Captain Jim, who was seated next to him; but his friend made no reply except to scowl as he listened to Captain Isaac, one of the leading chiefs, who boldly declared that "Tecumseh was a bad man," and shook, with great contempt, at the warrior the buffalo horns which he wore on his head.

In this state Tecumseh appeared in the square each day, and each day our boys returned to the council, fascinated and yet fearful. But when Hawkins, the Indian agent, departed, the great chief kept silence no longer. That night there was a grand council packed with eager and excited listeners. The Indian boys had been silent during three days, and Tom and Jerry were more and more fearful of the influences at work upon them.

And yet the boys themselves were greatly moved by the warrior from the Northwest as he spoke that night. His words were as eloquent as they were dangerous, and the speaker seemed to be almost on fire. He pictured the condition of the Indians learning to till the soil, with great contempt. The loom and the ploughs were not the implements of Indian braves. Squaws and white men only were fit for such work. He told how grasping and cruel were the white men,

and as for the Indians, only slavery or extinction was before them. The bow and the arrow, the club and the scalping-knife, were the implements and weapons of men, and he urged them not to forget how to use them. As he drew his eloquent speech to a close, he told them how he had come from the far-distant Great Lakes, because their friends, the British, had urged him to come and summon them to follow on the war-path, and drive the white men either into the sea or across it to the lands whence they had come.

It was a marvellous speech and marvellous in its effect. The warriors were greatly excited, and the feeling was becoming intense. But Tecumseh's wily brother, the Prophet, whom the British had informed that a comet was about to appear, declared to the excited warriors that "they would see the arm of Tecumseh like pale fire stretched out on the vault of heaven at a certain time, and that thus they would know by that sign when to begin war."

It was almost morning when the council broke up, and already more than half of the assembled warriors had promised to make war upon the Americans.

Tom and Jerry looked about for their Indian friends, but they had suddenly and quietly disappeared. Stirred by the words of the warrior and the Prophet, already, although our boys were not aware of it, they were numbered among *Tecumseh's Young Braves*.

Tecumseh now went on, visiting all the leading Creek towns, and gaining friends and followers every day. Among the greatest of these was Weatherford, a half-breed, as powerful as he was keen and brave. But some withstood him, well aware what the end of such a struggle as he proposed must be. One of these was a noted chief named Tustinuggee-Thlucco, whom Tecumseh was extremely desirous of winning, but who remained the firm friend of the United States to the end. Angered and chagrined by his refusal, at last Tecumseh, pointing his finger at his opponent's face, said: "Tustinuggee-Thlucco, your blood is white. You have taken my red sticks and my talk, but you do not mean to fight. I know the reason. You do not believe the Great Spirit has sent me. You shall believe it. I will leave directly and go straight to Detroit. When I get there I will stamp my foot on the ground and shake down every house in Toockabatcha."

His listener long thought over this speech, which appears the more remarkable when it is recalled that when the comet appeared, which had been foretold as "the long arm of Tecumseh," it was accompanied by an earthquake that made the houses at Toockabatcha reel as if about to fall. The frightened Indians ran out of their huts, shouting: "Tecumseh is at Detroit! Tecumseh is at Detroit! We feel the stamp of his foot!"

But the "Big Warrior," though sadly troubled, did not respond, and continued firm in his allegiance to the United States.

Colonel Hawkins, the Indian agent we have mentioned, did not believe anything more serious than an Indian revolt would result from Tecumseh's visit. Tustinuggee-Thlucco was doing all in his power to prevent an uprising, but a half-breed chief, named Peter McQueen, was working hard on the other side. The "war-dance of the Lakes," which Tecumseh had taught the Creeks, was often practised, and the war feeling became more and more intense, although many of the Creeks still opposed it, and indeed never entered into it.

The few scattered white settlers were now in great peril. They were liable to be cut off or massacred in their own homes at any time. In July the battle of Burnt Corn Creek was fought, the first engagement of the Creek war, and the victory rested with the Indians. The whites also were busy now, and the British and Spaniards were doing all in their power to increase the warlike feeling among the Indians.

Pensacola became their headquarters, and arms and supplies were furnished the red men from that place. A chain of rude forts or defences had been built between the Tombigbee and the Alabama. The leading place of refuge was within the strong stockade which had been built around the house of Samuel

Mims, a short distance from the boat-yard on Tensaw lake, about a mile east of the Alabama river, and about ten miles distant from the place where it joined the Tombigbee.

Families were now abandoning their homes and fleeing for safety. It had been a long time since our friends had seen Tecumseh's young braves. Formerly, and at unexpected times, they had come to their home, and often remained for several days, only to disappear at last as suddenly as they had arrived.

One night when Jerry was milking, as he arose from his milking-stool he was startled to see Captain Jim, in war-paint and feathers, standing behind him. He declined the invitation to enter the house, and in a few words indicated to his white friend the necessity there was for them to abandon their home and seek some place of safety at once.

The advice had been declined after a long talk by the family, and several days passed, during which rumors of fires and massacres frequently came. The days were now passed in fear, no one venturing far from home, and a careful watch was kept at all hours.

Just a week had gone, when, at precisely the same time in the day as on his former visit, and in the same manner, Captain Jim again appeared to Jerry.

"Go! Go now! Heap hurry," said the laconic Captain Jim.

"Why? What's the matter now?" asked Jerry. "Anything new?"

"Heap Creeks, all here. Like leaves on trees. Much burn and many scalps;" and the young brave pointed proudly to a trophy he himself was carrying.

Jerry shuddered; but the young Indian waited for no further words, and turned and started towards the forest. The young pioneer watched him as far as he could see, and then turned and entered the house.

The result of his interview was more serious this time, and the warning words were heeded. Hurriedly the raft was built and equipped, and early the next morning the little party started down the Alabama in the manner we have described in the preceding chapter.

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CHAPTER III

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

THE clumsy raft was now moving steadily onward, the boys remaining at their places at the oars, and Nance working faithfully with the long pole. Their faces soon were wet with perspiration, and their arms began to ache under the strain; but they were strong boys, and had been accustomed to swing the axe all day long, and to use the harrow and the plough in the newly broken ground around their home, from early morning until late at night.

Their life had been a hard one thus far, but they had not drawn back from its demands, and had been able to do more than many men who were much older. Their father had been a hard worker also, and when he had been content to remain away from the settlements, and to let "Tom and Jerry" alone, had been considered a successful man, and certainly he had trained his boys with great care.

As has been related, he had brought his little family nearly ten years before this time from New York State, led on by the inducements a friend had held

forth to him, and the promise of quick returns to be found for his labor in this new and sparsely settled region along the Alabama river.

But about twice each year he had insisted upon visiting the settlements, and his family had come to know what this meant for him and for them all. Apparently he had been unable to decline the invitations of his friends there to join them in their drinking-bouts, or, at least, he did not decline; and for days after his return from each visit he did little work, and remained in a kind of a stupor, from which he roused himself only to drink again from the demi-john which he always brought home with him, and which, so long as it contained anything, stood between him and his work on the little clearing.

About a year before the time of our story he had returned from one of his periodic visits to the settlements; but instead of falling into a stupor, as he usually had, he had insisted upon resuming his work of cutting down the trees, and the very first tree which he had cut, as it fell, had dragged him under it. His leg had been broken by the fall, and the fever which followed, a result of his intemperate habits and neglect of the laws of health, in a few weeks had ended his life, and left the family in the charge of these twin brothers, who were men in size and almost in strength, but without experience, and young in years.

Tom and Jerry had worked steadily and done the best they could after their father's death, clearing the forests and planting new fields, and were beginning to think their troubles would soon be ended, when the Indian uprising brought all their labors to a standstill.

Hurriedly they had constructed this raft we have described, and early in the morning they placed all the family on board, and such things in addition as would be necessary for them to have within the next few weeks, and boldly started forth on their voyage down the river.

As they worked at the oars they talked in low tones, each trying to encourage the other, and speaking far more bravely than he felt in his heart the conditions of affairs would warrant.

"Do you suppose the Indians see us now?" asked Jerry.

"Yes," replied Tom, "I've no doubt they've followed us, or watched us all along the way. We ought to be farther out in the stream. We'd be a little safer from attacks from the shore there, but the pole wouldn't be of much use, and that is the only thing we've got to steer this old craft with, and I thought it might be the smaller of two evils to keep in near the shore."

"There's danger everywhere," replied his brother, "and I confess I'm a good deal afraid; but all we can

do is to do the best we can, and keep our eyes on the bank as we go along. I'm glad the children are in the shanty with mother."

"So am I. They'll help to keep her busy, and maybe she can keep them quiet."

They continued on their voyage in this way for some time, the boys resting occasionally now, and stopping to eat the lunch they had brought with them. A light wind had arisen, and they took advantage of it by again raising the sail and resting from their labor. The little boat they had in tow they frequently looked after, as in it they had stored some of their food, so that if it should become necessary for them to leave the raft and escape to the shore they would not be without some means of subsistence.

"What shall we do to-night?" asked Tom as the long day drew to a close, the "point" and several other places where they feared that an attack might be made having been safely passed. "Shall we both stay on guard?"

His brother hesitated a moment as he replied, "We ought to reach Fort Mims some time to-morrow, or, at least, we'll hope to get there; and to-night is going to be the hardest part of our trip. I don't know but we'd better both of us keep awake all the time."

"I think so, too," said his brother, "for a part of the night, at least; but still if we can get a little rest I think we'd better take it, because there's no know-

ing what we may have to do before we ever arrive at our destination, if indeed we ever are fortunate enough to get anywhere beyond the sight of these redskins. Who would've thought that Captain Jim would've dropped his friends, and been found among Tecumseh's young braves?"

"I should have thought so, for one," said Jerry, "for he's doing just exactly what you and I would have done if we had been in his place. He thinks that the white men have been trying to take his land away from him, and while we've not done that ourselves, I'm not sure, as a whole, there isn't too much truth in what he says."

As the dusk came on, they guided the raft farther out into the stream. Their progress necessarily would be much slower now, and all they hoped for was to come through the hours of darkness without attracting the attention of any of the prowling or passing Indians.

They had not a full sense of what the war with the Creeks was, or was to be, but they knew that in all probability they had lost their home, and very likely were escaping for their lives. At any rate, they had taken the warning of their Indian friend, and had been duly impressed by his evident sincerity in bringing the message he had given them.

It was true that the Indians were divided somewhat in their feelings about the war, but many of them had

been thoroughly aroused, and were eager to join in the attempt which had been begun by Tecumseh to drive the white men into the salt sea, or across its waters to the place whence they had come.

Tecumseh's visit in the end proved to be a sad one, and the passions he aroused and the zeal for war which he inspired brought consequences no one could have foreseen, and dangers and sorrows of which even the great Prophet himself could not have dreamed.

For a long time our two boys remained at the helm, if such the long oar which they had succeeded in rigging at the stern of the raft could be called, conversing only in whispers, and watching the dim outlines of both shores as they passed.

Every bush might conceal a foe, and behind every tree there might be some lurking enemy who would not hesitate to grasp the opportunity of ridding his land of one more of the hated pale-faces. The dusk deepened, and, at last, the darkness came and spread over all things.

"There's no need of your staying here any longer. Go in and lie down awhile, and I'll manage this rudder, or long oar, or whatever you call it. I'll call you in a few hours and let you have your spell then," said Tom.

"All right," replied his brother, as he disappeared within the rude shanty.

No fire had been made on the raft at night by which

to cook their supper, as the warning the young brave had given them they knew must be heeded, and even the smoke from so small a fire as they would kindle would be likely to attract the attention of any prowling Indian, and might bring on an attack which they would not be able to meet.

Nance, meanwhile, had heeded the request of her brother, and had sought the shelter of the shanty early in the evening, and left the boys alone to look after the raft.

When Tom disappeared, Jerry's feeling of loneliness increased. The stillness became almost oppressive, and the voyage of the raft seemed to be almost uncanny, as it moved steadily on in the darkness. Jerry could see only for a short distance before him, and he was compelled to trust to his general knowledge of the river in a large measure for his directions. Captain Jim and his companion had been the only Indians they had seen, but their signal of warning was not to be received lightly. Several hours had passed since their appearance, and the night had brought its own shelter.

In spite of the darkness, however, he could not rid himself of the feeling that eyes were watching him, and that every movement he made was observed by men whom he could not see. He tried to shake off his fears and to assure himself that there was no immediate cause for alarm, and yet, somehow, in

spite of his efforts, the sense of some approaching danger became keener every moment. Several times he was tempted to go to the shanty and call his brother, but each time he had gone back to his rudder again, trying to convince himself that his fears were groundless, and that it was better for him to let Tom sleep, if he could, for a time, as he knew all the strength he could gain would be needed before they arrived at the end of their voyage.

An hour or more passed in this manner, and then the young watcher was startled as he saw some one come from the shanty and approach him. At first he could not determine whether it was his sister or brother, but in a moment he recognized Tom's voice, when in a low tone he said, "I couldn't sleep, Jerry. Somehow I felt that we were in greater danger than we've ever been. I know it's probably foolish, but I thought I'd come out and take my stand along with you, for, to be honest, I felt just a little bit afraid."

"I know how you felt," said Jerry, "and we'll both of us keep awake, for a while, anyway. I've been feeling a good deal as I do sometimes when I have had a nightmare, and I was trying to get away from something and couldn't move hand or foot."

Tom took his place beside his brother, and, seated upon the raft, they began to talk in low whispers, all the time keeping such watch as they could on either side in the darkness.

Somehow the long night passed, and just as the first light of the dawn appeared, Tom laid his hand upon his brother's shoulder and said, "Jerry, look over there to the left. There's a canoe coming out from the shore. Can you make out what it is or how many there are in it?"

"It's too dark. I can't tell yet," replied his brother, looking in the direction in which Tom had pointed, and both boys became silent as they watched the frail little craft make its way over the river. It came on almost as still as the shadows, but they soon were enabled to see that it had only one occupant, and yet they were not very much reassured when they saw that his evident purpose was to make for the raft.

The boys crouched low and kept out of sight behind the shanty as they watched the approach of this new-comer. The sail flapped against its rude mast, and as the light from the rising sun soon became stronger their courage returned.

"Get your gun, Tom," said Jerry. "We'll be all ready for him if he wants to make trouble."

"There's only one man in the canoe," said Tom. "We can handle him without much work. Let's wait a bit, though, before we do anything. It may be some one who wants to see us, and we don't want to stir up any trouble if we can help it."

Meanwhile the canoe came nearer and nearer, and the man who was paddling with so much strength and

dexterity, without any doubt now, was making for the raft.

"He's coming for us," whispered Jerry, "there's no mistake about that. Be all ready for him, only don't shoot until we find out who he is, or what he wants."

The canoe was now within a few yards of them, and the occupant soon ran it in close by the raft. Without a word the solitary visitor stepped out, drawing the canoe after him. As he turned towards the shanty, both boys, grasping their guns, advanced to meet him and to demand the purpose of his coming.

CHAPTER IV

A CHANGE IN THE PLAN

AS the boys approached the stranger, they held their guns in readiness, prepared to meet any show of violence that might be made; but their fears were at once relieved when the visitor called out to them, "Go slow, boys, don't shoot your best friend. Not that you would be likely to hit anything much if you did shoot, but it is just as well not to use your pop-guns too freely in times like these. There's no knowing what redskin might pop up out of the water right alongside of your — your — I don't know what to call this craft. What is it, anyway?"

"It's Josiah! Hunter Josiah!" said Tom joyfully, as he recognized the voice of the new-comer, and their fears of an immediate attack were relieved.

"Yes, that's just who it is," said the man whom they had addressed as Josiah. "Now, don't waste any of your time talking about him or talking to him. There's too much business on hand just now, and I propose to have a share in it, too."

The new-comer had for a long time been a friend

of the father of our boys. He was a man in middle life, of a strong and vigorous physique, and evidently was familiar with the customs of pioneer life, and the dangers to be encountered in the forests. His roving disposition had prevented him from settling upon any plantation or developing any clearing. He was, consequently, more of a shiftless, happy hunter than anything else, who wandered about from place to place, making his home for a time with some friend, and then remaining for weeks in the forest, apart from all mankind.

He was a very strong friend whenever his heart went out towards any man, and though he never could be persuaded to remain long in one place, his friendship was as enduring as his life was restless.

He followed the boys as they returned to the stern, and seated himself as Tom resumed his place at the rudder. He listened to the story they had to tell him of the causes that led to their departure, and the experiences they had thus far had on their voyage. He indicated his pleasure or dissent by an occasional exclamation, but did not interrupt them until their story had been finished, and he had heard all they had to say.

"The trouble's mostly among the Creeks, boys," said the hunter, when at last their story was finished. "The Choctaws are not very much stirred up as yet, and I don't think we shall have very much to be

afraid of from the Cherokees. There's no love lost betwixt them, and all this is in our favor. I don't believe we'd have had much trouble, anyway, if it hadn't been for that pesky Tecumseh and his buffalo-tailed brother. Were you boys at the council when they danced around there in the square, dragging those long buffalo-tails behind them?"

"Yes," replied Tom, "we were there, and I don't think I ever heard such a speech in my life as Tecumseh and his brother made."

"Stuff and nonsense! 'Twas all stuff and nonsense," replied the hunter somewhat angrily. "Nothing but a cat's-paw of the British. He himself was made a fool of by them, and so he thought he would come down here, more than a thousand miles away from his own happy hunting-grounds, and make fools of the rest of the redskins. Not but what the most of them were fools enough already. But where are you going?"

"We are going to try to make our way to Fort Mims. That's where Captain Jim told us the whites were gathering," replied Jerry.

"That's the best place there is, no doubt about that," replied the hunter; "but you can't go clear down. I saw Captain Jim myself, and the little whiffet, all painted and daubed up, was feeling as smart as a rattler with a new skin. At first he wanted to take my scalp, but I would not listen to

any such nonsense as that, and so I had a little conversation with him myself. He was pretty decent then, for I reckon he has not forgotten all about old times yet, and I picked it out of him that some of the pesky redskins were down the river lying in wait for just such parties as you, who are on their way to Fort Mims."

"What are we to do, then?" asked Tom anxiously. "You know we have got mother and the children along with us, to say nothing of Nancee, though I will risk her most anywhere."

"You ought to have gone a long time ago," said the hunter.

"That's all true enough," replied Tom, "but we didn't know what was going on until day before yesterday, and shouldn't have known then if Quilutimac hadn't come and told us."

"What! Have you not heard anything about Jackson's treatment by the government?"

"No, not a word," replied Tom.

"Well, this is no time to tell you of it, but it's about the rankest piece of work I ever heard tell of. Some of the other leaders were not treated very well either, for all they have done their best to protect the country, though perhaps some of them have made it up of a coloring to suit themselves. Some time I'll tell you about it, but there's too much business on hand now, and that's not the least of the causes that

led to this bad business, anyway. I've seen too many signs of Indians around here for me to stop and waste any more time talking to you."

"Well, what do you think is the best thing to be done, Josiah?" said Jerry. "Tom and I don't care so much about ourselves, for we're used to Indians' ways, and not much afraid of them anyhow; but we've got mother and the children along with us, and what in the world we're going to do with them I can't tell."

"I know," replied the hunter. "Don't be afraid, Tommy; I was not your father's friend for nothing, and I am not going to leave his youngsters in the lurch, though he himself pulled out and left them. The Indians are pretty thick around here, and you may need more than your father's friend to help you before you've got this party safely through."

"I presume some of them have been watching us all the while, ever since we started," said Jerry.

"I reckon you didn't escape the notice of them altogether. An Injun is not blind, and some of them can smell farther than they can see. I think we'll find some way to get your party over to Fort Mims, though," replied Josiah.

"Do you know how things are there?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Yes," replied the hunter, "I was there a few days ago. Fort Mims is pretty full. What with the women

and the children and the darkies that have crowded in there (for the darkies are scared the worst of all), it is pretty well filled up, but I reckon we'll find a place for you. At any rate, if we can't find any, we'll make one, for that is what a good share of the settlers have had to do who have gone in there,— just build their own lodgings inside the stockade."

But the conversation was interrupted by the sound of a gun fired on their right, and the whistle and thud of a bullet as it passed over their heads and buried itself in one of the posts of the shanty.

"Well, now, that's pretty cool," said the hunter; "and that were a white man, too, though I'd be ashamed to make a shot like that. I reckon you had better go inside, boys, and let me steer this craft awhile."

"No," said Jerry, "we've provided for this very thing." And he brought from the shanty a stand composed of four or five thick planks, and three or four feet long, which they had made for this very purpose. Placing one of these on either side of them, they could see plainly in front, and felt safe from any attack on either side.

"You see I am right," said the hunter, a moment later, as he called their attention to a man standing on the shore and waving his hand. "He is a Spaniard, too. I thought something would account for the poor shot. A Britisher would not have done that. We'll go a piece farther away down the river, and stop our

talking for awhile, and then we'll see what we can do. He's on the wrong side of the river, though, and all he can do is to drive us to the shelter of this bank."

The sun had not yet risen above the tops of the trees, and although it was light enough for them to discern the objects upon the shore, they did not summon the other members of the family from the shanty; and, indeed, if any of them had appeared, they would at once have told them to return, as the shot which had been fired had warned them of danger near.

"I think we'll have to stop pretty soon," said the hunter, "and land, and strike out across the country. I didn't see very many signs of Injuns over that way, and Fort Mims can't be more than five miles away."

"I don't know whether the children can make five miles or not," said Jerry dubiously.

"They have got to. That's all there is to be done. We can carry them on our backs, can't we?" said the hunter.

"Yes, we can do that," replied Jerry; "but that won't leave us free to use our guns if we have to."

"I tell you we won't have to," said the hunter. "Either they are lying very low, or else the Injuns have cleared out for a while from that region, and gone farther down the river. Do you know, I have a kind of dim suspicion that while they are going to pick off such parties as they can without too much trouble, they have no particular objection to letting Fort Mims

fill up. I suspect they think that's pie for them, and that they will fall on the fort some dark night, and take the scalps of every one inside. Kind of a man-trap, you see."

His words were not entirely reassuring, and yet his experience had been so much greater than that of the boys, and as they knew how shrewd and keen his judgment was, they decided to follow his advice.

"What are we going to do with this stuff we have brought with us?" asked Jerry.

"Leave it on board," said the hunter gruffly, "and turn the live-stock loose in the woods."

"But we brought the pig and the chickens along because we thought we'd be likely to stay some time inside the stockade of Fort Mims, and we would have to have something to eat there."

"That will be your greatest trouble at Fort Mims, but you will have to turn the pig and chickens loose here, though. A man's life is worth more than a pig's, and a dozen hens' into the bargain. I suppose you brought your guns," he added, "as a kind of a protection. Oh, well, they are better than nothing. They are not of much account alongside of mine, though."

The boys flushed a little as he spoke of their guns, for they were accustomed to pride themselves somewhat on their prowess as hunters, and yet they knew that their companion was not inclined to belittle their

ability, save as he compared it with his own, which was well known to be far superior to that of any one in the entire region.

"We'll land here," said the hunter, as they came near a little cove. "You had better get your family together, and be ready to start right off."

"Oh, why didn't we stay at home!" said Mrs. Curry complainingly, when Tom entered the shanty. "I know that would have been a good deal better than this tramping off through the country."

"But you know what Tecumseh's young brave said, don't you? And beside, Hunter Josiah is here now, and he's even stronger in his words than the Indians were. He says he knows there's danger and lots of it, and it is not going to be safe for us to go farther down the river."

"I suppose I shall have to go, then," replied his mother; "I always do. That's been my fortune in life always to follow up somebody that was starting from a good place to go out into nowhere."

Her complaints were redoubled when she saw the pig and the chickens turned loose in the woods, but the former was not inclined to be left behind, and, with a grunt, he started after the party when they prepared to enter the forest.

"Let him come. Let him come," said Hunter Josiah, with his quiet laugh; "he had better come to a good end than a bad one, and pork may be in

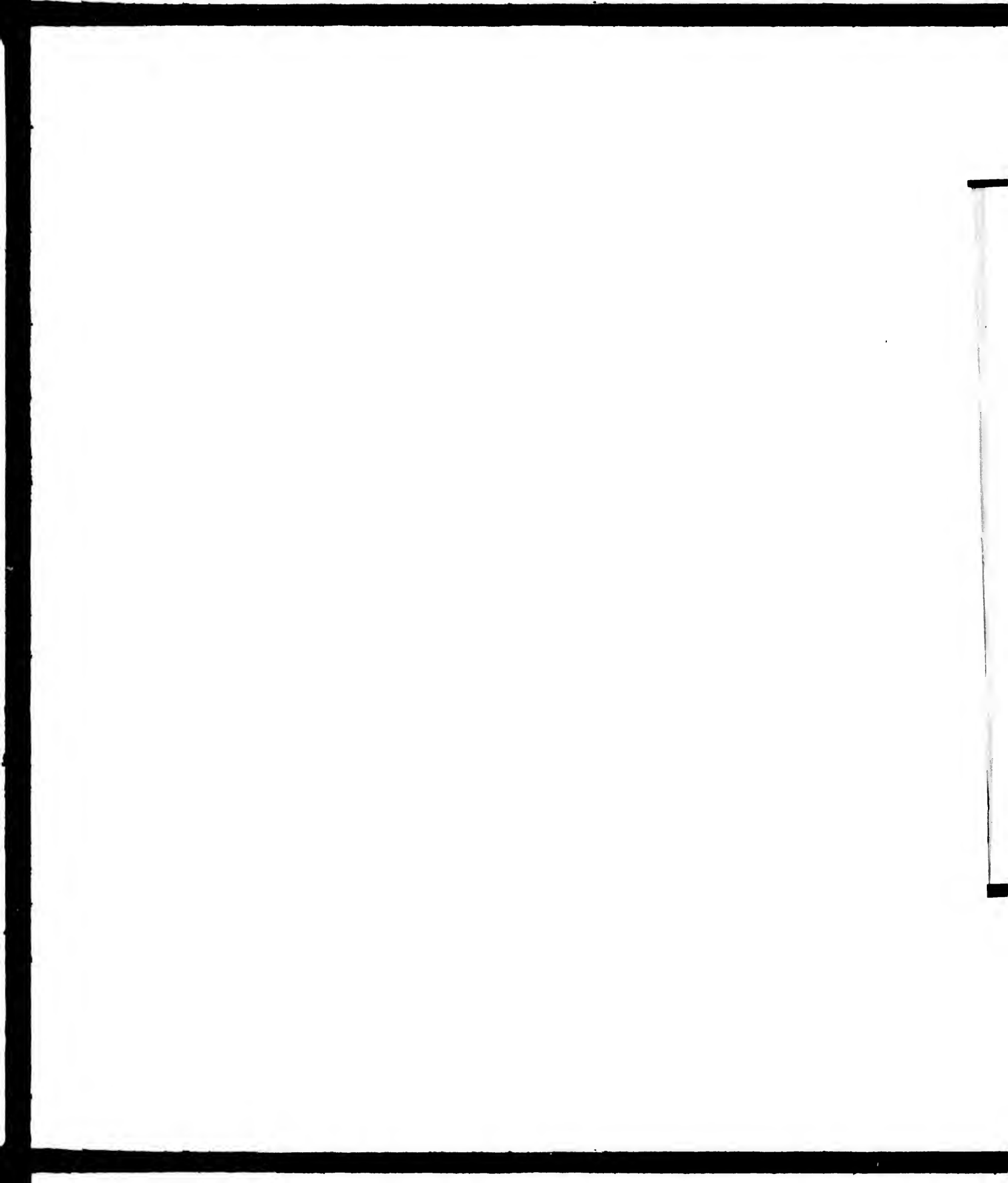
demand at Fort Mims before winter yet. Are you all ready?"

"All ready," replied the boys.

"Then we'll start off on our trail. I don't know what there is before us, and we'll be lucky if we get to the fort without meeting any redskins, but I want ye all to keep as still as you can while we're on the march, and we'll make the best time we can. Come on now," he added, as he picked up one of the children and placed him on his back, an example which Tom quickly followed, and the entire party, with many forebodings, started into the dense forest to try and make their way to the shelter of Fort Mims. None of the party, except the hunter, had ever been in the place they were seeking, and they knew of its strength only by common report. As they were, however, compelled to seek the shelter of some stockade, they had chosen Fort Mims as the most accessible, but they never had planned to go to it by the route which the hunter was indicating.

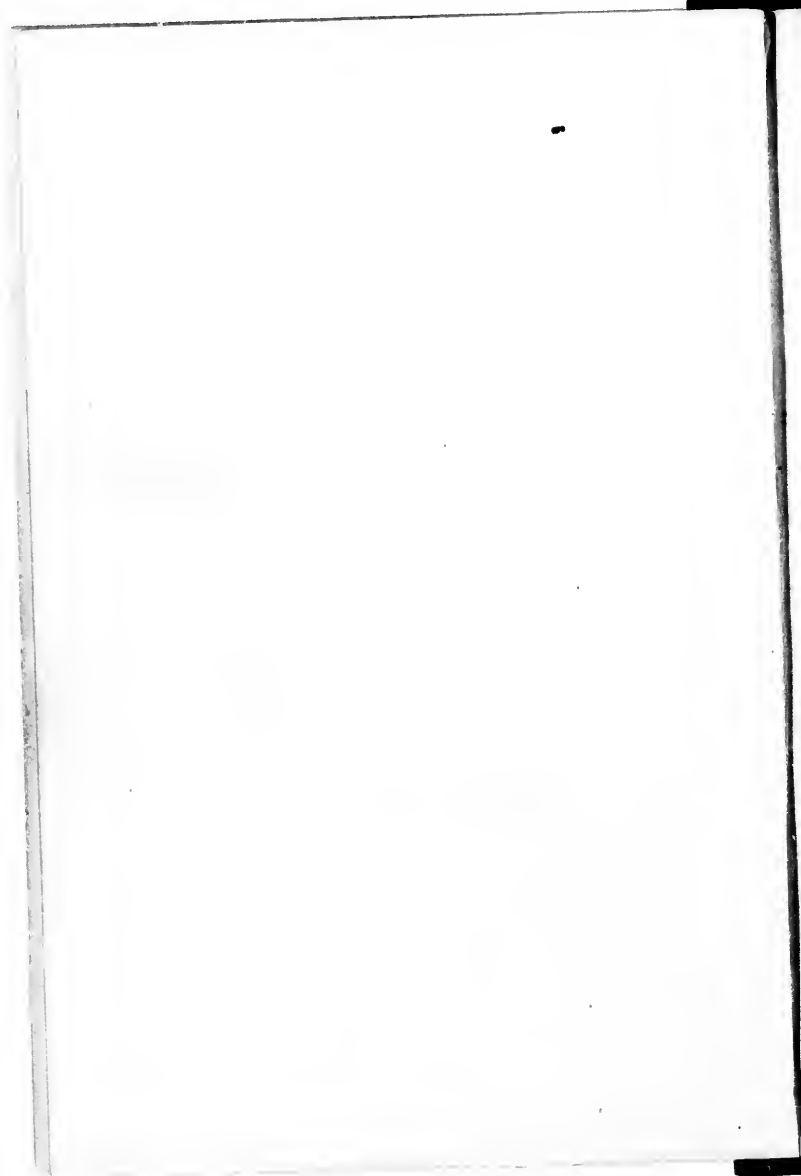
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"The hunter was leading the way."
Page 51.



CHAPTER V

TO THE FORT

IT was a strange appearance our little party of fugitives presented as they started into the forest. The hunter, with his gun grasped in one hand and one of the children clinging to his back, was leading the way. Behind him followed Jerry similarly equipped. The mother and Nance came behind him, while Tom was serving as the rear guard and was watchful of all sides.

The pig, which had followed them when they had first started, for some unaccountable reason began to emit some ear-piercing squeals, and there was nothing for Tom to do but to stop and drive him back.

Whether these had been given as a challenge, or because he was as suspicious of the perils surrounding them as were his human companions, could not be known; but after gazing for a moment in stupid surprise at Tom, who struck him several blows with the butt of his gun, he disappeared and left the party free from the danger which his squealings might bring upon them.

"We can't go as slow as this," said Hunter Josiah, stopping for a moment to talk with Jerry, who was close behind. "I don't know what we shall meet and what dangers we may have to face, but I do know one thing, and that is, that the sooner we bring our party to Fort Mims the better it will be for all concerned."

"I am going to carry that boy on my back," said Nance, coming up just in time to hear the last words of the hunter. "That will leave you free to keep a sharper lookout, and warn us if you find any danger in front."

This proposal was quickly adopted, and the little party started on once more. Frequent stops for rest were made, and the hunter and one of the boys, leaving the party, occasionally would start off on different paths for a short distance to see if any signs of danger were to be found. Even the mother had no time for complaining now in the midst of such trials and dangers, and yet both boys noticed as they went on that her face was becoming more and more flushed, and that it would be soon a question whether she would be able to keep up with the others in the rapid march which they were making.

"I think we have gone about half way, now," said Josiah, as the party stopped on one of its frequent halts.

"Do you think half our danger is over, then?" asked Nance.

"I am inclined to think so," replied the hunter, "for I very much doubt whether the redskins would want to run the chance of making an attack on a party, even as defenceless as we are, when it was within hearing of the fort. Still, you never know what a redskin will do, and I don't think we shall be safe until we are inside the stockade."

"Are the Indians pretty thick around here?" asked Jerry.

The hunter smiled significantly as he replied, "Well, there are several of them, I make no doubt of that."

"What kind of a place is it we've started for?" asked Tom.

"Oh, I can't describe it to you, now," said the hunter. "You will see when once we get there; that is, if we're ever lucky enough to make it. But come on, now, we must start on again. Every minute of time, and every step of the way, count for a good deal more now than they are likely to again in a good while."

The party resumed their march, but moved in silence now. All of them were beginning to feel the fatigue of the journey, and as they came nearer to the fort they began to increase the vigilance which they had used all the way.

They had gone on for a half-hour more in this way when the hunter suddenly stopped, and, raising

his hand in warning, began to listen intently. The entire party were startled, as they all knew the hunter had heard or seen something of more than ordinary importance. One of the children, already over-tired, here began to cry, and Hunter Josiah, kind-hearted and gentle as he was, turned quickly and placed his hand over the little mouth somewhat roughly.

The mother began to cry, and said, "You never were so rough to any of my children before, Josiah, and I don't see why you should treat any of them in that way now."

But a sharp word from the hunter brought silence again, as they all were convinced that he was alarmed at some danger he suspected to be near them.

"Some one's coming," he whispered to the boys, "and he's coming right towards us, too."

At his words the suspense became more and more intense. But soon the others heard the sound which had caught the attention of the sharp-eared hunter, and it was evident that he had not been deceived. Breathless with fear, they waited for several moments, and soon the form of some one was seen dodging from tree to tree not far away.

The hunter had taken his gun, and motioned to the boys to do the same, and they made ready for any attack that might be made. Tom noticed, as he glanced about the party, that the faces of all but the

children were very pale, and even the little ones were silent now, catching something of the fear which impending ill often gives, long before it can be seen or known.

The unknown man soon stepped out into a little clearing. They waited to see whether he was alone or not, as he stopped and began to whistle. Soon they were more than relieved when they saw that he evidently was alone, and as they perceived his dark face and short, heavy frame, their fears at once disappeared. An exclamation of disgust from the hunter was followed by his call, as he said, "Here, you black nigger, what are you doing out here in the woods all alone? Don't you know there's an Injun a hiding behind every tree ready to scalp you?"

The startled negro rolled his eyes, and tried to stammer forth some words in acknowledgment of the hunter's salute. "Yes, sah; yes, sah; I's all alone."

Tom laughed as he saw how much more the black man was frightened than were any of those who had been so startled by the sound of his approaching footsteps.

"How far are we from Fort Mims?" asked the hunter, as the negro joined the party.

"'Bout a mile an' a half," was the reply.

"I suppose you belong there, don't you, Sambo?"

"Yes, sah, and my name's not Sambo, sah, but Cæsar, sah."

"All right, Caesar," replied the hunter, speaking cheerfully, now that the immediate cause of fear had been removed. "How many people are there in the fort now?"

"Oh, a whole city full," was the reply; "men and women, and boys and girls, and little children, sah. Some of them not so big as dese, sah." And he pointed to the children, who were clinging to their mother.

Tom and Jerry were both curious, and would have asked many questions of the negro, who now had recovered from his fear, and felt something of his own importance as the only one who could impart much information concerning Fort Mims and the people gathered there.

"We must start on again," said the hunter, "and we'll have to be more careful now than ever. While I don't think there'll be much danger of an attack now, since the fort is so near, at the same time it would be a very easy thing for some rascally Creek to throw his tomahawk or shoot an arrow at some one of us, and it would not make very much noise, either." And as he led the way he became silent again, and his anxiety was shared now by every one in the party.

Occasionally the hunter turned to whisper to his companions and tell of something he had seen, or some sign that had appeared of the presence of hidden foes.

These became more frequent as they came nearer the fort, and when they halted again for a brief rest, in a low voice Jerry said, "I don't like the looks of things at all. I've seen more signs of Indians within the last half-hour than I've seen in three weeks before."

"Do you suppose any of them have been following us?" asked Tom.

"No doubt, no doubt," replied Josh, "and it's more'n likely some of 'em are watching us at this very minute. Still, I hardly think they'll touch us, but from these signs I've seen it won't be long before the Indians will be heard from, and I hope Fort Mims has got some defences that will be strong enough to stand against the mob that will be thrown against it. But it is not well for us to take any chances, and we'll start on again right away."

The mother, almost worn out, now was beginning to complain again, and to declare that it was impossible for her to advance another step, but a sharp word from the leader silenced her words, and although almost too weary to move, she arose and resumed the march with the others.

On and on they went, now not even stopping for a rest, as the hunter was afraid that if any break occurred, the resumption of the march would be more difficult, and as they drew nearer the fort he became more and more anxious.

So on and on the little party trudged, stumbling

over roots and falling over dead branches, their faces streaming with perspiration, and some of them appearing as if it would be impossible for them to go any farther.

"It is the longest mile and a half I ever knew," said Tom as he advanced to the side of the leader.

"Never mind," said Josh, "we're almost there now, and when we're once inside, we'll forget all this hard work, and how tired we were. Here, you, Caesar," he said to the negro, who also had advanced, "you didn't show us the short way at all. I don't believe ye knew the way."

But Caesar only grinned and shook his head without making any reply to the hunter's words.

At last the leader stopped, and turning to the others said, "We've reached our journey's end now, for I can see the stockade ahead of us."

"Where? Where?" eagerly called out the boys, who were unable to see anything in the spot which the hunter indicated; but in a few moments a strange-looking place appeared not far in advance of them, and the hunter triumphantly said, "You can see it now, can't you? That's Fort Mims, and we've covered the distance between the river and the stockade in a good deal less time than I thought we could; and you stood the journey better than I feared," he added, turning to the mother; but she made no reply except to shake her head and sigh.

"This is a funny fort," said Nance. "I don't believe it's much of a protection against Indians. I declare I believe I would rather have stayed on our raft and trusted that when it was anchored in the river, than to put the children behind such a flimsy, good-for-nothing protection as that ahead of us."

"There's nothing else to do now, though," said Tom, "and we'll have to make the best of it. I don't think it's very promising-looking myself, but, at any rate, we'll not be alone here, and there'll be some protection in numbers, anyway."

"The gates are open," said the hunter, "and we'll go in at once."

And acting upon his words they entered within the wide-open gates, and curiously looked about them at the strangely enclosed spot which had been given the name of Fort Mims by the owner of the place.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE AT FORT MIMS

A STRANGE sight was that which our party looked upon when once they were inside the gates of Fort Mims. The place appeared to be crowded with people. The soldiers were mingling with the citizens, and women and children formed a large part of the assembly. Many negroes were there, and a few Indians also were to be seen, who were in as great fear of the hostile savages as the whites themselves were.

The new arrivals hardly knew where to go, or whom to seek at first; but their uncertainty was relieved when Hunter Josiah Fletcher hailed a man who was a stranger to the others, but whom he evidently knew well.

"Why, Martin Rigdon, I didn't know you were here. How long has it been since you have been seeking shelter from the redskins at Fort Mims?" asked Josiah.

The man whom he thus addressed laughed as he replied, "I am not seeking shelter for myself, Josiah,

but I've been detailed here to help look after these refugees. What's this party you've brought in?"

"Oh, some friends of mine," said Josiah, "who want to stay here for awhile. They have left their home up on the river, as some of their Injun friends were kind enough to give them the warning word, and I want to find a place for them inside the fort here for a time."

Martin shrugged his shoulders as he said, "A place inside the fort is a little difficult to find just at present. Every spot seems to be in demand; but come with me and I'll help you to find out what can be done."

Josiah followed his friend, and in the course of a half-hour returned with the information that the women and children could be accommodated in one of the little cabins, but that the boys and men would have to find their resting-places within one of the many board shelters that had been erected.

"This is a great place," said Josiah, "and there have been a great many changes since I was here a few days ago."

"Ye" replied Martin, "and things are not in the same way now as they were some time ago."

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in Wayne's army, and what a fight he made in the battle of Fallen Timber, at the Rapids on the Maumee, in 1794."

"He fought like mad there," replied Martin, "so they tell me, and in 1799 they made him a captain; but the best luck he ever had was last March, when they made a brigadier-general of volunteers of him, and he has been at work ever since. The first thing he did this summer was to try to give some protection to the people who were so frightened about the Indians in this part of the country. He wanted to take all the soldiers he had right into the Creek country up around the Coosa and Tallapoosa, but General Flournoy would not allow it. He said he had had no orders from the War Department for any invasions, and was allowed to go on the defensive only; but he's been strengthening all the block-houses and defences, and has sent some of his men off into the border land and along the Choctaw frontier. He's been here, too, and if it hadn't been for him Fort Mims would have been no better than a rat-hole. Not that it's very much better yet, but it's a good deal better than it would have been if Claiborne had been here and str tightene

Before Claiborne had gone to Fort Mims, many of the wealthy half-blood families, as well as the whites, led on by their fears, had gone down the Alabama in boats and canoes, somewhat after the manner in which our friends had started. Many of these had hidden themselves in the thick swamps around Tensaw lake. After a time they had joined the white refugees in constructing a strong stockade around the house of Samuel Mims, who was an old and wealthy inhabitant of that region.

His house, one story high, was built of wood and quite large. Strong pickets had been driven around it, and fence rails placed between them. Port-holes about three feet and a half from the ground, to the number of five hundred, also had been made. About an acre was enclosed by these pickets, and there were two more gates made in the stockade, one on the western and the other on the eastern side.

Quite a number of other houses had been erected within the pickets, and as the number of refugees increased, cabins and board shelters, like those our friends were to occupy, had been built.

At the south-west corner of the stockade there was a block-house which, through some strange neglect, was only partially finished at the time when our friends arrived.

The days passed monotonously now. The stockade was enlarged and two new houses were built. Major

Beasley, who was in command of Fort Mims, issued rations, and received all who could assist in the defence or needed protection. Expeditions were sent forth, and drafts frequently were made upon the soldiers at the fort, until their number was greatly reduced; but the major, either because of his ignorance and inexperience, or because of some strange infatuation, declared that he could protect the place with even the small number of soldiers he had, and pretended to laugh at the fright of the refugees, who daily came and brought alarming reports of the movements of the Indians.

Occasionally, also, word was brought from some of the other stations, and there was a report that about four hundred of the Creek warriors were preparing to fall upon Fort Easley, which was about sixty miles distant from Fort Mims and nearer the enemy.

Major Beasley, finding the number of refugees increasing very rapidly within the post of which he had charge, commenced to enlarge it. A new row of pickets was driven about sixty feet beyond the eastern end. Tom and Jerry had their share in this work, but it was carried on so slowly and carelessly, that their own fears increased with every passing day.

Again and again the whole place would be thrown into confusion by the reports that the Indians were approaching, but as these were found to be only false

rumors, the carelessness of the leaders increased, and most of the men were inclined more and more to belittle the fears of an Indian attack.

"It's like that old story in our reading-book," said Josiah one day. "It told about a boy who was a shepherd lad, and every day went home saying that a wolf had come down upon his sheep, and the men went out to help him; but at last when they found that he was lying to them all the while, they got so they didn't pay any attention to his words, and finally when the wolf really did come they left the boy all alone to fight him. The fight didn't last very long, for the wolf soon had the boy and the sheep too."

In the early evening the young people often assembled in some one of the houses and played games and danced, so careless had they become, and so secure did they feel, under the bold words of their leaders, against any attack by their Indian foes. Some of the negroes, who were slaves of some of the refugees, furnished the music and added to the sport.

Tom and Jerry with their sister entered somewhat into these games, but the boys were not entirely without fear, so strong and so constant had been the warnings which their hunter friend had given.

One morning, which was the twenty-ninth of August, two negroes, one of whom was the Caesar they had met when they first came to Fort Mims, came running into the fort. Their faces were livid with

fear, and they were so frightened they scarcely could talk. At last, after much labor, their story was drawn from them, and they declared that when they had been down near one of the swamps looking after some of the beef cattle, they had been startled and frightened almost out of their senses by the sight of twenty-four Indians, hideous in their war-paint, and evidently prowling around the fort with no good intent.

The major at once sent Captain Middleton with a couple of mounted men to reconnoitre. They remained outside until near sunset, and when they returned to the fort they declared that not a trace of an Indian could they find. Major Beasley became very angry at the negroes then, and charged them with lying. The more they protested their innocence and the truthfulness of their message, the more angry the major became, and finally he ordered both of them to be flogged for raising a false alarm.

Caesar, who was the slave of John Randon, was the first one to have his back bared and receive the lashes. Hunter Josiah and our two boys were very indignant at this flogging, and together with Mr. Fletcher, who owned the other negro, tried to persuade the major to give up the punishment, but they only added to his anger.

Turning upon Fletcher he declared that if his negro was not punished, he and his family would

have to leave the fort by ten o'clock the next day. Mr. Fletcher's family was a large one, and rather than have them lose the protection, weak as it was, which Fort Mims afforded, he consented to the flogging.

As Josiah returned to their rough board shelter, after witnessing the punishment which had been inflicted, he said to the boys, "This is a great place, this is. Just see how many of the people here are sick. This malaria from these Alabama swamps is enough to kill a dead man; but that is not the worst of it. I tell you those niggers were right, and the Injuns are prowling around here. I don't believe this fort is safe for a minute. The Injuns have got all this crowd shut in here like rats in a hole, and there'll be an awful time, and right away, too, in my opinion."

"What do you think we had better do?" asked Tom.

The hunter hesitated as he replied, "There's danger inside, and there's danger outside. I don't know where there's more of it. There are a few soldiers here, it is true, but they can't do much work against the crowd which the redskins will send here if they decide to attack the fort, and the most of those who are here can't carry a ramrod, to say nothing of a gun. I'll think it over and see you in a little while; but I don't like the looks of things at all, not even a little

bit. There's trouble ahead; I'm sure of it. I don't like the looks of things."

The hunter left them sadly perplexed, while he went to seek his friend Martin and confer with him as to the best plans to be made for the safety of the party he had brought to the fort.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE WOODS AGAIN

THE remarks of the hunter in our last chapter need a little further explanation.

Josiah Fletcher had not done much to assist in the building enterprises of Fort Mims, but every day he had been out on a scouting tour, and had himself seen many signs of Indians, and brought back his reports to Major Beasley. He had told him of his fears, and the major ought to have had confidence enough in such a thorough woodsman as Josiah to have trusted somewhat to his words, especially since he was not the only one who had been frightened and brought alarming reports; but Major Beasley evidently was confident of his own ability, and, rash even in his weakness, would listen to no words; and as the scouts became more anxious, as though to defy them and express his confidence in his own prowess, he daily became more and more careless.

The gates of the stockade were left wide open, and often with an insufficient guard, and indeed at times with almost no guard at all. The work of enlarging

the stockade was pushed on so slowly and negligently, that a sudden attack by the Indians would have found the people of the fort unprepared, and unable to make a strong resistance.

The whipping of the two negroes also had increased the hunter's disgust, and added to his fear. For himself he felt no alarm. He had no one dependent upon him, and felt abundantly able to care for himself, even in the midst of such wily foes as he well knew the hostile Creeks to be.

He left the boys after the interview we have recorded, and went to talk with his friend Martin. For an hour or more the old comrades talked over the situation, with many a shake of the head and foreboding word. At last Josiah returned to the place where he had left the boys, and the look of determination which they saw upon his face, at once informed them that he had arrived at some conclusion, and was ready for action.

"I don't know but I'm doing a foolish thing, boys, but I can't help it. Martin agrees with me, and the thing I want you to do is this: I want you to take your mother and Nance and the children, and get out of the fort right away."

"Get out of the fort!" said Jerry. "Why, if the Indians are as thick around here as you think they are, it will be like jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"It's warm enough in either place," replied the hunter dryly, "and I don't know that your scalp will be any tighter on your head than it would be in the fort, if you were outside, but something's got to be done. I know this place is not safe, and I'm satisfied the Injuns have got designs against it, and they're going to act pretty sudden, too."

"Do you want us to go right away?"

"Yes, right off. I don't want you to waste five minutes."

"But where are we to go?" asked Tom aghast.

"Go to Fort Pierce. It's not far from here. It's not over three or four miles away at the farthest, and I don't believe the Injuns think the place is worth attacking — at least, not for a while; but I tell you Fort Mims is going to catch it, and there won't be many of the five hundred and fifty-three people here now left, I am afraid. But if they do attack this place, as I'm sure they will, it may arouse the government to do something, and little insignificant Fort Pierce, along with a good many others of the posts, will be looked after, then. Besides, there's a lot of new whiskey just arrived, and between ourselves Major Beasley is too drunk most of the time to look after this place as he ought to. Think of it, the commander of Fort Mims about two-thirds drunk every day! But don't stop to talk here. I'll give you the directions; at least, I'll give them to Tom, and, Jerry, you go and get

your folks and be ready to start as soon as Tom comes for you."

"Aren't you going with us?" asked Jerry.

"Not a foot," said Josiah; "I've got to stay here. I'm appointed to stay in this place, and it won't do for me to leave. If a lot of Injuns fall on you I couldn't protect you, and if they don't, you will be just as safe without me as you would be with me, so I'll stay here and fight it out. I'll take my chances with the five hundred and fifty-three, and you'll have to take your chances out in the woods."

The protests of his mother and the surprise of Nance did not prevent Jerry from insisting upon their making preparations to start at once.

"That's always the way, that's always the way," said his mother. "I'm never allowed to rest on this earth. First, it's moving from York State, and then it's nursing your father after the tree fell on him. Oh, dear! I wish he hadn't been so fond of 'Tom and Jerry.' Then it's nursing an Indian, and then it's leaving your home and starting out on a raft; then it's leaving the raft and tramping through the woods till you're almost dead, and then it's moving on from where you're safe, — for Major Beasley says it's safe here, — and then it's starting out again for another fort. Oh, dear! I wonder when the end will come. I wish my end was here. I'd about as soon be scalped by the

Indians, as drop dead from being so tired I couldn't breathe."

Jerry listened to what his mother had to say, but without expressing any sympathy, or offering any further explanation, he insisted that they should go with him.

They did not stop even to say good-by to the major, but, joined by Tom, started once more out into the forest. This, the boys knew, was peopled with savages, who were filled with hate and rage, and who would slay any of the whites if they fell into their power. They felt their responsibility, and their hearts were heavy as they departed. They were the only ones to leave the fort, so far as they could see, and the fear which they had felt inside the stockade was not lessened when they began their new march through the forest.

Slowly and carefully they made their way onward, Jerry leading the procession, and Tom serving as the rear guard, and holding his gun in constant readiness. They were not able to make very rapid progress, as the children could not be carried now, except for short distances, and they frequently were compelled to stop for rest. The boys were glad when the march had ceased for a time, and they were glad to have the expedition to the fort.

About half the distance to Fort Pierce had been covered when they stopped once more to rest. The entire party was silent, oppressed with fear, and yet rejoicing that no signs of their foes had yet been seen.

Suddenly one of the children called out, "Black man,— I see a black man."

The boys at once arose, and, holding their guns, peered out into the forest. "Charlie was right," said Jerry, "there is some one following us." And all turned to watch the woods behind them.

The boys were frightened, and yet they grasped their guns, determined to do their best if they should be compelled to defend the party.

Soon, out from the midst of the trees they saw three Indians coming. They marched in single file, glancing neither to the right nor left, and following the trail which evidently was very clear to their eyes. Their faces were painted, and the appearance they presented was savage and warlike.

The mother began to cry softly, and Jerry noticed how pale his sister's face was when he glanced at her for a moment.

"It's Tecumseh's young braves," said Tom in a low voice a moment later, and with a feeling of great awe he recognized the young Indians.

They called them to approach, and as they

"Where go?" asked the young brave whom the boys called Captain Jim.

"Fort Pierce," replied Tom.

"Ugh! Not much talk, much hurry," replied the Indian.

"What do you mean?" asked Tom. "Is there danger?"

"No pale-face left soon," replied the Indian laconically. "All killed."

"What will become of us, then?" said Jerry.

"No kill," replied the Indian. "Much go, heap quick."

The further conversation revealed to the boys the fact of some great danger which lay behind them, and into explanations of which the young Indian braves evidently were not inclined to enter; but it was clear that their warning was given because of their desire for the safety of their friends.

The young pioneers appreciated the motive, and made no further attempts to learn what the danger was, although they both were satisfied that some movement against Fort Mims was being planned, and the young braves urged them to leave the region as soon as possible for their own safety.

"I wonder if it's all true," said Tom.

"It's true enough," replied Jerry; "and it's just as true, too, that we've got to hurry on," and the march was at once resumed.

But a slight accident occurred soon, for the directions which Josiah had given Tom were forgotten, and in their haste they mistook their way, and soon came to the banks of Pine Log creek.

"I thought Fort Pierce was this side of the creek," said Jerry.

"So did I," replied Tom, "but I've forgotten every word Hunter Josiah has given me, and I don't know where the place is. But I'll tell you what to do. You stay here quietly on the bank, and I'll cross over the creek and explore a little. If I don't find anything, we'll keep on up the creek and see what we can do. I don't see how I ever could have made such a blunder, but that's just the condition of affairs, and there's nothing else to be done."

The party seated themselves on the bank, concealed as much as possible by the bushes that grew near the water, and watched Tom as he waded and swam across the creek and disappeared into the woods on the other side.

For an hour they waited on the bank in silence, keeping careful watch in every direction, alike afraid of some sudden attack upon themselves, and of some danger befalling the brother in the woods across the creek.

In the course of two hours Tom returned, declaring that he could find no signs of Fort Pierce. "I'm completely puzzled," he said, "and I don't know what to say or where to turn, but the only thing we can do is to keep on up the creek, and see what we can find."

Greatly dejected, the party resumed their march, and filled with sad forebodings again started on their search for Fort Pierce.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MASSACRE

THE fugitives were nearer Fort Pierce than they knew, for but a few moments had elapsed before they saw the walls of the strange-looking place rising before them.

An entrance was obtained, and, although the number of refugees here was far less than at Fort Mims, and the defence much weaker, they soon entered into the life of the place, and the boys took their part in the work of the garrison.

Two days filled with anxiety passed, and they were becoming somewhat accustomed to the monotony of the life there.

It was the afternoon watch, and both our boys were on guard at one of the gates. Suddenly their attention was arrested by the sight of two men approaching. As they came nearer they were impressed by their worn and weary appearance, and the evidence of some struggle through which they had passed.

"It's Hunter Josiah," said Tom excitedly. "It's Josiah Fletcher;" and he hailed his former companion and welcomed him within the fort.

The appearance of the two men was such as to indicate the suffering and excitement which recently had been theirs. For some time Josiah was unable to speak, but at last, when he had been served with food and rested a little, he began his story.

"It's all up with Fort Mims," said the hunter, "and there's hardly a soul left to tell the story. Only about a dozen have escaped with their lives."

"What! Out of the whole number?" said Jerry, aghast. "There must have been five hundred and fifty there when we left."

"So there were," replied the hunter, "but a dozen people are all that's got away, and one of those is Hester, a negro woman, and another is Socca, a friendly Indian. But if you'll be quiet I'll tell you the whole story. You know that Peter McQueen, after the battle of Burnt Corn creek, went down to Pensacola with all his followers. There the British stocked them up again, and I'm told offered as much as five dollars for every white man's scalp they would bring in. They were to do all the damage they could everywhere, and if they should happen to be defeated, they were to send their women and children down to Pensacola. Then, if the Americans should prove too much for them all, they explained to Peter how they had vessels enough there to carry them all to Havana.

"Well, McQueen started out with his followers, along with Josiah Francis and William Weatherford,

both of them half-breeds, you know, though I'll say for Weatherford that he's the best one I ever saw, if he did lead the attack against Fort Mims. He's a magnificent-looking man. He's tall and strong, and as decent as it's possible for such a man to be.

"Well, they had a great gathering of the Injuns up at Toockabatcha, and there they got ready to start out. You see the Spaniards wanted the trouble made up there, to draw off our men from Mobile."

"Why?" asked Jerry.

"Oh, the Spaniards have felt all along as if Mobile belonged to them, and they have wanted to take it again; but late in August, Weatherford had his men at the plantation of Zachariah McGirth. There he was lucky enough — or unlucky, if you look at it from our side — to seize some darkies, and from them he learned all about the state of things at Fort Mims. One of the darkies, by the way, escaped and came down to our fort, but Beasley wouldn't listen to him, and had him flogged just as he had the others."

Josiah stopped for a moment as if the story he was telling was almost too much for his feelings, rough hunter though he was. But in a moment he resumed and said, "The morning of the last of August was a day I shall always remember. It was hot and clear. The people inside the fort felt all right then, and Beasley even had sent a messenger to General Claiborne to give him word that he could hold the fort."

against any number of Injuns; but Beasley was too drunk to know much, and that explains much of the trouble, after all.

"I can see the women now as they were getting dinner ready. Some of the soldiers were hanging around doing nothing, or else playing cards, and some of them, I remember, were fast asleep on the ground. I should think there were a hundred youngsters, too, playing and dodging around among the cabins and tents, and some of the young fellows and the girls were dancing.

"I remember, too, how that poor negro stood there tied to the stake, with his back all bare for the flogging. The people, of course, didn't know it, but it was the most awful moment in their lives. You remember that ravine out beyond the eastern gate?"

"The one all covered over with trees, and in which everything grew so rank?" asked Jerry.

"Yes," replied Josiah. "Well, right there, there were a thousand Creek warriors hidden, and all ready to spring on the fort. They were nearly naked, and I never saw men so painted as they were. You see, they had some of the prophets along with them, and one or two of them I was lucky enough to pick off myself a little later. They had their faces all painted black, and their rods and medicine-bags were by their sides.

"Pretty quick the drum began to beat for dinner. I had noticed, just a little while before that, that the eastern gate was wide open, and that a whole lot of sand had drifted against it. It was so deep that the gate could not be shut, and I was just going to work to shovel it away myself, when I heard the drum beat for dinner.

"The Injuns knew something of the habits of the people at the fort; at least, I think they must have known, for they acted just as if the first tap was the signal they were waiting for. The first thing we knew there was the most awful yell you ever heard, and the whole gang of them came running through that open gate.

"Beasley was a fool, but I'll say for him he was not a coward, and the first thing he did was to run for the gate and try to close it. Some of his soldiers were quick-witted enough to rush to the port-holes, but I'll never forget to my dying day the sight of the women and children, and the men who didn't have any guns, as they all tried to crowd into the houses and cabins.

"The major was not quick enough. Before he could dig out the sand and shut the gate, the Injuns were at him. They used their clubs and tomahawks first, and dropped him, and then they rushed over his body into the new enclosure. Beasley had life enough left in him to crawl behind the gate, and though he

didn't live but a few minutes, as long as he could breathe he called out to his men to fight.

"The Injuns soon filled up the outer enclosure, and in the field beyond there was a great crowd of yelling savages. I remember noticing how the prophets began their dances; but one or two of them won't dance any more, that I'm sure of," and Josiah tapped his gun significantly.

"Five of their prophets dropped pretty quick, and the Injuns stopped for a moment and made as if they were going to clear out, but others crowded in, and with such yells and howls as you never heard, they began to fire through the port-holes.

"I remember that poor negro tied out there waiting for the lash that never was to fall on him, and for doing what would have been the best deed the fort ever had done for it; but he was shot among the very first. Captain Middleton had charge of the eastern side, but it didn't seem a minute before he was dead, and every man with him. Captain Jack, off on the south side, and his rifle company were fighting like demons. Lieutenant Randon was fighting from the port-holes on the west, and Captain Bailey, who had general charge after Beasley was killed, seemed to be everywhere at once. It was great work he did.

"But it was the toughest time I ever saw. You remember there were two enclosures, and how they were separated by a row of log pickets with port-

holes and an open gate. On one side were the women and the children, and a few soldiers and men who hadn't any guns; and on the other were those yelling savages.

"The only thing for the people inside the fort to do was to kill the savages or be killed by them, and pretty quick they got their second wind and their courage came back. They fired through the port-holes, and I tell you they made some pretty big holes among the savages; but it didn't seem to do much good, for others rushed in and took their places, and there were so many of them that a few losses didn't count.

"Even the boys and the old men were fighting, and I saw some women too who handled the guns like heroes. Bailey kept telling the people to hold on a little longer, and that the Injuns never fought very long at a time, and he tried to get some to go with him, and make a dash against them, but nobody seemed to want to follow him.

"The fight went on for three hours, and then just as Bailey had said, the Injuns began to get tired. They didn't howl as they had been doing, and were not firing as they had been before. The people shut up in the main fort began to think the end was coming, but they never were more mistaken in their lives.

"Weatherford, who knew pretty well the condition of things, was riding on one of the handsomest gray

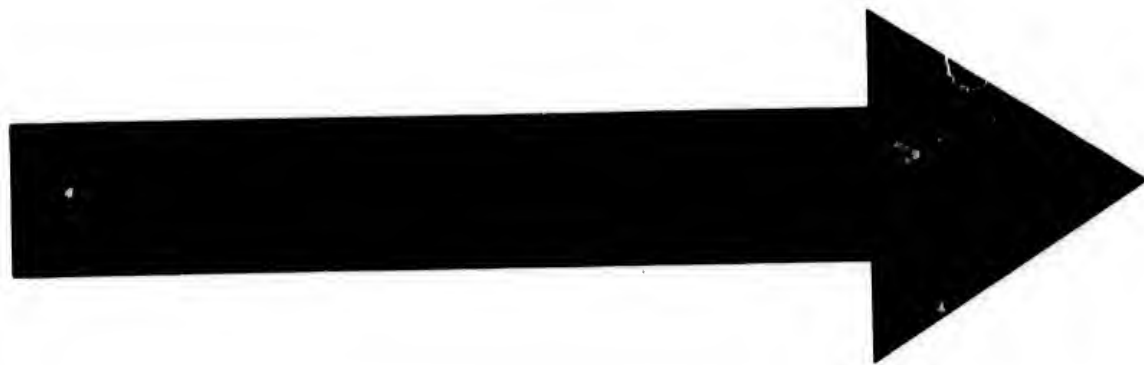
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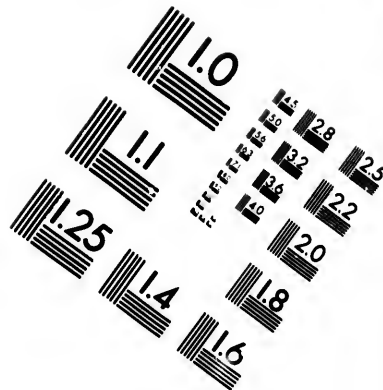
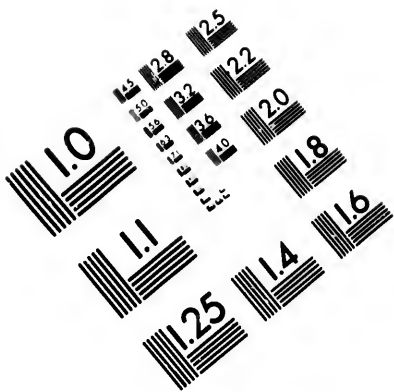
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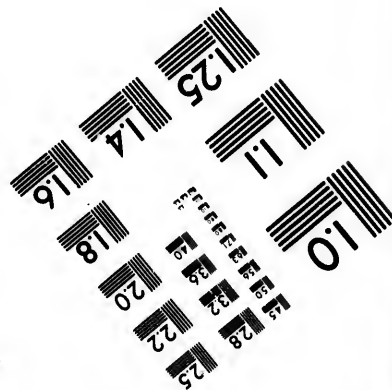
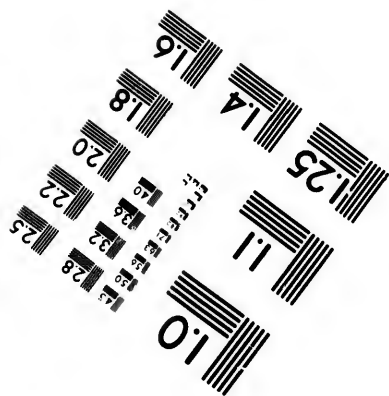
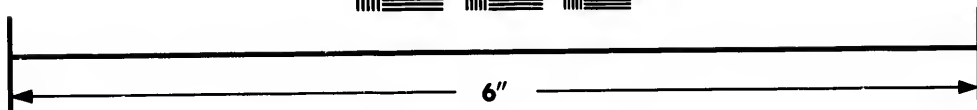
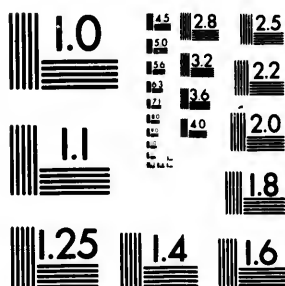
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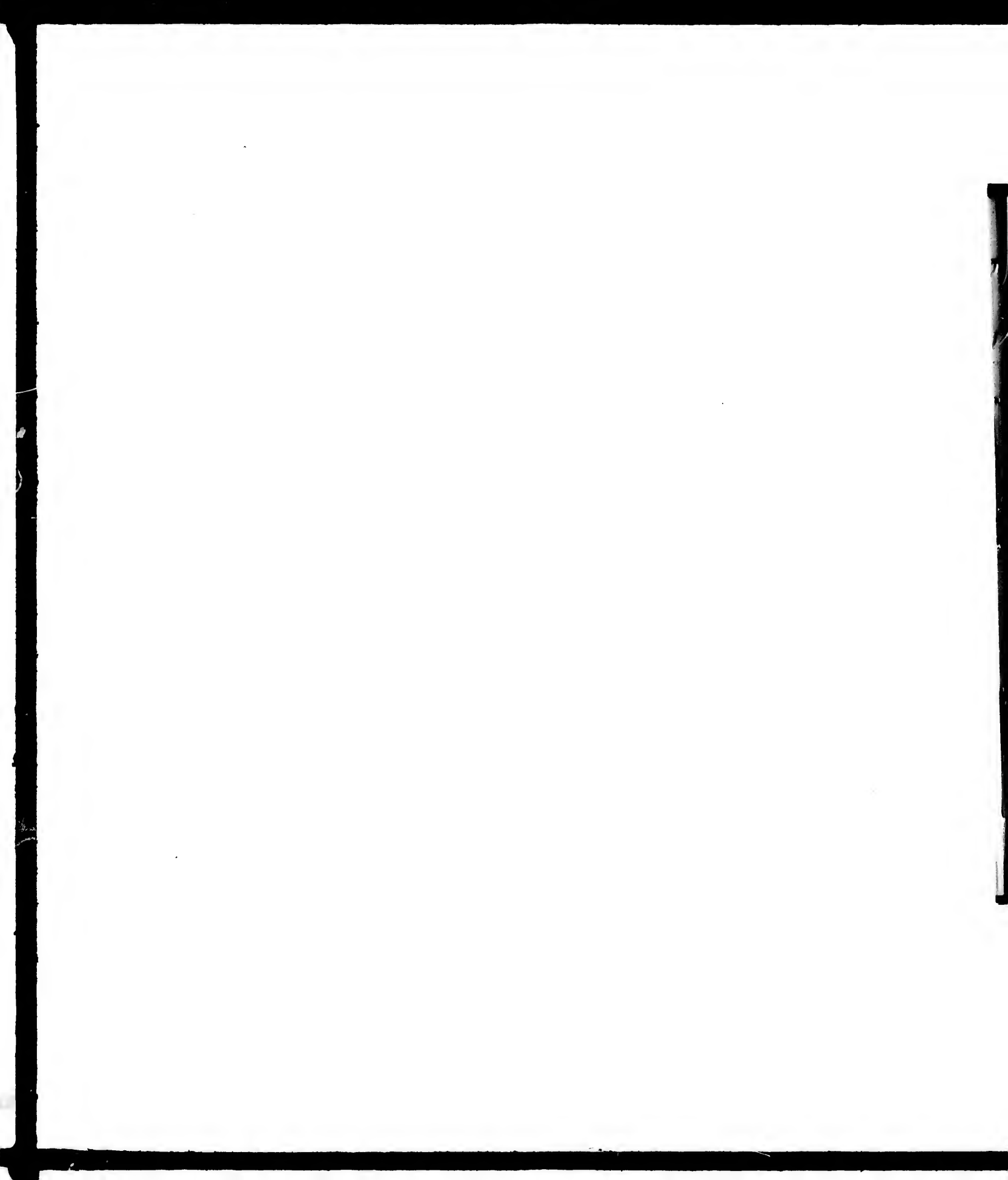
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horses I ever saw, and he took after the Injuns, who were beginning to move away, and pretty soon got them back again. At least I think it was Weatherford, though some said it wasn't; but everybody was excited, and couldn't tell very well just what was going on. The Injuns came back and went to fighting again, anyway. They yelled like demons as they came on together, and filled up the outer enclosure. Captain Bailey had some pretty good sharpshooters with him, and they kept them back a little, and I know I shot a good many of them myself; but Weatherford was watching everything, and pretty soon he got some of his men to begin to shoot burning arrows, and in a little while the fort was on fire, and some of the people started for some of the other buildings, but a good many stayed behind and were roasted right there.

"The fire rapidly spread to the other buildings, and I never shall forget the sight, when in a few minutes almost everything was roaring and crackling in the flames. You could hear the shrieks of the women and children, and that of course made matters a good deal worse.

"There was only one place left now, and that was Patrick's loom-house. You remember that was on the northern side and had been enclosed with extra strong pickets. There Bailey, and those who were left alive of his company, took their stand, and kept

shooting at the savages. These were now in the main fort, and everybody was trying to get to the loom-house; but lots of them were killed by the Injuns as they ran, and the children and the old people were trampled to death.

"I saw old Samuel Mims, while he was trying to run for this place, shot down, and while he was yet alive, an Injun, all covered with blood, cut off his scalp, and with a yell waved it in the air.

"The fire and the Injuns both together went at the loom-house then. They broke down the pickets and began to torture those who were inside. They took the little tots by their feet and knocked their brains out against the pickets. They ripped open lots of the people who were killed, and you could have seen them waving the scalps they had cut from the women, holding them up by their long hair.

"You see the women's scalps are worth five dollars apiece just as the men's are. The sight was too much for Weatherford. He tried to call off his men, and begged them to spare the women and the children, but they turned and began to shake their clubs at him, and I didn't know for a minute but it was all up with him; but he couldn't hold his men, and they soon left him, and the butchery went on.

"Four hundred out of the five hundred refugees at Fort Mims were dead by sunset. There was not a white woman or child that escaped. They had

blocked up every way out of the fort, and yet a dozen of us managed to cut our way through. Captain Bailey was with us, but he died out here by the swamp. That negro woman, Hester, though she had a ball in her breast, managed to get away, and I don't know what's become of her, though I think she has gone down the river. The Injuns didn't kill many of the darkies, for they kept them to be their slaves."

"How many of the Indians were killed?" asked Tom in a low voice.

"Four hundred, anyway, and I know that crowds were back in the morning trying to carry off their dead. Oh, it was a fearful sight, and while a good many of them have gone down to Pensacola or farther up the country, there are a lot hanging around here yet, and Fort Pierce will be the next spot attacked."

"Come on, then, Josiah," said Tom, "let's talk it over with the captain." And as a result of their interview, that very day all the inmates of the fort were packed into canoes and started down the river towards Mobile.

CHAPTER IX

THE RETURN

THE trip to Mobile was safely made in spite of the wily Indians, whose presence they more than once detected on their voyage. Here, however, there was great fear, and the news of the fearful massacre at Fort Mims spread dismay throughout that portion of the country. Many of the pioneers flocked to the various settlements, and left their families under the protection of the soldiers there, while they themselves took their guns and started forth for the field of action.

As soon as Tom and Jerry had seen that their family was comfortably settled, they, with Josiah and Martin, who also was among the dozen that had succeeded in making their escape from the fort, started once more for the scene of the massacre.

The cry for help went northward as well as elsewhere, and although the people in New York did not hear of the massacre until thirty-one days had passed, the sensation it produced there was not as marked as it ought to have been, because the recent victory of Perry on Lake Erie had produced a feeling of joy

throughout the nation, and the thoughts of all the people were turned with intense interest to the movements of General Harrison, who was then just about to enter Canada, and who soon retrieved the national misfortunes and disgraces of the preceding year at Detroit.

It was ten days after the massacre before our boys arrived at Fort Mims with Major Kennedy, who had been sent by General Claiborne to bury the dead. As they approached the place, it was a sad and horrible spectacle that presented itself. The air was filled with the buzzards who had come from miles around to feast on the bodies of the dead. Along with these there were many dogs who were not merely fighting among themselves, but contending with the buzzards for the foul banquet. The spectacle was almost too much even for those hardy soldiers to endure. Many of them were made sick by the sight, and a fearful cry for vengeance was raised by them all.

Not many of the bodies could be recognized, and they found none that had not been scalped. At once the brave men prepared for action, and soon two large pits were dug, into which they were to cast the bodies of the slain. Separate burial was impossible, and as very few of the bodies could be recognized, it was impossible to mark even the names of the slain upon a head-stone.

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Thirteen people only, it had been learned, had made their way through the enemy's lines, and now the soldiers were prepared to cover the remains of those who had been slain. Mutilated white men and women, along with the bodies of little children and those of Indians and negroes as well, were lying in one promiscuous mass. Some had been butchered in a manner that language cannot describe.

But after a time, even that sad labor was ended, and the ruins of the buildings and stockade were all that were left to show that there ever had been such a place as Fort Mims. The main buildings had been burned to ashes, and these were almost filled with bones. The plains and the adjoining woods were thickly strewn with the bodies of the dead. Every wooden building had been consumed except the block-house and a part of the pickets. It was a far different sight from the merry scene which greeted the boys on their first visit to the fort, when the inmates in their fancied security had been passing the time as if they were engaged in a picnic, or were on some expedition of pleasure.

When the work at last had been completed, and all the bones and bodies had been buried in the two pits which the men had dug, the desire for vengeance was intensified. The most intense excitement and alarm had spread now throughout all the southwest, and the powerful Indian prophet Francis was

especially busy in increasing the fear, and in inciting the victorious Indians to spread destruction throughout the region that lay between the Alabama and the Tombigbee rivers.

Every little stockade now was filled with the frightened refugees, and sickness and death carried off more than even the savage Indians themselves. The distress can scarcely be imagined. General Jackson, as we shall soon see, was now, as he had been for some time, busily engaged in his efforts to overcome the wily and treacherous Indians, and protect the scattered people from attacks. Settlers living far from the homes of others were first sought out by the savages, and many of them were slain long before the news had reached them of the massacre of Fort Mims, or they had been made aware that the Indian uprising had become anything like as general as it was afterward known to be.

Our boys, with Josiah, now planned to push their way northward to Fort Madison. There was nothing for them to do at home, and as they had provided for the safety of the family, they all three resolved that they would have a share in the efforts of the country to subdue the Indians and overcome the British and the Spaniards, who were even more active, though less open, in their movements than the Creeks.

Under the direct influence of Weatherford, helped on by these British and Spanish officers, the Indians

had become so active in that region, that General Flournoy, who, up to this time, had not allowed General Claiborne to act except on the defensive, soon was aroused to a sense of the necessity of some offensive measures, and not many days had passed before he ordered General Claiborne to take his army, and advance into the heart of the Creek country.

They were to defend the settlers, some of whom were trying to gather the crops that were yet in the field, and "to drive the enemy from the frontiers; to follow them up to their contiguous boundaries, and to kill, burn, and destroy all their negroes, houses, and cattle and other property that could not be conveniently brought to the depots."

This order, which was regarded at the time by many, especially by those in the North, as being unnecessarily cruel and blood-thirsty, the Georgia general justified by the conduct of Great Britain and the cruel deeds of her Indian allies.

General Claiborne at once acted, and, crossing the Tombigbee, began to scour the country on its eastern side; but although he met and scattered some of the Indian bands, it was impossible to bring them to an open battle anywhere.

Josiah Fletcher and the boys, as we have said, now began to push their way northward. Again and again they passed some home which had been burned to the

ground, and frequently found the bones of the women and children who had been massacred. Day after day they advanced, their food being scanty, and constantly seeing signs of their Indian enemies.

At last, one day as they were making their way through a thick forest, Josiah turned to the boys with his quiet word of warning, and at his gesture they quickly stepped behind the large trees among which they were passing.

"There's somebody coming," said Josiah, "and I've a dim suspicion that it's a body of Indians."

"How do you know?" asked Tom.

"I'm not sure," replied Josiah. "And I haven't time to explain to you now what it is that makes me suspicious. We shall soon see or hear some one, I'm positive. Yes, they're coming," repeated Josiah, in a whisper. "Keep out of sight, and it's possible that they may not strike our trail right away."

Yes, there they were in plain sight now, and Josiah's words were true. As the boys peered through the bushes they counted a party of ten Indians marching in single file after their custom, hideously painted, and evidently bent on no good errand. As they passed, the boys glanced at each other quickly when they recognized the young Indians, who brought up the rear of the procession, as Tecumseh's young braves.

As soon as they had passed out of sight, Josiah called the boys, and with all the speed they could

make, and yet as quietly as possible, they started on in the direction from which the Indians had come.

They had little expectation that their own trail would escape the notice of these warriors, but their only hope in any event lay in their ability to put as great a distance as possible between them and this party.

For an hour they passed on as rapidly as they could go and then stopped for a brief rest.

"There are no signs of them yet, are there, Josiah?" said Tom; but the hunter only shook his head in reply.

"I'm going to double on our trail, now," said he, "and we'll start right back in the way we came. It's going to be dark pretty soon, and our only chance of escaping these fiends will be to double on our tracks and try to throw them off the scent. I don't know that we can do it, but I'm so confident that they'll find us, or at least that they'll strike our trail, that the only thing that I want to do now is to get out of their way. It is not a very pleasant feeling to know that any moment you may be shot down, and that when you're least suspecting it a bullet, or some Injun arrow or tomahawk, may come flying through the air and take you off before you know it."

The dusk soon deepened into darkness. Our little party of three did not dare to kindle a fire, as this would only increase the certainty and the zeal of their Indian pursuers. Josiah constantly spoke of them as

though they were following, but as yet no sign of their presence had been found.

"Yes, they know we're here," said Josiah quietly, "and it's pretty largely a question now whether we'll get them, or they'll get us. I know about where we are. It's not very far from the river. We can hide here for the night, or at least for a part of it, and then if we can once arrive at the Alabama, I think I can throw these redskins off the track."

Hour after hour now passed, our little party remaining in the place they had chosen, eating some roasted acorns they had carried in their pockets, but kindling no fire and watchful of every side. As the darkness increased, their fears increased also. Every rustling leaf and every sigh of the wind startled them and made them at once attentive, for it was difficult to distinguish between the step of a crafty foe and the sounds among the trees.

It must have been near midnight when Josiah said, "I think it's late enough now for us to start. We'll make a trial of it, anyway, and if we can once find the river I think we can get away from these men."

"I don't see why you think they are following us. Surely they passed by, when we saw them, without giving a sign that they thought there was any such thing as a white man within hearing," said Jerry.

"That's all true enough," replied the hunter, "but when you have had as much experience as I with

these red varmints, you'll know that they won't pass over a trail made by three white men, when they have a band three times the size, without stopping to examine it pretty carefully, and most likely following it up; but we must not stay here to talk any more. I think I can find the way all right, and we want to keep close together." And the little party started out once more into the darkness.

Every step was made cautiously now, and even Josiah displayed an alarm that increased the fear of his young companions. They moved like the shadows and almost as silently. The river was not far distant, and if once they could gain its bank, they thought their safety would be assured.

CHAPTER X

THE SPEECH OF TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVE

THE progress which our party made was very slow. They planned to keep together, as they knew an attack, if one were to be made, would come suddenly and without a word of warning. They made frequent stops, and listened for any sounds of an approaching enemy.

But keen as Josiah Fletcher was, he perceived that he was mistaken as he led the party on. Either the frequent stops they made may have deceived him as to the distance they had covered, or it may have been that he was not as familiar with the region as he had boasted himself to be.

On they went in single file, the boys especially being fearful, and quiet enough to satisfy even the keen-scented hunter. This was new work for them, and hardy boys as they were, the scanty food, the long marches, and the constant presence of danger, worse because unseen, began to tell upon them.

At last, when three hours must have passed, they stopped for a moment, and Josiah said, "We'll have

to change our positions. Tom, you go ahead now, and Jerry, you take the middle and I'll follow up the rear. I don't see why it is we don't come to the river. It can't be far from here. I've always thought I could find my way to the Alabama blindfolded and in the darkest night if I was set down anywhere within a hundred miles of it; but I seem to be a little off in my calculations to-night, and I don't see why it is that I don't find any signs of the water."

The eyes of the boys were now somewhat accustomed to the darkness, and they had less difficulty in making their way through the forest. When the march was resumed they had gone but a short distance before they came to a little knoll, from which Tom, who was now in advance, was certain he could see the river. The water looked like silver. The light was dim, but it fell upon something in advance of the party which he thought must be the glimmering of the little waves.

"Yes, that's the river," said Josiah as he came up, "I'm sure of it. I didn't think we could be far out of the way. I've not travelled this region all my life to get lost for nothing when the worst pinch comes; but you wait here a bit while I go on and see what the prospect is."

The boys remained where they were and waited for him in silence. The scene about them was strangely

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beautiful. The mighty trees amongst which they stood, the high bank from which they looked out over the river, and the waters that went by them quietly and peacefully would naturally carry their thoughts far from the war and bloodshed. Indeed, there was little in their surroundings to remind them of the sad scenes through which they had passed, and the danger in which they then were.

They had not long to wait, however, for Josiah soon returned, and said, "I know where I am now. I've been here hundreds of times. I've stood on this little hill and watched the white men and the Injuns both, as they went up or down the river. I've seen the settlers push those rafts of theirs up the stream, and the little canoes of the Injuns float like leaves with the current. It looks as peaceful now as it ever did, but I shouldn't be surprised if our greatest danger came before we got across it; but if we're once on the other side we can snap our fingers at every redskin in that party. Come on, now," added Josiah quietly, "we'll go down this little hill and perhaps we'll find something in the bay down there we can use to help us cross over the river."

As they moved on down the hillside they suddenly came to a place where the bank was much steeper, and almost before they were aware all three were sliding down its side; but the surprise which came to them at their quickened movements was as nothing

compared with that which was theirs when they arrived at the base of the hill.

The gravel, sliding under their feet and rattling before them, the efforts they made to stop themselves, and the exclamations they uttered as they slipped and rolled down the bank, became as nothing to the yell which greeted them when they once more were enabled to stand upon their feet. As unexpectedly as if they had dropped from the skies, they had slipped into the very midst of a party of Indians, who had been camping under the shelter of the high bank.

There were a dozen or more of these who leaped to their feet at the sudden appearance of our friends, and the silence of the night was broken by their whoops and yells.

Almost as motionless as if they had been turned to stone, all three of our party stood and waited until the Indians surrounded them, and but a few moments had passed before their hands had been bound securely behind them, and their feet had been tied together, and they were placed near the smouldering fire as captives of this Indian band. This fire was now rekindled, and in the light of its flames the boys could see that it was the same party of Indians which had passed them on the preceding day, and of whom Josiah had been in such fear.

Jerry watched the Indians, and at once recognized Tecumseh's young braves among them. Indeed, one

THE SPEECH OF TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVE 101

of these soon took his stand before the boys, and with many a flourish of his tomahawk began to taunt them. He declared that in the years gone by he had been their friend, that together they had chased the bear and hunted the wolf. Those days were all past, now, declared young Captain Jim, for he was the speaker, and pale-face and redskin should never again clasp hands in token of friendship, or eat together in the same wigwam. "You kill my people," continued the young brave; "you die. All die. Many a scalp shall be on our belts." And he pointed proudly to more than one trophy, which he himself had taken. "I am a man!" shouted Captain Jim, his feelings now apparently mastering him. "The pale-faces have robbed us of our homes. For the last time they have killed our warriors, and they never shall kill again. Every pale-face's scalp shall be taken, and much gold shall the white fathers at Pensacola give to the Indian braves. I am a man! I am Tecumseh's young brave. These also are Tecumseh's young braves. We are Creeks. We are Red Sticks. We shall send the white men on their way to the happy hunting-ground. You, also, shall go that way, and not even your trail shall be left behind to mark the pathway by which you have gone." With an extra leap and flourish of the tomahawk, and a yell that almost curdled the blood of the listening boys, the young brave turned and left them.

Had Captain Jim turned against them? He had more than once proved himself to be their friend, and the boys were at a loss to understand the meaning of this tirade. They remembered how he had been nursed by their mother, and had vowed eternal friendship in return for their care; and they also remembered how tenacious every Indian was in holding to his friends, and cherishing his hatred toward his enemies; but their meditations were soon interrupted by the council which had been quickly called.

The warriors took their seats in the circle, but the young braves were silent now. Warrior after warrior arose and gave his opinion, and Josiah, after listening intently for a time, whispered to his companions, "It's going hard with us, boys. Your young braves are the worst of all. You'll believe, now, when it's too late, that no Indian in the world is to be trusted; but what they'll do, they'll do soon." And Josiah became silent again, as all three of the prisoners listened to the discussion which every moment became more and more animated. Even the guard who was near them became more attentive to the words that were spoken than he was to the prisoners under his care.

It was still dark, and as Josiah Fletcher rolled over on the ground he came close to the side of Tom, and a whisper in his ear informed him of the hunter's intention, and it was not long before he had gnawed all the thongs of deer-hide with which Tom's feet

THE SPEECH OF TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVE 103

were bound. The hunter's teeth were strong, and as their knives had been taken from them, he could use his jaws to a good advantage. But Tom found that his hands were not free, as the tough thongs with which they were tied were stronger, and Josiah could make but little impression upon them, with all his efforts.

The council had not yet broken up, although it was evident that it was near its close, and in a few minutes the warriors arose and departed. Captain Jim returned to the place before the prisoners which he had occupied, and began to harangue them again in louder tones than before.

"I am a man!" shouted Tecumseh's young brave. "Not a pale-faced dog shall be left alive. Every white man shall lose his scalp, and every Indian receive the gold penny from the white fathers at Pensacola. As soon as the sunlight comes, and you shall have light enough to show you your way, every one of you shall be sent to the land of the Great Spirit." And he turned and left them.

"I don't know what they're waiting for," said Josiah. "If they're going to burn us at the stake, or stand us up for a mark for their knives and tomahawks, it may be that they want to see a little better than they can now; but it's more'n likely that they are waiting for some others to join them. It looks pretty dark for us, but we won't give up, boys. It's going to be morning pretty soon, and it may be in

more senses than one that it's always the darkest just before the day. Tom's got his feet free, and it may be that he can help us out pretty soon, if we can only get the attention of the guard on something else. Hello!" he added, "it's one of Tecumseh's young braves who is going to be our guard now."

Captain Jim returned and took the place of the Indian who had not left them since their capture. He had nothing to say to the boys now, and a half-hour passed before they spoke to him.

Tom had little hope that he could appeal to him successfully, and yet he reviewed the experiences they had had together. He called to the mind of the young Indian the long illness he had had, and the tender care he had received at his hands in his father's house. He spoke of the fishing and hunting they had done together, and the lasting friendship they often had vowed for each other.

Captain Jim made no reply, and they were the more surprised when, a few minutes later, glancing quickly in the direction of the camp to see that he was not observed, he took a knife and cut the thongs that bound the prisoners, and then resumed his position as guard.

It was some time before the prisoners could overcome the numbness in their hands and feet, but, at last, with a sudden start they arose, and running swiftly to the river, plunged into the water.

THE SPEECH OF TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVE 105

A yell from the Indians followed them, and they could distinguish the voice of Tecumseh's young brave above them all. Shots were fired, but in the darkness they were not well aimed, and none took effect.

The beginning of their escape had been successfully made, and putting forth all their strength, all three began to swim as quietly, and yet as rapidly, as possible out into the river.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE ALABAMA

THE shouting which had occurred at the plunge of the escaping prisoners into the water was followed by a silence which each felt to be ominous. The three men were swimming rapidly and quietly, endeavoring to keep together.

"I don't think they had any canoes," said Josiah, "and yet it's not likely that they would have been where they were without something of the kind being within hailing distance. So I presume they'll get some before we're very far on our way."

But there was no disposition to talk very much, swimming as they were in the river, which now was cold, and whose waters thoroughly chilled them. It was late for alligators, and they had no fear of danger from that source. They swam on with all the speed they could make for several minutes more, and then as they relaxed their efforts for a moment, Josiah said, "Perhaps they have gone up the stream for the canoes. I don't like this silence. I'm sure they won't give up the chase without

making something of an effort to find us. There! I believe they're coming now," he added, as he saw a dark object sweeping rapidly down the river.

All of the escaping men were good swimmers, and had had abundance of practice which stood them in good stead in this hour of need, and again they redoubled their efforts and swam on and on, without halting for a rest. The river was wide here, and to the boys it seemed as if they never would gain a sight of the further shore in the darkness.

They stopped for a moment to consider the question whether they should keep on in the direction in which they were going and cross to the further shore, or whether when they had reached the middle of the river they should swim with the current and go down the stream. The latter course was chosen, and turning upon their backs they floated on the slow-moving water for several minutes; but the canoe, which Josiah felt certain he had seen, they all could see now, and their main effort was to keep themselves concealed and escape the notice of its occupants.

They swam now with their faces just above the water, and were nearer the shore than they had been. Indeed, they could see the bushes that lined the banks, but they could also hear the paddles which the Indians were using in the oncoming canoe. Swiftly and silently these made their way down the stream, and the boys were soon satisfied that there

were but two of them in pursuit; but in each canoe there was a torch, and as the first one approached them, they all silently sank into the water and remained beneath it as long as they could hold their breath. Rising again to the surface they saw that the first canoe had passed them, but the light of the flaming torch in the second also showed that the other was close by.

Again they sank into the water, but this time they were unable to remain as long as they had before. Indeed, their efforts had well-nigh used all the strength they had, and now, at the time when there was the greatest call for it, they all felt it would be lacking.

As Tom rose to the surface of the river the light of a torch fell full on his face. His first thought was that everything was lost now, and that all three of them were certain to be discovered. In the canoe he could see there were three Indians, two of whom were paddling, and one holding a gun and also grasping the torch. Tom never could understand how it was that when the light fell upon his face there had been no call in the canoe; but in a few moments it had passed, and all three of the prisoners were left in the darkness that seemed to be greater than before the glare of the torch had fallen on the water.

"We must make for the shore now as fast as we can," said Josiah; but he spoke in a labored manner,

and evidently had not much strength left. The chill of the water and the long distance they had come were telling more severely upon him than upon either of his younger companions.

"If we can once get ashore," said Jerry, "we can hide in those bushes, I'm sure; but those canoes are coming back again, and one of them is coming up along this shore, and the other is going along by the further bank."

The three were together now, and were uncertain in which direction to go or what movement to make. They were swimming slowly and quietly, and were in constant fear of the approaching canoe, but they were rejoiced when they saw that this was passing between them and the bank. Remaining as silent as possible in the water, where they were, they soon found that they had again escaped the notice of their pursuers, and this time with renewed hope they started for the shore.

Josiah was almost exhausted when they crawled out of the water and up on the bank, quickly concealing themselves behind the bushes. It was necessary for them to rest awhile, and they all were so chilled now by their wet clothing, and worn by the exertions which they had undergone, that the rest was acceptable to them all in spite of its disadvantages.

As soon as Josiah had recovered a little from his weakness, they all three started inland as rapidly as

they could go. They made their way through the bushes and over the fallen logs, often tripping over some trailing vine, and frequently stepping into some marshy spot that threw them forward on their faces and covered them with mud; but they heeded none of these things, so eager were they to put as great a distance as possible between them and the river, for they had concluded that the Indians would make a search only on the water, and that none of them had landed on their side of the river.

At last they thought they had gone far enough so that it would be safe for them to start a fire, which they all were eager to do, so thoroughly chilled and exhausted was each one. Josiah had a flint, and with this he soon was enabled to gain a spark that set fire to the dry leaves and branches they collected, and all three were quickly warming themselves by the flames.

"We'd better wait here until morning," said Josiah, "or, at least, until it's light enough for us to see our way, for we'll make better speed and save enough of our strength to more than make up for our loss of time."

It was scarcely daylight when they prepared to start on again, without any breakfast and with no gun in the party. Although they were almost worn out by their exertions, they had no thought of giving up their efforts to make their way to Fort Madison.

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yet thoroughly dry, they felt the dampness and the cold keenly; but resolutely they went on, stopping only for an occasional rest, and when, at last, the little stockade of Fort Madison rose before them, it was a welcome sight to them all.

A night's rest, and the warm food which was given them the next day, restored all the members of our party to their former strength and spirits, and they curiously began to examine the structure which was known as Fort Madison.

Captain Sam Dale had been in command here for some time, while he was recovering from the wound which he received in a recent engagement. He gave our boys a hearty welcome, and they were interested observers of the man and of his methods of dealing with his followers. He liked to boast of his Irish descent, although he himself was born in Rockbridge County, Virginia, and was at this time about forty-one years old. His father and mother had died when he was a boy, leaving him as the oldest of eight children, for whom he had not ceased to care, to the best of his ability, through all these years.

Away back in Washington's administration he had been active in holding the Creeks in check, and while a young man he was celebrated as an Indian fighter. Later he became a trader among the Creeks, and on his journeys he frequently acted as a guide to parties of emigrants who were entering into the Mississippi

territory. The uprising of the Creeks in the War of 1812 had again called him into the field, and among all the fighters there was none more bold or successful than he.

The return of Colonel Carson to Fort Madison enabled Captain Sam Dale to take up the work of driving the smaller bands of savages from the frontier, a work in which he had been engaged before, and in which he greatly delighted.

About thirty of the Mississippi men under Lieutenant Montgomery and about forty more from the southern part of Alabama, among whom were Tom and Jerry and their friend Josiah, went with him on the first expedition he made.

They started from the camp early one morning and marched south-easterly to the river, to a place where there was a ferry and where they knew that a friendly negro named Cæsar had two canoes concealed. Cæsar was found without any difficulty, and in the two canoes which he furnished the entire party crossed the river, and although their clothing was thin, and they were poorly equipped for enduring the cool weather, they marched on and concealed themselves for a night in the cane-brake. At daybreak they started up the river, five picked men being in each canoe, keeping abreast of the party which marched on the shore.

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"There are others on the shore, captain," called out Josiah, who had had a glimpse of several dusky forms moving about in the brake.

It was a delight to the boys to see the spirit of this brave Captain Sam Dale in the moment of danger. Perhaps the time he had been seeking for had come, and they were about to have such a skirmish as would satisfy even this warlike captain himself; but our boys had had so little experience in Indian warfare, and their hearts were still so filled with the memory of the terrible massacre which had occurred at Fort Mims, that it was with a good deal of fear and trembling they made ready to enter into the engagement with these dusky foes. They tried to conceal their feelings as best they could, and soon took their places in the ranks of those who were ordered to advance and make a charge against these prowling Indians.

CHAPTER XII

SAM DALE'S ENCOUNTER

THERE proved to be but a small body of Indians in the brake, and these did not wait for an assault, for after a very brief skirmish they all fled up the stream in their canoes, plying their paddles so rapidly that soon they were out of sight. The courage of the boys returned somewhat after this exhibition of bravery, or rather lack of bravery, displayed by a foe of whose power they had come to entertain very high opinions since the terrible massacre at Fort Mims.

Captain Dale then divided his followers into two divisions, and sent some across the river to the eastern side, where they followed the well-beaten trail, and the others, among whom were our boys and their hunter friend, journeyed on by the western side.

About half-past ten they arrived at Randon's Landing. Here a halt was called, as many signs of the presence of Indians were seen. Indeed, while they were deliberating, and before the scouts they had sent out returned, they saw a large canoe come floating down the river.

This canoe had been dug out of a huge cypress tree. It was between thirty and forty feet long, and at least four feet deep and three feet abeam.

"That's the kind of a canoe they use to carry corn down the river," said Josiah, as he watched the strange-looking craft approach.

"It's not carrying corn now," said one of the soldiers near him.

"No, that's so," said Josiah quickly; "it's got another kind of cargo entirely. Just look at those redskins. How many of them are there?"

"I've counted eleven on board," said the soldier, "and I never saw such hideously painted Indians before in my life."

In spite of the cold, the Indians were nearly naked, and in their war-paint the appearance they presented would have struck terror to the hearts of our party, if they had not so far outnumbered them.

"They're going to land over there in that canoe-brake," said Josiah. "I wonder if the captain will let them get away without a shot."

"He doesn't act that way," replied the soldier, as Captain Dale drew near, and shouting to all his men to follow, started on the run for the place where the Indians were about to land.

Captain Dale, when he arrived at the spot, quickly dropped one of the Indians with his gun, an example which Josiah Fletcher speedily followed. The other

Indians, surprised at the sudden attack, quickly began to back the great canoe out into the river, and the boys saw that there were three swimming on the side which was not exposed to the bullets, and all the others were lying flat on the bottom.

It was a stirring scene that followed, and one which displayed the qualities of the hardy Sam Dale to their best advantage. One of the Indian warriors, thinking when they had gone out some distance into the river that they must be safe now, raised his head and shouted for Weatherford. This was the first intimation our party had had that this noted chief was in that neighborhood, and his well-known name caused some of them to stop for a moment; but Captain Dale was undaunted by the call, and once more raising his gun to his shoulder sent a bullet into the brain of the Indian who had shouted.

He had been one of the three who had been guiding the canoe, and now deprived of his aid, the ungainly craft turned broadside to the current, and slowly began to float down the stream. The captain quickly ordered six of the men who were on the eastern bank to bring the canoes, as he had determined to use them in attacking the Indians in their huge craft.

As the little party approached the larger canoe, they were unsuspecting of what it contained, but as one of them looked over the edge he screamed as

though in great fear: "Live Indians! Back water, boys; back water."

His companions needed no further encouragement, and, as fast as they could, sent their canoes back towards the place from which they had come. This exhibition of cowardice was almost too much for the quick-tempered captain, but, without indulging in any of the sharp words which he was very prone to use, he shouted for Caesar to bring one of the two little canoes which he had furnished for them to use in crossing the river.

"The captain's getting into it and going to fight those men single-handed," said Josiah excitedly. "It's risky. It's a risky piece of business."

"No, he's not going alone," said Tom, who was following the movements with even greater interest than any of the others. "There are two other men going with him."

"There's Jeremiah Austill and James Smith, and I'm going too," shouted Josiah. He started to run towards the bank, but the light little craft would hold no more, and to Josiah's mortification the party of three who were in the canoe with Caesar started without him towards the boat of the Indians.

Caesar paddled until he had brought them within forty yards of their enemies, when Dale and his two companions rose to pour a volley into the great canoe; but all their guns missed fire, for they had fallen into

the water and the priming had been spoiled. It was but a few moments before the two canoes were side by side, the little one appearing much smaller in its contrast with the huge and awkward-appearing corn-craft in which the Indians were.

In tones which could easily be heard upon the shore, Sam Dale shouted for Cæsar to hold the two canoes together, and as his own gun had missed fire, he started to use it as a club, and placing one foot in his own canoe and the other in that of the enemy he commenced a furious contest. His companions now joined in the engagement, also clubbing with their muskets, and several of the Indians were brained by the infuriated men; but the current of the river was here very strong, and in spite of his efforts, Cæsar could not hold the boats together, and at last with a despairing cry he let go his hold and the two canoes drifted apart.

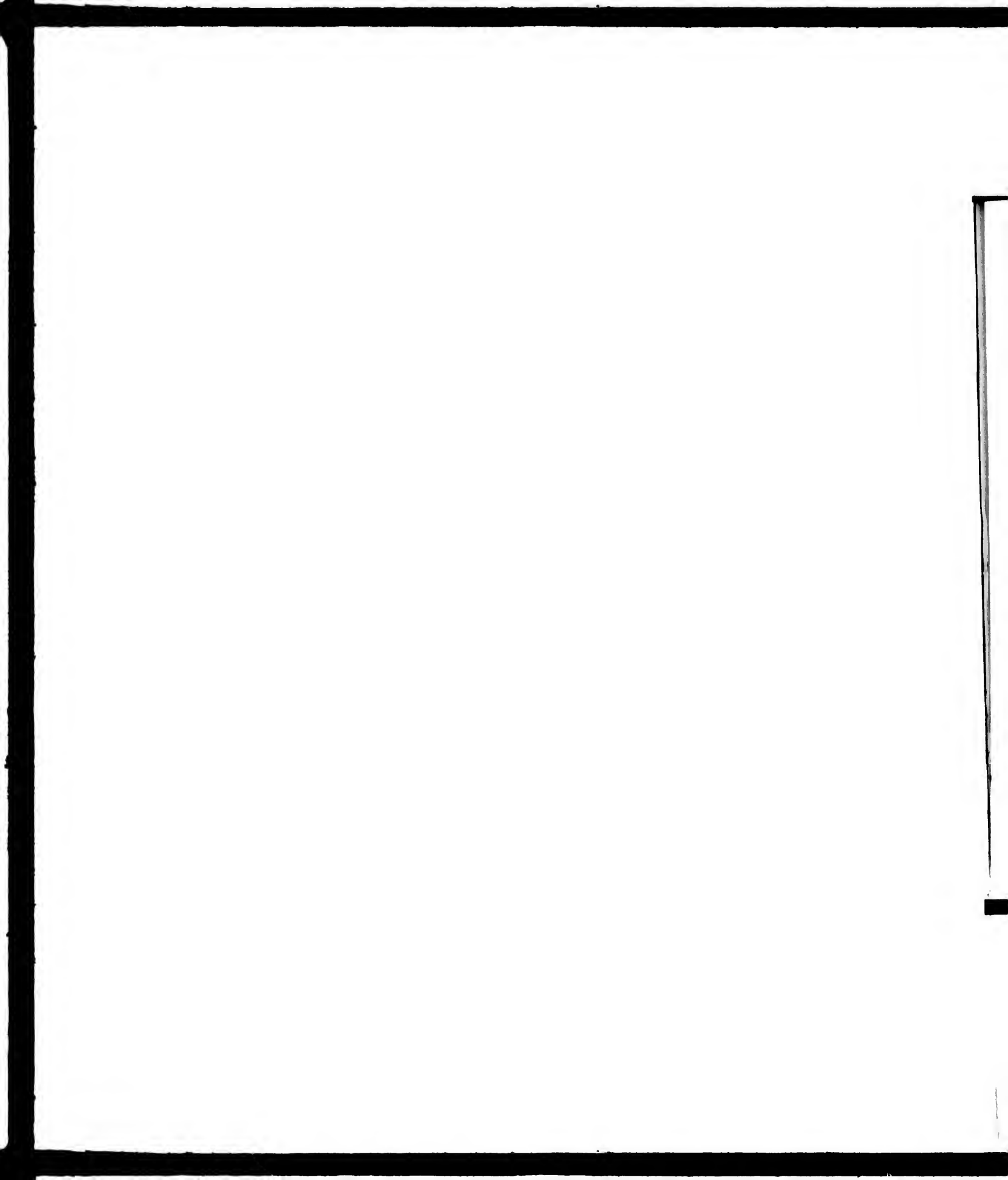
But Captain Sam Dale had been left alone in the canoe of the savages. One of the Indians was lying in the stern wounded so that he could not rise, and four others unharmed, and fierce and strong, faced him as he stood in the middle of the great canoe. Two of the warriors were lying dead at his feet. At the very moment when Dale had taken his stand, the Indian nearest to him raised his tomahawk, and directed a terrible blow at the head of the reckless but brave captain; but parrying this with the barrel of

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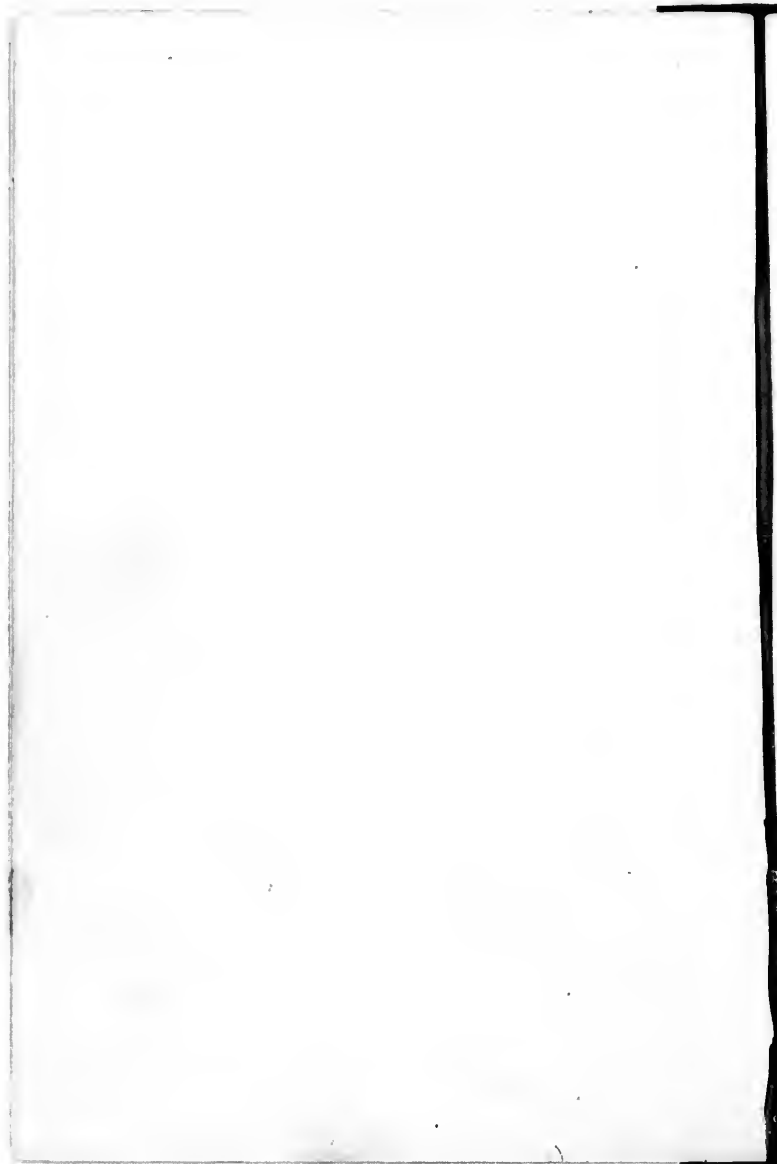
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“He drove his bayonet into the Indian’s heart.”
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his gun, with a movement of incredible swiftness he drove his bayonet into the Indian's heart.

The men who were on shore watched this contest with breathless interest, incapable of rendering any assistance, and afraid to shoot for fear of hitting their companion, whose movements were so rapid that they were almost unable to follow them. They saw another Indian instantly spring forward when his companion fell, and a groan went up from the watching men, who were afraid that Sam Dale would not be able to recover himself in time to meet this new onset; but Jeremiah Austill, although he was in the other canoe, had seen this movement, and bringing his own gun to his shoulder, which this time did not miss fire, sent a bullet into the Indian's heart, and he fell in the bottom of the canoe.

The third Indian then started for the undaunted Dale, with his tomahawk, but quick as he was the captain was quicker, and again his bayonet was driven into an Indian heart. Only one Indian was left now, and he was a famous wrestler. He had a powerful frame, and before this time had met Sam Dale and had many a friendly bout with him.

As the Indian arose and his keen glance met that of his foe, he shook himself, and giving a war-whoop that could have been heard for a long distance, shouted, "Big Sam, I am a man! I am a man! I am coming! Come on!" And once more giving a terrific

yell he bounded over his companions, lying dead in the bottom of the canoe, and with all his strength directed a furious blow at Dale's head with his rifle.

The captain tried to dodge it, but quick as he was he was only partially able to ward it off. The stock of the gun fell upon his shoulder and dislocated it. This, however, the captain did not realize until afterwards, for at that very moment, again he sent his fatal bayonet into the body of the Indian.

The Indian, who writhed and twisted as he tried to escape, shouted in tones which could be heard upon the bank, "Tarchachee is a man! He is not afraid to die!"

But even as he spoke he fell backward, and a shout of triumph rose from all the watchers as they thought the captain had won the victory over all four of his opponents; but the wounded Indian who had been lying in the stern of the canoe had recovered sufficiently now to try to use his gun which for several minutes he had been continually snapping, as he tried to shoot the brave man whom he could not reach. He was the only one left alive now in the canoe beside Sam Dale, who, worn as he was, quickly turned his attention to the living Indian.

"I am a warrior! I am a warrior!" shouted the wounded man, who realized the disadvantage at which he was, and the helplessness of any contest with the infuriated white man. "I am a warrior!" he repeated, as if it were his death song. "I am a warrior! I am not afraid to die!"

It was well for him that he had no fear of that event, for summoning all his strength Sam Dale once more drew back his bayonet, and driving it through the body of the Indian pinned him to the bottom of the canoe. Afterwards, when he was telling the story of his struggle and speaking of this last Indian whom he had slain, he said laconically, "He followed his four comrades to the land of spirits."

The strange contest was over, and although it had lasted only about ten minutes, it was one of the most remarkable personal combats on record during that war, or any other.

His men could see that Captain Dale appeared to be almost dazed after the struggle was finished, but he was recalled once more to the necessities of action by a number of his men who came running down to the bank and shouting, "Weatherford is coming! Weatherford is coming!"

The cry of the Indian, then, had not been for effect only. The noted half-breed must be near, and Captain Dale knew that he would not be alone, as he had a large number of followers who were filled with pride after their success at Fort Mims, and who were eager for another fray with the white men. Captain Sam knew that against a large number his own few followers would be in no condition to make a stand, and quickly summoning his entire party, he crossed the river and started again for Fort Madison.

CHAPTER XIII

ANDREW JACKSON

IN order to understand some of the portions of this story which will soon follow, it will be necessary for us at this time to stop and consider the life and some of the deeds of a man whose name thus far scarcely has been mentioned.

At the outbreak of the war there was living near Nashville, on a farm which was called the "hermitage," a man named Andrew Jackson. He was then in the prime of life, tall and strong, and to a remarkable degree held the confidence of his fellows.

His boyhood days had been full of privation and hardships, but he had come through them all successfully, and with a confidence and determination largely made by his very conflict with adverse surroundings. When but a lad he had had a share in the struggles of the colonies with Great Britain, but as a result of those very struggles he had been left without a relative on this side of the Atlantic.

He had had many quarrels, although it is but just to say that they seldom were of his seeking; but the

general opinion of the men of those times was not averse to personal encounters, and young Jackson, quick-tempered and fiery, was frequently in trouble. His marked trait of character, however, was his tenacity of purpose. If once he started on a line of action, it seemed as though nothing could turn him from it. It was the same quality that afterwards caused him to be known as "Old Hickory."

With his early days and struggles we have little to do in this story, although our readers would doubtless find them as interesting as the later events in his life; but when the War of 1812 was declared, no one in all the nation was more rejoiced than Andrew Jackson. To the British he owed the loss of his mother and brother. He had been a captive in their hands, and had not forgotten his own early sufferings. His feeling of revenge was natural, and the public sentiment of the times upheld him. Perhaps if he had been born fifty years later his heart might not have been so hard against the English, and he would have appreciated more fully all the elements that entered into the War of the Revolution.

Be that as it may, Andrew Jackson speedily had a force of twenty-five hundred volunteers who had declared that they would follow him wherever he would lead them. He tendered their services to the President, and these were accepted, although there was not felt to be any immediate demand for them. All the

interests of the government seemed to be centred upon the Northwest, but if President Madison could have known of the surrender of Detroit and the catastrophe at the River Raisin, and also of the hickory-like qualities of Andrew Jackson, doubtless he would have been glad to have sent him there in place of the inefficient leaders who were in command.

Jackson and his men chafed under the long delay that followed the acceptance of their offers, but on the first of November he received word from Washington, directing him to equip and organize fifteen hundred infantry and riflemen and go down to New Orleans to reinforce General Wilkinson, who then was in command there.

The men began to assemble early in December, 1812, some coming from places many miles distant, so strong was their desire to follow Jackson; but delay followed delay. The government seemed to think its full duty was done when it had given the order for the men to assemble. No funds had been provided from which they were to be paid, and arms and ammunition were very sparingly furnished.

But General Jackson was undismayed, and seemed to be roused the more by the very problems that faced him, and at last, on the thirty-first of December, 1812, he despatched Colonel Coffee with the mounted men for Natchez, and on the seventh of January he embarked his two infantry regiments in flat-boats on the

Cumberland, but it was not until the fifteenth of February that he himself arrived at Natchez, where he found Colonel Coffee waiting for him.

At this place a request came from General Wilkinson, who was at New Orleans, to halt his command and report his forces and instructions. Perhaps the latter was suspicious that it was the intention of Jackson to supersede him, but as there was no indication of an attack upon New Orleans, the Tennessee general at once obeyed his superior officer. The troops were placed in comfortable quarters, and a strong guard was detailed to protect the boats at Natchez.

But as the days passed, General Jackson became more and more impatient. Indeed, patience never had been one of the prominent elements in his character. One letter did not satisfy him, and he sent a second urging the War Department at Washington to employ his force on the northern frontier if there was nothing for them to do in the South; or if that was not expedient, that he should be authorized to take possession of Florida, where the British and Spaniards, as well as the Indians, were exceedingly troublesome. But before either letter arrived at Washington, he received an order from there to consider his force as dismissed, and to deliver all the public property he had in his possession to General Wilkinson.

Jackson was astounded; and officers and men

alike joined in denouncing General Armstrong, the Secretary of War. The anger increased daily, as they were unable to understand the motives for such cold-blooded work (for Jackson had received only a curt tender of thanks for his labors), until a letter came from General Wilkinson suggesting the recruiting of the regular service from his command.

General Jackson understood it all now. Wilkinson was jealous of the younger leader, and had tried to undermine him. How little Jackson cared for the order of his superiors can be judged from the fact that when a few days later the recruiting officer came, he was informed that if he tried to lead away a single volunteer from the corps, he would be drummed out of the camp.

And yet the brave general scarcely knew what to do. His followers were mostly young men, and now they were five hundred miles from home and were to be deprived of their arms and tents and provisions, and even the sick were to be left behind, uncared for and unattended.

He would not submit, and in no very choice language he wrote the Secretary of War just what he thought of his actions. General Armstrong received many puzzling letters during the war, but we have no doubt he understood very clearly what Andrew Jackson wrote him. He also wrote the President, and in part explained why he did not intend to obey his orders.

The energetic general at once acted, giving orders for wagons and supplies, and directing his followers to retain their arms. He also borrowed five thousand dollars on his own responsibility, and declared that not a man should be left behind "who had any life in him."

Two hundred miles of the return march lay through the country of the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and about all the expedition accomplished was to overawe these dusky warriors so that they did not dare to join in the uprising of the Creeks.

General Jackson could be as tender and gentle as he was brave, and on that long march he frequently gave up his horse to some sick soldier, and trudged along on foot in the midst of his men, whom he constantly cheered by his example and words.

But Andrew Jackson, true to his own character, had no thought of abandoning his part in this second struggle for national existence. Mortified though he was by his treatment, and angered by the actions of the War Department, the disasters to our cause in the Northwest stirred him far more than his own chagrin. On the eighth of April, while on his way homeward, he wrote the Secretary of War, offering to take his force into Canada. "I have a few standards," he wrote, "wearing the American eagle that I should be happy to place upon the ramparts of Malden."

About the middle of May the Tennessee volunteers

arrived at their homes, and General Jackson assumed their pay himself, though, after a long delay, he was reimbursed by Congress.

The Indian troubles did not allow the resolute general to remain long in retirement, and he was again called upon to lead a large body of troops into the Indian country. The alarm caused by the massacre at Fort Mims had aroused the entire region. The general government was too busy in its campaigns on the northern border to give much heed to this, and the local officers were called upon to act at once. The governor of Tennessee was authorized to call out thirty-five hundred men, in addition to the fifteen hundred required by the general government, and Andrew Jackson was immediately placed in command.

He directed a part of the cavalry to report at Huntsville by forced marches, and Colonel Coffee's division was soon sent on to Fort St. Stephen's, which was said to be threatened by the Indians. When, on the seventh of October, General Jackson arrived at Fayetteville, the place where his troops had gathered, ill in health and with his arm carried in a sling, he found a despatch from Colonel Coffee that he had marched with thirteen hundred men a short distance beyond Huntsville, and that the Creeks had divided their forces.

It had been thought that Mobile would be the

place the enemy would first attack, but relieved by the information he received, General Jackson prepared to strike a few quick and energetic blows, and to crush the rebellion in a brief time.

There were about four thousand of the Creek warriors, and they were surrounded by an American force large enough, if it had been commanded by one man like General Jackson, to have crushed them speedily. But here, as elsewhere, petty jealousies and rivalries entered, and delayed decisive action by the divisions they caused.

About one o'clock in the morning of the eleventh of October, a messenger arrived from Colonel Coffee with the information that the Red Sticks were rapidly approaching his position. General Jackson at once replied that he would be on the march in two hours to reinforce him.

It had been understood that General Coker would send supplies down the river to Ditto's Landing, and trusting his word, General Jackson at once put his troops under arms and started. They scarcely halted during the day, and by eight o'clock in the evening they had arrived at Huntsville. Here the rumors of an Indian attack were not believed, but he started on again the next day, and at evening had joined the forces of Colonel Coffee.

A great cry now arose for provisions. He sent Colonel Coffee with six hundred men against Black-

warrior's Town, a hundred miles south, while he waited for the supplies which did not come.

At last he resolved to advance, though he had scarcely a week's rations on hand. He could not abandon his enterprise, and though few men would have had the courage to go on in the face of such obstacles, he would not give up, and resolved that the friendly Creeks should not look in vain to him for aid. Famine threatened him, and yet he determined to advance to the Ten Islands, and then sweep down the country to the forks of the Coosa and Tullapoosa, where the Red Sticks were said to be gathering.

He again sent letters to those who had promised him supplies, and he himself promised to pay some of the private citizens if they would furnish his army with provisions.

Colonel Coffee returned from his expedition to Blackwarrior's Town, where he had not seen an Indian, but had taken three hundred bushels of corn. The provisions of his men were so nearly exhausted, that during the last four days of the march they had subsisted upon parched corn.

General Jackson established a depot for provisions at Fort Deposit, and again started inland. He marched with his troops in three columns, so that instantly they could be formed in order of battle if an attack should be made. On the march he despatched

two hundred cavalry, who destroyed the Indian village of Litlefutchee and collected some corn and a few beeves. Meanwhile his troops were reorganized, and the daring Colonel Coffee was made a general.

He at once showed his fitness for the new title by taking a thousand men and destroying the Indian town of Talluschatchee. One hundred and eighty-six of the enemy fell in this battle, and in the evening of the same day General Coffee arrived at the Ten Islands.

Among the prisoners taken was an Indian baby who was found clinging to his dead mother's breast. General Jackson at once cared for him, and afterwards made him a member of his own family, educating and caring for him as if he were his own son, and gave him the name of Lincoyer.

At Ten Islands the general established a post called Fort Strother, and the prisoners brought in by General Coffee were sent on to Huntsville. No supplies had yet been received, and the army scarcely knew each day what it would subsist upon the next. Again and again the general wrote begging for aid, but no replies were received.

On the seventh of November a runner arrived with the intelligence that a large body of Creeks were near Talladega, about thirty miles south, and were preparing to destroy the place.

Again General Jackson displayed the force of his unbroken will, and with twelve hundred infantry and

eight hundred cavalry he started for Talladega. He crossed the Coosa in the night, and on the evening of the eighth encamped within six miles of his destination. About midnight a friendly Indian chief named Chenubby arrived with word from General White that he could send no supplies, as he had been ordered farther up the Coosa. The last message was almost enough to crush any ordinary man, but Andrew Jackson did not give up, but pressed on towards Talladega.

A stirring engagement there took place, but who could withstand the determined man? The friendly Indians in the fort were released, and the hostiles fled, leaving three hundred of their warriors dead upon the field.

As soon as the victory was complete, the general at once started back for Fort Strother. The horses were nearly famished, and the men were suffering from hunger. Jackson, who was in the van of the returning troops, noticed some acorns on the ground as he passed. Hastily dismounting, he threw the bridle over his arm, and, having gathered a few of the nuts, sat down on the roots of a large tree to eat them. One of the soldiers, noticing him, approached, and demanded something to eat.

"I never turn away the hungry," said the general, "while I have anything to give them." He then offered the soldier some of the acorns, saying, "I will

cheerfully divide with you such food as I have." Mortified and ashamed, the soldier returned to his fellows, reporting the incident, and the murmurings at once ceased.

On the evening of the eleventh of November, the army arrived at Fort Strother, but were bitterly disappointed when they learned that almost no provisions had been sent.

But troubles increased. The desire for adventure on the part of the men had been satisfied by the engagements of Talluschatchee and Talladega. Starvation now threatened them, and soon the whole army was on the verge of mutiny.

General Jackson, having been informed that the militia regiments had determined to leave the camp, at once ordered the volunteer brigade under arms, and gave orders to fire if the militia did not return to their duty. This had the desired effect, and quiet again was restored for a time.

Having received word that positively supplies would soon reach the camp, Andrew Jackson made an eloquent and stirring appeal to his followers, promising that if provisions did not arrive within two days, he himself would lead them back where there was plenty.

They consented to remain; but the general knew he could not restrain them long now, and when the two days had passed, still the supplies did not come. One regiment left the camp; but when General Jackson

declared that if two men would stay by him that he would remain in the camp, one hundred and nine men were found who promised to remain also.

He was confident, however, that the supplies were near, and he joined the departing militia, making the one condition, that if they should meet the supply party, they all would return with him to the camp.

Within ten or twelve miles of the fort they met a party with one hundred and fifty beeves. The column at once halted, the cattle were knocked down, and the half-famished men had such a repast as they had not known for weeks.

When, however, the order to return was given, none obeyed. One company had already started, and the angry general, with a few men, dashed ahead of them and declared he would shoot the first one who endeavored to pass him.

These men then fell back, but the others were not so easily moved. The general argued and pleaded, but without avail. Finally, snatching a musket from a soldier he threw it across the neck of his horse, and declared he would shoot the first man who moved a single step in advance.

For several minutes not a word was uttered. At length the men gave way before the iron will and resolute daring of their leader, and in a short time were on their way back to Fort Strother. If they had known that the musket was out of order, and

the general's arm too weak to hold it, they might not have been so quickly cowed.

Such was the daring of Andrew Jackson. These deeds we have recorded were slight compared with those that followed; but for the account of them we must wait for some of the chapters to follow. This outline of his work, however, was necessary before we went on, and will help to explain many of the incidents and adventures that will be related further on in our story.

CHAPTER XIV

TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVES AGAIN

FOR fifteen days the boys remained at Fort Madison, where Captain Dale and all his party arrived safely. The danger in the country, however, was increasing every moment. The whole region seemed to be infested with the savage and treacherous foes. Almost every day information would be brought to the fort that the family of some lone soldier had been murdered; and many refugees were daily received. All of them realized now that the time had come for decisive action, and nearly all the available men were in the service.

When about two weeks had passed, our boys, with their friend Josiah Fletcher, left Fort Madison to be the bearers of a message to General Claiborne. They knew that a long march was before them, and as well equipped as the scanty condition of the fort warranted, they started forth early one morning on their way to the camp of Claiborne.

They crossed the river in a canoe which Cæsar gave them, and near the farther shore began to go down

the stream. "I wonder why so many of the darkies are called Cæsar," said Tom.

"They seem to like the name, I reckon," replied the hunter. "I don't know any other reason. Though this Cæsar here that we've just left behind us is a good deal better off than that poor fellow was who had the same name at Fort Mims. Why, I can hear the fellow's screeches now, and sometimes when I wake up in the night, the picture of him tied as he was to the whipping-post, and his back all bare and ready for the lash, comes up before me. And to think that all he was receiving that whipping for, was just because he had told the truth, and insisted that what he had reported he really had seen."

The boys had planned to visit their home, which was not far down the river, and in a short time they drew near the familiar spot. Nothing is more forlorn than a deserted house, and especially is this true when the house is one's own home. The air of desolation is then doubly marked. They drew their canoe up on the bank among the bushes, and approached the house. They came quietly and carefully, as none of them knew what occupants the rude building might have now.

"There's our horse," said Jerry. "Old Nick wouldn't leave, would he?"

"I reckoned somebody would have carried him off before this. It looks as though there was no one here," said Tom.

"I don't believe any one has been here," said Josiah; and when all three entered the house, they could find no evidence of any one having visited the place during their absence.

"It's a little tough to come back to your own home," said Jerry, "and find everything as blank as it is here."

"Yes, but not half so bad," said Josiah, "as what we've found at so many of these houses, where the settlers insisted on staying until it was too late for them to get away."

"I wonder," said Tom, "how many murdered men, women, and children we've found!"

"Too many, too many," said Josiah, as he busied himself in making preparations for their supper.

They all remained there during the night, and Josiah was astir in the morning long before either of the boys was awake. He had gone outside the house, and was carefully examining all the signs about the place, when he suddenly stopped and listened. His attention was fastened upon a little canoe which he saw coming very rapidly down the river, and he soon was able to perceive that three men were in it. Josiah stood and watched the fleet little craft, endeavoring to make out what it was and who were paddling it, but all he could determine was that the occupants were Indians and that the place the canoe was making for was the very one on which he himself stood.

With an exclamation of disgust, he quickly turned and entered the house, and aroused both the sleeping boys.

They all were startled as they came out into the open air, and watched the swiftly approaching canoe. All three of the Indians were paddling, and the little craft, driven by the force of their strokes, was making rapid headway towards the shore.

"We want to get out of this, boys," said Josiah. "It may be they're alone, and then maybe they're not alone. Let's get behind these trees, or the horse-barn, anyway," a suggestion which the boys speedily followed.

Nearer and nearer they could see that the canoe was coming, and Josiah said, "We can pick them off now. Each of you boys can take one, and perhaps you'll be lucky enough to hit something, and I'll take the third."

"We don't want to shoot yet," said Tom. "We don't know whether they're friendly Indians or not. The way in which they're coming shows they're coming for some purpose, and they're in a hurry about it, too. They look to me as if they were trying to get away from somebody as much as anything."

Again and again Josiah brought his gun to his shoulder, declaring that the only good Indian was a dead Indian, but at the request of the boys each time he gave up his project.

"Let's go into the house, boys," said Josiah, after a few moments had passed. "We can get in without being seen from the river, and if we have to fight for our lives, we can do it better there than we can anywhere else."

"Here goes, then," said Jerry, as he led the way, and soon all three were inside the house, and the door had been barred in such a manner that it could not be easily opened from without.

"No other canoe is in sight," said Jerry, as they took their positions where they could watch the movements of the little boat, "and I don't believe there's any one else with them. We'll wait and see what they're up to."

"They're almost up to the shore now, and they're going to land," said Josiah; "that's what they're going to do. It would have been a good deal better to have dropped them in their canoe, and saved them all this trouble, to say nothing of ourselves."

Tom made no reply, for with renewed interest he was watching the approaching Indians.

"Jerry, do you see who that is?" he said to his brother in a low voice.

"Why, it's Tecumseh's young braves," replied Jerry. "Captain Jim has a strut like a turkey gobbler. I don't believe he has got over the glory yet that he won at the butchery at Mims."

"Keep quiet," said his brother. "Let's see what

they're going to do. They may be going to set fire to the house, to pay us for the time when we got away from them."

Josiah again volunteered his advice that they should waste no time, and shoot every one of the three Indians; but the boys were unwilling to do this, as they had a good deal of curiosity concerning the visit of the young warriors, and wanted to learn what object they had in coming.

As soon as the canoe had been concealed among the bushes on the bank, the three young Indians turned and advanced towards the house, holding out the palms of their hands. Each of them carried a gun, in addition to the bow and quiver, which they never had discarded.

"They're on a peaceful errand this time," said Tom, "and it's a good thing we didn't shoot. It may be they have got a message for us, and have learned that we are here. I'm going to step outside and see, at any rate." And he opened the door and motioned for the young Indians to approach. The surprise which their visit had aroused was as nothing compared with the message which they gave the party.

"They've left the fighters," said Tom, as he returned. "They've gone over to our side."

"What!" said Jerry. "Aren't they Tecumseh's young braves any more?"

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"Tecumseh's young braves," muttered Captain Jim, with a special emphasis on the first word. "No Weatherford's. No Red Eagle's. No Hoponika Futsahia's."

They were not inclined to talk very much, and yet the reason for their coming was soon learned. Briefly stated, the course of events which led up to this action on the part of Tecumseh's young braves was this: Brigadier-General John Floyd, with nine hundred and fifty bold followers, who were guided by Mordecai, a Jew trader whom our boys already knew, had entered the hostile region, aroused by the cry for help that had gone abroad after the massacre at Fort Mims.

General Floyd crossed the Chattahoochee, and with his forces pushed steadily westward towards the Tallapoosa, where he had been informed that a large number of the hostile Indians had been assembled at the Indian village of Auttose. This village was supposed to be "holy ground," and the prophets had told their superstitious followers that no white man ever could set foot on that ground and live.

This town was on the left bank of the Tallapoosa, about twenty miles above the place where it joined the Coosa. On the 28th of November General Floyd encamped within a few miles of this spot, and shortly after midnight started with all his men to attack the place.

At dawn he arrived before the town, and arranged his troops in three columns for battle. The friendly Indians were with him, led by a half-breed named William Mackintosh, and a chief called the "Mad Dog's Son."

General Floyd had intended to surround the village, but, when the morning light came, he saw that there were two villages instead of one, and it was necessary for him at once to change the position of his forces. One town was about one hundred rods below the other, and to this lower village one of the three companies was sent, and the attack was begun.

The battle at once became general, the Indians appearing at nearly every point and fighting bravely for a time; but the boom of the heavy artillery which General Floyd had brought with him and the furious bayonet charges so frightened them that they turned and fled to the cane-covered caves which had been cut in the bluffs of the river.

The events which followed were a source of shame to all the Americans, and the only excuse which can be offered was the anger and fear which had been roused by the massacre at Fort Mims, and which led the soldiers on to harsher measures than otherwise would have been used.

Four hundred of the Indian dwellings, some of which were large and contained many valuable articles, were fired, and the dismayed Indians were hunted and

butchered in almost as savage a manner as the whites had been at Fort Mims.

Fully two hundred of the Indians were murdered, while Floyd lost only eleven killed and fifty-four wounded. He had marched one hundred and twenty miles in seven days, and as Auttose was sixty miles from any depot of provisions, he at once hastened back to Fort Mitchell. His returning forces were harrassed somewhat by some desperate survivors of Auttose, but no great damage was done.

But the loss of "holy ground" had proven too much for the faith of Tecumseh's young braves. They had implicitly believed their prophets when they had declared that no white man could set foot on that ground and live; but the white men had fared better than the Indians there, and thoroughly disgusted now, the young braves had felt a reaction, and had given up all hope for the success of their cause.

They had resolved that, before it was too late, they would enter the service of the Americans, convinced now that all their efforts against them would be fruitless. In some way, which they did not explain to the boys, they had learned of their presence at their old home, and their former feeling of friendship returning, they had resolved to seek them there.

Their coming was eagerly welcomed by the boys, who were glad of their aid, and rejoiced to have them on their own side; but Josiah did not share in the

feelings of his young companions. He was absolutely without faith in an Indian's honesty, and now was keenly suspicious of these young warriors who recently had been so active on the other side.

Whether the confidence of the boys was well placed or not the following chapters of this story will show; but the young braves at once felt that in Tom and Jerry they had strong friends. In Josiah, however, they saw a suspicion which they cordially returned with good measure.

CHAPTER XV

THE SEARCH FOR JOSIAH

THE addition of three members to our party not merely increased its size, but its perils as well. If danger arose it would be much more difficult for them to conceal themselves, and the presence of six men would be far more likely to be discovered than of three. They all were tough and hardy, however, accustomed to the presence of danger, and a tramp of many miles through the forest had no fears for them. Josiah, indeed, suspicious of Tecumseh's young braves, was continually watchful of them, but in the hearts of the boys there was no such feeling concerning them.

They had known them for a long time, and while they were as fickle as the Indians are proverbially known to be, and had been thoroughly frightened in the overthrow of the place which they had considered "holy ground," yet they were no cowards. The boys were satisfied that their presence would increase their strength and in many ways might serve to avert the dangers of the march.

Early in the morning they started out across the country, trusting to the knowledge which Josiah had of the way, and relying upon the young braves for their assistance in procuring food. While they all carried guns, they were almost afraid to use them, as the sound of a shot at any time might bring upon them an attack from concealed foes.

All through the day they marched, following the Indian custom of single file, and without any adventures of interest arrived at a place where they decided to pass the night. In the morning they resumed their journey, but they had gone but a short distance when Captain Jim raised his hand in a warning manner, and brought them all to a halt.

"What is it, Jim?" asked Jerry.

"Smoke," said the Indian briefly.

But the boys were not able to see it, and even Josiah was not certain, accustomed as his eyes were to the scenes of the woods, that he could make out what the young Indian declared he had seen. But Captain Jim, quiet and impassive, was still positive, and added the words, "Not Indian smoke; white man's smoke."

Were these men the young braves declared to be near, friends or foes? The question could not be settled where they then were, and, indeed, none of them as yet had seen the indications of the presence of the white men of which the young brave appeared to be

so positive. It was finally decided that Captain Jim should go and make such discoveries as he could. He at once expressed his willingness to do this, and declared that the smoke indicated that the camp of the strangers was distant not more than a half-hour's journey.

All six pushed on for a part of the way, and then five of them remained behind, while the young Indian went in advance to make a closer observation of the smoke before them. They all could see it now, and the sight had strengthened the confidence they had in the Indian's faithfulness, as well as in the keenness of his vision.

They waited impatiently for the young brave, remaining quietly in the place they had chosen, and their patience was rewarded in a brief time by the return of their companion.

Three white men and three Indians, Captain Jim declared to be in the camp ahead of them, indicating the number by the fingers of his hand. Of the white men he declared one was a pale-face and two were black, by which they understood that the party consisted of three Indians, one British officer, and two Spaniards, for the swarthy complexion of the last named frequently led the Indians to call them the "dark pale-faces."

Captain Jim also declared they were not friends, and his opinion was not changed by anything Josiah

could say to him. The hunter was still sceptical of the young Indian's ability and worth, and he declared that he was going on to make an observation for himself of the party in advance of them. He would not listen to any of the remonstrances of his companions, and immediately leaving them started alone.

A half hour, as much as the young brave had consumed in his journey, passed, and Josiah did not return. Another half hour passed and still there were no signs of the missing hunter. When another hour also had gone, they began to feel uneasy about him, and fearful that he had fallen into some trouble.

"Why doesn't he come?" said Jerry, with considerable irritation. "If the redskins are near us, we don't want to stay here any longer than we have to, and he ought not to keep us waiting."

"It may be he doesn't come because he can't come," said Tom; but Captain Jim at once arose and declared that he would go and see what had befallen the "white hunter."

The young Indian was not ignorant of the suspicion with which Josiah regarded him, and while he had entered into no conversation with him and made no efforts to win his favor, his proposal was eagerly hailed by the boys, as they knew the old hunter would appreciate the efforts in his behalf, and perhaps be drawn more closely to him if he was in any difficulty.

In less time than he had consumed before, the young Indian made his observations and was back in the camp; but as he entered he gave no sign of his having seen Josiah and said no word about his journey.

"Did you see him?" asked Tom; but Captain Jim was silent for a few moments, and then said briefly, "Gone."

"He's gone? What do you mean, Josiah or those men you saw?" asked Jerry.

"All gone," replied the Indian. "White hunter gone, too."

"Where have they gone?" asked Tom.

"Same way we go," replied the Indian. "White hunter go as a prisoner."

"Prisoner!" said both boys together. "How do you know?"

Captain Jim was not inclined to explain the methods by which he had arrived at his information, except to repeat his words that the entire party had left the camp, and that he knew Josiah had been a prisoner because he marched in the middle of the group. The Indians had gone in front of him, and the white men had marched behind. All this he had learned from his study of the trail they had left. He also declared that Josiah's gun had been taken away from him, and that he thought his hands were bound behind him, but of this latter point he was not positive.

Greatly disturbed, the party began to discuss what should be done now, and as they talked, the time rapidly passed before they arrived at a decision. Should they go for help or should they abandon Josiah and trust him to escape alone from his captors?

"No," said Jerry, "I know that Josiah wouldn't have left us if we'd been taken that way, and while I think if he really has been taken prisoner it must have been his own fault, for he had no business to distrust Captain Jim's word; at the same time, if he is in trouble we're the ones that ought to help him out, especially if they're going in the same direction as we are."

Captain Jim thoroughly approved of the proposition of his friend, and urged them to follow the party until night, and then to attempt the rescue of Josiah. As soon as this decision had been made, they started at once for the camp which the other party had recently abandoned. From this place they were compelled to allow the young Indians to take the lead, as the boys had no such ability as they in discovering or following the trail Josiah's captors had left behind them.

They marched as rapidly as possible and made what they considered very good time, but the entire day was consumed, and as yet they had not come upon any immediate traces of the party they were following.

Josiah's captors evidently had not gone in a direct way, and frequently had turned in a direction opposite to the one they supposed they had taken; but they followed them as well as they could, and at night came near to Randon's creek. Here all signs of the other party were lost, and Captain Jim declared that they must have crossed to the other side. But how had they done this? There were no canoes anywhere to be seen, and the creek was too deep for them to have waded across it, and they did not believe that all would have been tempted to swim in such cold water.

A delay of an hour occurred at the bank of this creek, as not all of the Indians could swim and the boys were unwilling to leave any of them behind. The three young braves were positive that the other party could not be far in advance now, and were eager to cross to the other side. At last this crossing was made by means of a log they found farther up the stream, and which they brought down for the use of the Indians.

It did not take long, when once they were on the opposite bank, to find again the trail they had lost for a time, and they pushed on as rapidly and as quietly as they were able. At last when they stopped to rest, and to eat the few roasted acorns they had in their pockets, it was decided that Captain Jim, with one of the Indian braves, should go on in advance for a time,

and then return and report to the others what he discovered. He appeared to be so confident that they were near the other party now, that the boys gave their consent, having far more confidence in his ability than in their own.

Less than an hour had passed before Captain Jim returned and brought word that the party had gone into camp about a mile in advance of them. The three Indians and two Spaniards, together with the British soldier, were still there, he reported, but he had not been able to see anything of Josiah, although he was confident that he was with them, as he had found traces of his footprints on the trail.

What should now be done? Should they wait till the darkness came on and make an attack upon the others when they were unsuspecting of the presence of their pursuers? This was Captain Jim's plan, and he expressed great confidence in their ability to "get the white hunter."

It was quickly decided that they would go on for a part of the distance between them and the other camp, at any rate, and they began to advance carefully. No cat could have been more quiet than they as they marched on through the woods, taking great pains to avoid stepping on any dead branch, or upon anything that would make the least sound. Their progress necessarily was slow, and frequently they stopped to listen.

Captain Jim was positive that the other party was not suspicious of their presence, and consequently he was much bolder than the boys and urged them to advance more rapidly. At last they all could catch an occasional gleam of the camp fire, and knew that they were coming near the place they were seeking.

It was not like Indians to build such a fire as they saw before them, and they knew that the white men must have kindled it. They stopped for a few moments to rest and to deliberate about their further actions. They made no fire themselves, as they knew that, although the wind was blowing in their direction, the other Indians would be quick to see it; but when an hour had passed they decided to start on again, and increasing their carefulness they made their way silently nearer the camp and soon arrived at a place from which they could look down upon the scene before them.

The boys were excited now, but the young Indians were as calm as when they had first started on the march. None of the party spoke, and all stood for some minutes gazing down upon the strange sight which the camp before them presented.

CHAPTER XVI

JOSIAH'S MESSAGE

THE sight upon which the boys looked stirred their hearts and inspired something of a feeling of fear as well. Near the fire the three white men lay fast asleep. They could see their forms and faces, and the flickering light, throwing fantastic shadows over them and over the ground, produced an effect as weird as it was strange. Two of the Indians also were asleep, and one sat with his back against a tree, keeping watch over Josiah, who was lying near him on the ground.

They could see that his feet and hands were bound, and apparently he also was asleep. Evidently none of them had any suspicions of the presence of enemies, and they at once concluded that Josiah had not informed them of the proximity of the party of which he had been a member.

In their eagerness the boys advanced nearer the fire, and Tom, who now was greatly excited, stepping upon a stone which rolled under his feet was thrown forward for a moment, and in endeavoring to recover

himself, made a noise which at once aroused all the sleeping men.

The Indian who was acting as guard at once jumped to his feet, and threw over the smouldering fire a lot of wood which for a time deadened the flame.

Tom and Jerry were undecided for a moment as to what was best to be done. Should they shoot? They could hardly bring themselves to the point of shooting men who were helpless before them. It was true their own hearts had been greatly moved by the fiendish work of the Indians at Fort Mims, but this feeling had been more than balanced by the murders which the white men had committed at Auttose. Yet they were not at all sentimental. They knew that in war harsh measures at times were not only necessary to protect themselves, but to gain an advantage over their enemies. If they were not prompt in their own actions, they were well aware that all the advantage would be with the other side.

While the boys were deliberating about these matters, and hesitating as to their course of action, the young braves, who were not moved by any of the scruples and fears of their white companions, quickly brought their guns to their shoulders, and two of them fired.

The sound of their guns roused the boys again, and they looked to see whether any harm had befallen their hunter friend.

"Look out for Josiah," said Jerry in a low voice to Captain Jim, and they again looked carefully towards the camp to see whether any damage had been done him.

A groan arose from some one who had been hit, but all five of our friends were afraid to come out into the light. They caught the sound of men running from the camp, but whether they had done more than seek the shelter of the woods, or were trying to come to the rear of the advancing party, they could not determine.

They decided to retain the position they held and await further developments. The waiting was their most difficult task, for the time dragged on so slowly, and their own hearts were so filled with fear, that the stirring of the few dead leaves on the branches often made them start as if some hidden foe was advancing upon them.

Was Josiah still in the camp? The fresh wood had soon caught fire and the blaze illuminated all the camp, and they could see plainly the entire place.

"No, he's not there," whispered Jerry. "I think they must have carried him away with them."

"Yes, I thought I saw a couple of white men cut his thongs, and start off with him right after our guns were fired," said Tom.

But neither of the boys dared to approach the camp as yet, or come out into the light, and so all five of

the party remained in the same cramped positions which they had been holding.

The fire flickered and started up, and then it died down, throwing such fantastic shadows all about, that more than once they were certain the Indians or the white men had returned to the camp, and were about to advance against the foe that had so unexpectedly fired at them.

Captain Jim was certain that the Indians would not come back, and while the boys well knew that he was more familiar with the traits of Indian character, and the customs and habits of his own people, than they, yet they were by no means as positive that the party would not return as were the young braves.

The only thing they could do for a time was to wait, and they remained in their hiding-places till their arms and legs ached, and they were more weary than they would have been if they had been marching many miles.

Would the morning never come? It seemed to them as if enough time had been consumed to make up two or three nights, and their fears increased the strain to such a degree, that when at last there began to be a few faint streaks of light, they were almost unable to move. As the light increased, the boys looked cautiously out from their places of concealment and soon could discern one body stretched upon the ground near the ashes where the fire had been.

"Choctaw," said Captain Jim, as a little later he crept forward, and the boys at first were horrified to see him take his knife and cut the scalp from the dead Indian's head.

"That makes me sick," said Tom, shuddering, as he saw what the young Indian was doing.

"So it does me," replied Jerry; "but after all it's only their way of doing things, I suppose. To Jim it doesn't look any worse than putting a bullet in a man does to us."

Most of the Choctaws had refused to go into the Creek rebellion, and they were surprised that the Indian they had slain, or rather whom Captain Jim had shot, should have belonged to that tribe.

"Served him right," said Tom a little later when the young brave returned. "He had no business to be on that side, for it's plain enough that when he was with the Spaniard it was for no good purpose."

They waited until the sun was well up before they made any further advance, but when two or three hours had passed, and they saw no signs of the party returning to the camp, they all started towards the place. There was nothing they could find at first to give them any clue as to what had become of Josiah, or in what direction the party had moved when so hurriedly they had abandoned their camping place. They thought they had left nothing behind them, and they soon concluded that, frightened by their shots,

the entire party had made off as rapidly as they could go, taking their prisoner with them.

"Hello!" said Jerry a moment later, "what's this?" He stooped and picked up a piece of brown paper on which it seemed to him some strange characters had been written.

His words brought his brother to his side, and Tom exclaimed, "That's something Josiah left behind him. I don't see just how he could have done it, for when we saw him, his hands were tied behind him.

"He's written it," said Jerry, "with a burnt stick. I can't just make out the words, can you?"

"Let me take it," said his brother, and he had just stretched forth his hand to grasp the paper, which they conjectured Josiah had left behind, when an arrow suddenly whizzed past their heads and buried itself in the arm of one of the young braves.

They waited for no further demonstration, but at once turned and ran in the direction from which they had come, and did not stop until a half mile lay between them and the camp. The young Indian had been running with them, and they had not noticed, until they came to a halt, that the arrow was yet in his arm.

Captain Jim and Jerry both took hold of the shaft and drew it out. The young brave never flinched during this operation, although they knew he must be weak from loss of blood, and was suffering great

pain. They bound up his arm as best they could and then started on again.

"We must get away from this as fast as we can," said Tom. "There's no knowing how many men may be on our trail within a half hour."

"But where shall we go?" asked Jerry.

"I don't care," said Tom; "anywhere and anyhow, so long as we get out of this region," and they all started to run.

They placed another half mile between them and the camp before they stopped again, and this time they tried to decipher the strange characters which Josiah (if the writing was his) had written upon the brown paper.

"It must be from Josiah," said Jerry. "I never saw any of his writing before, and if this is a sample of it, I hope I shan't see any of it again very soon."

For some time both boys worked over the strange-looking message, and at last were enabled to decipher most of the characters which Josiah had written.

"His writing," said Tom, "looks like a whirlwind in distress. I don't believe he could make worse-looking letters if he tried."

"I'm not troubled half so much about the looks of the letters as I am in trying to find out what it was that he wanted us to know," said his brother; but at last, as perseverance will accomplish almost anything, even the deciphering of letters, as strange as those

the boys found upon the paper, was accomplished. Either the message had been purposely left at the camp, or else abandoned in the hasty flight which had taken place when the young Indians had fired the shots. As soon as they had made out the message the boys looked into each other's face with something of dismay written there.

"That changes every one of our plans," said Tom.

"It does, if we do what he suggests," replied Jerry.

"But there's nothing else to be done," said his brother.

"No; that's so, if we are certain that Josiah wrote these words. I don't know whether he can write or not."

"Oh, he can write; I know he can, for I remember some letters he sent father, and they were written just about as well as this one we've just read."

"I hope it didn't take father as long to make it out as it did us, for if it did, Josiah might a good deal better have brought his word himself and saved time. He could have come from Pensacola two or three times while father was trying to make out what he had written in any one of his letters."

"Well, I'm sure this is from Josiah, and we've got to act, and act right away."

"All right," said his brother, "we'll chance it anyway; but the first thing we want to do is to get away from this region about as fast as we can go, and if

we're lucky enough to succeed in doing what Josiah suggests, it's more than likely we shall run into a dozen such nests as the one we've just struck, before we come to our journey's end."

Evidently the time had come for action, and after having eaten a few of the roasted acorns which they had brought with them, they started again on their flight, which was not interrupted until it was high noon.

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CHAPTER XVII

JERRY DEPARTS

THE boys had been unable to decipher all the words in the message which so strangely had been left for them at the camp. It was evident that Josiah had concluded that his young friends would not abandon him, and had expected that some effort would be made soon for his release. How he had been enabled to write, or where he had obtained the paper, the boys, of course, could not tell, but they had been able to read enough of the strange-looking words to inform them that General Claiborne and his army were near Limestone creek.

This was a far different location from the one for which they had started, and in which they had expected to find the general and his men. If the words were true, it completely changed the direction of their journey, and it was with many misgivings they finally decided to make a trial of the suggestion that Josiah had given them.

Should they at once penetrate this region and seek the general in this unexpected place? They were

bearers of a message for him from Fort Madison, and, indeed, it was for this very purpose they had left that fort.

"What can Claiborne be doing up by Limestone creek?" said Jerry, as they stopped at last to rest.

"I suppose he's after redskins," said Tom. "You know they said down at Fort Madison that Claiborne wasn't satisfied with acting on the defensive only any more, and that he planned to have a share in this campaign as well as Jackson or Coffee."

"Yes, that may be the explanation of it all," said Jerry; "and he's not so far away, if he's where Josiah says he is, that we shall lose very much time on our trip, even if we should find that the report is false."

They had ventured to kindle a fire and cooked the birds which the young Indians had shot with their arrows, for none of them dared to use their guns, as they knew if General Claiborne were near, it would also mean that many lurking Indians would not be far away. Tecumseh's young braves well knew the place which had been indicated in the letter of Josiah, and they undertook to lead the others to it. They abandoned everything like a beaten track, and started out in directions that to the boys were new and strange; but they had such confidence in the ability of their Indian companions to find their way through the forest, that they trusted them implicitly and followed without a word, even though many times

it seemed to them they were going in a direction opposite to the one they themselves would have taken, if they had been left to their own resources.

"It's strange how Captain Jim can find his way," said Jerry. "Josiah's pretty good at picking his way through the woods, but he's not to be mentioned with these young Indians."

"It just seems to be born in them," said Tom. "It's a kind of a second nature. They can find their way among the trees as well as white men can along the streets of a big town like Mobile."

But there was little inclination for conversation on the part of either of the boys, as the journey was a difficult one, and often led through swamps and over rough ground. Steadily all the day they kept on, stopping only for occasional rests or when Captain Jim, who was the leader, became suspicious of the presence of Indians.

They had but little food with them, and they depended largely upon such things as they could secure on their journey. They were almost afraid to kindle a fire, and when they did, it was only to have just enough to roast the birds they shot, and then it was at once smothered.

The young braves seemed to be fearful that they were pursued, though just why they suspected this they did not explain; but the boys knew enough of the habits of the Indians to be well aware that the

arrow which had been shot at them when they had gone to the camp where they had found Josiah's letter, indicated that some of the party they had surprised there had returned. Indeed, if the Indians had been in control of the men there, they were certain that they would carefully examine the trail, and would at once know how many were in the party and what its character was.

Accordingly they shared with the young braves the fear of pursuit, and this feeling kept them steadily on their way, even after they became so worn that it seemed to them it would be impossible to advance another step. The thought that they too might be fired upon as suddenly as their companions had shot at Josiah's captors, was not an inspiring one, and made them more than ready to listen to the calls of Captain Jim, who was constantly urging them forward.

They slept that night in the woods, under the lee of a small hill which protected them from the wind and furnished them a shelter. If they had been near the river they would have sought out one of the many caves which the Indians for years had been accustomed to dig near the banks, and to conceal by a covering of cane. These caves furnished protection and shelter, but were not dug as far from the river as the camping-place of our boys.

The next day they resumed their journey, pushing on even more rapidly than they had gone on the pre-

ceding day. Soon after noon Captain Jim, who was in advance as usual, suddenly raised his hand in warning, and the entire party immediately halted. He turned towards them, and beckoning with his hand, indicated his wish for them all to advance to the place where he was standing.

"Claiborne there," said Captain Jim laconically, pointing to a place they all could see now.

"That must be so," said Jerry; "but what a place he's made."

There was a strange-looking stockade at least two hundred feet square, which had been built, and they could also see three block-houses and a half-moon battery that commanded the rear. They did not know then, what they learned soon after, that this defence had been built by General Claiborne himself, who had pushed across the country to the Alabama with three hundred volunteers, some dragoons and militia, and a band of Choctaw Indians. These Indians, the young braves informed the boys, were led by Pushanataha and Mushullatubba.

General Claiborne had crossed the Alabama on the seventeenth of November, although our boys were in ignorance of his movements, and on the twenty-eighth had been joined by the third regiment of the national troops, which Colonel Gilbert Russell was commanding. This stockade and fort, which the boys now beheld, was intended as a place where provisions

could be stored for the Tennessee troops General Jackson was leading in the northern part of the country.

Our little party stood for a few moments in silence, watching the men who were yet at work upon the stockades. It was the turn, now, of the young braves to feel somewhat alarmed, and though they displayed no fear, the lead was at once taken by Tom and Jerry, who assured their companions that the white men would do them no harm. They at once started on, and soon entered the camp, where a royal welcome was given them.

What was their surprise to find among the prisoners a Spaniard and an Indian whom they were certain had been members of the party which had made a prisoner of Josiah. The Indian was carrying his arm in a sling, and Jerry, turning to Kanawha and pointing to the wounded warrior, said: "You see, you accomplished something, as well as Captain Jim."

From these prisoners they could learn nothing as to what had become of Josiah and the other members of their party. They themselves had left the others when they fled from the camp, and had been taken prisoners by a band of soldiers who were making their way towards Fort Claiborne (as the place where they then were was, even then, called), but they either could not or would not explain what had become of the hunter and their companions.

"I don't believe they know," said Jerry.

"Neither do I," replied Tom; "and if they did know, they would not tell us. I don't know what's the matter with these Spaniards."

"I do," said Jerry. "The mischief with them is, that they want to stir up all the Indians they can, and then, by acting with the British, they think there'll be trouble enough raised so that they can fall on Mobile when all the men have been taken away from there, farther up the country, to fight the savages."

"I hope nothing will happen to mother and Nance," said Tom soberly.

"So do I," replied Jerry; "but I tell you, Nance can take care of herself, and mother and the children too. You need not worry about her."

"I know she can take care of herself and the others under ordinary circumstances, but if a crowd of those yelling Creeks and blood-thirsty Spaniards should happen to fall on Mobile, when they were not expecting them, even Nance, brave girl as she is, wouldn't be able to do anything more against them than the people at Fort Mims could do against Weatherford," said Tom.

"But Weatherford is up in this part of the country somewhere," said Jerry. "At least, that's what they said at Fort Madison, and I'm positive they knew what they were talking about, so that we've nothing to fear from that quarter."

"I think we've a big enough contract," replied Tom, "to look after ourselves just now, and we'll see some stirring scenes before we get through with it."

The boys delivered their message to General Claiborne, who received them courteously and listened to the account which they had to give of their meeting with the Indians, and of Josiah's capture; but the fight which Sam Dale had had in the big canoe with the Indians stirred his heart most, and it was not long before every man in the fort had heard the story, and was singing the praises of "Big Sam," as he was familiarly known among the Indians and the scattered settlers of that region.

The boys remained in the fort for two weeks, taking their share in the work and helping to complete the defences. The successful defence of the place would depend far more upon the half-moon battery that had been erected in the rear, than upon the stockade, strong as it was, and the three block-houses that had been built; but early in December General Claiborne felt that the place was strong enough to leave, and he was desirous now of penetrating into the heart of the Creek country.

His little army had been increased to about one thousand men, and the messages he received, and the appeals for help which came from every side, made him eager to start on his expedition. Messengers also brought him the information that more English

vessels had arrived at Pensacola bay, and had brought many soldiers and large quantities of supplies for the hostile Indians. All this, together with the rumors of the movements of the Indians, increased the eagerness of the general and quickened his preparations.

Early in December he felt that it would be safe to leave the fort, and he at once prepared to advance. To Jerry, who was to be accompanied by Tecumseh's young braves, he intrusted a message which he wished them to carry to General Jackson. This meant a long and difficult journey, but the boys willingly undertook the work, and one bright day in the early part of December they left the general's quarters to start on their long journey to General Jackson's army.

General Claiborne gave them careful directions, and furnished them with the best equipment he could give, and as he bade them good-by he added, "You tell General Jackson that I sympathize with him in his troubles, and I know something of his feelings from my own experience. I only wish I was authorized to take Pensacola, that sink of iniquity, that depot of Tories and instigator of disturbances all along the southern frontier; but good-by, and good luck to you," he called out to the boys as they left the fort, and soon disappeared in the forest beyond.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PIECE OF CANE

JOSIAH FLETCHER, at the time when the unexpected visit had been made by his friends and the young Indian braves, had been hopeful for a moment that the opportunity for his release had come; but his thoughts had received a rude shock when one of the Spaniards quickly approached him, and cutting the thongs that bound his feet and hands, roughly ordered him to rise and follow him.

As Josiah was well acquainted with the feelings of this Spaniard, and as he was positive that his captor would waste no words with him, he quickly obeyed and followed him, as the man was armed, not merely with a gun on which a bayonet was attached, but with a knife which even in the darkness Josiah could see, and without which few Spaniards at that time were to be found.

He marched in advance of the man, and a mile or more had been covered before they came to a halt. Here his captor stopped and listened intently for a moment, but as no sound was heard, the march was

resumed and the pace at which they had been going was considerably quickened. They had gone but a short distance when a sound as though made by some squirrel in the bushes near by, once more caused him suddenly to stop and listen intently. Again the sound was heard, and this time his captor replied to it. Two or three times the sound, which Josiah then knew was a call of some kind, was given and answered, and in the dawn, which was rapidly approaching, he soon could see the form of a stalwart Indian advancing.

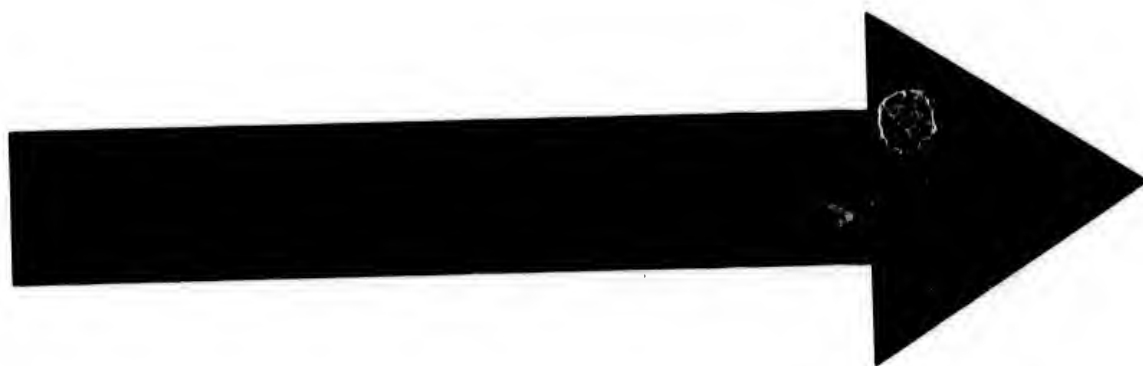
As Josiah looked at him his heart sank. He recognized the man as one of the noted Creek warriors, and one who for a brief time had been with the party which had captured him on the preceding day. The Spaniard and the Indian immediately entered into a conversation which lasted for half an hour. Josiah, somewhat familiar with the language, for they spoke in the Creek tongue, was enabled to hear many of the words, and those which he could distinguish greatly increased his fear. Again and again he heard the word "Econochaca," and each time his heart sank at the sound; but at last the discussion was ended, and they started on once more, the Indian also going with them.

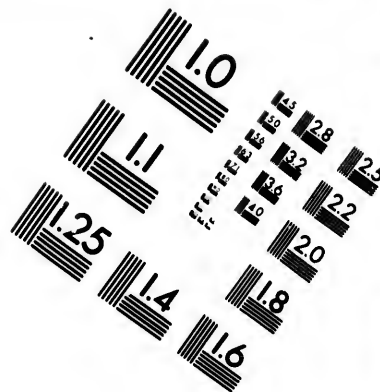
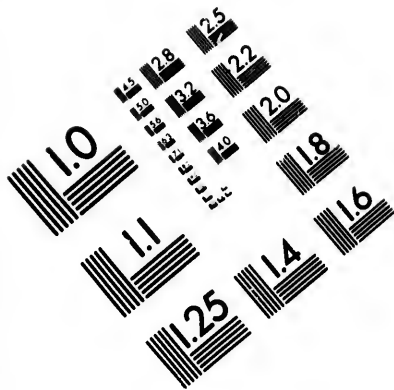
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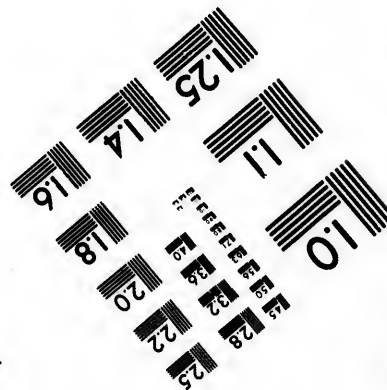
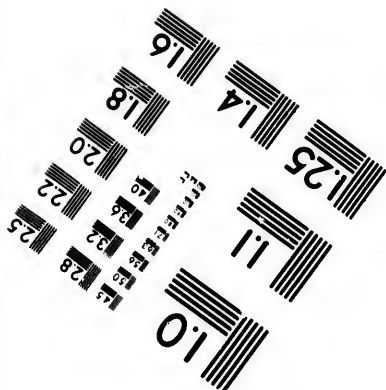
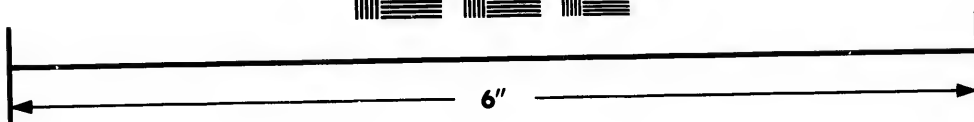
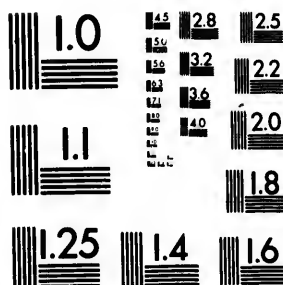
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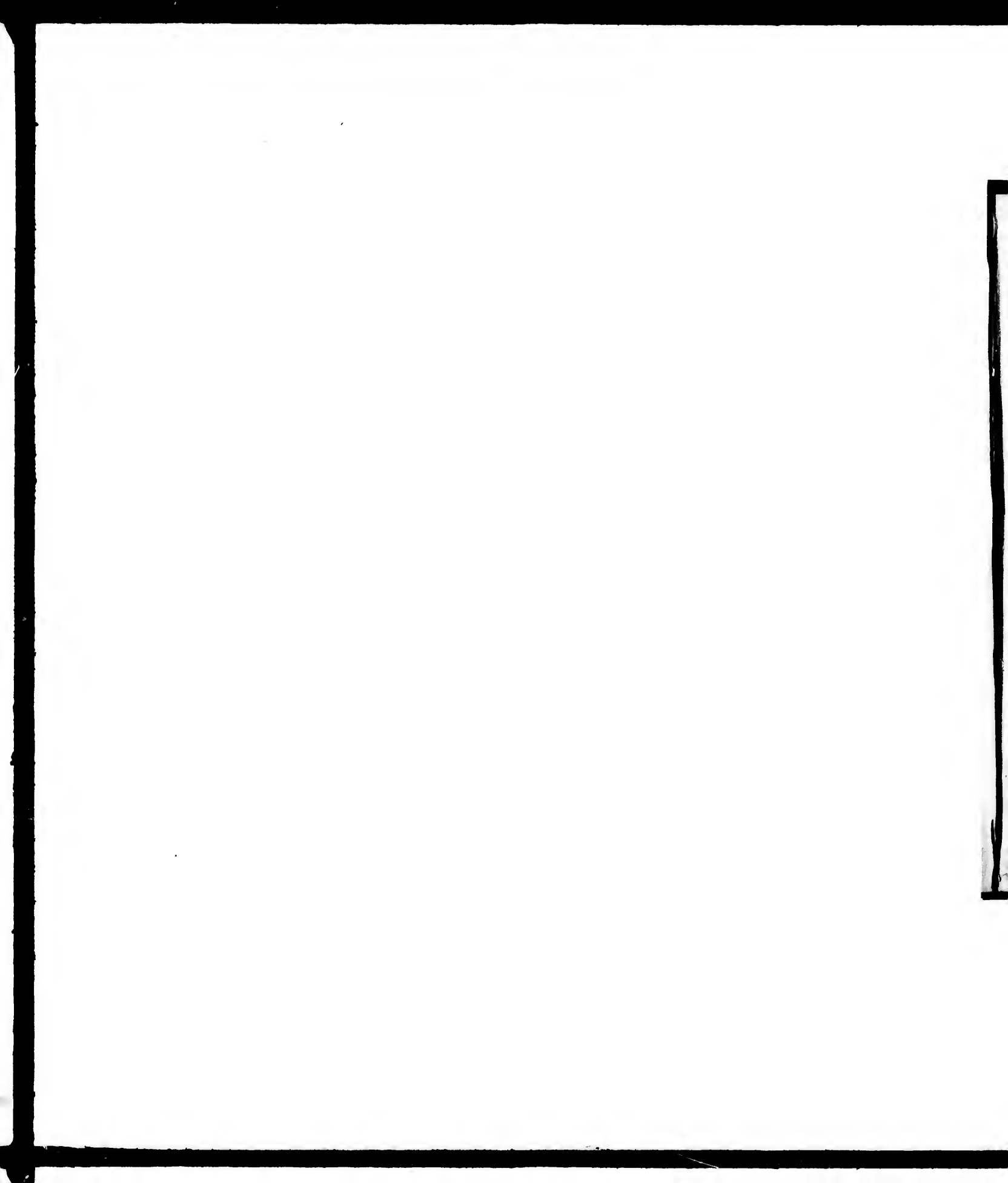
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somehow to escape; but with two such men near him, he knew how slight that hope was now, and how unlikely it would be that he could overcome them both, or escape the close attention which they constantly gave him.

The party went on swiftly and in silence, and Josiah was familiar enough with the region through which they were journeying to know they were rapidly approaching the river; but the word which he had overheard the Indian use so many times, "Econochaca," kept sounding in his ears. He knew it was a place which the Indians considered as holy ground, and strange reports had been current of the cruelty and the suffering which were prevalent there; but his captors gave him no time to meditate over the possibilities of the dangers he might encounter when once they had arrived at the "holy ground" (if that was to be their destination), and steadily kept up the pace which they had set at the beginning of their march.

There was an occasional halt made, and the Indian would listen intently as if he was expecting new arrivals or was suspicious of some approaching danger. The parched acorns furnished the only food they had, but with unflagging zeal they steadily held to their march.

At one time there was a warm dispute between the Spaniard and the Indian, of which Josiah knew him-

self to be the cause. Evidently the Spaniard was desirous of ridding himself at once of the presence of the hunter, and wished to put him out of the way immediately; but to this the Indian would not give his consent, and, as he evidently was a man of great influence, and one whose good opinion this Spaniard was desirous of holding, the proposal was refused, and they steadily kept on their way towards the place they were seeking.

Several hours passed in this manner, and soon the suspicions that Josiah had had that they were making their way towards the river were confirmed, and he caught occasional glimpses through the trees of the water; but they did not halt until they had arrived at the bank of the stream, where once more an earnest and animated conversation took place between his two captors. Josiah could not hear many of their words, and yet it was evident that the Indian was trying to explain something to his companion, and was insisting with a good deal of earnestness that his own scheme should be carried out.

At last the Spaniard appeared to be satisfied, and as soon as his consent had been received, the Indian departed, going swiftly up the bank of the river and leaving them where they were. They both seated themselves now, the Spaniard holding his gun in such a position that he could quickly use it if the occasion demanded, and Josiah became somewhat

despondent as the chances of his escaping slipped away.

The hunter stooped and picked up a stick, which was a little more than a yard in length, and idly began to push the pebbles down the bank into the river with it. It was a long, light piece of cane which he held in his hand, and he had no thought of retaining it, and yet, had he known it, his very life was depending upon that light and harmless branch, which he had taken in a moment of thoughtlessness.

His companion scarcely noticed it, and the silence remained unbroken. The hunter noticed as he brought one end of the cane near his face that the piece was hollow, and he peered through it at the further bank, and watched the birds that were flying near.

He did not know where the Indian had gone, but the fact that he and the Spaniard were resting on the bank led him to think that he would soon return, and in this supposition he was not deceived, although the warrior came back in a manner far different from that which Josiah had conceived.

The Spaniard had kept his attention on a point up the river, and frequently Josiah followed his gaze and found himself watching and waiting for something he knew not what. Soon, around the bend of the river, he saw a canoe swiftly coming, and long before it had approached he recognized its occupant

as the Creek warrior who had joined them on their march.

He soon arrived at the bank where they were waiting, and Josiah, following the command of the Spaniard, took his place in the canoe with the other men. For some reason, which he never could explain, he took the light little piece of cane, which he had been holding in his hands, with him, and although the Indian scowled at first when he saw this, as soon as he recognized how harmless it was, he paid no further attention to it.

The canoe was heavily loaded, now that three men were in it, and the Spaniard soon joined with the Indian in using the paddles, although at first he had taken his seat in the stern, holding his gun in readiness for use at any moment. Assuredly there was no chance for Josiah to escape if he plunged into the water. The canoe would soon overtake him, and the only plan he could think of was by some sudden movement to overturn it and throw all three into the river, and then trust to his ability to contend with both the men at the disadvantage in which they then would be placed. He thought quite seriously of this plan for some time, but finally abandoned it as being hopeless, and more and more resigned himself to the fate which he feared was to be his.

The canoe was kept near the shore, and evidently both men were fearful, though of just what they

were afraid Josiah was unaware. He watched them as they wielded their paddles, the Spaniard being almost as dexterous as the Indian, and realized at what a rapid rate they were leaving behind them the place where they had been, and drawing nearer to the point where he suspected they were to leave the river and start overland for Econochaca.

Josiah had laid the piece of cane which he had carried with him across the canoe, but lifting it for a moment he brought one end of it to his eye. He had known that it was hollow, but as he brought it this time near his face he instantly formed a plan by which he thought he might escape. His face had lighted up for the moment, and the Spaniard, who just at that time turned his head, noted the change; but so confident was he of the inability of their captive to escape them, that only a cruel smile passed over his face, and he gave no further attention to the prisoner.

Did he suspect? Josiah's courage fled for a moment as he thought of that possibility, but in a moment he realized how improbable it was that even a suspicion of the plan he had formed could have entered the mind of the white man. He endeavored to resume his former calm and impassive attitude, and yet he was all the time watching for the suitable place to be found in which he could put his plan into operation.

Meanwhile, mile after mile was passed, and now

the Spaniard was beginning to show signs of fatigue, although the Indian was apparently as fresh as when they had first started. Josiah noticed as he glanced ahead of them that they were coming somewhat nearer the shore, and from the bank not far in advance of them, he saw the long roots of a large tree that spread down into the water and evidently reached out for some distance into the river. Some of the roots were near the surface and had served as a barrier in the current of the river, and around them a large mass of floating rubbish had gathered.

"That's my place," said Josiah to himself, "and if I'm ever going to put my plan into operation that's the very spot." But what could he do? He glanced at each of his captors, but neither was apparently giving him any thought or attention.

The Spaniard was laboring hard now, and although the day was cool the perspiration was pouring down his face. It was hard work for him, and Josiah was delighted as he heard the Spaniard say to his companion, "Why don't we make this man take his share in the work? He knows how to paddle, I'll warrant, and I don't think he should be carried all the way. He ought to work his passage, for I'm nearly worked out myself."

The Indian gave a grunt of assent, which to Josiah seemed to imply as much disgust for the weakness of his companion as his willingness to comply with his

wishes; but he withdrew his paddle from the water and waited for the two men to attempt that which was exceedingly dangerous in a light canoe.

The Spaniard had bidden his prisoner change places with him and take his turn at paddling. Josiah, with great apparent eagerness, had given his assent, and both men stood up, balancing themselves in the canoe as only those who are familiar with one can do.

They were now nearly opposite this spot in the river which Josiah had noted, where the long roots of the tree were jutting out into the water, and the rubbish and scum had gathered. He saw with much satisfaction that this was more in quantity than he thought when he first had noticed it when they were farther down the stream.

When Josiah had arisen he had taken the little piece of cane in his hand, and as he turned about to face the Spaniard, he noticed with much satisfaction that the latter had laid his gun on the bottom of the canoe.

"It's just the place I wanted," said Josiah to himself, "and they have furnished me just the time I was looking for."

He took a step forward as if about to exchange places with his captor, when suddenly, and without a word of warning, still grasping the stick in his hand, he turned quickly and leaped into the river, and disappeared from the view of his companions before either of them was fully aware of what had happened.

CHAPTER XIX

JOSIAH REAPPEARS

IT was late in the afternoon when Josiah took his sudden departure from his companions in the canoe, and although he did not notice it at the time, the sun already was low in the western sky. All this was in his favor, as a clear light would have interfered with his plans, and at once have brought him into trouble.

The startled men, scarcely aware at first of what had happened, were almost thrown from their feet by the push which Josiah gave the canoe as he departed head foremost over its side. For a minute or two it seemed as if they must lose their balance, and that both, in spite of their best efforts, would be thrown into the water, and there become companions of their prisoner.

At last the canoe was righted again, and as soon as they had regained their equilibrium the Spaniard reached for his gun. He looked up for a moment as he heard an exclamation of surprise from his companion, who already had taken his gun and was peer-

ing into the water to find some token of the presence of Josiah.

Meanwhile the canoe had drifted out of its place, and the Indian laid aside his gun for a moment, while he took his paddle and by a few strong, swift strokes again brought it into position. He had not lost sight of the spot where Josiah had disappeared, and soon they were directly over the place into which he had gone.

The Spaniard held the gun, while the Indian in the bow kept his paddle so that he could hold the canoe in its position. Both watched the water carefully now, and waited for the opportunity to shoot, as they were certain that the daring hunter would quickly be compelled to come to the surface again to breathe, and the Spaniard had resolved that that moment should be the last Josiah should have to live.

All through their journey he had been desirous of putting Josiah out of the way, but for some reason, which the hunter could not fully understand, he had given way to his companion, who appeared to be eager to have the prisoner kept for some purpose; and although Josiah was not able to determine what that was, he had been satisfied it was one that promised little good to him.

But the white man in the canoe, as they waited, obtained no glimpse of the man who had so strangely left them. Even the ripples which his plunge had

made soon disappeared, and there was nothing to show that any one was beneath the surface.

They waited and watched, and as the moments passed they looked inquiringly into each other's face; but the Indian only shook his head and they again resumed their watch. They peered carefully up and down the stream to see if any signs of the hunter would appear there, but the silence was unbroken and the surface of the river undisturbed.

Five minutes and more passed in this manner, and the men, becoming more and more puzzled every moment, began to paddle the canoe slowly up and down the river, looking carefully in all directions; but their efforts were unrewarded, and they soon returned to the spot they had left.

The Indian now took his paddle and began to scatter the rubbish which had collected above the roots of the tree, which, as we have said, ran far out into the river. They both peered into the water, but still their search was fruitless.

The twilight was deepening now, and every minute increased the improbability of their being able to discover the hiding-place of Josiah, if indeed he was hidden. Into the minds of the captors — at least into that of the Spaniard — there began to come the conviction that Josiah must have been drowned. Perhaps he had struck some rock, or was held as in a vice by some of the interlacing roots. He thought of

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all these possibilities, and yet he was not satisfied that Josiah was dead. But where could he be? His disappearance, so sudden and unexpected, was not as strange as his failure to rise to the surface and again be seen.

At last he turned to his companion and declared that the white hunter must be dead, and that he had no doubt that he had been drowned long before this, and urged his companion to resume their paddling.

A dissatisfied grunt was all the reply the Indian made, except to shake his head and declare that they must wait longer. A quarter of an hour passed in this way and still there was no sign of the missing man.

Apparently there was little use in remaining where they were, and the conviction deepened in the white man's mind that the hunter was dead, and their further search was now useless; but for some reason the Indian was the leading spirit, and the Spaniard followed his bidding; but soon the chief, turning about, sent the canoe towards the shore, and stepping out, beckoned to his friend to follow. They drew the little skiff up on the bank, and then leaving his companion there, the Indian went a little farther down the stream and took his station near the river.

He stood there motionless as the trees, save as his glance was quickly turned now up and now down the river. Evidently he had no thought of abandoning their search, and appeared to be far more

suspicious of the white hunter's ability to remain alive, even though he was under the water, than his companion was.

The sun sank lower and lower. The deepening twilight intensified the silence which rested over everything, and which was broken only by an occasional splash of some fish as it came to the surface, or by the cry of some bird slowly making its way across the river. The chill of the air became more and more marked as the sun disappeared, and the waiting more and more tedious, and the Spaniard grew impatient. He was fully satisfied that Josiah was dead, and every moment spent near the river now, to him appeared to be a mere waste of time.

But was the hunter dead? Let us see.

Josiah Fletcher, in spite of his lack of training in the schools, was not without his own wisdom. His long experience in the forests, and his practical observations, had quickened his every faculty, until the hunter was a wise man in the ways of the woods, if not in the ways of the world outside.

He was always extremely careful in all his movements. The many adventures he had had with the wild beasts and Indians had made him quick of decision and prompt in his actions, and the plan which he had formed during their voyage up the stream was as bold as it was sudden.

As the canoe in which he was carried a prisoner

had been making its way up the river, more than once, as we have already related, he had been tempted to upset the entire party, and trust to his chances of escaping in the confusion that would follow; but he had held this as a last resort, determined to use it only after everything else had failed. His attention had been attracted, as we have seen in our last chapter, by the long roots that ran far out into the river from the great tree that grew on the bank.

He quickly and carefully estimated how far out those branches extended, and, as he noted the quantity of rubbish which had been gathered near the surface, the thought had flashed into his mind that the very time and place had been found for which he had been waiting, and when he arose to change places with the Spaniard, and apparently had been willing to take his turn in wielding the paddle, he decided that his opportunity had arrived.

Tightly grasping the piece of cane, to which we have referred, he plunged headlong into the river. The water was cold now, but he paid little attention to the chill which it produced. He had drawn in his breath, as he left the canoe, and he well knew how to hold it, and to hold it longer than many men were able to do.

Down, down into the river he forced his way, and then under the water swam rapidly towards the roots which he knew he would find in the bed of the

stream. He quickly came to these, and grasped them with his hands. He had a firm hold, and yet what good would it all do him? A few moments and he would be compelled to rise to the surface for breath, and the moment his body appeared, a shot from the gun of one of his captors would at once put an end to his life. But was his scheme a foolhardy one? Did he forfeit a good chance for a poor one?

Josiah had not lost his hold on the piece of cane, which we have already mentioned several times. As he found that he had a firm grasp on the roots, and could easily maintain his position there, he held to his place with one hand, and with the other he thrust the cane up through the water, fitting one end to his mouth. But would it reach the surface? This was the fear which was in the hunter's heart, and every hope of safety he had, depended upon the length of the cane. Quickly he thrust the little hollow branch up towards the surface, and then began to blow out the water which filled it.

What a relief it was! But the moment his breath was gone it would be necessary for him to draw it in again, and if water and not air should follow the suction, he knew his every chance would be gone; but the hunter's heart rejoiced when he found that, after he had blown the water from the tube, he was able to fill his lungs with air, and his hopes of escaping increased.

Gradually he lowered the cane until the water began to trickle through it once more, and then he knew the end of it must be near the surface. Having arranged this to his satisfaction, he held the cane in his mouth, and with both hands grasped the roots. The water was cold, and in a few moments he was thoroughly chilled and almost numb; but steadily he held to his position, finding that he could breathe easily through the cane, and he waited for the minutes to pass.

If the water had been clear enough, he could have seen the canoe more than once, directly over him; but the floating mass and muddy water prevented him from discerning this, and thereby added to his peace of mind. The little piece of cane which Josiah allowed to protrude from the water several times was pushed aside by the paddle of the Indian, but even his quick-witted mind never suspected the ability of the hunter to breathe through what appeared to be only a broken branch, held somehow in its place. Perhaps the increasing twilight aided the hunter in all this, but at any rate his device was not suspected, and the moments slowly passed.

The party in the canoe were wondering where the hunter could be, and Josiah also was beginning to be puzzled as to how long he could remain under the cold water and cling to the roots.

In this way a quarter of an hour passed, although

if Josiah had been asked how long he had been under the water, it is likely that he would have declared that some hours had elapsed since his plunge; but the increasing numbness, and the chill which he was now feeling, at last convinced him that he could maintain his hold no longer, and letting go with his hands he turned upon his back, and still remaining under the water and breathing through his tube, began to make his way down the stream.

Once or twice he came to the surface, and while the slight splash he made was noticed by the watchers, it was not sufficient to hold their attention. At last, in one of these movements, in spite of all his efforts, the cane filled with water, and it was necessary for Josiah either to abandon it or to clear it again; but in his struggles he was surprised as his feet touched the bottom of the river. He knew then that he must be near the shore, and quickly letting the cane go, he slowly rose out of the water.

How cold he was! His teeth were chattering, and his entire body was trembling as with an ague. Slowly he moved, rejoicing as he saw how dim all the objects appeared in the twilight, and yet as he glanced up the stream, his heart sank within him as he saw the figures of the two men watching by the bank.

There they were, not more than a hundred yards away! Startled by the sight, he dropped again out of sight, but in the quickness with which he had

tried to make this movement he lost his foothold, and the splash which followed was sufficient now thoroughly to arouse the attention of the watchers.

What could he do? The woods, he had noticed, were close by the river's bank. His only hope of safety lay in them, and Josiah was not long in deciding upon the course of action he would follow.

He arose from the water and made his way rapidly towards the bank. His appearance was greeted with a yell of derision and triumph by the Indian, who called to his companion and at once started after the hunter; but Josiah had gained the bank now, and mustering all his strength, started to run, and soon disappeared in the woods beyond.

CHAPTER XX

THE PLACE OF TORMENT

IF Josiah Fletcher had not had wet clothing clinging to him, and had not been so thoroughly chilled and weakened by his experiences of the past half hour, escape might have been possible for him; but as it was, numb with the cold, weakened by his efforts, and startled by the sudden appearance of the men watching and waiting for him on the bank, the prospect before him was not encouraging. And yet as he entered the forest he ran as perhaps never he had run before.

Glancing behind him he saw that both men were in pursuit, and only a few moments had passed before he realized that an escape by flight was an impossibility. He was too weak long to keep up the pace at which he had started, and already he could hear his pursuers, and he knew they were steadily gaining upon him.

Some other plan must be tried, and that without a moment's delay. Josiah, noticing a large tree near him, stepped quickly out of the path, and dodged behind its shelter.

The Spaniard was in advance, and swiftly he passed Josiah's hiding-place without stopping, and apparently unsuspecting of the presence of the hunter. Hope revived, and he began to think there might be a possibility of his doubling on his pursuers, and making his way to the river again, and of using the canoe which he was certain they had left not far from the place where he had climbed the bank.

As he glanced out from behind the tree his hopes were scattered in a moment, as he saw the Indian standing directly before him and apparently waiting for him to appear.

"White man a fish. Breathe water. Have gills," said the warrior.

But Josiah made no reply to the Indian's words, as there was nothing for him to say, and the little confidence he had gained by the clever way in which he had deceived both his captors was dispelled now, and he knew that his present situation was much more critical than that in which he had been before, and from which he so successfully had escaped.

The Spaniard was recalled by his companion in a moment, and as he returned he, too, put questions to Josiah, to which the hunter made no response. Again the Spaniard urged that their prisoner should be shot and put out of the way. Why his advice was not listened to, Josiah could not tell, but in his heart there was a deeper fear that his perils were not les-

sened by the stubborn refusal of the Indian to grant his companion's request.

No further words were spoken to the hunter, and he soon saw that the canoe was to be abandoned and that they were to make their way overland.

"White hunter breathe in water," said the Indian, "but Indian breathe on land."

This was the only explanation Josiah received, and his hands now were quickly bound behind him. On through the darkness the party made their way, not stopping for even a brief rest. Across the country and through the forests they rapidly advanced, Josiah marching between the two men. Many times Josiah fell in his weariness, but a sharp word from one of the men would bring him to his feet again, and compel him to do his utmost to keep up with the others.

At last, towards morning, they stopped, and a small fire was kindled. Josiah's hands were freed long enough to allow him to wring out his wet clothing and lie down for a brief sleep.

There was an air of confidence in the Indian now that became apparent, and the forebodings of the hunter increased. Evidently his captors were not afraid of pursuit, and the region into which they had entered was one familiar to both men. Soon, after a breakfast of roasted acorns, they started on once more.

For two days the journey was kept up, and the stops which were made were not frequent, and each was only for a brief time. Josiah, hardy woodsman though he was, was nearly worn out by the struggles through which he had passed. His clothing was in shreds, and the moccasins which he had were worn and torn; but Josiah noticed with some satisfaction that the Spaniard was in even a worse plight than he, and that the journey had told upon his strength even more than it had upon his own. The Indian apparently did not notice the difficulties, and, as far as Josiah could see, was as fresh now as when they had abandoned their canoe and started through the woods.

The confidence of his captors increased rapidly, and it was evident that they were near the end of their journey. Josiah had no other clew to this than the word "Econochaca," which he had heard in their conversation, and which he was aware could not be far away. All his doubts were soon settled, for in the afternoon of the second day they approached a place which he heard the Indian call "Econochaca," as he encouraged his companion by declaring that this was to be the end of their journey.

Econochaca, or "holy ground," was situated in a pathless wilderness, on a bluff on the left bank of the Alabama river. Weatherford himself had built the village a few months before this time, having selected the most obscure place he could find, and had had it

dedicated by the Shawnee prophets whom Tecumseh had left behind him.

This had been made a place of refuge for the wounded, and for the fugitives who might be compelled to flee from their homes in the adjacent Indian settlements.

At the time when Josiah entered the village there were many of the Indian women and children there, although these soon after were removed to another place for greater safety. Not a path or trail led to this village, and in their wild and reckless speeches the prophets again and again declared to the credulous warriors that, like Auttose, this place also was "holy ground," and that no white man could ever enter it and live.

Sad forebodings filled the mind of Josiah as they approached this village, for rumors of the strange rites and ceremonies practised there, and the cruel customs of the place, had been heard by him for several weeks past.

Little attention was paid to our party as they entered, and Josiah noticed that there was a large square in the centre of the village. Even as they approached, the priests were performing their incantations, and as he glanced about him, his heart sank as he noticed on one side of the square ten large stakes which had been driven securely into the ground. To these stakes were bound even then some white men

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and a few Indians whom he recognized as friendly Crecks. The purpose of all this was only too evident, and Josiah knew that they were to be the victims of the prophets' fury, and the offerings of these poor, deluded savages to the unseen powers. He knew also, now, why his Indian captor had so persistently refused the request of the Spaniard that he might be shot, and even the sturdy hunter's cheek blanched as he thought of the fate which in all probability was in store for him.

The party stopped, and for a few moments watched the crowd of yelling savages. Even the women and children were present, and joined in the exciting sport. About the feet of the wretched victims were gathered quantities of pine knots which had been soaked in pitch, and the children were amusing themselves by driving long splinters into the bodies of the helpless prisoners.

A kind of dance was soon entered upon, and the yells of the warriors, and the excitement of the others, soon wrought the fury up to a pitch such as Josiah, familiar as he was with Indian customs, never before had seen.

The medicine-men, or prophets, led in the dance, and the high excitement under which they labored seemed to inspire a similar feeling in the minds of all the others. For some time this dance went on, but at last the torch was applied to the fagots, and one pile

after another was soon in flames. The sight of the fire seemed to increase the fury of the spectators, and the tauntings of the victims and the yells of the warriors increased.

Some of the wretched prisoners gave vent to their feelings by such screams of agony and fear as Josiah had never heard before. Others were silent, and seemed to pride themselves upon the fact that even in their death agony they did not give their captors the pleasure of witnessing any weakness on their part. But the resinous wood soon burned out and made an end to this scene, and the excitement died down almost as rapidly as it had arisen.

Josiah thought that even the cruel Spaniard was touched by the sight they had just seen, but as he did not speak he had no means of judging of his feelings, and certainly he expected little mercy at his hands. But Josiah Fletcher was heartsick. Here he was a prisoner in this village of Econochaea, which the Indians firmly believed to have been built on "holy ground," and into which as yet no white man had ever come except as a prisoner.

Behind him lay a pathless wilderness. The exact location of the village even was unknown to the white men, at least so Josiah thought, and only rumors had been scattered of the life there and the deeds that were done by the Indians. There was little hope of aid from without — of that he felt positive.

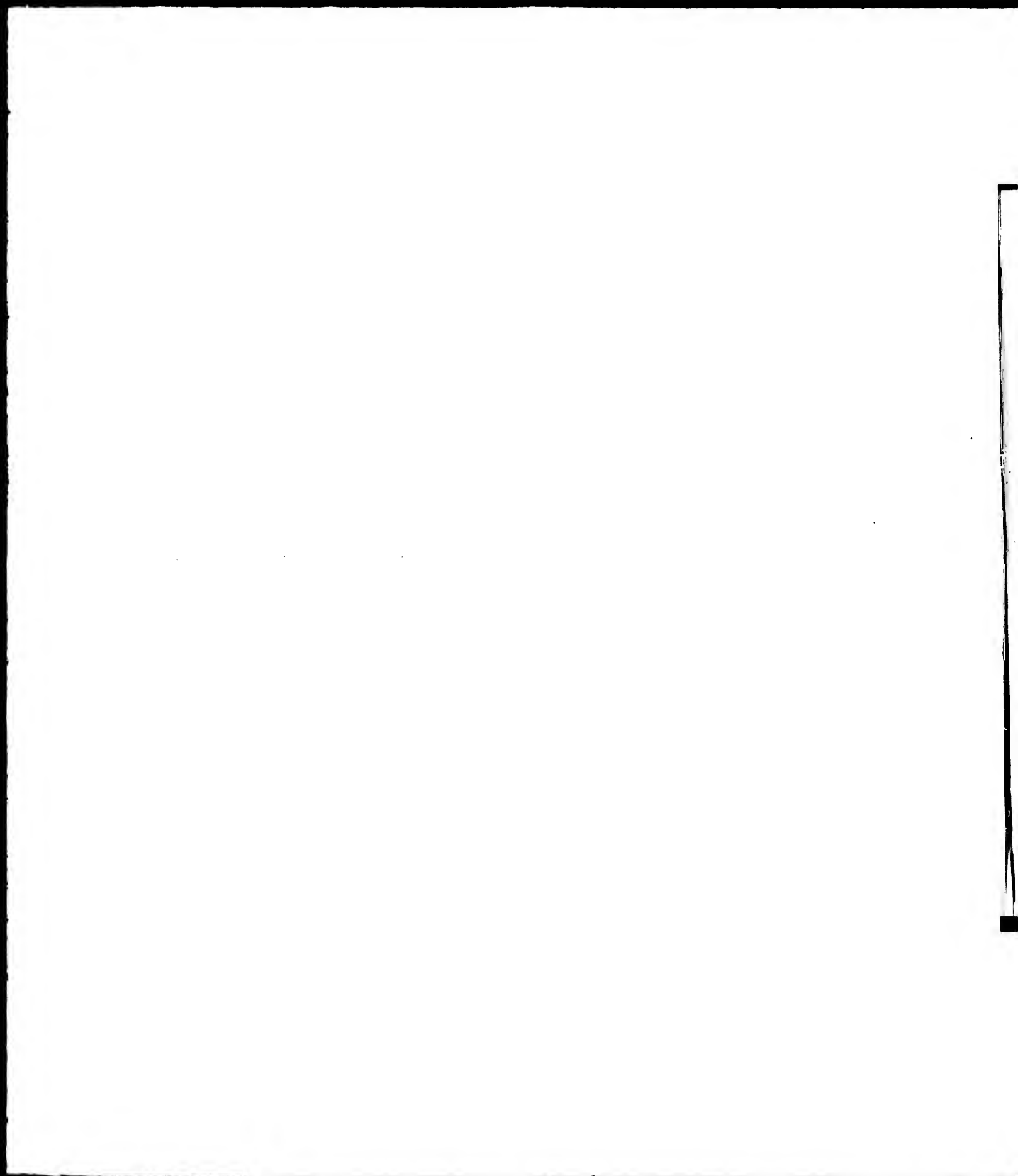
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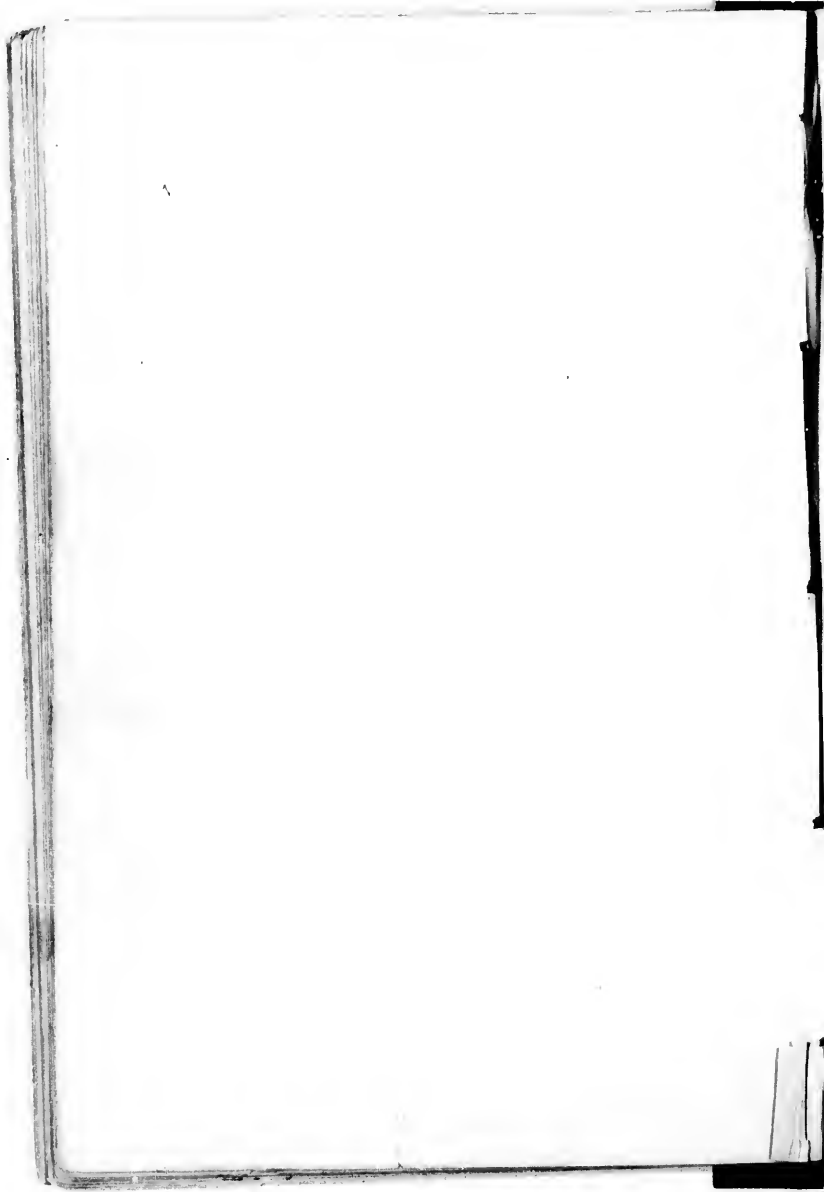
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As he glanced about the village he was surprised at the large number of warriors he saw, and he knew that even if a party of white men should try to enter the place, they would not be of much avail unless there were many of them; and such an advance on the part of the soldiers was something Josiah did not expect, and which he regarded as exceedingly improbable.

Wearied by his march, his clothing in a sad condition, his strength wasted by the lack of sufficient food and his exertions, the sight of the men burned at the stake served to rob the hunter of the little courage he had had. He was certain his turn would come soon, and that he, too, would be tied to some stake and a scene similar to the one he had just watched, again would be enacted.

"Well, it's lucky," said Josiah to himself, trying to take as calm a view as possible of his situation, "that there's no one dependent upon me, and if I am going to go up in smoke, it's probably just as well that there aren't very many to feel badly about it. We've all of us got to go some time, and if my time has come now, why, I'll try to make the best of it. If those Indians could die without a whimper, I think I'll try to keep my tongue between my teeth even if it's hot enough to blister it, and see if I can't rob these fiends of the pleasure of seeing my torments. But I'll not give up yet. It may be some way will

open, and that I can manage to cut loose in spite of these redskins. I don't propose to give way till the end comes, and then if I have to, why I'll have to, and that's all there is about it. Meanwhile I intend to keep my mouth shut and my eyes open, and if I have half a chance, I'm going to be quick to make the most of it."

Josiah again looked all about him, and as he saw the walls which had been built, and how strong the place was, he could not keep from himself the conclusion that any such thing as an escape was most unlikely. But his thoughts were interrupted by the approach of several Indians whom he took to be chiefs. He did not recognize any of them, and could not hear the conversation which they held with his captors. This, however, was soon at an end, and he was led away by two of the braves, who securely bound his hands and feet, and throwing him roughly into a tent left him there alone.

CHAPTER XXI

AT THE STAKE

DAY after day passed and Josiah Fletcher was still kept a prisoner. His feet and hands were tightly bound, and any effort to escape which he might have felt inclined to have made would have been as useless as it was hopeless.

What was to become of him? What purpose had they in retaining him as a prisoner and keeping him in such close bondage?

The fear deepened every day in the hunter's heart that he was kept for no good purpose, and he became almost certain that he too was to be offered as a victim, as were those he had seen when he first entered the village. Not a word could he get from his guard, and the uncertainty, together with his scanty food and the cramped position which he was compelled to keep day and night, soon told upon the rugged Josiah.

Two or three times his thongs were loosed and he was led out into the square, which, as we have said, was in the centre of the town; but the horrors and

suffering which he saw there on the occasion of each visit affected him far more than even his captivity itself.

The fanaticism of the priests led all the warriors to make these human sacrifices, on the ground that they were necessary for their success in the war which they were waging with the whites. The most of these victims were white captives, or half-breeds who were suspected of being too friendly to the white men's cause. Some friendly Creeks also were burned, and in this way the medicine-men thought to strike terror to the hearts of the halting, and inflame the zeal of all those who were already committed to the cause so dear to Tecumseh's heart.

On the first occasion when Josiah was led out into the square many women and children were in the town, and these were even more cruel than the warriors themselves. They had not the strength of the men, but they were far more ingenious in contriving ways to increase the tortures of the prisoners. Josiah was scarcely able to stand when he was first led out, and had barely risen to his feet before an Indian boy shot at him a blunt arrow; and the pain which it inflicted — for the worn Josiah could not repress his feelings — brought a yell of delight from all who witnessed it, and encouraged the boys to try their skill again and again. They soon left him, however, to resume their occupation of forcing splinters

under the skin of those who were about to be burned.

Sometimes the victims were compelled to run the gauntlet, but not one of them ever escaped, and, bruised and bleeding from the blows which were inflicted upon them, they were brought back, only to be tied to the stake and have the resinous wood piled all about them.

The second time Josiah was led forth, expecting a repetition of his former torments, he was surprised as he observed that no women and children were to be seen, and as none of them appeared again he concluded that they had been removed to some other place for safety. At first this brought a ray of hope to the hunter's heart, and he thought there was a possibility that the Indians were preparing to resist an attack. But as day after day passed and no further indications of such an event were seen, hope almost died in Josiah's heart, and he abandoned himself to the death which he was certain would soon be his.

He noticed in the village one day a half-breed whom he at once recognized as Weatherford. The influence he had over the others, the respect they all paid him, his evident strength and commanding form, all served to bring back to the captive's mind the man whom he had seen a few times before and whose name was so well known. Indeed, Josiah dared to hope a little when he recalled the efforts of Weatherford to restrain his warriors at Fort Mims. What he was doing at

Econochaca he could not ascertain, but on each succeeding day when Josiah was led into the square he saw him, and concluded that he either was waiting for some attack, or making preparations for some expedition he was about to lead.

In this way two weeks passed. Why something was not done with him Josiah could not tell, but at last there came a morning when he was led forth into the square, and from the looks which were given him he concluded that the day of his trial had come. He was brought near to a circle of warriors who were seated upon the ground, as silent when he approached as though they had been statues. He could see their faces and hear their words, and as he was somewhat familiar with their language, he had little difficulty in understanding the purpose of the deliberations which soon began.

There was a debate concerning himself. Weatherford rose to speak, and as the hunter heard him make pleas for the life of the prisoner, his heart began to beat again with hope. Earnestly and strongly the half-breed appealed, and when he sat down a murmur of applause made Josiah think that either his execution was about to be put off, or that he would be held for exchange as Weatherford had urged.

After a brief silence one of the prophets arose and began an impassioned harangue in which he urged the Indians not to be beguiled by the smooth words of

even so great a man as Weatherford. There was no hope for success to be looked for except as human sacrifices were offered. The cause demanded this, the people themselves were entitled to it, and the larger the number of victims, the greater the prospect of success.

Josiah could see that the prophet's speech produced an impression far deeper than that of Weatherford's, and he became an eager listener as the debate progressed. Now for him, and now against him, some man of prominence would speak; but the prophets evidently knew the temper of the warriors better than did Weatherford himself, acknowledged leader though he was.

At last the long debate was ended, and with a sinking heart Josiah realized that the decision had been against him. Still bound he was left where he was, in charge of his guard for a short time, while other unhappy prisoners were brought forth, and he could see them as they were bound to the stakes and the fagots piled about them.

Soon three or four of the Indians seized him and carried him back to the wigwam from which he had been taken; but he knew from their actions that he was not to escape the fate which he believed was in store for him. Soon he was brought forth again by these same warriors, and as he glanced about the square he saw twelve stakes, at eleven of which there

were already victims bound. The one stake which apparently had been left free he at once concluded was for himself, and the question was soon settled as he was carried near it. The thongs were loosed and he was told to rise.

So stiff was he and weak, that he was scarcely able to stand erect, and as he took a few tottering steps forward, a yell of derision arose from the crowd which was watching him.

"Well, I'll show them how a white man dies," said Josiah to himself. "Nary a groan shall they get from me."

And yet with all of Josiah's bravery he never had been in such danger as then faced him. He glanced along the row of victims, and saw that more than half of them were white. He noticed also several half-breeds and two or three friendly Creek warriors in the number, who looked at him with but little more expression than the stakes themselves had. The women and the children were gone, and as a consequence no splinters were thrust under the skin of the victims this day, and there was a strange hush over all.

Noticing that he was scarcely able to move, two of the warriors seized him and roughly helped him forward to the stake, to which he was soon fast bound. Not merely were his hands and feet tied, but a long lash was wound around his body, so that even his contortions would be prevented when the agony began.

His head was left free, and he looked up at the sky above him. The white clouds were moving there, and nothing he could see in any way appeared to reflect the scene beneath. He glanced at the other victims for a moment, and felt rejoiced as he noticed that one or two of them had fainted.

What was that? In the midst of his own grief Josiah noticed that one of the victims was a woman, and apparently she was unconscious of anything occurring about her.

"I'm glad of it," said Josiah to himself. "Her troubles will soon be over, and I hope she won't wake up in time to give these redskins any chance to enjoy her sufferings."

The prophets were busy now, and with strange incantations were moving about amongst the crowd. How hideously they were dressed! Skins of beasts were curiously wrought and fastened about them. Their faces were black, and as they shouted or sang their voices sounded almost unearthly.

He could see Weatherford on the margin of the crowd, mounted on his magnificent gray horse. As he stood there, horse and rider both motionless, the appearance they presented was more like that of a statue than of life.

How long would it take before the agony would be over? When would the prophets cease their din and the real work begin? Josiah hoped it would not be

long; and as now he could think of no possible way of escape, the sooner the end came the better for him.

The wood had been piled very high about him, and reached almost to his armpits. Why it was that his head had been left free he could not understand, but with a strange calm he was observing the movements of the crowd and the antics of the medicine-men. Soon, however, he noticed a change. The medicine-men ceased from their incantations, and one of them, who appeared to be a leader, stepped in front of the assembly and began an impassioned harangue. More and more excited did he become as he went on. All the men except Weatherford appeared to share in his feelings.

The glance which Josiah cast at the half-breed disclosed the look of scorn on the brave man's face, for he was entirely free from the superstitions of the people, and unmoved by the wild harangue of the prophet.

The gesticulations of the speakers became wilder. They threw their hands and waved their arms about their heads, and the people were fast approaching a state of frenzy. One Indian quickly seized a blazing fagot, and, approaching the stake at the other end of the line, set fire to the pile.

Louder than the voices of the prophets rose the scream of agony from the white man who had been bound there; but no other pile was fired as yet. Why was this?

"The demons are going to take us one by one," thought Josiah, "and my turn is coming last. They're going to leave us to see all the sufferings of the others, and draw this thing out as long as they can."

Still the prophets spoke, and the warriors were divided in their attentions between the excited speakers and the sight of the blazing pile. The flames soon died down, and Josiah shuddered as he saw in the midst of the ashes a few bones, showing all that was left of the man who had been bound there.

Again one of the prophets began to speak, and for a moment the Indians stopped to listen to him. The voice of the speaker was shrill and high. Never had the hunter seen anything like the scene before him. Some smoke still was rising from the smouldering fire. The whole multitude of warriors were standing as one man facing the speaker, who was approaching the end of his harangue. As he drew near to the close he seemed to be in a perfect fury, and there was scarcely any one in all the assembly who did not share with him in his feelings.

Again a warrior seized a fagot as there came a pause in the speaker's words, and was about to start towards the second stake. He had taken but a few steps when suddenly a hush came over the assembly. The entire band appeared to be startled, and were listening intently to some sounds which Josiah could not hear.

What could be the meaning of it? Josiah had little feeling now, as long since he had abandoned all hope of escaping; but something unusual evidently was at hand, and in a moment he saw the crowd thrown into confusion and together start and run towards one of the forts.

CHAPTER XXII

ECONOCHACA

WHEN Jerry and Tecumseh's young braves left the camp of General Claiborne as the bearers of his message to General Jackson, Tom accompanied them as far as the borders of the forest. Another party left at the same time with a message for Governor Blount, and the boys stopped to watch the others until they disappeared amongst the trees.

"Well, Jerry," said Tom, "I don't know when we'll get together again, and I hate more than I can tell you to be separated from you; but there's nothing else to be done now."

"It won't be long," replied Jerry confidently, "and Tecumseh's young braves know every inch of the country around here, and we'll soon have the message delivered and be on our way back again."

"Probably we shan't be here then," replied Tom, "for there's a good deal of talk, as you know, of starting right off towards the Creek country, and the general is just determined to strike some blow that will put an end to these troubles."

"Well, I hope he will," replied Jerry, "and that soon, too. This uncertainty is worse than a real fight. If we could only meet them once hand to hand and get the matter settled, everybody would be a good deal more contented."

"Your talk is very brave," replied his brother, "but I think in your heart you're as scared as I am. I didn't think when we started out on that raft, with Nance and mother and the children, that we'd ever be having a share in this war. I thought an end would come in a few days or weeks at the most, and that then we'd go back home and go to work once more clearing up the place."

"Oh, well, never mind, Tom," said Jerry; "the country is getting roused now, and even Tecumseh's young braves have seen which way the wind is blowing, and they have come in on the winning side; haven't you, Captain Jim?"

But the Indians made no reply, and Jerry continued: "But we can't stay here to talk any more, for we must start; so good-by." And without once looking behind them, Jerry and his companions started on their long journey.

Tom watched them as long as they could be seen, and then stood for some moments looking towards the place in the forest where they had disappeared. Slowly then he returned to the camp, his heart filled with forebodings, and much more fearful of the com-

ing events than he had been willing to acknowledge to his brother.

Soon every one in the camp was astir. General Claiborne was determined to strike an effective blow, both for the sake of his own reputation and his desire to put an end to the terrible uncertainty under which the scattered settlers were laboring.

Anything like the usual work on the clearings was impossible. Families had been shot down in cold blood, and often the men had been tomahawked while they were in the fields harvesting the crops. Even the women and children were not safe, and many a mother had seen her little one raised aloft in the arms of some brawny savage, and its brains dashed out against the walls of the home in which she lived.

There were about a thousand men in the army now, and Tom, with great interest, watched the movements of the soldiers. There was a battalion of horse which Major Cassell led, and also one of militia of which Major Smoot was in charge. In this latter battalion he recognized Captain Sam Dale, and his courage returned when he thought of the encounter which he had witnessed between this man and the Indians in the great canoe a few weeks before.

The regulars were commanded by Colonel Russell, and there was a band of Mississippi volunteers led by Colonel Carson, who had enlisted for twelve months.

In addition to all these, there were about one hundred and fifty Indians, mostly Choctaws, whom Pushmataha led. A sufficient garrison was left at the fort, and then the little army started.

Rapidly they pushed their way onward, stopping only for such halts as were absolutely necessary, making an unbroken march for eighty miles. There they stopped long enough to build a station for provisions, which they named Fort Deposit, and then the march was resumed, the army pushing steadily on again for nearly thirty miles.

They were passing through a pathless wilderness now, and only the baggage and provisions that were absolutely necessary were carried. Men and officers alike suffered greatly on this march, and on most of the way they subsisted chiefly on boiled acorns.

It was currently reported in the army that they were bound for Econochaca, the "holy ground" of the Indians; and when the last thirty miles of the march had been completed the entire army halted, and General Claiborne sent forward his scouts to spy out the land.

Among those who were sent on this expedition was our young hero Tom Curry, along with the soldier whom Josiah had familiarly called Martin, and in whose care he had left his young companion. Other men also were sent out on scouting expeditions, as the general was determined to learn the exact location

of the place before he prepared to strike what he hoped would prove to be a fatal blow.

The spies found the place strongly guarded, after the Indian fashion, and had every reason to believe that none of the inmates had any suspicion of the danger threatening them; but as we already know, rumors had penetrated the Indian village sufficient to lead the warriors to carry their women and children across the river into safe places among the thick forests, and the defenders of the place as a consequence were without any hindrance to a vigorous defence.

Tom and his companion reported what they had discovered to the general, and told of the deep ravines and swamps that almost surrounded the town and rendered an approach an exceedingly difficult matter. However, they all declared that the place where the Indians had entered was one into which the white men could go too, and after some time approaches suitable for the army were found.

General Claiborne carefully made his plans, and in three columns the army closed upon the town by a simultaneous movement. Colonel Carson's Mississippi volunteers were the first to be seen by the enemy, and so furiously did they make their attack that before Colonel Russell and Major Smoot could bring their men fairly into the fight, the Indians in dismay had broken and fled. The most of these escaped, as Major Cassell had failed to follow his directions and occupy

the bank of the Alabama west of the town with his battalion of horse.

These Indians fled in droves, running swiftly along the bank of the river, and whenever they could find an opportunity plunged into the water, some swimming and some using the canoes which they had hidden along the banks. Some, who were fortunate enough to gain these, made their way to the farther side of the river and joined their families, who were concealed in the woods there.

Here Weatherford gave a display of his courage and skill that was long talked of after the war was ended. As we have related in a preceding chapter, he was usually seen mounted on a swift gray horse that seemed to share the spirit of his rider. When the half-breed found that his warriors had deserted him and were unwilling to listen to the calls of the prophets, he was compelled to flee for his own life; but he was the last to leave.

The horse he was riding responded to his every touch, and bore him along the ravines to a high bluff which overlooked the river, and behind which there was a steep precipice. With a shout of exultation the soldiers pressed closely upon him, thinking that now they had their dreaded enemy in their clutches.

On one side lay the river far below the bluff, and on the other side were the deep ravines, while beyond him lay a swamp through which escape was impossible;

but not hesitating even for a moment Weatherford touched his powerful steed with his hand, and with one mighty bound horse and rider both left the bluff and disappeared beneath the water of the river.

So sudden was this movement, and unexpected by the soldiers, that they all stopped for a moment, and a cry of dismay arose from the ranks; and yet the bravery of the half-breed and the wonderful response of the horse he was riding aroused their admiration, and a sound almost like that of applause was heard among the soldiers as they stood motionless, and watched for the reappearance of the horse and his rider.

In a moment both rose to the surface, and Weatherford grasped the mane of his horse with one hand and held his rifle with the other. Evidently he knew the noble animal which had been carrying him, and when they had gone a little distance out into the stream, Weatherford once more lifted himself into the saddle, and, waving his hands defiantly at his enemies behind him, was carried by his faithful steed safely to the farther shore.

The soldiers at once returned to Econochaca and began to plunder the village. At their entrance they had quickly spied the eleven victims of whom we have told in our last chapter, who were still fast bound to the stakes in the square in the centre of the town, and about whom the fagots were piled high.

There was no more surprised boy in Alabama than Tom Curry when he recognized in the first victim he approached his friend Josiah. It was but the work of a minute to free him, and in spite of the excitement to stop and listen to his story.

The Choctaws meanwhile had been scalping the slain Indians. Thirty of these lay dead, and as soon as the work of plundering was completed, General Claiborne ordered the town to be fired. He knew the place was considered by the Indians to be "holy ground," and he thought by reducing it to ashes he might be able to break in upon their superstitions, and thus destroy one of the sources of their courage.

Quickly the soldiers obeyed his word, and in a brief time the two hundred houses that composed the village were in flames. It was found that the assailants had lost but one man in the attack, and while six were wounded, the soldiers felt that they had been wonderfully fortunate in accomplishing their task with so slight a loss.

Two nights and a day were spent near the ruins of what once was the beautiful village of Econochaca. The Indians did not return to the attack, and the general hoped that their spirit was broken.

There was need of this attack of his, for the skies were very lowering, and as we know seven British vessels, besides many troops and two bomb-ships, had arrived not long before at Pensacola.

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Mobile was in great danger and New Orleans was also threatened. St. Augustine, without any doubt, would soon be occupied by the British soldiers through the consent of the treacherous Spaniards. The Indians had increased in their boldness since the successful attack they had made upon Fort Mims, and in view of all these things a decisive blow at this time the general thought would be doubly effective.

The army now resumed its march, and on the twenty-ninth arrived once more at Fort Claiborne; but the general was very desirous that the news of his success should be sent to General Jackson, whose plans might be governed somewhat by the loss of the Indians at Econochaca.

Josiah Fletcher, who had soon recovered from his sufferings, with our young friend Tom Curry and two friendly Indians who were familiar with the region, were chosen to go on this errand, and soon after the arrival of the army at Fort Claiborne they bade good-bye to their companions and started on their journey to Jackson's camp.

CHAPTER XXIII

AN INTERRUPTED PASSAGE

WHEN Josiah Fletcher, with his companion and the two Indians who were to serve as a guard and guides, started on their expedition, they were not at all certain of the way. Josiah had, it is true, often hunted in this part of the country, but the most of his life had been spent in the southern portion of what is now the State of Alabama.

"There's no help for it, Tom," said the hunter. "We shall have to rely pretty much upon these Indians to show us the way to Jackson's camp, but we don't want to let them fool us. I don't feel very sure of them myself."

"If you had seen them when they were scalping those dead Creeks, you wouldn't have thought they wasted any affection on the other side," replied Tom.

"That's all true enough," said Josiah; "but an Indian is a good deal like a duck. You can't keep one out of the water if there's any near him, and you can't keep the hands of a redskin away from the scalp of the best friend he's got, if there's one he can take."

"But surely the effect of the reverses these Indians have had will help to keep these fellows straight who are with us," replied Tom.

"After a fashion, perhaps," answered the hunter; "but these redskins are as easily drawn one way as they are the other. Even those young fellows you call Tecumseh's young braves were fierce enough when the war first began; and I can assure you that they did their full share in the bloody work at Fort Mims; but you see they have had all their courage pulled out of them, and now they are just as ready to fight on the other side."

"That's true; but that is not the whole truth," answered Tom. "Tecumseh's young braves were all right enough for us until they heard the great prophets speak; and I never myself heard any one talk that made my blood start as they did. Why, Tecumseh appealed to every motive he could think of. You would have thought he was a patriot trying to get his men to stand by their own country, and I'm not at all sure that that wasn't just what he was doing, after all."

"Stuff and nonsense," replied Josiah. "This is a white man's country. No redskins have any right here."

Tom laughed as they both turned to follow the Indians, who were ready now to start on their journey. A violent storm had occurred after their sack of the

town, and as they walked rapidly on through the woods the effect of this was apparent on every side. Great trees had been torn from their roots, and long and heavy branches broken from their places. The hurricane seemed to have had a narrow track, but within that it had wrought great damage.

The little party marched silently, the Indians in advance and the white men following. The silence of the woods in the last of December was doubly impressive. They could see some little distance in advance of them; and the sound of the wind was not broken, as it had been when the trees were covered with leaves.

Late in the afternoon they had put a good distance between them and the camp of General Claiborne which they had left, and their pace now slackened somewhat.

"That was a great fight, wasn't it?" said Tom, whose mind was full of the thoughts of the destruction which had been visited upon Econochaca.

"The Indians didn't fight half as well as I thought they would. It wasn't their style or place either," replied Josiah. "They have fought better in close quarters during this war than I ever knew them to do before in my life; but after all, whenever they have fought that way it has been because they thought the victory was right in their own hands."

"They fought well this time, but not so long as I

thought they would," said Tom. "They gave up a good deal sooner than I expected them to. But what a leap that was that Weatherford took on his horse, wasn't it? I should like to have that horse, and I wish I had a body like that half-breed's."

"More stuff and more nonsense," said Josiah. "You don't want any of the half-breed's make-up. If I had his body here I'd put a bullet-hole in it. That's about all it's good for."

"I can't help feeling," said Tom, "that Weatherford is fighting for what he thinks is his own country, anyway."

"Oh, well, he's not so bad as some of them," replied Josiah, "I'll say that much for him; but Injun blood is bad blood wherever you find it."

"I wish I could have heard something from Nance before I started," said Tom. "I'd like to know how they all are at Mobile."

"Oh, Nance is all right," replied the hunter, "she can take care of herself and the others too."

"I'm not afraid of her," said Tom, somewhat proudly; "but after all there's a good deal of danger there, and if the British and the Spaniards together make an attack on Mobile, I'm afraid it will go hard with the town. I almost wish we'd stayed there, and if I'd ever thought that this trouble with the Indians was going to last anything like the time it has, I don't think either Jerry or I would have left."

"Oh, you can do a good deal more for Nance and your mother up here putting a stop to these Indian raids, than you ever could have done at Mobile. But we've got to start on again ; I see the Indians are in a hurry," replied the hunter.

And once more they resumed their journey. They were fearful of the scattered bands of the Indians now, and did not know but some of the defeated warriors might rally and return, and if they did, it was more than likely that they would fall in with some of these parties before they arrived at their journey's end. At nightfall they kindled no fire, and in the morning made only enough to cook the birds which Josiah shot, and then quickly covered it.

They steadily advanced, and whenever they found a level stretch they often used the lope, or half run, which was a favorite mode of travelling with the Indians, and in which both these white men showed great endurance. Late in the second day they arrived at the bank of the Tallapoosa. How they were to cross this now became their problem.

"Let's swim it," said Tom. But Josiah, who had a vivid recollection of his recent experiences in the water, and whose teeth almost chattered as he recalled the cold and numbness from which he had suffered, decidedly opposed the suggestion, declaring that it was too long a swim, and as the water was cold some

of them very likely would be taken with a cramp before they could gain the farther shore.

The Indians searched the bank for a canoe, but none was found, and when they returned to the others it was with a suggestion that a raft should be built. The shore was strewn with the trees which had been broken in the hurricane and carried down the river.

The suggestion was approved by both the white men, and the work was at once begun. They experienced more difficulty in lashing these limbs and trunks of trees together than they had expected, but at last they made the raft only large enough to carry two. Josiah fashioned a rude paddle with his hunting-knife and declared that he would be the ferryman, and would himself carry the others across, taking one on each trip.

When the raft had been completed it was late in the day, and Tom, who was the first to be carried across, when he took his place on the treacherous-looking craft noticed that the sun had almost disappeared from sight. But Josiah safely and quickly carried him across the river, and soon landed him on the farther shore. He at once began his return trip for the others, Tom meanwhile standing near the place where he had landed, watching the ferryman in his efforts to guide his unwieldy craft.

"How slow Josiah is! I think I could make that raft hum if I held the paddle," said Tom to himself.

But the hunter had scarcely made his way to the middle of the river before Tom was startled, as glancing up the stream his attention was arrested by the sight of a canoe which was rapidly approaching.

He called to Josiah, and warned him of the approaching boat, and as the young man stepped quickly back into the bushes where he could not be seen by any one who was passing, he was surprised to see Josiah quickly let himself into the water. Tom divined the plan of the hunter at once, and saw that he was holding to the side of the raft. He was on the side nearer the shore, and evidently was hoping that by keeping his head out of sight he might escape the notice of the new-comers and receive no attention from them.

The water was cold, and Tom shivered as he thought of the plight in which Josiah must be. Perhaps the men in the canoe would pass without noticing the raft. There were many floating logs in the river now, and it was barely possible that the rough structure, made as it was of the trunks and limbs broken from the trees by the storm, would appear so like the other floating débris, that the party would not stop to examine it.

The canoe was rapidly approaching now, and as it came nearer, Tom could see that there were four men in it, two of whom were paddling. He also was soon enabled to see that one of the party was a white man,

and he had just begun to hope that they would pass without noticing the raft, when a sudden exclamation from one of the Indians caused both of the men who were paddling to cease from their labors and bring the canoe to a standstill.

What would they do? Was it the raft which had attracted their attention? Perhaps Tom himself had been seen, and at the thought the boy drew back farther into the bushes, but still remained near enough to the river to watch the movements of the men in the canoe.

No, it was the raft which had been seen by them; and as they turned from their course and started towards it, Tom knew that his friend would soon be in great danger. Evidently the men were suspicious but not afraid, and had stopped to examine the strange-looking craft more from motives of curiosity than anything else.

They had been coming so swiftly down the stream that it was evident they were in a hurry. Tom was excited now, and as the canoe drew nearer to the raft his breath came faster. He knew that Josiah had no gun, nor anything by which he could protect himself. He himself must do something to divert the attention of these men, and aid his companion in his predicament.

It would be death for Josiah if the party found him, and Tom now had no hope that the hunter

could escape their notice. The paddle which Josiah had used he saw was lying on the raft, and evidently was the subject of conversation on board the canoe. This was within five yards now, and if Tom was to do anything the moment had arrived.

Twice the boy brought his gun to his shoulder before he could decide to shoot, but at last, taking careful aim, he fired. All the men in the canoe turned quickly at the sound of the gun, and looked at the puff of smoke which rose above the bushes behind which Tom was concealed. Evidently they had been taken by surprise; but a greater surprise yet was in store for them, for suddenly there was the sound of two guns fired from the other shore, and not without effect, for Tom saw one of the Indians fall forward, and another suddenly clapped his hand upon his shoulder.

They were startled now, and quickly seizing the paddles of their canoe started again down the stream as rapidly as they could go. They were not yet out of sight when Josiah crawled up on the raft. He shouted at the party which was now far down the stream, but no attention was paid to his hail. Josiah stood and watched them until they were out of sight, and then taking his paddle again sought the farther bank.

Tom waited behind the bushes and soon began to wonder why the raft did not return. He could not

see the men in the canoe now, and the raft itself was out of sight behind the little point on the farther shore. More and more puzzled Tom waited, but when a half hour had passed and none of the party appeared he began to be alarmed.

What was the meaning of it? Why did they not come? It would soon be dark, and he began to fear that he had been abandoned by the others. He did not know the way to Jackson's camp, and as he thought of possible treachery on the part of their Indian companions, he began to be seriously alarmed, not only for himself but also for his hunter friend. Meanwhile the gloom increased, the sun had long since disappeared, and the darkness would soon be at hand.

CHAPTER XXIV

FOLLOWED

THE darkness deepened while Tom waited for his companions, and he began to think they were prevented from coming. He was afraid something had happened to Josiah, and the suspicions which his companion had entertained concerning the Indians returned now to him, and he, too, began to fear that there had been foul play somewhere. He did not know whether to go away, or to wait longer where he was. If evil had befallen the hunter, it might soon be his turn to share in it also, for the Indians knew where he was, and if they had dealt foully with Josiah, it would be a comparatively easy matter for them to cross the river farther up the stream, and come upon him while he was unaware.

He decided that he would remain for a little while where he was, and await further developments. Several minutes passed in this way, but the only sounds that were heard were of the lapping of the waters and the wind sighing through the tree-tops.

Suddenly his attention was directed by a sound that came from the river.

What was that? It sounded very much like a paddle, and the slight splash in the water was soon followed by another; but who was it coming? Was it Josiah returning, or did it mean danger for himself?

He peered out into the darkness and soon saw slowly emerging the outlines of the raft. He could discern the two bodies that were on it, and he hesitated a moment between his inclination to run, and his desire to wait and see who the approaching men were. Suddenly he heard a whistle low and clear from the raft, and he recognized it at once as Josiah's signal. Reassured by the familiar sound, he watched the progress of the raft as it was sent towards the shore by the combined efforts of the two men, for both were paddling.

Yes, it was Josiah and one of the Indians. Tom had no difficulty now in recognizing them, and as soon as they landed he listened to the explanation which Josiah gave for their long delay.

One of the Indians, as soon as the canoe had gone down the stream, had quickly started towards the little point below them that projected into the river, and taken his stand where he could watch the movements of the party that was fleeing. He had expressed to the hunter his fear that they might

return, and by making a *détour* come upon them from behind, after they thought all danger had passed.

"But you're wet through, Josiah," said Tom, "and your teeth are chattering like a woodpecker's bill against a tree. You're not fit to go over again. I'll take the raft this time and go over for the other man, and you wait for me here."

Josiah interposed a few feeble objections, but evidently he was glad of the proffer of his young friend, and Tom soon stepped upon the raft and grasping the paddle quickly moved out into the stream.

It was not new work, for many times he had made a voyage down the river in a small canoe, or on one of the larger rafts that sometimes were made up by settlers and sent down to the mouth of the Alabama.

Slowly he sent the little craft onward, trying to make as little noise as possible, for he did not know but another party of stragglers might be coming down the river by this time, and he was not without fear that the party which had passed them might return. His progress consequently was not very rapid, and the young pioneer was watchful on every side; but at last he crossed the stream in safety and looked about for the Indian who was supposed to be waiting for him.

He approached the shore and stepped out upon the bank, but not a sign of the Indian could he see. He did not know but he had come to the wrong

place, or perhaps he had gone farther down the stream than he had intended to; and yet he scarcely dared to call, and was for the time undecided as to what he had best do.

For several minutes he stood there on the bank waiting for some sign of the presence of the Indian, and he was about to resume his position on the raft, and go farther up the stream, when he was startled by the sudden appearance of the young brave. He uttered no word, but stepped quickly upon the raft, and taking the other paddle began to assist Tom at once, and together they sent the little raft farther out into the river.

They had not gone more than a third of the distance across the stream when the Indian suddenly stopped and uttered a low warning word to his companion. He evidently heard something that disturbed him.

Yes, Tom could hear it now, too. There was a splash of some kind farther up the river, or was it down the stream? Tom could not tell at first, but following the example of his companion he dropped his paddle, and taking his gun they both silently awaited developments.

For several minutes they retained their positions, not even uttering a word or doing so much as to whisper to each other. Their raft meanwhile had drifted some distance with the current, and they were afraid they would lose their bearings. The sound

which had arrested their attention was not repeated, and once more grasping their paddles they sent the raft quite swiftly over the water and soon arrived at the farther bank.

Here they were compelled to go some little distance up the stream before they landed, so far had they drifted below the landing-place, and when once more they were with their companions they told of their delay and the alarm which the sudden splash in the river had caused them.

Tom's companion, who hitherto had been silent, said, "Canoe come back. Chase the white hunters."

And from his conversation they learned that when he had gone down to the point, as Josiah had related, he had seen the men who were in the canoe, when they thought they were beyond the sight of the party that had fired upon them, turn about in their course, and seek the bank which was on the side of the river on which they themselves then were. The Indian also urged them at once to start inland and make the best possible time.

"He's right," said Josiah; "he's right. I'm chilled to the bone, but we must put out of here right away. We've got a good many miles to go, and with woods as full of Indians as these are now, we'll be lucky if we ever arrive at Jackson's camp."

"We can make a start, anyway," said Tom:

"Yes," replied Josiah; "but there's no knowing

what we may run into. I'd like to know whether Jerry and those young braves of Tecumseh's made their way all right, and succeeded in getting into General Jackson's camp. If they did, I don't see why we can't."

"Of course they did," said Tom. "Jerry didn't close his eyes on that journey, I'll warrant, and when his eyes are open, they're wide open."

For some time they journeyed on in the darkness. Many mishaps were theirs, and frequently they stumbled over logs and were tripped by the vines, and more than once stepped into some marshy or boggy place that threw some of them forward upon their faces.

At length, after three hours had passed, they made a brief halt, and as it was near morning now, they decided that it would be safe for them to start a small fire. They did this; but as soon as Josiah's clothing was dry, and they had cooked what little food they had, they at once started on again.

Their Indian companions now apparently had lost much of their fear, and explained that if they were pursued, it was more than likely that by this time the others had lost trace of them.

In another hour it was broad daylight, and then the Indians strongly urged them to wait for a few hours and see whether they were followed.

"That's a good plan," said Josiah, "and we'll try it. It won't do us any harm to get a little rest, and

it may be that we shall get rid of some dangers by travelling in the night and resting in the daytime. To tell the truth," Josiah added, after he and Tom had stretched themselves upon the boughs they had collected, "I'm a good deal afraid that those fellows in the canoe will not give us up. They don't know how many of us there were, nor who we were, but when you popped at them on one side and the two Indians on the other side, they must have concluded at once that you were acting together, and that there were only three of you all told. If that's so, it's very likely they'll send somebody after those they think are on the other side of the river, while they'll either come themselves or send somebody else after those who were on this side, and I think we'd better keep pretty quiet to-day."

The Indians had both withdrawn from the camp and gone into the woods, and as they had not explained their purpose in leaving, Josiah's fears returned, and he again became suspicious of treachery on the part of their guides.

"I tell you, we can't trust 'em. We can't trust 'em, and this little nap that you and I planned to take, we'll have to give up — at least, I shall."

"Well, I think if there had been any treachery in the minds of these Indians," said Tom, "they wouldn't have been apt to hit two of those men who were in the canoe, and that's just what they did."

"That's so," said Josiah slowly; "I'd forgotten that. They did tickle two of those fellows in the canoe, didn't they? We're not going to borrow any trouble before we have to, and so we might just as well turn in and have a little nap, after all." This advice Tom quickly followed, and soon both of these hardy pioneers were fast asleep.

When they awoke, both Indians had returned to the camp and were preparing the birds they had shot for their breakfast. They had not used their guns, as they were fearful of the presence of the enemy, but their arrows, which, even though they carried fire-arms, they were not willing to discard, had quietly and just as efficiently accomplished their purpose. The small fire was kept just long enough to cook these birds, and then was put out again.

Slowly the hours of the long day passed, and as the dusk drew on again, they made their preparations for resuming the journey. They were almost ready to start when Tom felt the touch of one of the Indian's hands laid upon his own. He glanced up quickly and saw that the Indian had also placed his finger upon his lips. He whispered the one word "Coming," and although Tom was not able to detect any unusual sound in the forest, in a few minutes he too could hear the snapping of branches, and knew that some one was approaching.

All of them had drawn back now, leaving their

camp, and had hidden themselves behind the trees. They were excited and fearful. How many there were in the approaching party they had no means of knowing, and whether they were friends or foes they could not tell; but soon they stepped forth into the cleared space and Tom could scarcely repress the exclamation of fear which rose upon his lips.

There were five Indians and one white man whom Josiah at once recognized as the Spaniard who had formed one of the party which had captured him, and with whom he had gone to Econochaca.

How the Spaniard had escaped from that place, when General Claiborne made his attack, he had never known; but as he had not found his body among the slain, he concluded that he had succeeded in making his way across the river, and had hidden with the Indians in the forest.

But there were only four who had been in the canoe which had passed them while they were trying to make their way across the river, and here there were five of the Indians, not one of whom showed any signs of a wound, and a Spaniard who perhaps might have been a member of the party; but the two additional warriors certainly showed that others were scouring the country, and that reinforcements had been drawn from them.

The entire party stopped at the camp and curiously examined the remains of the meal which had been

left there. They began to examine the ground and look for the trail again, and Josiah almost chuckled as he saw that they had followed the one made by the Indians when they had left the camp in their search for birds. They waited until all of them had passed, and then Josiah whispered, "The Indians were right, Tom. Those fellows are following us."

"But where are our Indians?" said Tom quickly. "There's only one here. Where's the other one?"

"That's true," said Josiah, somewhat startled, "and I don't know what it means; but we've got to put out of this, and make better time than we have been doing, or they'll get us, after all."

Summoning their companion, they started as swiftly and silently as they could go once more into the forest. They knew the enemy was near them, and they were in danger of an attack at any moment. Their fears were increased by the strange disappearance of the Indian who had been with them, and it was with many forebodings that they resumed their journey.

"I hardly think they'll follow us in the darkness," said Josiah in a low whisper to Tom. "They'll think we're not suspicious of them, and that very likely we'll go into camp somewhere at night, and they'll plan to fall upon us then if they can."

"But what's that?" asked Tom suddenly as he

pointed into the forest by their side. "There's some one coming."

All three of the men grasped their guns and stood silently awaiting the approach of this stranger. They could see his form, but could not determine whether he was friend or foe. How noiselessly he stepped over the dead branches with which the ground was strewn! How swiftly he made his way even in the dim light! They could see that he was walking confidently, and yet he made no sound that they could hear; but evidently he was approaching, and still holding their guns they all waited for him to come near.

CHAPTER XXV

EMUCFAU

THE approaching Indian was soon recognized as their missing companion, and their immediate fears, as a consequence, were quieted; but the report which he brought was alarming, and they resolved to make all possible haste and push their way on in the darkness, and through the unknown country.

The Indian told them how he had seen the members of the other party apparently scouring the woods, and the hunter well knew that when they had begun a search of that kind it would not soon be abandoned.

The Indian guides now led the way, and there was nothing for the white men to do except to follow their directions. However strong their own fears were, — and Josiah did not hesitate to express his own distrust freely, — there was nothing left for them to do but to make all possible haste and try to find some way of eluding their pursuers.

All night long they worked their way onward, occasionally stopping to rest and to make such observations as they could of the region about them. Several

times they thought they recognized the presence of their pursuers, but each time they were fortunate enough to escape without observation, and when the daylight came it found them far on their way.

The Indians led them to several places where they could lie concealed, and where they took such rest as they could gain. The journey was an exciting one now, and Tom declared that he thought he appreciated the feeling of the foxes they had chased when the boys had been on their hunting expeditions with Josiah.

But all things have an end, and at last, in spite of Josiah's fears, the Indians led them near the place which they had no difficulty in recognizing as the camp of General Jackson. Fort Strother, where the general made his headquarters, presented an unusual appearance as our little party entered.

Near the gate stood a tall, vigorous man, apparently in the prime of life, grasping a rifle in his hands and shouting excitedly to the soldiers near him, who evidently were awed by his words. So great was the excitement among the men that but little attention was paid to the entering party, and it was some time before they learned the condition of affairs at the fort.

They were rejoiced, however, at soon seeing Jerry and Tecumseh's young braves approaching, who had succeeded in making their way into the fort, and who

had been there for several days. From them they learned that many of the soldiers — the time for which they had enlisted having expired, and their pay having been very slow in coming — had threatened to leave, and how on this very day the feeling had become so strong that a large body of men had thrown down their arms and had started to leave the camp.

General Jackson's pleadings apparently had had very little effect. At last, exasperated beyond the power of control, he had taken his stand in front of the advancing men, declaring that he would shoot the first one to approach. Their spirit evidently was subdued by his action, and the bravery of the hardy soldier, and his resolute attitude and reckless daring, accomplished more in shaming these men than his words of command and entreaties ever had done.

For some time our party remained in the camp now, and the boys watched General Jackson with increasing interest. He had faced his trials as a brave man should, and in spite of all the discouragements arising from the lack of support on the part of the War Department, his insufficient equipment, and the unwillingness of the men to remain longer than the time for which they had enlisted, he had never lost heart.

He was determined that the enterprise on which he had entered should be successfully carried through to the end, and the lessons he taught the boys by his own daring and his unflinching will were never

forgotten. Apparently he was always in motion, and almost alone he had traversed the wilderness between the Coosa and the Tennessee, going backward and forward, stopping at none of the places for a long time, and yet lending his presence and his aid to all the movements.

His chief desire now was to hasten forward the supplies for his new army, which was quite rapidly being gathered, and which was to take the place of his former one. The boys were greatly interested, we may be sure, when they saw the advance of these new men.

The first to arrive were two regiments, many of the soldiers being mounted. They had enlisted for sixty days and numbered about nine hundred men. They were, however, raw recruits and without any experience in Indian warfare, except such as the border men continually had in their rough life.

General Jackson determined to put them in motion at once and start towards the enemy. The Indians had recovered somewhat from their late disasters, and were beginning to show an aggressive disposition again. The general was satisfied that this must be quickly checked, or new and greater dangers would threaten the entire region.

It was the fifteenth of January when Jackson led his new troops across the Coosa to the place where the battle of Talladega had taken place. There he

was joined by a band of two hundred Indians, most of whom were Cherokees and friendly Creeks; and there, too, came Chief Jim Fife, for whom our boys had named one of Tecumseh's young braves, who, as we know, was familiarly called "Captain Jim." The warrior had brought with him some of the artillery that had remained at Fort Strother when the other troops had departed, and he also had a six-pounder of which he was exceedingly proud. Altogether there were nine hundred and thirty men now with Jackson, besides the Indians, and with these he started on what he called an "excursion" towards the Tallapoosa.

In advance of him he sent two companies of spies, who frequently reported the condition of affairs in front. General Coffee, who had only forty men left of all his followers, all the others having deserted, was also among the number.

On the twentieth they encamped at Enatochopeco, near the Hillabee creek. Emucfau was only twelve miles distant now, and for this place the entire army started. When they had come near the village, the scouts reported that they had found a beaten trail, and the watchful general at once knew that a large force of Indians was probably not far away. Accordingly he thought it was prudent to halt, and reconnoitre before advancing.

He doubled the number of his sentinels, sent out spies in every direction, and formed his troops in a

hollow square. All the soldiers were excited now, and yet there was a silence over the entire army.

Hour after hour passed, and the men began to complain. They were kept in their positions uselessly, they claimed, and yet none of them dared to dispute the command of the resolute general. The scouts returned about midnight, and again reported that they had seen numbers of the Indians prowling about; and at the same time when these messages were brought, another scout entered, reporting to the general that about three miles away there was a large body of Indians in camp. Some of these, he said, were engaged in a war dance, and others were removing the women and children from the camp as rapidly as possible.

All these the general accepted as signs of an immediate attack, and he resolved to await it where he then was. His position was an excellent one, and he did not care to throw away his advantage by making any false moves. He knew that the usual hour when the Indians made an attack was near morning, and yet he did not wish his men to advance then from the position they were holding.

The long night passed, and just as the first gray of the dawn was seen, the Indians, with yells, and brandishing their weapons, fell suddenly and with great fury on the left flank of Jackson's camp. This was composed of the troops which Colonel Higgins was

commanding, and General Coffee also was there, and under his direction, assisted by the other officers, these untrained men began a desperate fight, and astonished themselves by their own coolness.

The Indians were held in check for a time, and when the light became clearer, reinforced now by Captain Ferrill's infantry, General Coffee led the whole body in a vigorous charge against the savages. This was too much for the Indian courage. They could fight much better in a sudden attack of their own than they could when the situation was reversed, and quickly thrown into confusion, they scattered and fled. For two miles the soldiers pursued them, and many an Indian fell by the way.

General Jackson, who had been busy every moment, as soon as he saw the break in the forces of the assailants, immediately sent General Coffee with four hundred men and all the friendly Indians to destroy all the camps at Emucfau.

As soon as they approached this place, they saw that it was too strongly fortified to be taken without artillery; so General Coffee marched back for the purpose of guarding the cannon on its way to a position where it could be brought to bear upon the town. This movement was misunderstood by the Indians, and they thought their assailants were now retreating, and with renewed courage a large body of them fell upon the right of Jackson's encampment.

General Coffee, whose excitement had now become intense, obtained leave to lead two hundred men to the support of that wing, and planned to fall upon the left of the enemy at the same moment when the friendly Indians should fall upon their right flank. Here a great mistake was made, but whose fault it was no one ever knew. Only fifty-four men followed General Coffee, but the excited officer, without waiting for more, at once, with those who were with him, fell upon the Indians, and General Jackson ordered the friendly Indians at the same time to fall upon the right flank of the foe.

Quickly his order was obeyed, and it produced a marked effect. The plan of the assailants had been to attack the right as a mere feint, and then when attention had been called in that direction to fall with their main force on the left flank, which they had expected to find weakened and in disorder.

But General Jackson was too wary a man to be caught in this wise, and suspecting some such movement, he had not only ordered the men on his left to remain firm, but had gone there at once himself, and had ordered Captain Ferrill to bring the reserves immediately to this spot.

As a consequence, the unsuspecting enemy, instead of meeting the left wing in their attack, met the whole main body, who, after two or three volleys were fired, charged them with the bayonet. This

was too much for the Indians' courage, and they fled in great confusion and were hotly pursued for some distance.

Meanwhile the friendly Indians, who had seen the flight of the foe, were unable to withstand the temptation which was offered them, and left their position on the right and joined in the chase, all the while pouring a sharp fire among the fugitives.

General Coffee all this time was struggling as best he could against the Indians who had assailed the right of the encampment. When the friendly Indians, led away by the enthusiasm of the pursuit, deserted him, it left him with the odds greatly against him; but Captain Jim Fife with a hundred of his braves soon returned from the chase, and brought aid to the struggling general at just the right time.

His assailants, disconcerted now by the flight of their main body, gave way under the sharp charge which General Coffee led, and ran in every direction in their endeavors to escape; but many of them fell before the guns and the tomahawks of their pursuers.

General Coffee had been severely wounded, and several of his men had fallen and others were wounded; but the victory they had won served in part to compensate them for their losses. General Jackson was astonished at the bravery and the courage of the

Creeks, and decided that it would be imprudent to make any further attempt just then to destroy Emuefau.

His raid, or "excursion" as he preferred to call it, had been highly successful, and he determined to return at once to Fort Strother. About ten o'clock on the morning of the twenty-third of January the return march was commenced, and before sunset the army had arrived at Enotochopeco creek, where they made their camp for the night. They were still watchful, but were not molested.

The next morning the return march was resumed, but the Indians, who had mistaken this movement for a flight, had followed the men, and crossing the creek suddenly appeared in force on their rear. An alarm gun brought the entire army to a halt, and Jackson immediately changed front and in good order prepared to meet the enemy.

He chose his own ground for the battle, and was confident that the action would be a short one; but to his great surprise his men who had behaved so well at Emuefau now failed, and when a few guns had been fired, the right and left columns of the rear guard gave way and began to flee. These drew with them the greater part of the centre column, leaving not more than twenty-five men to support Colonel Carroll, who was at the head of that portion of the army. These bravely began their fight, however, and

order was soon restored, although the battle was sustained by this little handful.

The little six-pounder, of which mention already has been made, was dragged to the top of a hill in the midst of a fire from a foe ten times the number of the Tennesseans, and when it began to send its grape-shot among the enemy, with frightened yells they scattered in every direction. For more than two miles the white men pursued them, and slew many of their Indian assailants.

In these two engagements of Emucfau and Enotochopco, Jackson lost only twenty killed and seventy-five wounded. How many the enemy lost they never accurately knew, but one hundred and eighty-nine of their warriors were found dead.

The march was then resumed, and after an absence of twelve days they once more made their way into Fort Strother. Here plans for an active campaign were formed, and exciting scenes were soon to be enacted, in which our boys and Tecumseh's young braves had no small share.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE WRESTLERS

FOR a few weeks now, our boys remained in Jackson's camp. The life there, while different from the stirring experiences which recently they had had, still had excitement of its own, and offered constant variety. Most of the militia had now gone, and had left the camp amidst the cheers of the few who remained.

General Jackson, though sadly perplexed by the loss of so many of his followers, was in no wise disheartened, and early in February found that his ceaseless activity was beginning to reap its reward. Reports came of two thousand troops from East Tennessee, which were then pressing on towards the Coosa, and, about the same time, as many more arrived at Huntsville from West Tennessee. His joy was still further increased by the arrival at Fort Strother, on the sixth, of the Thirty-ninth Regiment of the United States Army, six hundred strong.

Not long afterwards, a part of Coffee's brigade of mounted men came into the fort, and also a troop of

East Tennessee dragoons. The Choctaw Indians, also, now openly announced their allegiance to the United States. and by the end of February there was every promise that he would have five thousand men under his command.

Meanwhile the few militia in the camp were busied in the construction of flat-boats, and our boys had a share in this work.

Amongst all the soldiers there was a feeling of unbounded admiration for General Jackson, and many accounts were given of his courage and his prowess. At that time he had no living relatives, but his bravery, his physical strength, and undaunted will were the admiration of his soldiers. The stories were told how when he was a little fellow only thirteen or fourteen years of age he had taken part in the struggle of the Colonists against Great Britain. His work as a soldier, his courage when a prisoner, and his kind heart were the themes of many a conversation around the camp fires.

The story, which is now familiar to every boy, of the refusal of Jackson, when he was taken prisoner, to clean the boots of the British commander, was, perhaps, the most frequently told; and the wound he had received, when he had been struck on the head and arms with the sword of the irritated officer, aroused the anger of his followers even then.

His brother Robert, who also had refused the

brutal command of the same officer, had received a wound from which he never had recovered. They also told how, when Jackson was a prisoner, he had used the razor-blade, which had been left as the only means by which the captives could carve their food, to remove a knot in the wall enclosing the prisoners, and had witnessed the action on Hobkirk's Hill.

While these captives had been suffering from small-pox, the mother of the Jackson boys effected their exchange, and took them back to their home at Waxham, where Robert died, and where many months passed before Andrew's health was fully restored. Their widowed mother had then gone to Charleston to aid the American prisoners there, but she had been stricken with ship fever, and soon died.

Andrew, as we know, worked for a time in a saddler's shop, and then taught school; but before he had completed his eighteenth year he had resolved to become a lawyer, and although he paid more attention to horse-racing, foot-racing, cock-fighting, and other similar amusements which were common at the time, than he did to his studies, yet he managed to make a fair preparation, and soon entered upon a large practice.

As the men at Fort Strother worked at the flat-boats, stories of Jackson's personal encounters were frequently told, and perhaps incited the men to many similar attempts, for the tedium of the camp

life was relieved by frequent contests among the men. Their games were rough, and oftentimes led to feelings which occasionally resulted in a duel, although this was strongly condemned by the general himself. They shot at a mark, threw knives at a small piece of paper fastened to a tree, flung hatchets and tomahawks as tests of skill, and frequently engaged in wrestling-bouts. These were some of the rough means the hardy soldiers found to relieve their lonesomeness and test their skill and strength. These tests often led to quarrels which became at times bitter and full of danger, but the work of building the flat-boats went steadily on.

The Indians did not work, but employed their time either in trying to furnish game and thereby add to the scanty supplies of the camp, or else they sat in silence and watched the white men at their labors.

Among the militia there was one young man who had gained the name of "Big Bob." He was a quarrelsome man, perhaps three or four years older than our boys, and played the part of a bully amongst the men. He had been brought into contact with Tom several times in his labors, and for some reason, apparently had acquired a strong dislike for our hardy young soldier. He had noticed his warm feeling for Tecumseh's young braves, and as a method of tormenting him had made disparaging remarks about the

young Indians, and had done all he could to annoy them.

At last Tom ventured to enter a protest, which the bully took as a personal grievance. Warm words followed, and in a few moments Big Bob had challenged our young soldier. Tom had no wish to fight, and yet he could not see his way to avoid a conflict, knowing as he did the feelings of the men and the interpretation they would place upon his refusal.

Josiah Fletcher undertook the work of peacemaking, and in a long interview which he had with Big Bob tried to effect a compromise by a shooting-match. To all his proposals, however, the bully would not listen. Strong in his confidence in his own power, and perhaps feeling that the young soldier was afraid of him, he scornfully refused all the overtures of Josiah, until at last the hunter proposed that instead of a duel with guns, they should have a wrestling-match in the presence of the others. Big Bob agreed to this last proposal, declaring that he would "eat up the little upstart, and not leave a piece of him large enough to be found by the crows."

The match was arranged for the following day, and it soon became evident that Big Bob intended to do all the harm possible to the young soldier. Tom had accepted the compromise of Josiah, but all through the day he was quiet and thoughtful, as he well knew the strength of his opponent and the possibility of a

defeat which would make him the laughing-stock of the camp.

The match was taken up by the men, and soon all were interested in the coming event. Tom spent some little time in practising with his brother and Captain Jim, who was himself no mean wrestler, and who knew some tricks which he tried to teach his friend.

The next day the arrangements were completed, and the time soon came when the contest was to take place. A large ring had been formed, around which gathered nearly all the soldiers of the camp. As Big Bob stepped forth from the crowd of soldiers, Josiah could not conceal his fear, for the bully was well named. He towered above his young rival by a head, and his large frame apparently was the very embodiment of strength. He was at least twenty-five pounds heavier than Tom, and his added years gave him another advantage; and yet as the hunter noticed his young friend he could not conceal his feeling of confidence in his ability to care for himself.

Tom was somewhat pale and very quiet. He uttered no such boastful words as his rival did, and well knew that the task before him was no slight one; and yet the young soldier was no mean antagonist. While he was smaller and lighter than Big Bob, his body was athletic and the muscles stood out on his frame like whipcords. His long experience in the

pioneer life felling the trees, and doing such heavy work as came upon the boys after their father's death, had developed every muscle of his body, and Josiah knew that he would do his best, and that "best" would be something of which he need not be ashamed, if no accident or unfair methods were used.

In spite of the cold the men stripped to the waist and turned to the umpire for him to give the word to begin.

"Which shall it be," said the man, who had been selected to serve in that capacity, "a square hold or a side hold?"

"A square hold," said Tom.

"I don't want any square hold," growled the big bully; "that's only fit for baby play and boys. If we're going to have a square test, let's have a side hold."

Tom, stung by the scornful words of Big Bob, acquiesced, although he knew that this gave every advantage to his rival, for size and weight would count for much in a struggle of this kind; but the young soldier determined that, come what would, he would show no signs of fear. His heart was cheered as he noted the evident signs of sympathy for him amongst the soldiers.

"All ready, then," said the umpire. "It will be the best two out of three falls."

Big Bob laughed as he said, "There'll be only one fall. That'll be enough."

He was full of confidence, perhaps a trifle over-confident, and yet Tom realized as he faced him now, that his antagonist was one not to be despised, and that all his strength and skill would be called into use.

With a quick movement the men grasped each other and the struggle began. Big Bob tried, by putting forth all his strength, to throw Tom in such a way that he would fall upon him and perhaps crush him with his weight, but he was surprised when he found that the task was not so easily accomplished as he had thought. The young pioneer was not to be caught off his guard, and was holding his own in a way that surprised the bully, and brought a cheer from the soldiers, who were interested spectators. Several times Tom wavered and almost lost his balance, but he clung to his opponent each time and managed to keep his position.

At last both men were seen to topple, and in a moment it was evident there would be a fall.

"There they go!" shouted the men as together the wrestlers fell upon the ground; but even then the bully was unable to force his rival upon his back, and found, when he tried to move, that his own head was held as in a vice. Side by side the two men lay, the face of each upon the ground, and unable to move, until with a sudden motion the bully drew back his fist and struck Tom in the face.

A shout of anger was heard among the spectators

and a cry of "foul" arose from the crowd, and in a moment the struggling men were torn apart. A few moments of rest followed, and then the struggle began again. Big Bob was breathing hard now and evidently was very angry, and he entered into the work with even more spirit than before, and less than a minute had passed before he had caught his young antagonist and thrown him to the ground, falling heavily upon him as he went down. The fall was fair, and evidently not unexpected by the men.

Another rest followed, and Tom as he glanced about him could see that while the sympathy was with him, almost none of the crowd thought he was a match for his bulky foe.

A third trial now followed, and as Tom stepped into the ring Captain Jim whispered to him, "Try the trick." Tom nodded his head by way of reply, and in a moment the struggle was renewed. Both wrestlers were straining now, and doing their utmost to end the contest. Several times Tom almost fell, but managed to regain his position, and for a time held out against his heavy antagonist.

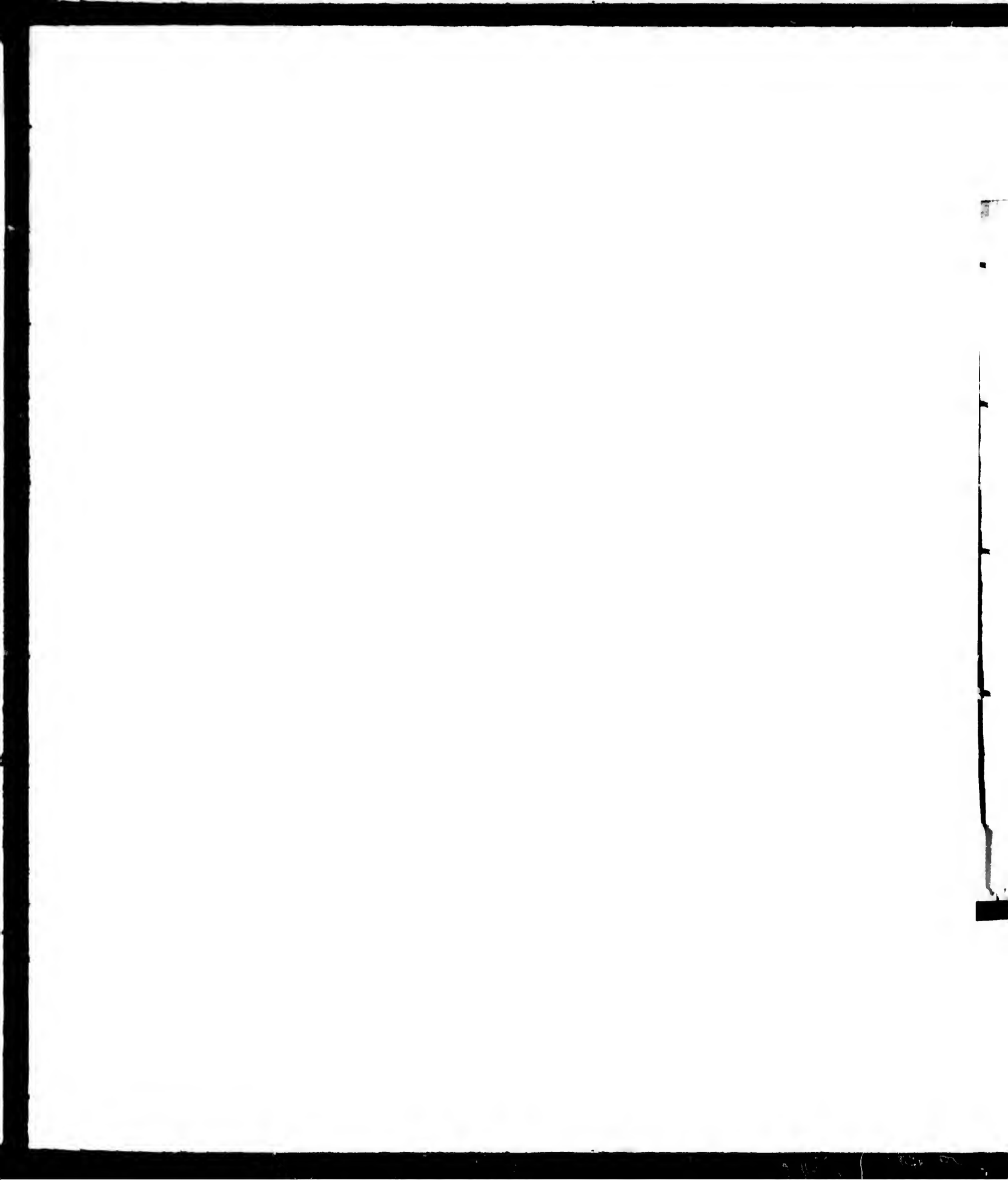
"He's down! he's down!" shouted the men, as again Tom almost lost his balance. "No, he isn't!" shouted others, as they saw the young soldier regain his position and cling desperately to the bully.

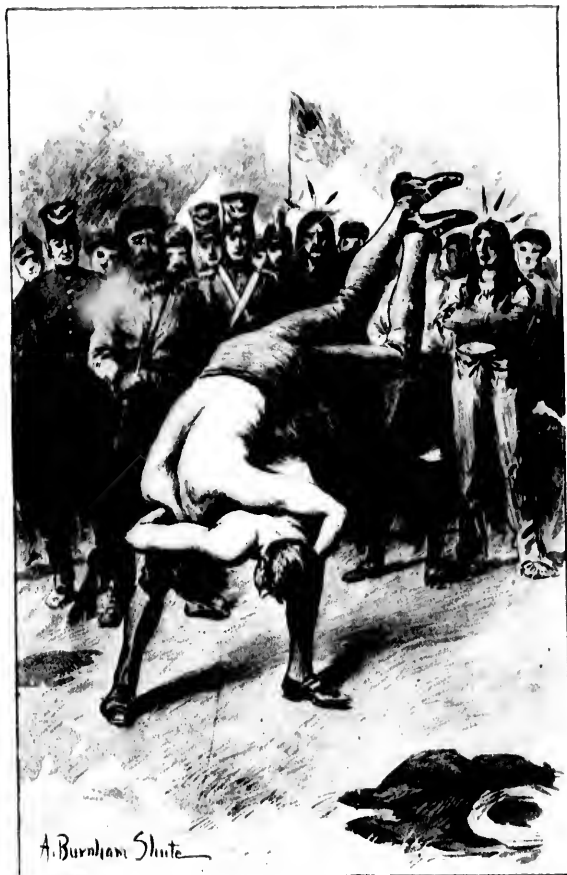
Tom was in a position now where he could look out upon the crowd. Who was that man standing on the outer edge? Could it be General Jackson?

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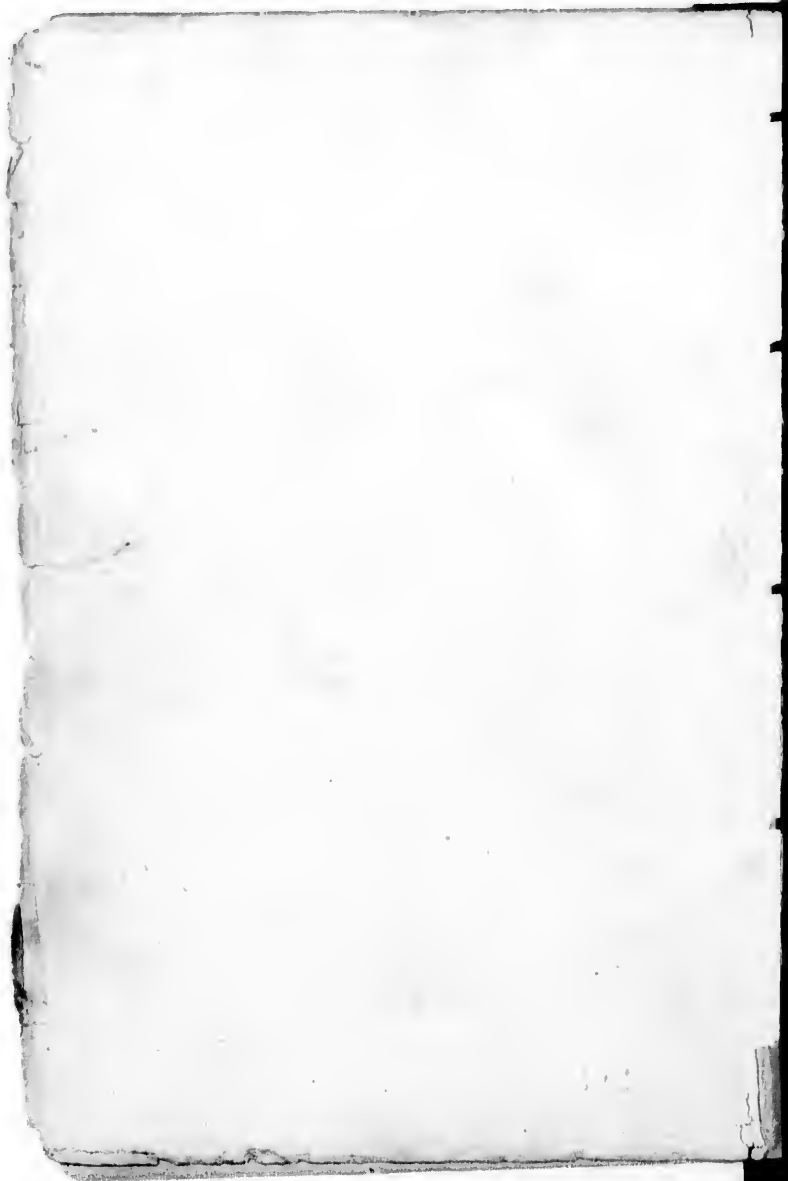
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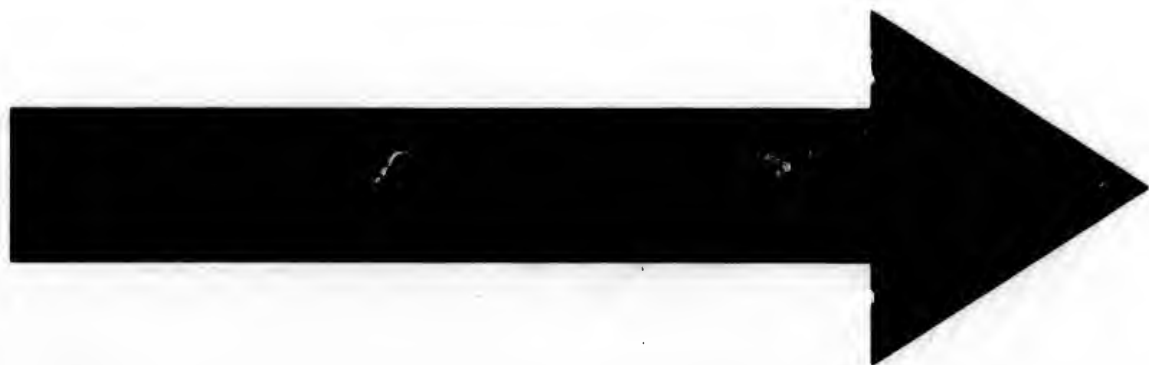


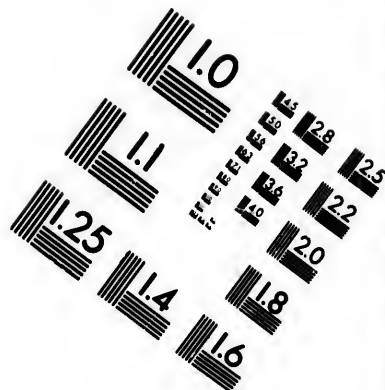
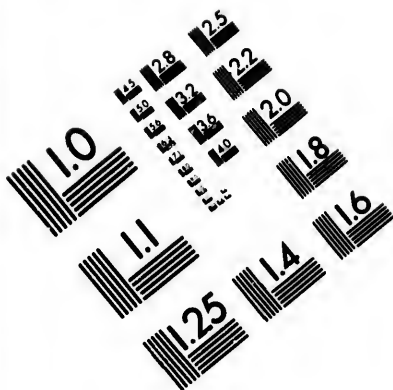


"He was thrown headlong and hard upon the ground."

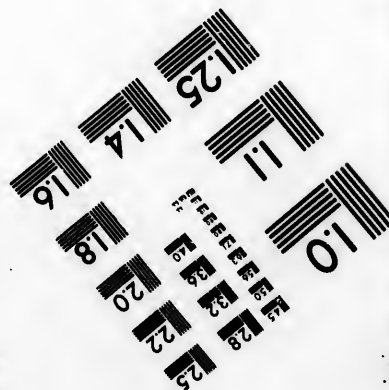
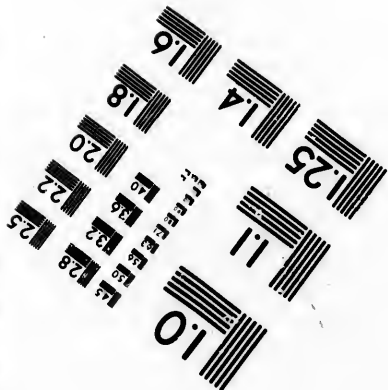
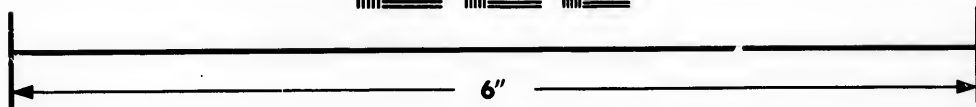
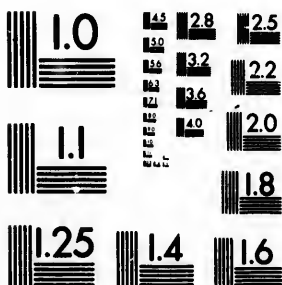
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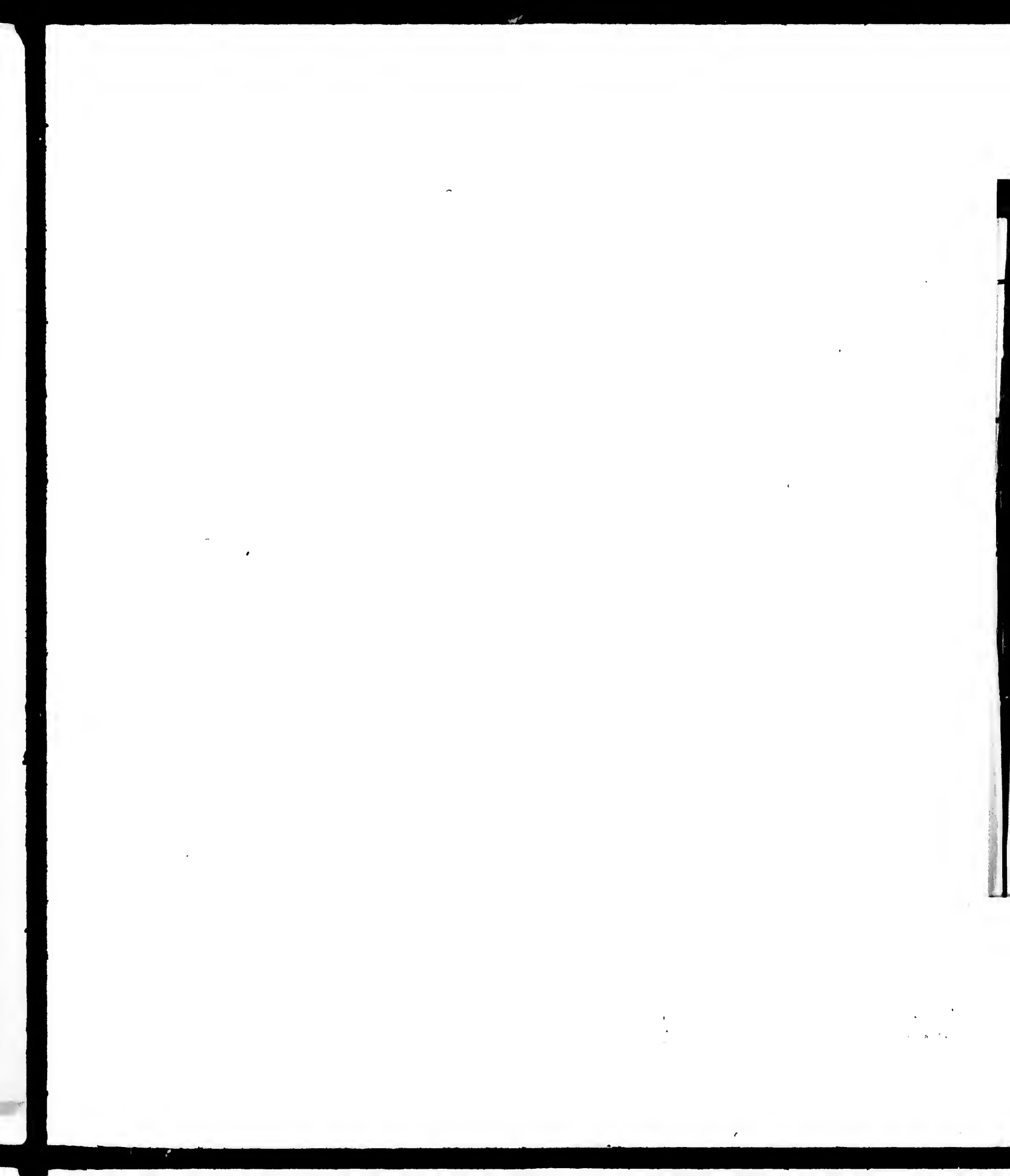
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Yes, it certainly was, and apparently he was an interested spectator. Again Tom almost fell, but as he regained his position he found the opportunity for which he had been waiting. The bully's arm had slipped a little lower in the struggle than it ought to have been, and the young soldier was quick to take advantage of the weakness in his antagonist.

Putting forth all his might, he grasped the bully about the neck and slipped under him, exerting all his strength as he tried to throw him over his back. His head was bent far down now, and a shout of encouragement rose from the spectators as they saw Big Bob lifted for a moment from the ground; but by a desperate effort he regained his position, although he found himself helpless in the grasp of his foe. Again Tom put forth all his strength, this time exerting himself as he never had done before, and the shouts of the crowd redoubled.

Big Bob had lost the advantage. Slowly his feet came up from the ground, and almost before he was aware of it his body was brought over that of the young soldier beneath him and he was thrown headlong and hard upon the ground, lying at full length, and stunned for a moment by the fall.

The young soldier turned to the crowd, which now was cheering and shouting as though it had gained a victory over the Creek nation itself. They were rude and rough men, and the "rough and tumble"

which they had just witnessed, and which was a struggle after their own hearts, made them heap their congratulations upon the young hero, for as such they regarded him.

Tom, the moment he had thrown his antagonist, had started from the ring. He was panting from his exertions, and could scarcely reply to the words of praise that were heaped upon him. Josiah, as proud as though Tom had been his own boy, was shaking him by the hand; but Tecumseh's young braves, though they had been interested spectators, were silent.

"Tom," said Josiah, "did you know General Jackson had been here, and that he saw you throw that big bully?"

"Yes, I caught a glimpse of him just before I tried that trick Captain Jim taught me, and I reckon it was the sight of him that gave me strength enough to lift that big fellow. I feel as though I had been moving a mountain."

"That's all right as long as you moved it," said Josiah. "But the general says he wants to see you, and he wants you to come to his tent at once."

Joined by Jerry they left the assembly and started towards the quarters of the general, wondering what the summons could mean, and half afraid that some punishment would be measured out to them for engaging in the struggle through which they had just passed.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CANE-COVERED CAVES

OUR young hero, for as such he was regarded by all the men in the assembly now, quickly recovered from the effects of the struggle through which he had passed, and with his friend Josiah soon arrived at the general's quarters.

"I wonder what Old Hickory wants of you," said the hunter.

"I don't know any more about it than you do," replied Tom. "But why is it all the men call him 'Hickory'?"

"Oh, that was a name they gave him when he led his army back to Tennessee after that fiasco last year. They said he was as tough as the hickory. He wouldn't give up and couldn't be broken, and somehow the name has stayed by him ever since; but here we are, and we'll soon find out what he wants of you."

They were at once admitted into the presence of the general, and here Tom again found all his courage going from him. The tall form of Andrew Jackson,

his determined look, and above all the respect which he commanded, so impressed the bashful boy that he was at a loss for words.

"I saw you," said the general abruptly, "lift that great hulking mass of humanity off from the ground and fling it over your back. You did well. I've been known as something of a rough-and-ready man myself, and I think I appreciate the qualities you showed as well as another; but I want to say one thing to you, young man, and that is — Don't you ever go any further than a wrestling-bout. I could tell you of some of my own experiences," and the general's face was clouded as he spoke, "but I didn't bring you here to talk about that. I want you to do some work for me. Will you do it?"

"I'll try," replied Tom, wondering what it could be that General Jackson desired of him.

"Well, I think," said the general, "that we've brought this Creek war nearly to an end, but I hear that they're gathering all their warriors at the Horse Shoe, and I want to know a little more about it. Do you know where that is, and do you think you could find your way there and report to me the condition of affairs?"

"I do," spoke up the hunter quickly; "and as probably I shall go with him if he goes, there'll be no trouble in finding the way."

"Well, I've sent some others out on the same

errand," said the general, "but I want you to go too. It's a tough contract. You'll want a little of the hickory about you, and you showed me in that rough and tumble of yours that you weren't afraid, anyway. You say you know the way?" he continued, turning to Josiah.

"Yes, sir," replied the hunter.

"Well, I want you to go right away," and the general acted as though he was about to leave them.

"But, general," interposed Tom, who at last had found courage to speak, "my brother is here with me, and there are three young Indians who are friends of ours, and I should like to have them go too."

"It's a pretty large party," replied the general. "Let me see, that'll be six altogether. Perhaps you'll be the stronger for it, though, so take them along with you and start."

Josiah and Tom at once left the general's quarters and started to return to their companions.

"He's hickory, isn't he?" said Tom.

"Yes, and he's shown it in ways beside his toughness on a march," replied Josiah.

"How's that?" asked Tom.

"Why, he's had three or four rows that have made him a marked man in all this part of the country. Away back in 1806 he had a quarrel with a man named Charles Dickinson. He was a popular man, and the trouble almost broke Jackson up. It seems

Dickinson made some remarks about Jackson's wife, and they had some pretty high words. Jackson thought that Dickinson was being used by his enemies, and so he tried to prevent a row. In fact, he told his father-in-law to stop him, if he could; but some meddlers made the matter worse, and finally just when Dickinson was going to start on a flat-boat for New Orleans, he wrote Jackson a very insulting letter, calling him a coward, a liar, and I don't know what all. Jackson knew that Dickinson would practise with his pistol all the way down the river and back again, but in three or four months Dickinson returned to Nashville and came out worse than ever against Jackson. The general then challenged him at once, and they arranged a duel for the thirtieth of May. They went out on the bank of the Red river early one morning, and took their places eight paces apart. Dickinson had aimed at Jackson's heart, and when the word was given he fired, and broke a rib and raked his breast-bone; but Jackson never complained, and Dickinson yelled, 'Have I missed him?' but Hickory then aimed, and Dickinson fell so wounded that he died that night."

"Why didn't he want him to know that he had hit him?" asked Tom.

"Oh, Dickinson thought he was the best shot in the world, and Hickory didn't propose to give him all that pleasure of knowing he had hit him. Then he had

trouble with Aaron Burr, but he got out of that all right, though some are still suspicious of him; and last year he had a great time with Colonel Benton. They met in the streets at last after a good many quarrels, and Jackson drew his pistol, but he was not quick enough, for Benton fired first, but he ran and Jackson after him, and then Jesse Benton fired at Hickory and shattered his left shoulder. Jackson fell, and the trouble was taken up by friends. Benton would have been killed if outsiders hadn't interfered. Jackson suffered a good deal, and all the doctors but one wanted to take off his arm; but he was hickory then just as he is now, and he wouldn't allow them to take it off."

"He's got it yet," said Tom.

"Yes," replied Josiah, "but it isn't of much use to him. He carried it in a sling when he started on this trip. But here comes your friend Big Bob. Perhaps he'll make trouble for you again."

Tom quickly glanced in the direction Josiah indicated, and saw that his companion was right; but as the bully was alone, the fear which Josiah's words at first aroused subsided, and he waited for his rival to approach. He was surprised as he drew near to find that instead of anger it was a feeling of admiration which his bulky antagonist displayed.

"That was a great trick you had, Tom," said Big Bob. "It was all a trick, of course, I know that.

Why, I could lift you off your feet and throw you a mile if I could only get a good hold."

"There's no doubt about that," replied Tom, with a laugh.

"Well, tell me about it," said Bob. "If you'll teach me that trick I'll give you the best cow in Alabama."

Tom laughed again as he replied, "Some day, perhaps, I will."

They soon found their companions and made their arrangements to start at once for Horse Shoe Bend. They were to go down the Coosa as far as Hatchet creek, which Josiah told them was about fifty miles away, then they were to strike across the country, a distance of, perhaps, fifty miles to this Horse-Shoe Bend, as it was called, where Jackson had heard the Creeks were gathering. Two canoes were soon secured, and provisioned as well as possible from the scanty supplies in the camp, and without explaining the reason for their departure they at once started on their voyage.

They were going with the current, and yet, as they were desirous of making the best possible time, they used their paddles, two paddling continuously, and the third relieving each for a time. They knew the country was filled with bands of prowling Indians, all of whom were reported to be making their way towards the Horse Shoe Bend. They were therefore desirous

of completing their expedition as soon as possible, and of returning to Fort Strother.

All day long they sent their little canoes forward, not stopping for rest until it was late in the afternoon. But what should they do for the night? Josiah advised that no stop should be made; but the boys were becoming weary now, and it was apparent that a brief rest, at least, must be taken.

Captain Jim explained to them that a little farther down the stream he knew where there were some caves on the river's bank, and these would afford both a protection and a shelter.

These caves, as we know, had been dug at frequent intervals along the banks of the Alabama rivers, and were used by the Indians as places of refuge. Each was capable of concealing three or four men, and they were covered over with cane in such a manner that no one would suspect their presence, unless he knew where to look. They were dry, and would afford a good shelter for the night; and, somewhat reluctantly, Josiah gave his consent.

In the course of an hour they arrived at the place where Captain Jim told them these caves were, but they went a little farther down the stream, and, hiding their canoes among the bushes, waded back to the hiding-places. This would conceal their trail, and prevent any one from suspecting their presence. They found the places as Captain Jim had described, and

even Josiah was enthusiastic when he saw how dry and sheltered they were.

"It's a good place to sleep in," said Jerry, "and I'm ready for a nap, too."

"Well, we'll turn right in," said the hunter. "We'll have to use two of the caves, as there are six of us, and three will fill up one pretty well. What shall we do about a guard?"

Captain Jim at once volunteered, and took his seat upon the bank as the others entered the caves. The cane covering was replaced over the entrances, and this allowed the air to enter freely. They were so warm that the boys found their desire for sleep intensified, and in a few moments all except the young Indian, who was the guard, were asleep.

Just how long they slept they could not tell, but they were roused by the young brave, who told them that he could see two canoes coming down the river. There was confusion in our party at once, but it was soon decided that the safest course to follow would be for all five of them to remain within the caves, and for Captain Jim to report his further discoveries.

Josiah objected to this plan somewhat. "If it's a band of redskins it's just as likely as not they'll catch us here like a woodchuck in his hole." But as all the others were confident that it would be better for them to remain concealed, he reluctantly consented, and left Captain Jim alone on guard.

They were all aware that these caves were well known by the Indians, and they were afraid that the parties in the canoes, which Captain Jim had seen in the moonlight, might be making for the very place where they then were. If they were white men, however, they probably would be ignorant of the existence of the caves, and would pass without any trouble; and even if they were Indians, there were many chances that they would go on down the river without stopping to enter these places of refuge. They all, however, were uneasy, and waited with much anxiety for Captain Jim to report.

The young Indian, who had again resumed his position on the bank, watched the approaching canoes and uttered a low exclamation as he saw them change their course and start directly for the place where he then was. Did they intend to land, or were they only coming in nearer shore? The question was soon settled when he saw the six men who were in the canoes approach the shore, and as soon as they had landed draw the little skiff up on the bank. They were some distance up the stream yet, and without being observed by them, Captain Jim at once entered the caves and reported to his friends what he had discovered.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SOLITARY GUARD

THE brief consultation which followed the entrance of the young Indian led to a decision on the part of Josiah and the others that they would remain in hiding where they were. They all were to be watchful and ready for any sudden call which Captain Jim might give them, and as soon as these arrangements had been completed, the young brave left the cave, after having looked carefully to the coverings, and resumed his place as guard.

He was behind one of the large trees and could observe the movements of the party, which had approached and now were within a few hundred yards of the caves. He was more anxious than he had allowed the others to perceive, and as he observed the movements of the new-comers his anxiety was much increased. Several times he hesitated and almost decided to summon his companions. Behind the trees they would be protected, and could defend themselves if an attack was made; but each time he

waited, so eager was he in watching the movements which the others made.

Keen though they were, they had not yet seen him ; and standing as he was within the shadow of the trees, he had no difficulty, in the moonlight, in seeing all that the others did. They were in the light, and while they were watchful, as yet he had seen no signs which indicated their suspicion of the presence of any one in this well-known place of concealment.

It soon became evident that they had come for the same purpose that had led Captain Jim's party to the place. He did not think from their actions that they were meditating any attack, but were simply seeking the shelter which the caves provided. He could see now that the party was divided just as his was, and that there were three white men and three Indians in it.

Suddenly the question occurred to him, "Suppose they should come to the same caves in which Josiah and the boys are?" There were six of these caves, and they must occupy two of them, and if by any chance they should approach the very ones in which his companions were concealed there would be trouble at once. As this thought occurred to him, he started as though he would go again to summon his friends ; but the others were too near now, and any movement on his part would be seen at once, and might precipitate a trouble which there was still a possibility of avoiding.

Captain Jim stepped back again into the shadow of the tree, and, almost fascinated now, watched the six men as they slowly and cautiously approached the caves. Which would they enter? The question was soon settled, for as they drew near they acted as though they were about to remove the covering of the one in which Tom and the two Indians were concealed.

Captain Jim grasped his gun and prepared to dispute their entrance if they should attempt to make one there; but his fear was relieved when he saw a change in their movements and they turned to the other caves which were farther down the stream. They quickly removed the cane, and, entering the two that were on the limits, pulled the covering back into place and quickly were hidden from sight.

Captain Jim was now perplexed about his own movements. Should he still remain on guard, or summon his friends and with them try to escape at once from the danger which was so near them? He waited to see if the other party would place any one on guard, but he was relieved when he found after a few moments that evidently no one was to take that position, and all six remained within the shelter of the caves. He decided that he would retain his position and await further developments.

There was no sign now of the presence of any one.

Silence rested over the river, and not a movement was made along its banks. The occasional call of some bird in the forest and the lapping of the little waves upon the shore were the only sounds he could hear. Motionless as the tree behind which he stood concealed, the Indian waited; and when a half hour had gone, the silence was still unbroken. Another half hour passed, and as nothing unusual was seen, he had about decided to summon his friends and with them seek the canoes which they had hidden down the stream, and attempt to make their escape.

He had taken a step out from behind the tree when he was startled by the sight of some one emerging from one of the caves occupied by the strangers. It was an Indian, who carefully replaced the canes and approached the shore. Back and forth he walked along the bank, with his head bowed, as though in deep thought. Evidently he was unsuspecting of the presence of any one there beside his companions.

Suddenly Captain Jim started as the outlines of the figure became more distinct in the moonlight, and he recognized the well-known leader of the Creeks, the half-breed Weatherford. Captain Jim was greatly moved by the sight. What a noble-looking man he was! Evidently from his appearance he was in great trouble or perplexity.

Once more the struggle which his nation was making for what they considered to be their own

liberty, and the preservation of the homes of their ancestors from the ruthless invasion of the white men, came back to the young Indian. He thought of the successful attack they had made on Fort Mims, and his heart stirred within him as he recalled the bravery of Weatherford on that day. His mind went back to the visit of Tecumseh and his brother, and again he could hear the burning words of the prophet as he addressed the assembled warriors. Many of the expressions he had used came back to the young brave's mind, and again he shared in the enthusiasm of that hour. He thought of the devotion of the braves to their leaders, and the determination so many of them had displayed to fight to the last, rather than give up to the white men.

It was a trying moment for Captain Jim, and even more trying for his companions, although they all were unconscious of the presence of the great Indian leader, and of the struggle in the heart of Tecumseh's young brave. His mind wavered, and with the return of his former feelings he was almost ready to step forth and salute the great chief, and return once more to his allegiance; but he was watching Weatherford now, and sometimes the half-breed stood as though in contemplation and motionless as a statue, looking out over the river and evidently seeing more than the moonlight disclosed. Then up and down the bank he would pace, frequently stopping and resuming his

attitude of contemplation. The younger Indian thought there was an element of sadness now in Weatherford's bearing, and it seemed to him that much of his hopefulness had disappeared.

It was a picture for an artist—the silent river flowing onward to the sea, the mighty forests that lined its banks, the moonlight streaming over all and revealing the noble figure of one Indian standing by the shore, and that of the younger one concealed behind the great tree.

As we have said, Captain Jim's mind was wavering. His heart had been so stirred by the sight of his former leader, and moved by his evident trouble and sadness, that he was on the point of going out to meet him and of returning to the place he had occupied among his followers; but suddenly Weatherford turned and looked sharply down the river. Perhaps he was suspicious now of the presence of the other Creek, but in a moment he turned again, and going to the cave from which he had come, removed the covering, and entering once more was soon lost to the sight of Captain Jim, whose perplexity and uncertainty were now much increased.

Still Captain Jim waited. He did not know but the chief might return, and he watched the cave far more than he did the river or the shores. The struggle meanwhile went on in the young Indian's heart. He had no thought of betraying his friends, and yet

he was yearning now for his own kindred. The recollection of the bravery of those he had left, and the presence of Weatherford, had revived his slumbering patriotism, and his heart went out in longing for those who were of his own blood.

When an hour had gone and Weatherford had not appeared again, the love for Tom and Jerry proved to be stronger than his yearning for his kindred; and now that silence had again returned, he knew the time had arrived for him to summon his friends, and with them attempt to make their way from this place so filled with danger.

Like a moving shadow now, the young Indian advanced from his hiding-place, and, crouching low and stepping softly, approached the caves. Before he gave the signal which had been agreed upon, he stood for a moment and looked out upon the scene before him.

The silence was unbroken, and not a human being was in sight. Reassured somewhat by the stillness, he approached the cave in which Josiah lay concealed, and several times gave the signal before it was responded to by those who were within. The young brave added his warning in a low whisper, and almost as silently as he himself had approached, the others withdrew from the caves.

One by one they left the shelter and took pains to return the cane covering carefully to its place. They

stood for a moment after all were on the ground and waited to see whether there were any signs of their presence being known. They were safe thus far, and then slowly they began to move towards the river. They gained the bank without being discovered, and stepping into the water began to wade down the stream, moving slowly and carefully.

It was a strange procession, and if those who were sleeping in the caves could have seen it, they would have been as moved by the sight as Captain Jim was by that which he had recently seen. Their canoes were several hundred yards down the stream, and as they came nearer to their hiding-place, they all increased their speed, and at last drew them forth and launched them on the river.

Before they took their places under the shadows of the bank, they stopped and looked back to the caves they had left. Their own shadows were concealed by those which the trees cast upon the water, and no one looking in their direction would have been able to have distinguished them. A low whisper from Captain Jim aroused their attention, and looking in the direction in which he silently pointed, they saw on the bank, which they had recently left, the figure of some man standing motionless and alone.

"Who is it, Captain Jim?" asked Tom. "What does it mean?"

"Weatherford," replied the young Indian. "Red Eagle, Hopenika Futsalia."

The eagerness of all to escape was greatly increased by the knowledge that the dreaded leader of the Creek nation was so near them. Josiah several times brought his gun to his shoulder and appeared to be determined to improve his opportunity to put an end to the existence of one who had wrought so much damage and suffering among the whites of Alabama; but Captain Jim touched his arm each time, and shaking his head made the hunter realize the foolishness of making an attack when they were as safe as they were.

"Better let sleeping dogs alone," said Josiah in a low voice. "The redskin's right, though I never shall have another such chance in all my life. I don't think I'd better drop the traitor now, but if I was all alone here I shouldn't hesitate a minute. But there are six of us, and we've got too important business on hand to let anything interfere with it, even such an important matter as putting an end to that half-breed."

"You're right, Josiah," said Tom; "and the only thing we can do is to get out of this just as soon as we can; and if we can once succeed in putting a good distance between us and that company of Weatherford's, I shall feel that we have done the very wisest thing."

"We don't want to stay here very long, then," said Jerry. "I don't know what we're standing here like a lot of stumps for, any way. Captain Jim seems to be fascinated by the sight of that chief, and we all appear to be pretty much like blocks; but the best thing we can do is to pull out of this right away."

"That's the thing to do," said Josiah, "especially since the redskin has disappeared now, and for all that we know he may be coming around through the woods to outflank us."

Yes, Weatherford had disappeared, and all six gave their attention to the canoes. They took their places silently, and, without using their paddles, at first allowed the light canoes to float with the current. They kept near the shore and under the shadow of the bank, and soon a good distance had been placed between them and the caves they had recently left.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHERE WERE THE BRAVES?

OUR escaping party, for as such they considered themselves, were silent for a time, but soon they thought they were far enough from the place they had left to resume their paddling, and swiftly the little boats moved with the current. Not more than a half hour had passed before, at a word from Josiah, the two canoes were brought closely together, and the hunter began to talk with his companions concerning the position in which they found themselves.

"You see it's this way," said Josiah. "That other party was coming down the stream, and it's evident they were going in the same direction we are."

"But they don't know we're anywhere near them," said Tom.

"That's all true enough," said the hunter; "but we are near, and we may be in a good deal of danger from them too. There's one of two things we can do. We either can make the best time we can and try to keep ahead of them, or we can stop somewhere and wait for them to pass."

"Oh, the other is the better plan. We don't want to stop any more. Let's keep going until we're so far ahead of them there'll be no danger of their overtaking us," said Jerry.

"That's just what I should say," said the hunter, "if we were not pretty well tired out. You see Tom had all he wanted to do yesterday before we started, and we've been keeping pretty steadily at our work all the time. If we could have had a good rest to-night in those holes in the ground we found, we might have been all right; but as it is, I'm strongly of the opinion that our best plan will be to stop somewhere on the shore and keep a good lookout till those other men pass us."

Tecumseh's young braves coincided with the hunter's proposal, and both the boys felt that his suggestion was a wise one, and it was soon decided that they would seek some place of shelter and wait for the others to pass. They accordingly resumed their paddling, and now moving slowly near the shore, were on the lookout for a good place where they could land, and where they would be concealed while they themselves were keeping a good outlook.

"That's the place ahead," said Josiah soon after. "That bluff there with the bushes and scrub growing on it is the very spot we're searching for."

Acting upon the hunter's suggestion the canoes were turned towards the shore, and leaving them

concealed upon the bank, the boys climbed the bluff.

"This is a good place," said Tom, "we can see far up the river and just as far down."

"Yes, and we can't be seen ourselves," said Jerry; "so I vote for making this our camp."

They returned to the canoes and hid them more securely among the bushes that lined the bank, and then returning to the bluff made their plans for passing the remainder of the night. It was agreed that only one should remain on guard, and that he should summon the others if any signs of an approaching party should be seen. One of the Indian braves volunteered to serve in this capacity, and soon the others were fast asleep.

Scarcely an hour had passed before they were awakened by their guard, who called their attention to two tiny specks on the river which could be seen in the moonlight far away. Captain Jim, long before any of the others were able to make out the occupants of the approaching canoes, declared that they were the very ones who had landed at the caves.

Nearer and nearer came the little boats, and at last, when they were opposite the bluff on which our party were concealed, they all could see that there were six men in the canoes, and Captain Jim declared that he was able to discern Weatherford himself in the one which was nearer.

Josiah again declared that he would not let this opportunity pass, and that he would try the effect of a shot on the chief. The boys, too, were eager now, as they felt that they were in a place of safety and could easily defend themselves if an attack against them should be made. The young braves were silent, for they well knew that their opposition would be misunderstood, and as the shot of Josiah rang out they looked keenly to see what the effect of it was.

"I've missed him," said the hunter, chagrined; "at least, I can't see that I've done any damage. That's a great note for me, isn't it?"

But the shot produced one effect, in that it quickened the movements of the men in the canoes, and soon they had disappeared down the stream.

"I'm inclined to think that shot of yours was a mistake, after all," said Tom. "We don't know that these two canoes may not be followed by others, and if they are, your gun may have done more damage to us than it could to Weatherford or any of his party."

"Well, we can't do anything now," said the hunter, "except turn in for a time and get what rest we can, for before it's light we must start on our way again. That will give the others a good start, and I don't think they'll be apt to come back here to see how it was that we saluted them as they passed this bluff."

"If they keep up the rate at which they're going,"

said Jerry, "they'll soon be so far away that it will take them a full day to come back here against the current. I don't believe I ever saw a canoe slip over the water as those did after you fired at them, and I think I know something about paddling a canoe myself."

"We'd better wait here a while," said Tom, "and see whether there are any others in the party. Then if we don't see any one else, I think it will be safe for us to start."

"Then we'd better get what sleep we can," said Josiah; and they all stretched themselves upon the ground except the young brave, who resumed his position as guard.

Josiah had declared that they were not far from Hatchet creek, and that he knew the region in which they were, as well as he did the place in which he had been born. In fact, he was certain that he could find his way over every foot of the ground in the darkness, but he had yielded to the suggestion of Tom that they should use their canoes as had been agreed, and go as far down the Coosa as Hatchet creek.

They were all so thoroughly tired now, and worn by their exertions of the day and night, that in a moment they were fast asleep. It would have taken a very keen observer to have noticed anything unusual on the bluff if he had been passing that night, for no fire had been kindled, and no one could be seen

except the young Indian, who was seated upon the ground motionless and still. He sat within the shadow of the trees, which effectually concealed him from the view of any one who might be passing on the river, and yet enabled him to see far over the waters.

The owls hooted occasionally, and the sound of the ripples of the river could be heard, but neither of these kept any of the party awake. For some time they had slept uninterruptedly, when Tom suddenly was awakened. Just how long he had been asleep he could not tell, nor was he aware of what had aroused him. He was sitting upright now, and at first could scarcely realize where he was. He glanced at the sleeping forms beside him, and the experiences of the past day at once came back to his mind.

Somehow there was a feeling of fear in his heart, and he was conscious of some impending ill; but the young pioneer was not prone to illusions, and he tried to shake off his nervousness. He resumed his position upon the ground, but found that he was unable to close his eyes. He remained there for some time, but his feeling of uneasiness increased every moment.

"This is strange," said he to himself. "I don't know what's come over me. I think I'll just step out and relieve the young brave. If I can't sleep I might just as well serve as guard, and let the rest of them take their turn."

But for several moments he did not move, trying again to fall asleep. Satisfied at last that it would be impossible for him to sleep more, and as his feeling of nervousness was increasing, he arose and started towards the place where he had left the young brave on guard.

As he moved out from the camp he was unable to discern the familiar figure, and he said to himself, "He's changed his position. I left him right here by the tree. I presume he'll be back in a moment, so I'll just wait for him."

But when several minutes had passed and the guard did not return, he started up the bank to see if he was there. Not finding him on that side of the camp, he turned and went to the other side, but not a sign of the young Indian appeared.

"That's strange," said Tom, feeling somewhat annoyed; "perhaps he's gone into the woods or down by the river. I think I'll follow him up and see what's happened to him. He may be in trouble, or have fallen somewhere." But his search was unrewarded, and no trace of the Indian guard could be seen.

"I wonder whether anything could have happened," said Tom, now beginning to feel alarmed, and strange forebodings coming into his heart; but he put away such thoughts, for he had not lost his confidence in the young Indian in spite of Josiah's suspicions; and, indeed, the hunter had not mentioned his fears of late,

and apparently had come to believe in the integrity of the young braves as much as the boys did.

He now began a thorough search. For a half hour he moved about amongst the trees and along the shore, but his search was still unrewarded.

"Perhaps he's come back to the camp by this time," said Tom, "and I'll go back there myself and see."

But when he returned it was to find that the guard was not there, and his forebodings now were fast passing into fears. Suddenly the thought of the other Indians occurred to him, and he did not know but they might be able to explain the absence of the guard; and he stepped among the sleeping forms to speak to them. He was thoroughly alarmed when he could find no trace of either of them.

"They're gone, too," said Tom, "and something is wrong. I'll have to arouse Josiah and Jerry, and perhaps they can shed a little light on this mystery."

It was some time before his brother and the hunter were awakened, but when they had listened to what Tom had to tell them, they were at once thoroughly awake, and alarmed as well.

"That's no more than I expected," said Josiah. "I told you you never could trust a redskin, and it's my belief that these young braves who have been with us have really been acting in concert with Weatherford and his party. If they have, it means trouble for us, and that right away."

"I can't believe they would betray us into the hands of Weatherford," said Jerry. "It may be that they've joined him, but not to betray us — of that I'm certain."

"I'm not certain," said Josiah. "The only thing you can be sure of about a redskin is that you can't be sure of him at all. That's the only way to deal with them. You've got to consider them guilty until they prove themselves innocent, and we've been a parcel of fools, and I've been the worst one of all, ever to put ourselves in such a position that they could get the best of us."

"You've taken altogether too much for granted," said Tom. "It may be that they have seen something that has alarmed them, and they have gone to examine it without arousing the rest of us. There's no use in charging them with something we don't know they're guilty of, and for my part I think the best thing we can do is to git around here and wait. I shouldn't be surprised if all three of them were back here inside of half an hour."

"Well, that may be," said Josiah. "We'll wait and see."

But another half hour passed and still the young braves did not return to the camp.

"I'll tell you how we can settle it," said Josiah suddenly. "I've just thought of something that'll show whether they're traitors or not."

"What's that?" asked Jerry.

"Why, the canoes," replied the hunter. "If they're all right, we'll know there's been no treachery planned; but if they're gone, we're gone too, unless we move out from this camp right away."

"We'll go and see," said Tom. And all three started at once for the place where they had left their canoes.

"There! It's just as I told you," said Josiah. "They've cleared out and gone by the river, for they've taken their canoe along with them."

"But they've not taken ours," said Jerry, "and that shows they're not planning anything against us."

"I'm not so sure of that," said the hunter. "It may be they've put a hole in the bottom."

"We'll try it and see," said Tom, and placing the canoe in the river they soon found that it did not leak, and the treachery of which Josiah had spoken evidently had not reached as far as the canoe; but the other was gone, and along with it Tecumseh's young braves.

What it meant not one of the party could tell, and with hearts filled with forebodings they all returned to the camp to talk over their situation and decide upon the best course of action.

CHAPTER XXX

JERRY'S VENTURE

THE discovery of the loss of the canoe increased the anger of Josiah, which already was very keen at the disappearance of the young braves. He gave vent to his feelings in many rough expressions and sharp words. He declared again that he knew they were traitors, and had been traitors from the beginning. He was certain they never had had any serious intention of leaving the Creeks, and, indeed, he suspected they had been in their employ all the time and were in reality spies. He was positive that they knew of the visit of Weatherford, and had been acting in conjunction with him; and why they themselves had not been betrayed into the hands of the other party he could not tell, but he was certain that it was through no lack of willingness on the part of the young Indians.

To all of Josiah's charges the boys made no reply. They were silent and thoughtful now, and indeed there was little for them to say. The appearances certainly were against their friends, and while they

had not entirely lost confidence in them, yet they knew that nothing they could say would place their case in any better light. Certainly their departure was strange, and the more the boys thought about it the less could they find any cause for it.

Josiah called their attention again to the events of the past day, and pointed out the behavior of Captain Jim at the cave, his opposition to their shooting at the passing party, and the silence which he had maintained ever since they had left Jackson's camp. All these were not forgotten by the boys, and yet they were not quite so ready as their friend to condemn the young braves, and had a faint hope that in some way their disappearance would yet be explained.

"But what's to be done now, boys?" asked Josiah.

"We shall have to act, and right away too."

"What do you think is the best thing to be done?" asked Tom.

"I feel about it in this way," said the hunter.

"Those redskins will adopt one of two courses. They either will come back here with reinforcements, or else they'll plan to catch us as we go down the stream. You see, they must know now that we're here, and they know, too, what spot we're bound for, so they'll do one of these two things, I'm certain."

"Do you suppose they're with Weatherford now?" asked Jerry.

"Yes, I think they're with Weatherford," replied Josiah scornfully, "and I think they've been with him all the time in heart; but I'll tell you what we must do. We'll have to change our camp, or else start again on our trip, and I'm inclined to think the first plan is the better."

"Where shall we go?" asked Tom.

"My advice is to go straight across the river to the other side, and keep quiet there for a time and watch the course of events. Something's likely to happen within the next twenty-four hours, and by that time we'll know what to do; besides, you two boys haven't rested enough yet to stand a hard tussle, and perhaps the break we'll have won't do you any harm."

"We had better go right away, then," said Jerry, "if we're going to go."

"That's my opinion too," said Josiah.

And they started at once for the place where they had left their canoe. The long night was almost ended now, and the first faint streaks of the dawn were plainly visible. They took their places in the canoe, and paddled rapidly across the river; but the other shore was somewhat different from the one they had left, and at first they could not find a place suitable for a landing. They went up the stream for a short distance, but as still they found no place, they reversed their course, and a little farther down the stream they landed at a spot which Josiah

declared to be just such a one as they were looking for.

The canoe was carried up the bank and hidden behind the great trees which grew close to the shore. As soon as this had been done, they returned and endeavored to remove all traces of their landing. They did not dare to start a fire, and made a breakfast as best they could from the provisions they had brought with them.

The waiting soon became tedious. Two of them were on guard all the time, while the third was allowed to rest. Josiah declared that he had not the slightest thought of giving up their expedition, and, indeed, he said he was more determined to go on to Horse Shoe Bend now than ever. But their danger was greatly increased. The whole region was filled with bands of prowling Indians, and they could not tell when they might have to fight for their lives. The apparent treachery of Tecumseh's young braves increased their perplexity, and perhaps added to their danger.

"If they come back," said Josiah, "they might come by land, though I hardly think they'll take us to be fools enough to stay there where we were, and be caught in their trap."

"But they don't know we're on this side of the river," said Tom; "and if they come by land they'll have no means of coming near us."

"That's so," said Josiah, "and so probably they won't return in that way. They'll think we won't abandon our canoe, and they'll be on the watch for us as we go down the river; but I'm certain they won't give us credit for giving up, and they know us well enough to be sure that if they search long enough they'll find us somewhere between here and Horse Shoe Bend."

A constant watch was now maintained, one keeping his attention fastened upon the upper part of the river and the other guard watching the rapids below. Several times they saw logs floating with the current, and at first were alarmed, as they took these to be canoes, but their nearer approach each time scattered their fears, although they did not cease to maintain their watch.

The trees behind them were large, and grew close to the water's edge. Danger might be lurking in the midst of these, and occasionally one of the boys left the bank and wandered for a short distance within the forest, but no sign of an approaching enemy was seen, and the long day at last drew to a close.

"They'll be sure to return," said Josiah, "there's no doubt about that; but if we get through this night all right, it'll be safe enough for us to start again, though I'm inclined to think now that our better course will be not to go down to Hatchet Creek at all, but to cross the river and start overland."

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"But there'll be danger there too," said Tom.
"No doubt," replied the hunter; "but these young
redskins knew we had started for Hatchet Creek, so
I'm of the opinion that they'll be watching for us
there, if they don't come back here pretty soon. Oh,
we shan't escape the critters. I'm as sure that we'll
see them again, as I am that to-morrow's sun will
rise."

"But if General Jackson is right and the Indians
are really gathering at Horse Shoe Bend," said Jerry,
"I don't see that we'll better matters by going across
the river. It will be like jumping out of the frying-
pan into the fire."

"That may all be true," replied the hunter;
"but one danger will be only general and the other
will be very particular, for there'll be a party down
by the mouth of Hatchet Creek watching for us
for two or three days yet, you may rest assured of
that."

Only one guard was maintained during the night,
and as each took his turn at the labor, the others were
able to sleep and gain their needed rest. They
ventured to start a small fire in the morning, just
enough to cook the fish which Tom caught. They
then prepared to resume their watch, and Josiah had
just taken his position when he suddenly called out,
"There's a canoe coming up the river," and both boys
came quickly to his side.

Yes, there was a little moving spot which they could see far down the river. The keen sight which all possessed satisfied each that the hunter's words were true, and forgetting all the other dangers they stood and watched the approaching object. It soon took on a more definite form, and they could clearly see the outlines of the canoe, and discern the three figures which were in it. No other canoes were following, at least none that they could see as yet, and it was not long before they could clearly make out the bodies of the men as they plied their paddles.

"That's Captain Jim's canoe," said Tom at last excitedly; "and if I am not very much mistaken, they're Tecumseh's young braves themselves."

The three men were soon near enough to confirm the truth of Tom's words, and the hunter as well as the boys were highly excited as they watched their movements. As the canoe approached the place where their camp had been, one of the Indians laid aside his paddle, while they cautiously and slowly approached the shore. Evidently there was something strange in all this, and the boys eagerly waited to see what the outcome would be. Their curiosity was soon satisfied when the little canoe was sent ashore and the three Indians, after drawing it upon the bank, disappeared among the bushes.

What could be the meaning of it all? Had they returned hoping to find their companions in the place

where they had left them, or were they coming now as enemies?

"That beats anything I've ever seen in all my experiences," said Josiah. "I've been treed by panthers and hugged by bears, but I've never been so completely nonplussed as I am now; but I knew those redskins were traitors all the time, and their coming back doesn't promise us any good."

"But I thought you said you were sure they would come back," said Jerry.

"So I was," said Josiah; "and you see I wasn't fooled either, for there they are. I feel a little like an old man I knew down the river who used to steer his own scow every spring, and carry a load of stuff down to Mobile. I was with him one day when he was bragging about his knowledge of the river. 'Why, I know every rock and bar in this stream,' said he; and he hadn't the words fairly out of his mouth before bump went the scow fast aground on one. 'There's one of them,' said the old man; 'didn't I tell you I knew every spot in the river?' Well, that's about the way I feel now. I knew what the redskins would do, and you see they've done it, though whether it promises us any good or not I'm not certain."

Suddenly Jerry broke in upon the words of the hunter, saying, "I'm going to take our canoe and go over there and see for myself what Tecumseh's young

braves are doing. I never half believed they were as bad as Josiah tries to make them out, and I'm going to try now to find out just what they're up to."

"Well, you're not going alone, then," said Tom, "for I'm going with you."

"That you're not," said the hunter; "and I'm opposed to either one of you going."

"But I'm going to go," said Jerry firmly, "whether you're opposed to it or not. I'm going to have this matter settled. I don't believe Captain Jim was ever a traitor, and I know I shan't run into any harm."

"Well, if you're bound to go," said Josiah, "it's better for one to go than two. So, Jerry, you take the canoe and go alone. If you get into any trouble, you're to use your gun, and we'll know then that we're to come and help you."

"Yes, without any canoe," said Jerry.

"Oh, that's so!" said the hunter; "I hadn't thought of that. I don't believe you'd better go at all."

"But I'm going," said Jerry; "so good-by to you."

He ran quickly down to the shore, and stepping into the canoe began to paddle his way rapidly across the river.

CHAPTER XXXI

A DISTURBED PARTY

THERE were sad forebodings in the hearts of those who stood on the bank and watched Jerry as he made his way across the stream. They were afraid of treachery on the part of the Indians who had so strangely left them and so unexpectedly returned. Josiah frequently repeated his expressions of fear and lack of confidence in the young braves, and again and again declared that he had known from the beginning that they would prove to be traitors and bring nothing but trouble upon their friends.

His words were not without their effect upon Tom, who watched the movements of his brother with increasing distrust. They held their guns in readiness, and although they had but little hope of being able to inflict any damage at the distance they were from the other bank, still they resolved to do what they could, and assist the young pioneer if he should meet with unexpected perils.

Jerry meanwhile was paddling his way across the river, and was not without misgivings of his own.

As he approached the bank these fears increased, and his heart was beating rapidly when at last he landed, and, after drawing his canoe into a safe place, started towards the bluff. He could see the Indians before they noticed him, and they were evidently examining the camp for signs which would indicate in which direction their recent companions had gone.

As Jerry approached and spoke to them, Captain Jim uttered a low exclamation, and all three turned and faced him, waiting for him to join them. The conversation that followed was not a lengthy one, as the Indians were not much given to talking; but before they could have explained the cause of their sudden disappearance and the reason for their return, there suddenly came the warning signal from the other bank which had been agreed upon. Jerry at once answered, indicating that he would return, and calling to the young braves, he bade them follow him. Before they could step into their canoes the warning was repeated, and this time it was given in such an urgent manner that Jerry knew some danger was near. Although he could not see what it was, he was certain that it was close by and threatening. He called upon his companions to hurry, and in a few moments they were paddling rapidly across the river.

They had scarcely arrived at the other shore, and drawn their canoes into a place of concealment, when

Josiah called their attention to another boat which was coming rapidly down the river. Who this new party was, or what their errand was, could only be conjectured, and the uppermost question in the minds of all was whether the return of Jerry and the young braves had been seen or not.

"There's nothing we can do now but wait," said Josiah. "We'll very soon know whether they saw you or not. But there are only three in that canoe, and, if they think it best to stop and investigate, we're ready for them, and, I think, can give them a reception they'll long remember. The only thing I'm afraid of is that this isn't the only canoe, but that others may be following."

"We've had excitement enough on this trip," said Tom.

"Yes; but we're likely to have more before it's ended," replied the hunter. "Jackson was right when he said that the woods were full of these redskins, and I think he's correct, too, when he said the grand climax was coming to the war pretty soon."

"That's the way I feel about it," said Jerry; "it seems to be in the air. The soldiers themselves are acting as though they had enlisted for their last engagement, and it is plain the savages are rallying for a last and desperate attack."

"If they're at Horse Shoe Bend," said Josiah, "it doesn't mean that they're so likely to make an attack

as it does that they're preparing to receive the one which Jackson will make ; but Hickory will be enough for them, and if they pen themselves in there at the Bend, it'll be just what he wants. But I wonder who these men are that are coming."

"We'll soon see," said Tom. "There's only one canoe ; at least there's only one in sight yet."

"I think that's all," said the hunter, "for in times like these a party wouldn't be likely to scatter very much. They'd keep together for protection if there were several of them."

The approaching canoe was now near enough for them to see that all the men in it were white. They could not handle their paddles as well as the Indians did, and yet, although their paddling was somewhat awkward, the little boat responded to every movement they made, and came rapidly onward.

"They're white men," said Tom, in a low voice.

But his companions made no reply. They were too intent upon observing the movements of the approaching party, and were waiting to see whether they had any thought of landing or not. If they had noticed the crossing of the boys, it was more than likely that they would land and make some investigations. If, however, they had not seen them, in all probability they would keep on their course, and all danger from them would soon disappear.

Suddenly Josiah whispered, "Do you see that man

in the stern? That's the Spaniard that took me prisoner, and the other two with him are Englishmen. I've seen them a good many times before. They've been up the Coosa for no good purpose, and are probably doing all they can to stir up the Indians, and furnish supplies and arms for the redskins. I wish we could stop them. I'd like to take that fellow into my charge, as he did me into his."

Meanwhile the canoe came swiftly on. There was no indication that the men were intending to land, and the fears of our party were relieved when they saw the new-comers pass. They came so close to the shore that they could easily discern the features of the men, and it became evident that Josiah was right, and the Spaniard who had captured him was one of the three men in the passing canoe. Almost as rapidly as it had come, the little boat went on down the stream and in a brief time had disappeared from sight.

"What shall we do now?" asked Jerry, breathing a sigh of relief.

"That remains to be seen," said Josiah. "We'd better find out what these young Indians have got to tell us. What made you go, Captain Jim, and where have you been?"

The young Indian felt the suspicion in Josiah's tone, and it was evident that he reciprocated the feelings of the hunter. He would reply to no questions

at first, but after a time he briefly told them that he had heard of the gathering at Horse Shoe Bend, and that he now was informed as to the numbers there, and the fortifications which were being built, and also that he knew of the preparations which were being made to receive the expected attack of Jackson's army.

"How do you know all this?" asked Josiah suspiciously.

But Captain Jim made no reply, nor would he enter into any explanation of the cause of their disappearance on the previous night. The boys, with the return of the young braves, felt their own confidence in them somewhat restored, and were willing to trust the words of Captain Jim, and return at once to Fort Strother with the message he had brought; but Josiah so strongly objected to this that they were compelled to listen, and prepared to follow his instructions.

"We'll go on now," said Josiah. "I think our best course will be to go down to Hatchet creek as we first planned. All the parties we've seen have been going in that direction, and while we're likely to run into a nest of the redskins somewhere, or find some of these treacherous Spaniards and British in our course, we're strong enough to find our way if there are not too many of them, and hold our own with the best of them."

As soon as this course of action had been decided upon, they brought their canoes once more down to the river, and as soon as everything was in readiness, resumed their places and started. They were more watchful now than ever, and the sense of danger increased every moment. Josiah was calm and collected, and apparently cared no more for the dangers into which they were entering than he did for the quiet life at the camp; but the boys were unable to restrain their feelings, and as they went on their nervousness increased.

In this way they had gone about five miles, when Captain Jim called the attention of them all to smoke which he could see on the left bank farther down the river. He declared that it was the smoke of a white man's fire, and the keen-eyed hunter, who, in spite of his age, could see far better than the boys, coincided in the judgment of the young Indian. He expressed his fear in low tones to the boys, that the Indians were leading them into some trap; but Tom assured him that if such was the motive of Captain Jim he had taken a very strange method of action, for he had called their attention to the sign of danger when they were still far away from it.

"We'll go on for a little farther," said Josiah reluctantly. "We'll go slowly and carefully, though, and hug the shore all the way."

The smoke became more distinct now, and both

Tom and Jerry were able to see it clearly. They kept on their course until they were about a half mile above the place where they thought the fire was, and then landed. Their canoes were hidden in the bushes, and they withdrew into the forest to talk over their plans. Josiah declared that he knew every foot of the country here, and his advice was that they should advance carefully and see what there was about the fire.

"There are six of us," said the hunter, "and I've no doubt that that smoke comes from the fire that those three white men we saw pass us up the river have kindled. I should like to turn the tables on them, and carry that Spaniard into camp with me."

"But we didn't come out here to take prisoners," said Jerry. "If we should be lucky enough to capture these men, it would prevent us from going on to Horse Shoe Bend, and I think that General Jackson would a good deal rather know a little about the condition of affairs there than he would that we had come back to camp with three prisoners; besides, we don't know that this camp ahead belongs to the men we saw, at all. It may be that there's a dozen there."

"That's so," said the hunter thoughtfully, "and perhaps we'd better send some one ahead to try and find out just the lay of the land. We can't be more

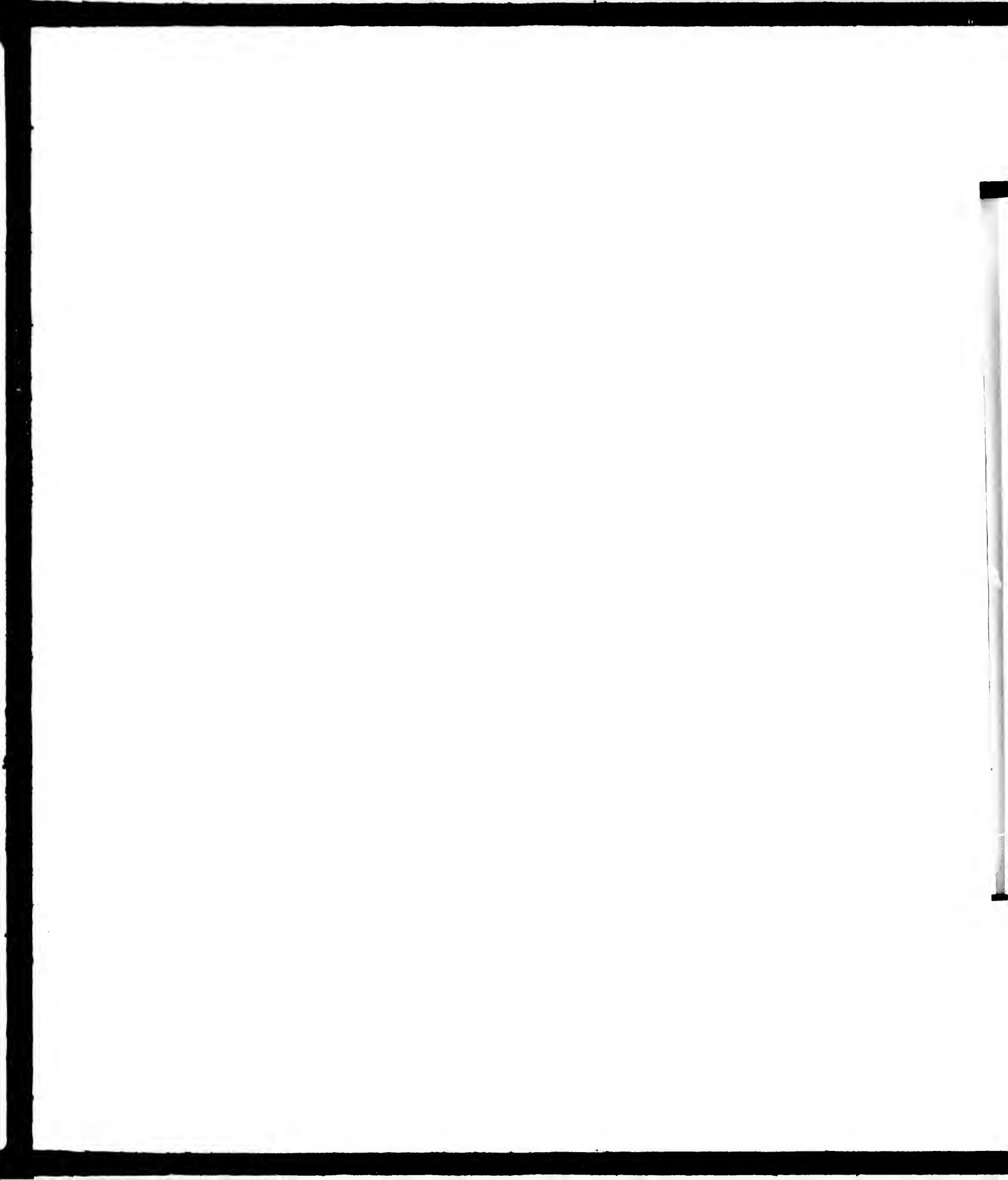
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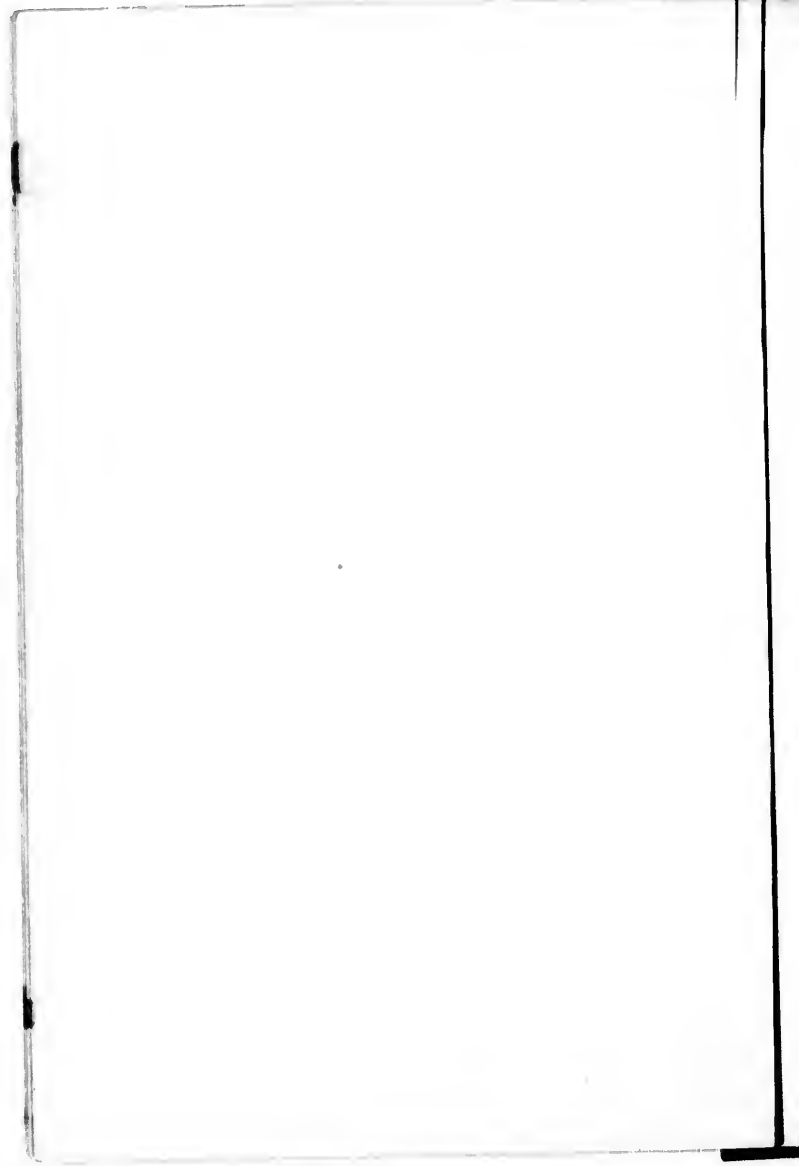
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"Just before them they could see the camp"

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than half a mile away, and it won't take long to find out the condition of affairs ahead."

It was accordingly decided that Jerry and Captain Jim should advance and learn all they could about the party which they suspected was so near them. As soon as possible they were to return to the others, who would remain in waiting where they then were, and their future course of action would be decided upon. In accordance with this plan Jerry and the young Indian started through the woods, and after they had gone the most of the distance, they began to advance with great caution.

They stealthily approached, all the time endeavoring to keep some large tree between them and the camp, which now they thought they might see at any moment. They went on for some distance in this manner and their search was at last rewarded by the view which they obtained. Just before them they could see the camp. There were only three men about the fire, and they had no difficulty in recognizing them as the ones who had come down the river in the canoe. Two of them were English and one was a Spaniard, and they also saw that Josiah was right when he declared that he had been his captor.

The men were talking earnestly, and while their tones were not low, the boys were unable to hear what they said. Accordingly they tried to creep a little nearer the camp, and so successful were they

that at last, standing behind a large tree, they were enabled to hear the conversation, and distinguish the words of the men before them.

Jerry was especially interested in what he heard, for it fully confirmed the report which Captain Jim had brought, and strengthened the confidence which he had in Tecumseh's young braves. The men were talking about Horse Shoe Bend. It was evident that they had been on some expedition which concerned the gathering of the Indians, and that they also had been busied in strengthening the courage and hopes of the Creeks. Supplies had been furnished from Pensacola, and a large number of white men had been at the Bend, assisting the Indians in erecting the fortifications and strengthening their defences.

Their conversation soon turned upon the number of men who were assembled there, and Jerry was delighted as he heard even the number of the Indians declared, and also the numbers of the reinforcements which they were expecting.

So interested were they in what they heard, that more time passed than they realized, and Jerry was startled when his companion suddenly touched his arm and pointed towards the forest behind them.

Jerry looked in the direction Captain Jim had indicated, and could plainly see a number of men who were approaching the camp after the manner in which

they themselves had come. They dodged from one tree to another, and were endeavoring all the time to keep themselves concealed within the shadows of the forest.

Jerry's first thought was to break and run. Here he was beset by two dangers, and in the midst of both he was fearful that his own chances of escape would be very poor indeed. He turned to put his thought into action when he was startled as he recognized his brother as one of those who were approaching.

Together with Captain Jim, he then withdrew from the place in which he had been standing, and soon they met their advancing companions. The cause of their approach was quickly explained, and Josiah told them how after so long a time had elapsed, and nothing having been heard from them, they began to be fearful of some evil having befallen Jerry and his companion, and decided to advance to their aid.

Jerry told his friends of the conversation he had overheard and urged them at once to return to their canoes. Josiah, however, was determined to see for himself the condition of affairs in the camp, and started forward. He had taken but a few steps when his approach was overheard, and the three men, thoroughly alarmed, quickly rose to their feet.

They caught a glimpse of the others in the forest, who as soon as they had seen that Josiah's approach

was known had started to advance to his assistance; but the white men did not wait to make further investigations, for it was evident that they thought a large party was approaching. Their presence now could no longer be concealed, and for a moment the two parties stood silently facing each other.

CHAPTER XXXII

UP THE COOSA

THE confusion we have described in our last chapter lasted but a moment. When all the members of our party stepped forth into view, the three men into whose camp they had broken evidently thought that a multitude was approaching. Each party had been fearful of an attack, and the unexpected meeting which had taken place left neither ready for prompt action. The three white men, however, without waiting to make further investigations, at once turned and ran from the camp.

At first they started towards the river where they had left their canoe, but they had gone but a short distance when the folly of this course was seen, and they turned quickly and ran along the shore. They dodged in and out among the trees and disappeared from sight almost before the others realized what had occurred. They were gone, that was evident, but they had taken no guns with them, and there was little danger now if an engagement should occur.

Consequently, Josiah, urging his young companions to follow, immediately started after them.

The hunter kept up well with the younger men, and for fifteen minutes they ran in the direction in which they thought the others had gone. During this time they caught no glimpse of the men, and finally Josiah, almost breathless, stopped and said, "There's no use in our following them any further. We might as well look for a needle in a hay-stack. The thing for us to do now is to go back where we came from, and take our canoes and start on again. I don't think these men will be very likely to trouble us. They seemed to be more afraid of us than we were of them."

The mention of the canoes at once aroused his companions' interest, and they returned as rapidly as possible to the place where they had left them. If these had been taken, they would be left without any means of continuing their voyage down the river, or of returning. As they approached the river again, Captain Jim called their attention to a little canoe they could see far out on the water. In it there were three men, and they had no difficulty in recognizing them at once as those whom they had been pursuing.

"They've doubled on us and got away," said Josiah. "They led us down the stream and then dodged about amongst the trees and came back to

their camp. They've got their canoe now, and we shan't be able to catch them."

"I wonder if they have their guns, too," said Jerry, and he started towards the camp which they had abandoned, but he soon saw that nothing had been left behind. They had been outwitted cleverly, and there was nothing for them to do now but to decide what their own movements should be.

"It's that young Indian's fault," said Josiah in a surly tone, pointing to Captain Jim. "I think he knows more about this camp than he cares to tell."

But the young brave was silent, apparently not hearing the hunter, or giving him any attention if he had heard his words. Josiah was much chagrined. He prided himself upon his woodcraft, and his ability to do in the forest more than other men, and now to have been outwitted by his captor and the two men who were with him, increased the mortification of the hunter, and he was inclined to vent his feelings upon his companions. He stood on the bluff for a moment, and fired a shot at the departing canoe, but it was too far away for him to inflict any damage. One of the men waved his hand tauntingly, but that was the only reply they received.

Our party now assembled about the fire which the others had abandoned, and there Jerry told the story which he had overheard when he had approached the camp. The warriors from the Hickory Ground, Oak-

choye, Eufaulahache, Fish Pond town, and many others had gathered together at the Horse Shoe Bend, or Tohopeka, as the Indians called the peninsula formed by the loop of the Tallapoosa.

In this little peninsula there were about one hundred acres. Jerry reported that many white men from Pensacola either were there now, or had been there recently, and along with some of the half-breeds had built a very strong breastwork of logs across the neck of the peninsula. Through this breastwork they had cut two rows of port-holes, and arranged them in such a manner that those who should assail the place would be exposed to a cross-fire from those within. Behind this breastwork was a mass of logs and brush, and near the river at the base of the peninsula there was a village of log huts where the Indians had moored hundreds of their canoes, so that if the garrison should be hard pressed they would have means of escape convenient.

The most of this peninsula was covered with trees. Stores and supplies of food sufficient for a long siege had been collected in the fort, and the Indians assembled there thought they were prepared to resist almost any attack that might be made upon them.

Jerry told all this to his interested listeners, and Josiah quietly asked, "Did you hear them say how many there were there?"

"Yes, they said that with the women and children

there were about twelve hundred. I think they said that about a quarter of the number was made up of these. It seems," continued Jerry, "the Indians regard this spot as absolutely safe, and they're a good deal cheered up since the fight at Emucfau and Econochaca."

"Emucfau is only about four or five miles away from the Bend," said Josiah, "and they haven't had far to go since the last fight. They call this Horse Shoe Bend Cholocco Litabixee in their language, and it's a good place, too."

"But what shall we do now? The words Jerry has heard," said Tom, "are just like those which Captain Jimi reported. I don't see any use in our going on, and I think we'd better start back for the fort. We should have to take a good many chances in making our way on to the Bend, for it's a good forty miles from here at least, and if we should happen to be taken prisoners, or any accident occur, this information which we have now had from two sources would be lost to General Jackson, and I think he cares more about that than anything else that we can do just now."

"Well, our white men have gone," said Josiah, "but they've left some information behind them."

"Yes, and that's a good deal better than taking three prisoners," said Tom.

"Well, I reckon," said Josiah, "that we've got

about the truth of the matter, and the general will be glad to hear it, and, of course, he ought to know what we've learned although we have had it second hand. We might get off, as Tom says, if we started to go across the country, so I'm inclined to think that we'd better do as he suggests."

This proposal was at once agreed to, and going to their canoes they immediately embarked and started on their voyage up the river. Captain Jim insisted upon taking Jerry in his canoe, and this left one of the young Indians to go in the other. As they paddled on, Captain Jim told his young friend the story of his absence. He did this in few words, and in a very disjointed manner, but Jerry learned a new side of his friend's character.

It seemed that the sight of Weatherford, or Red Eagle as he was often called, had aroused the feelings of the young brave more than he knew at the time. The thought uppermost in his mind was of the struggle all his friends were making to keep the lands of the Creek Indians from the white men, and hold them for the use of their own people. Into this region many reckless and evil-minded men had come, and the Indians had suffered greatly at their hands. It was natural that they should wish to retaliate, and they had done this after their own traditions and customs.

After Weatherford and his party had gone down the stream, Captain Jim thought over these things,

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and could not rouse himself from their influence. More and more he longed to see the half-breed leader again, and to hear from him some word such as he had often spoken to his young brave. The feeling had become so intense, that at last during the night, when he was on guard, he had resolved to leave his white companions and once more join the warriors of his nation.

He knew that Weatherford could not be very far down the stream in advance of them, and summoning the two young braves they had taken their canoe and started down the river.

They had soon found Weatherford, and to him Captain Jim had freely told his own feelings, and his experiences during the past few weeks. Weatherford had replied in a dignified manner, but sadly, and told the young braves that, while he should be glad to have their aid, he was himself convinced that the war was almost over, and that this last stand that the Creeks were trying to make at Horse Shoe Bend would be the end of the struggle. Perhaps it also would be the end of the existence of the nation. At any rate, he had not encouraged the young braves to follow him, and had told them that if they could remain where they were, without fighting against their own nation, it would be better for them to do so.

When Captain Jim had told him of the expedition on which he had started with the other braves and

his white companions, Weatherford had replied that he had no hesitation in declaring just the condition of affairs at Horse Shoe Bend, and it was from him that the young brave had obtained the information which he brought back to his companions, and had reported soon after his arrival.

Somehow in Jerry's heart there was an increased respect for Tecumseh's young braves. He realized now as he never had before how severe was the struggle in their own hearts, and how strong the love they had for their own nation. They were as much patriots as any men who had fought for their land and homes, and the only trouble arose from the fact that others had envied their possessions and had striven to drive them away from the homes of their ancestors. This conversation Jerry did not repeat until years afterward, and then only to his brother.

The canoes meanwhile steadily made their way up the Coosa, and by nightfall our party had arrived at the caves in which they had sought shelter so recently. In spite of the danger, it was decided that they would again use these places; but this time no visitors came, and without any interruption they resumed their voyage early on the following morning.

Late in the afternoon they arrived at Fort Strother, but as they entered within the enclosure it was apparent that there was confusion in the fort. The first man they saw was Big Bob, who good-naturedly

advanced and volunteered the information that everybody was ready for something, and seemed to be waiting for it, but just what it was he could not make out, though he told them that there had been many additions to the forces at the fort since their departure, and that everything seemed to be ready for Jackson to start for some other place. "And that's what I think he's up to," said Big Bob as he left them.

The appearance of the fort had greatly changed during the absence of our friends, and many of the forces which we have mentioned, already had arrived.

While the boys were curiously observing the newcomers, Josiah left them to go and report to General Jackson the result of their expedition. He did this with considerable fear, for he thought the general might be inclined to blame them for returning before they had carried out his instructions; but when Josiah entered his quarters he soon found that he already had received news from the Horse Shoe, and this exactly corresponded with the report which Captain Jim had brought and the words which Jerry had overheard in the camp they had disturbed.

"Your young Indian was right," said Josiah, as he returned once more to the boys, "but how and where he learned it is more than I can tell." Jerry knew that he could enlighten him, but he had no disposition to do so, and the secret of the young brave was secure.

The camp was a busy place now, and the arrangements went forward hurriedly for the start which was soon to be made for Horse Shoe Bend.

One morning the boys were surprised when Tecumseh's young braves did not join them as they usually did, and as the hours went on they concluded that they must have left the camp.

"There's no accounting for Indians," said Josiah. "You think you've got them, and then you haven't; and it's just as likely as not they have cleared out to take word to Weatherford of what's going on here."

Jerry himself had fears that the hunter's words might be true, and yet he had a stronger confidence in his Indian friends than he ever had had before Captain Jim told him his story in the canoe.

All things at last were in readiness, and the start was about to be made. General Jackson sent his stores in flat-boats down the Coosa, and in charge of them placed Colonel Williams and his regiment. He left Colonel Steele with a garrison of four hundred and fifty men at Fort Strother, and then with all the remainder of his army he commenced his march towards the Tallapoosa on the sixteenth day of March, 1814. The soldiers were eager for the journey, and although there was only one drum in the entire force, the march was not lacking in spirit.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HORSE SHOE BEND

GENERAL JACKSON, along with the flat-boats which he had sent down the river, had despatched a large body of the regulars with orders to meet him near the mouth of Cedar creek. Before he left the camp, however, he had stirred the hearts of all his soldiers, and especially impressed the minds of our young acquaintances by the summary punishment he visited upon one of his men.

As we know, he had been troubled by the mutinous spirit among his soldiers, and one man in particular among the West Tennessee troops had again and again incited his companions to mutiny. He was only a private, and yet the general felt that the time had come to visit summary punishment upon such disturbers. Accordingly this man was sentenced to death, and as this was his second offence, the general firmly refused to pardon him. The sentence was at once carried into effect, and the example thus presented exerted a very salutary influence on the entire army.

The journey of his forces was slowly made for the reason that a road had to be cut through the woods for much of the way. The river was badly swollen by the rains, and even the little creeks were filled to the tops of their banks; but so resolute was the leader, and so willing now were his followers, that by the twenty-first they arrived at the mouth of Cedar creek. The supply boats and the regulars joined them the very next day, and there Fort Williams was built as a basis of supplies, and plans were made by which this place was to be kept in open communication with Fort Strother. He left a large body of his followers here, and with about two thousand effective men resumed his march for the Horse Shoe Bend.

Previous to this time General Jackson had arranged the forces under his command in such a manner as to cover all that region. He was determined to strike a blow which would put an end to the war, even if it exterminated the "Red Sticks." Colonel Dyer had been ordered to scour the country between the Coosa, the Black Warrior, and Cahawba as far down as the old towns; the Choctaws and Chickasaws, who were now acting with him, were directed to watch the country west of the Tombigbee and prevent any of the "Red Sticks" escaping from beyond the Mississippi; and the Cherokees received very careful instructions to range about the head waters of the Tallapoosa.

At the same time there was a large force of North Carolina and South Carolina militia, of which Colonel Pearson was in charge, who had relieved the Georgia troops which General Floyd had led on the eastern borders of the Creek country, and these were held in readiness to act in any movement that might be made against the fastnesses and hiding-places of the hostile Indians.

As soon as the work at Fort Williams was far enough advanced to satisfy the energetic general, he again took up the line of march and started across the country on the morning of the twenty-fourth for the Horse Shoe Bend. The men who remained at Fort Williams — and there were many of these — were told to protect the supplies and continue the labor on the fortifications there.

Old Hickory pushed steadily eastward, and early on the morning of the twenty-seventh he halted within a few miles of the breastworks at the Horse Shoe Bend and sent out parties to reconnoitre. His spies soon informed him of the position of the Indians, and General Jackson was delighted with the news they brought. As we know, the Indians had erected a breastwork of logs from five to eight feet high across the narrow neck of the Bend. In this there were double port-holes which had been arranged with much skill and ingenuity. In this labor the British and Spaniards had assisted, and many of the half-

breeds had been active in planning and forwarding the work.

Within this enclosure there were about a hundred acres of land. The centre was high ground covered with brush and fallen timber. At the lower extremity of the peninsula, on the river bottom, as it was called, was the Indian village.

General Jackson was now but six miles distant from the Horse Shoe, and as his spies had given him full information of the number and location of the foes, he prepared at once to act, and early on the following morning sent General Coffee with the mounted men and most of the Indians with instructions to cross the river at a ford two miles below the village, and to take possession of the high grounds on the opposite bank, so that all escape in that quarter would be cut off.

With the remainder of his forces General Jackson marched to a position in front of the enemy's breastworks, where he halted and waited for the signal which had been previously agreed upon, and which would inform him that General Coffee was ready for the action to begin.

As soon as this had been received, the main column immediately moved forward.

The two pieces of artillery, a six and a three pounder, were planted on a hill only about eighty yards from the left of the enemy's line, and at half-

past ten fire was opened on the works, under the direction of Captain Bradford, the chief engineer; but the wall was not seriously affected.

Indeed, as the small balls were buried in the logs and earth, the Indians shouted in derision, and fiercely defied the attacking forces, meanwhile warmly returning their fire. For nearly two hours the cannonade was kept up with great spirit and activity, although many of the rifles or muskets were not used except when the dusky warriors incautiously exposed themselves.

Meanwhile the friendly Indians had advanced to the left bank of the river, while General Coffee remained on the high ground with the rest of his troops. Some of the Cherokees, who were very active in the fight, now discovered that the enemy's canoes, which were drawn up on the shore, as we know, near the village, had been left unguarded.

They at once plunged into the stream, swam across the river, and paddled back with many of the canoes which they had seized. Means having been thus provided for crossing, the Cherokees, headed by their chief, Robert Brown, and accompanied by Colonel Morgan and Captain Russell, accompanied the spies across to the village, set the little town on fire, and at once moved against the enemy in the rear of their works. The smoke from the burning huts assured General Jackson that all things were moving in that

quarter as he desired, but the slackening of the fire of the assailants made him think they were too few to dislodge the Indians, and very likely were in peril themselves.

The Indians were fighting with the utmost bravery and desperation. Every avenue by which they might have fled now was occupied by the American troops, and their homes were in flames. Still they refused to surrender, and thus far were successfully resisting every attempt of the spies and the Cherokees to dislodge them.

General Jackson's soldiers were now clamoring loudly to be led to the assault, but he had hesitated to give the order until he became convinced that the party in the rear were not strong enough to overcome the opposition they encountered. For two full hours he had been battering at the breastworks with cannonballs, and apparently without producing any effect. The command which he at last gave to storm, was received with shouts and acclamations.

The Thirty-ninth United States Infantry under Colonel Williams led the way. They were well supported by the East Tennessee Brigade, and the whole assailing party behaved most gallantly. A fierce struggle was maintained for a short time through the port-holes muzzle to muzzle, the action being so close at times that General Jackson afterward wrote in his despatch, "Many of the enemy's balls were welded to the American bayonets."

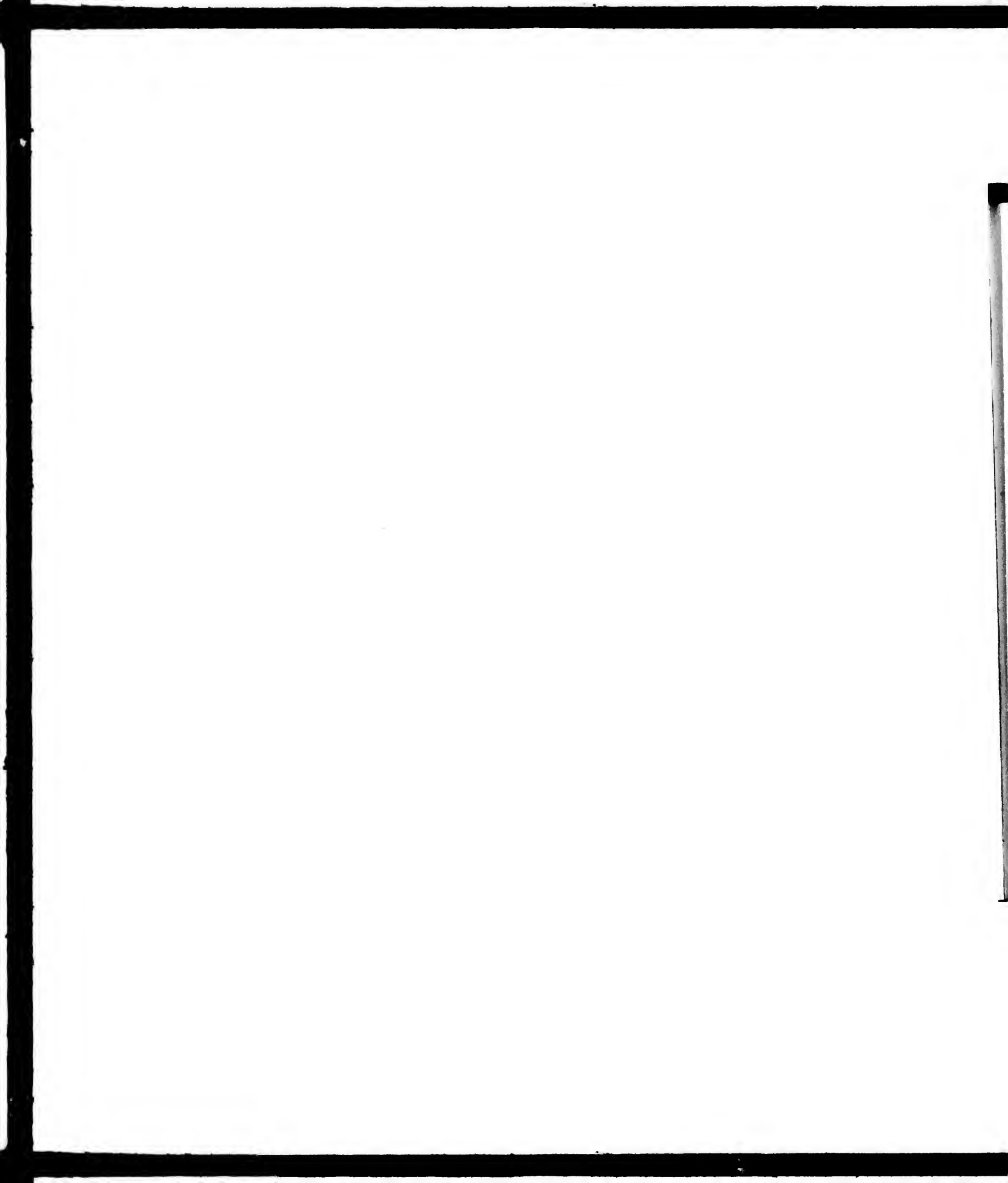
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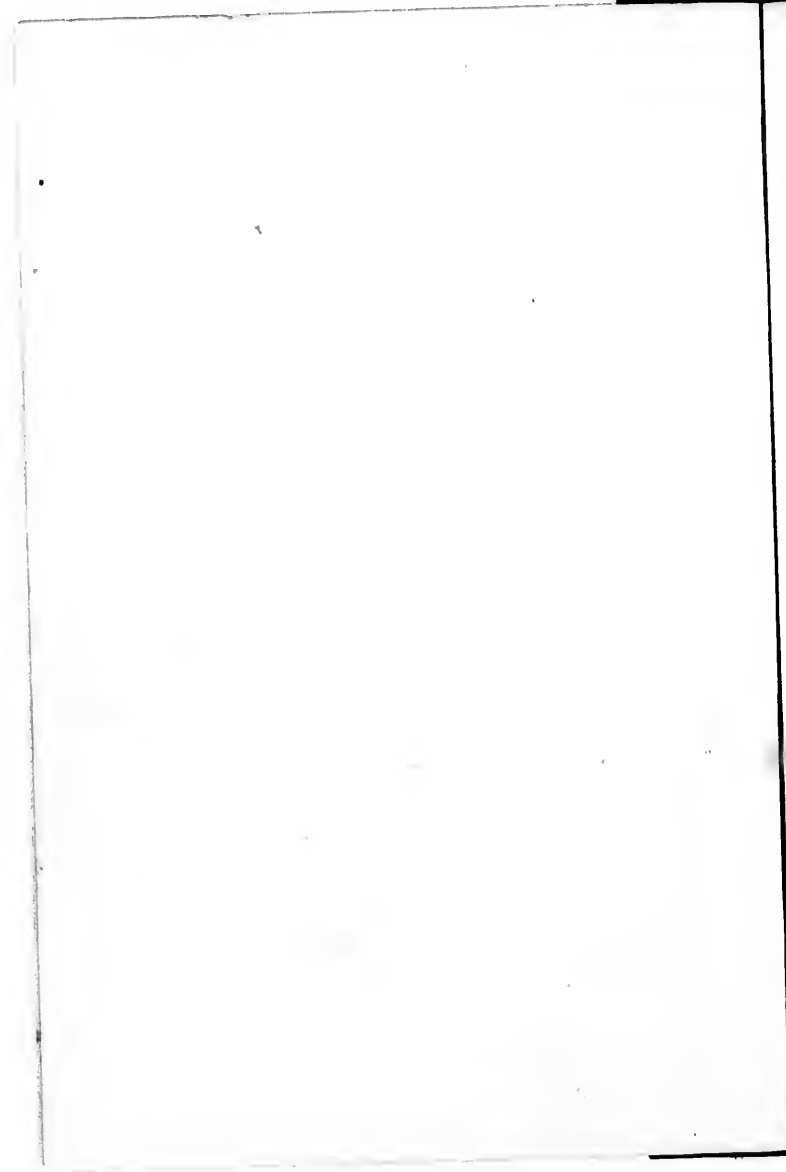
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“Major Montgomery was the first to spring upon the breastworks.”

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The contest went on for several minutes, and then Major Montgomery was the first to spring upon the breastworks, but he was shot dead among his comrades who were rushing forward to sustain him. A young man at his side, Sam Houston, of whom our boys in later years heard again after he became the first president of the Republic of Texas, and later a member of Congress, was severely wounded in the thigh by a barbed arrow, but he leaped boldly down amongst the yelling savages and called upon his companions to follow him. At the fall of Major Montgomery a smothered cry for vengeance had rolled all along the line, and the example of young Ensign Houston had so stirred them that the whole column now dashed over the feeble barrier like an avalanche, crushing and bearing down everything before it.

The "Red Sticks" were now fighting with the fury of despair, and they met the shock of the new-comers with clubbed muskets and rifles, and with the gleaming knife and tomahawk; but they were not able long to withstand the dexterous use of the bayonet, and in wild confusion began to flee to the woods and thickets. Some few attempted to escape by swimming the river, but were shot down in their flight by the spies and the mounted men under General Coffee. Most of them, however, fought and died where they stood — behind the ramparts, which they were unable to defend.

The conflict now turned into a butchery, and was continued for hours. No one asked for quarter. The Tallapoosa was running red with the blood of the savages, and the dead were piled in mangled heaps upon its banks. The Indians had been told that torture awaited those who were made prisoners, and so not one would suffer himself to be taken or ask for quarter. Some tried to secrete themselves in thickets, but they were driven out and slain, and a considerable number sought refuge under the bluffs of the river which were covered by a part of the breastworks and the fallen trees.

General Jackson, noticing these men, sent an interpreter to them to offer terms of surrender. The answer they gave was a volley that sent the messenger back with several severe wounds in his body.

The cannon was now brought to bear on their position and a partially successful charge was made; yet the stubborn Indians were not dislodged. General Jackson then called for volunteers to storm the place, and the wounded young ensign, Sam Houston, was the first to respond to his summons. While he was beyond the lines trying to discover the position of the concealed Indians, he received two bullets in his shoulder and was borne helpless away. Others responded now, and a number lost their lives in the attempt to dislodge the foe.

Finally the brush was set on fire. The flames

spread very rapidly, snapping and crackling as they caught the dry bark and leaves, and licking up everything in their way. The Indians were soon forced from their concealment, and all who attempted to flee or offered any resistance were shot down.

Darkness at last put an end to the carnage. A few Indians escaped, but of the thousand who went into the battle in the morning not more than two hundred were alive now, and many of these were severely wounded. There were three hundred prisoners taken, but nearly all were women and children. The exact loss of the "Red Sticks" never was known, as the bodies of many of their dead were thrown into the river by their friends previous to the final rout. Among the slain, however, were three prophets, and one, who was a chief as well, named Monohoe, was struck in the mouth by a grape-shot, and although he lived in spite of his wound for many years after, he was unable to incite his countrymen to revolt or warfare again.

General Jackson had lost fifty-five men killed and one hundred and forty-six wounded. Twenty-three of the killed and forty-seven of the wounded were friendly Creeks and Cherokees. During the night General Jackson's followers completed the work of destruction, and in the morning almost nothing but smouldering ruins remained of the fortifications at Tohopeka.

Immediately he began his return march towards Fort Williams. The wounded were carried on litters, and while many of the dead had received burial, many more had been sunk beneath the waters of the Coosa, as the only method of keeping them safe from the desecration of savage hands.

Five long days were consumed in this return march, and although they encountered many of the hostile Indians on their way, they always fled at their approach. The spirit of the "Red Sticks" was almost broken, and few had any heart to try to make a defensive stand anywhere. Terrible vengeance had been taken for the massacre at Fort Mims and the other cruelties that the Indians had perpetrated since the war began.

For five days the army remained at Fort Williams, and during this time our boys sought in vain for their young Indian friends, — Tecumseh's young braves. They had seen nothing of them in the engagement, and were unable to learn whether or not they had rejoined their countrymen in this desperate stand. If they had, there was little likelihood that any of them were alive now; but Tom somehow had the feeling in his heart that he would meet them again, and that they would give no bad account of themselves.

Many of the hostile Indians now made their way into Florida, so careless were the South Carolina men in carrying out the work which General Jackson had

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intrusted to them, and who, as we know, were on the left bank of the Tallapoosa to prevent the escape of any of the Creeks.

McQueen, one of the most prominent chiefs among the Creeks, was captured, and soon made his escape to the Escambia river with five hundred of his followers; but, in spite of all this, General Jackson regarded his expedition as a great success, and evidently looked for the end of the struggle soon to come.

While General Jackson was at Fort Williams, remaining, as we know, for five days, reports were brought to him of the condition of the Indians, and he at once made preparations for aggressive work, and determined then and there to complete the work not yet quite finished. The campaign was not ended, and our boys were to have their share in the exciting experiences of the next few days.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SEARCH FOR NANCE

AFTER a brief delay at Fort Williams, General Jackson pushed on to what was known as the "Hickory Ground." His march was through the country, flooded now by the spring rains and swollen streams, and at the head of the peninsula where the Coosa and Tallapoosa joined, on the site of a fort which a hundred years before this time had been built by Governor Bienville, he halted, and there erected a new place of defence. The old French entrance was cleaned out and deepened, and on this foundation was built a fort which, in honor of the leader, was named Fort Jackson.

Village after village of the Indians was destroyed by the energetic and enraged soldiers, and now many a band of the humiliated Creeks made their way to Fort Jackson to sue for pardon and peace for themselves and their broken tribes.

General Jackson received all these deputations courteously, but with much sternness. He accepted the offers of all, naming as the one condition that

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they should now make their homes above Fort Williams, in what was known as the "neutral ground." There, he told them, they would be treated with, and what the government should at last demand would be made known; but to every one he declared the one condition on which peace could be secured was that the noted leader, Weatherford, or Red Eagle, or Hoponika Futsahia (Truth-maker), as he was variously known, should be captured and brought to him.

The Indians, thoroughly subdued and willing now to purchase peace at almost any price, complied with his demand, and the search for Weatherford began. But that haughty chief did not wait to be taken and dragged as a criminal into the presence of his conqueror, but, learning of the condition which General Jackson had named, aware now that every hope for his nation had fled, he mounted his swift, gray horse, on which he had made the leap from that high bluff at the "holy ground," and made his way directly to Jackson's camp.

The sun was just setting as he made his approach, and General Jackson happened to be alone in his tent. The haughty chief entered, and drawing himself up to his full height (six feet and two inches), folding his arms, and looking calmly at his conqueror, said, "I am Weatherford, the chief who commanded at Fort Mims. I have nothing to request for myself.

You can kill me if you desire. I have come to beg you to send for the women and children of the war party who are now starving in the woods. Their fields and crops have been destroyed by your people, who have driven them to the woods without an ear of corn. I hope that you will send out parties who will conduct them safely here in order that they may be fed. I exerted myself in vain to prevent the massacre of the women and children at Fort Mims. I have come now to ask peace for my people, but not for myself."

General Jackson in astonishment looked at the brave man, and felt his own heart grow warm within him as he recognized the true nobility of his foe.

"How dare you come here into my very presence and ask for peace and protection?" at last the general managed to say.

"I am in your power. Do with me as you please," replied Weatherford proudly. "I am a soldier. I have done the white people all the harm I could. I have fought them, and fought them bravely; and if I had an army I would yet fight and contend to the last; but I have none. My people are all gone. I can do no more now than weep over the misfortunes of my nation."

Jackson realized that there was something of the "hickory" in Weatherford as well as in himself. Here was a man who had gone into war to protect

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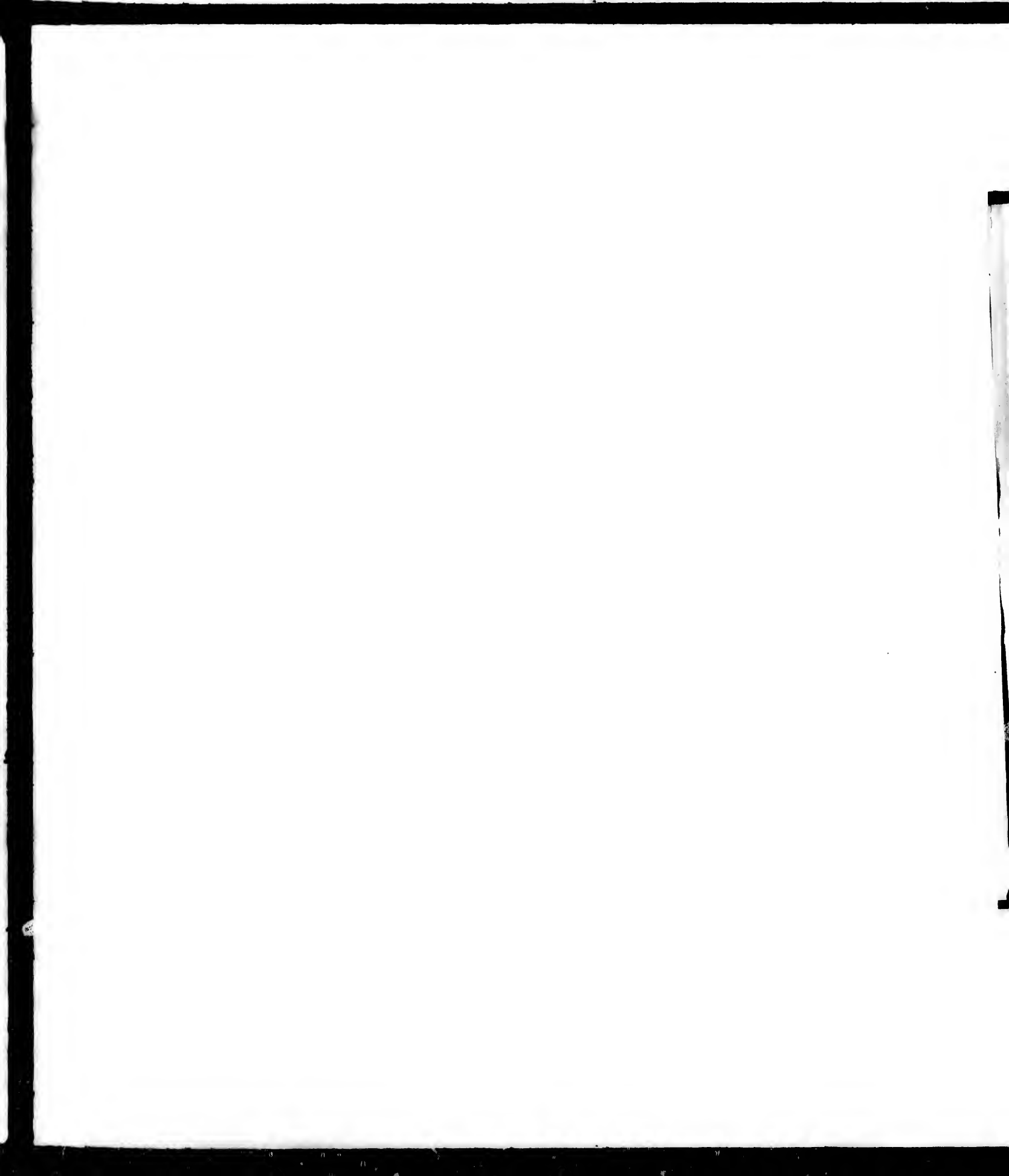
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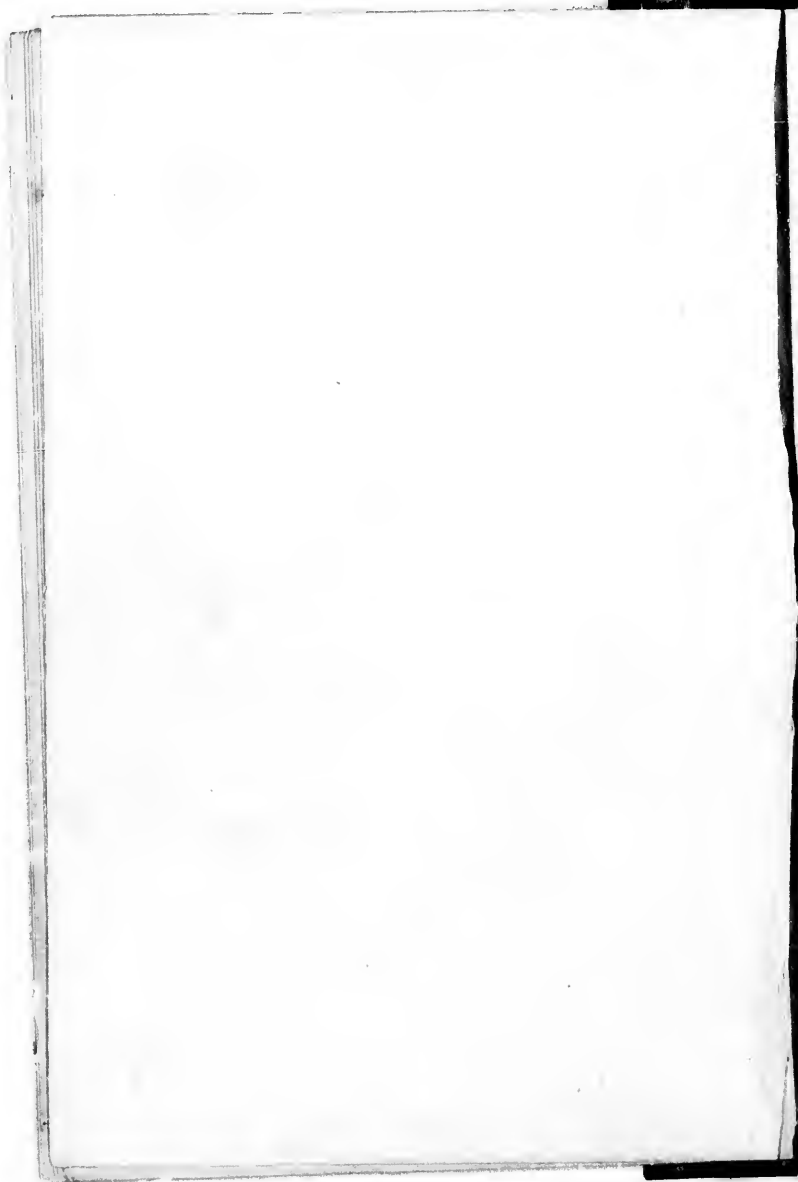
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"I am in your power. Do with me as you please."
Page 336.



the homes of his people from the invader, and who had fought with all his cunning and strength as long as hope remained. He had endeavored to be merciful, but often his efforts had been in vain, and now he stood here in the presence of his conqueror, fearlessly expressing his opinions, and apparently with little regard for one who had power over his own life.

"If you truly desire to submit," said the general, "your nation must make its home beyond the Mississippi. That is the only wise policy for you to pursue. If, however, you desire to continue the war, and feel prepared to meet the consequences, you may depart in peace and unite yourself with the war party, if you choose."

Again Weatherford drew himself up to his full height and his eyes flashed half in scorn, half in anger, as he replied, "I may well be addressed in such language now. There was a time when I had a choice and could have answered you; I have none now; nay, even hope is ended. Once I could animate my warriors to battle, but I cannot animate the dead: my warriors can no longer hear my voice. Their bones are at Talladega, Tallaschatche, Emucfau, Econochaca, and Tohopeka. I have not surrendered myself thoughtlessly. While there was a chance for success I never left my post nor supplicated peace. But my people are gone, and now I ask it for

my nation, not for myself. On the miseries and misfortunes brought upon my country I look back with deepest sorrow, and wish to avert still greater calamities. If I had been left to contend with the Georgia army, I would have raised my corn on one bank of the river and fought them on the other. But *your* people have destroyed my nation. You are a brave man; I rely upon your generosity. You will exact no terms of a conquered people but such as they should agree to. Whatever they may be, it would now be folly and madness to oppose. If they are opposed, you will find me among the sternest enforcers of obedience. Those who would still hold out can be influenced only by a mean spirit of revenge, and to this they must not and shall not sacrifice the last remnant of their country. You have told our nation where we might go and be safe. This is good talk, and they ought to listen to it. They *shall* listen to it."

General Jackson, strong as he was and unyielding in his efforts to crush any enemy, was deeply moved by these brave words of the half-breed, and immediately bade Weatherford go to the forest and search for his scattered followers and counsel peace.

But for a long time in all that region there was no peace for the Creek warrior. The people whose relatives had been massacred at Fort Mims were filled with thoughts of vengeance, and were untiring

in their efforts to find and punish this leader. Consequently Weatherford remained away until the war was finished, and what he did upon his return we shall tell in another chapter.

On the twentieth of April General Pinckney arrived at Fort Jackson with troops from North and South Carolina. The defeat of the Creeks practically had put an end to this war, and the new general at once directed the West Tennesseans to go home, and said he would leave a brigade to garrison Fort Williams. The order was hailed with joy by the West Tennesseans, and within two hours after it had been received they had started up the Coosa. They moved rapidly, and crossing the Tennessee river were discharged at Fayetteville. There Old Hickory gave them a farewell address, and left them for his own home, which was on a large farm near Nashville, and called the "Hermitage."

Tom and Jerry, freed now from the restraints and labor of the camp life, started at once for Mobile, in company with their friend Josiah. It had been long since they had seen any of their family, and weeks had passed since any word had been received from them.

"I'm afraid we shall not find everything just right at Mobile," said Jerry.

"Oh," replied the hunter, "if there had been any trouble there, I think you would have heard long

before this. Everybody was afraid after the massacre at Fort Mims that the Indians would start for Mobile at once. That's just what the Spaniards wanted them to do, and the British were behind it all. If they had done that, there wouldn't have been anything left of the town; but instead of going south they went north, and we know what they've been up to."

"Yes," said Jerry, "but Mobile is only a little village, and there's not a building there that isn't wooden. They haven't anything that's much good to fight with against artillery, and they couldn't make much of a show against the rifles of the Indians. Why, there aren't a thousand people there altogether."

"That's all true enough," said Josiah, "but you forget Fort Bowyer at the edge of the bay."

"No, I don't," replied Jerry; "but that's thirty miles from Mobile, out at the end of that little narrow sand cape. It hasn't over twenty guns altogether, and only two of these are large. If the British and Spaniards, to say nothing of the Indians, once get inside of that there'll be no hope for Mobile."

"Still they've done nothing so far," said Josiah, "and we'll go so fast that they won't have time to do anything before we get there; and now that this war is over, you can take them all and start for home before any further trouble arises."

Accordingly our party of three made their way as rapidly as possible, and in the course of a few days

arrived at Mobile. They at once went to the house where the other members of the family had been left. They were surprised when they entered to learn that they had changed their quarters, and were now to be found at another house in a distant part of the village. They started for this place, and in response to their summons a man opened the door and listened to their words.

"I've come for my mother and the children," said Tom. "They told me they had moved here."

"Your mother and the children?" said the man. "Why, who are they?"

"Why, you know, Mrs. Curry and Nance and the children."

"Mrs. Curry," said a woman in a sharp voice, who came and looked over the shoulder of the man. "Why, they've been gone from here more than two weeks."

"Gone!" said the boys aghast. "What do you mean? Gone where?"

"I mean that they've gone, that's all there is of it," said the woman sharply. "They were the most unsociable lot of folks I ever saw. They wouldn't talk much with me, though I tried to be neighborly and sociable too, but it seems to me that the more I talked the less they said."

"But surely they must have said something about where they were going," said Tom. "They haven't left the village, have they?"

"I don't know anything about it," said the woman; "they've gone, and that's all. No, hold on a minute," she added a moment later; "I believe the girl did leave a letter which she said some one would call for, and maybe you're the one that wanted it."

"Yes, I'm the one," said Tom quickly; "let me have it."

"Well, I'll look for it," replied the woman, "though I don't just remember where I put it."

The boys waited impatiently while she went on her search, and at last when she returned she said, "I can't find it. I'm sure I put it somewhere, but just as likely as not it got burned up. I took all the rubbish out of the room where they were and set fire to it, and it's just as likely as not that letter was in the mess."

"Oh, but look again," said Tom; "we must have that letter."

"Well, I'll try," said the woman, "but I know I shan't find it." And her words proved to be true, and the boys left the house without any knowledge of where their mother was.

"Well, what shall we do now?" asked Tom, as they turned and went slowly down the street.

"Why, we'll make a search through the town," said Josiah. "We'll find them all right, never you fear."

Accordingly the boys began their search, but none

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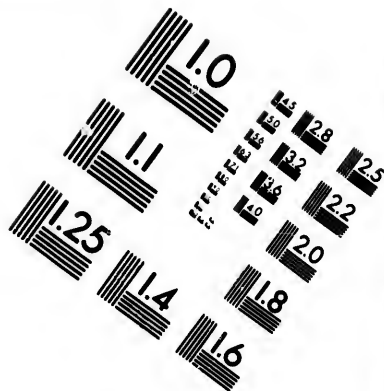
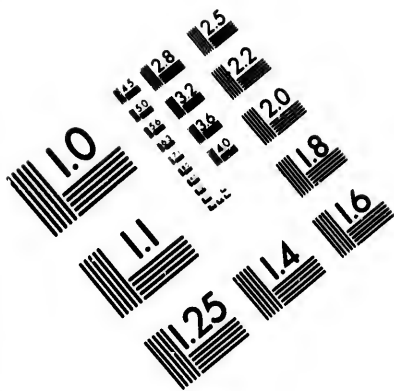
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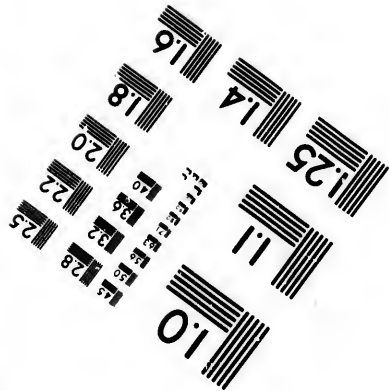
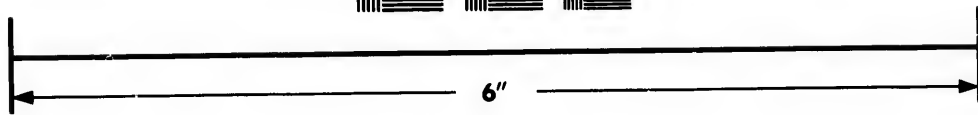
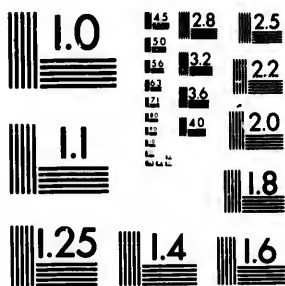
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of the officers knew anything of the whereabouts of the missing people, and finally they visited street after street and house after house; but their search was unavailing, and as night came on the boys were not merely discouraged but sadly perplexed.

"We'll try it again to-morrow," said Josiah, "and we shall find something, I know."

The boys did not sleep much that night, for they were constantly striving to find some solution for this perplexing problem; but when the morning came the same difficulties still faced them, and they were as ignorant as on the night before.

"I'll tell you what," said the hunter suddenly, when the boys had finished their breakfast, "I know what's become of them. They've gone home. That's where they've gone. That's just like Nance. She probably heard that the war was over, and thought you boys would put straight for that place, and that's where she's gone, you mark my word."

The search in the village, which was again resumed, proved unavailing, and at last the boys resolved to act upon the hunter's suggestion. There was nothing else for them to do now. Their home was far away, and yet every trace of the presence of their mother at Mobile had been lost.

"They're either there or nowhere," said Tom at last; "and we might just as well try that clew now as

any other, and in fact it's the only one we've got, and so the sooner we start the better."

Their preparations were soon made and the voyage up the Alabama was begun ; but the boys started with heavier hearts than they had had on any of their late expeditions, or in any of the exciting experiences through which they had passed.

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CHAPTER XXXV

CONCLUSION

THE canoe in which they had come to Mobile they used now on their return. The boys were silent most of the time, and their hearts were filled with forebodings. The strange disappearance of their mother and the children they could not explain, and the more they thought about it the more perplexed they became.

There was one thing evident, however, and that was that they had gone from Mobile, but under whose care they had no means of knowing, and they were not hopeful that the hunter's words would prove to be true. Still there was nothing left for them to do except to follow his advice, and they began their return voyage at his earnest solicitation.

They steadily kept at their work, as they had little disposition for conversation, and were eager to find out whether those whom they were seeking were at their home or not. Josiah tried to cheer them, and frequently recounted the exciting events of the past few months; but while the boys listened respectfully,

their thoughts were far away, and they seldom made any reply to the kind-hearted hunter. They fully appreciated all that he had done for them, and did not wish to show their distrust of his advice, but their hearts were heavy, and they had little desire to enter with him into a review of their own deeds and experiences.

The hunter was eager to stop at Fort Mims, but he quickly gave up the proposal when he saw how opposed the boys were to making a stop anywhere on their voyage. For two days they kept steadily on in their course, stopping only for brief intervals and occasional rests; and even when night came they slept but a few hours, and then resumed their work, so eager were they to arrive at the end of their voyage. But at last the sights became more familiar, and they knew that they were approaching their old home. Their eagerness and silence both became more intense now; and even the hunter was still, as he shared, in a measure, in the feelings of his young companions.

At last the little log house in which they had lived for ten years came in sight. It was a beautiful day, and the sun was shining as brightly as in the morning when they had started forth on the rude raft they had made. Their eyes were constantly turned towards the familiar place, but there were no signs of life apparent and the silence was unbroken.

"There's nobody there," said Tom gloomily. "We

might better have stayed at Mobile and followed up our clews there."

"We did follow them all up," said Jerry, "and we didn't have anything left but this one that Josiah gave us."

"But even that's failed," replied Tom, "for there's nobody here, you see."

"Nobody here!" said Jerry, with almost a shout. "There's somebody out by the corner of the house now. It's Nance, as I live."

And dropping his paddle for a moment he shouted as loudly as he was able, but his words were not heard, and the figure he had seen disappeared, and their forebodings returned with the returning silence which seemed more intense than ever before. But the little canoe was sent forward more rapidly now, and in a brief time they approached the bank and started rapidly for the house. Before they had arrived at the bank the figure they had seen again appeared, and this time none of them had any difficulty in recognizing it as Nance.

"Hello, Nance!" shouted Tom, starting on a run as soon as he had leaped ashore.

His sister, for indeed it was she, startled at the call and the sound of the familiar voice, screamed and started towards the young men. Brave as she was, she could not control her feelings, and indeed there were traces of a strange moisture in the eyes of both

the boys. Even Hunter Josh was deeply touched, and apparently fastened his attention upon the crows which were flying across the river and uttering the same hoarse notes they had given when the party first set sail so many months before.

The children, hearing the uproar, soon came forth from the house, and clinging to their brothers' knees added their words of welcome. The little group at once entered and found Mrs. Curry just coming to the door to meet them. The welcome the boys received was a warm one, and yet they had scarcely seated themselves at the table to eat the food which Nance speedily prepared for them, before their mother began again in the familiar strain to which the boys had become accustomed since their father's death.

"I don't think you did right at all," she said. "Why, you've been gone for months now and left Nance and the children, to say nothing of me, in that old town of Mobile; and such a time as we've had! I don't think you ought to have gone at all."

"But, mother," said Tom, "it isn't very likely we should be here to-day if we hadn't taken our share in this war. Somebody had to go, and there was no reason why we shouldn't go as well as the others."

"Oh, yes, there was," said his mother. "I'm always the one that's left. I don't believe any one in the world ever had such a lonesome time as I've had. Your father would come away off into this forsaken

country, and, of course, I couldn't leave him to come alone; and then he was so fond of 'Tom and Jerry.'"

"Hush, mother," said Jerry. "Of course he was fond of us, for I know you must mean us boys. Father's gone, and we don't want to say anything against him. Poor man, he had the worst of it."

"I suppose so," replied his mother, "I suppose so, but nobody knows how hard it's been for me to be left with no one but boys to protect me, and then have them run off and fight the Indians, and leave me with the children so long alone. I never saw any harm in the Indians."

"I've seen some one you know," said Nance, breaking in. "Some of your friends."

"What do you mean?" asked Tom quickly.

"Why, some of your Indian friends," said Nance. "I don't know how we ever should have got here if it hadn't been for them."

"What! Tecumseh's young braves?" said Jerry.

"Yes," replied Nance, "and they've been good friends to us, too. You see, the way of it was this: we heard at Mobile that the fight with the Creeks was over, and lots of the people there began to start for home. Well, we wanted to go too, and when we found a party coming right up this way we made arrangements for them to bring us, just as I told you in that letter I left."

"That letter you left?" said Tom. "We couldn't

find it anywhere. The woman in whose house you were staying searched for it high and low, but she couldn't find it, and we hadn't the remotest idea what had become of you, or where you were."

"Is that so?" asked Nance, in astonishment. "Why, I don't see how you ever thought of coming back here for us, then."

"Why, they tried everything else," said Josiah, "and as they didn't find you there, they knew this was the only place where you could be, so I persuaded them to start for home, and said they would find you here. And you see I'm right," he added, turning to the boys. "But what about these young redskins? They were traitors, I know."

"They were no traitors," said Nance indignantly; "but when they found us in that party, — for we met them coming down the river, — they insisted upon taking us home themselves, and they've been a great help to us too."

"Yes, the Indians are all good, as far as I can see," said Mrs. Curry. "I never have believed any of the time in having this war, and if it hadn't been for the white men probably there wouldn't have been any."

"Probably not," said Josiah dryly.

"But come, boys, I want you to see what I've been doing," said Nance. "You see we've been home ten days now, and I found the old horse and the cow here, too. They were both pretty shy at first, but

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I've managed to tame them so they'll follow me now,
and you'll find them both in the barn."

"You didn't see anything of the chickens or the
pig, did you?" asked Jerry.

"I didn't see anything of the chickens," said Nance,
"but I was out in the woods one day, and I heard a
noise, and looked up and there was our old grunter.
He eyed me for a time as if he half remembered some-
thing about me, but when I moved he started off for
the forest, and I've not seen or heard anything of him
since. But come out here, I want to show you what
I've done."

The brave girl led the way to the clearing and
showed her brothers what she had done in the way of
ploughing and planting, alone and unaided.

"You're a great girl, Nance," said Tom proudly.
"I think Old Hickory would have been glad to have
had you in his army."

"Yes, I presume he would," said Mrs. Curry. "I
haven't any doubt that he wasn't satisfied with hav-
ing only the men, but that he would take the women
and the children too if he could. All he wanted
was to kill off these poor Indians and make a name
for himself. I know all about such men, and I don't
feel very well about your leaving me all alone through
these months, and not knowing what was going to
happen to us any minute."

"I'll tell the general the next time I see him,"

said the hunter dryly. "I've no doubt he'll feel very much put out when he hears about it."

But perhaps Josiah did not have patience enough with this woman who had seen so much of the harsher side of pioneer life that her spirit was almost broken, and she had fallen into this way of complaining about everything pertaining to her lot in life.

The boys at once resumed their work upon the place, and soon a stranger would never have known from its appearance that it ever had been neglected or abandoned for so long a time. On the second day after their return they were surprised as they sat at the table in the morning by the entrance of Tecumseh's young braves. They came into the room silently, and for half an hour uttered no word; but when the boys went out to the barn the Indians followed them, and there Captain Jim told his friend of their experiences.

When Jackson's army had started for Horse Shoe Bend the young braves at first had thought to go with him, but soon their remembrance of their former friends, and the fact that they were on an expedition against the people of their own blood, had so moved them that quietly they had left the army and taken no part in the struggle. They were convinced that the end was not in doubt, and while they knew that defeat awaited their own nation they could not bring themselves to take part in accomplishing it. But

Captain Jim assured the boys of their strong personal friendship for them, and in his graphic way told of the feeling they still had.

"Our hearts cling to yours," said Captain Jim, "as the moss to the trees by the river. The white men have strong hearts like hickory, — they bend, but are never broken. The white man's hand has been heavy on my people, and the Red Sticks' home is no more; but Tecumseh's young braves have not forgotten the kindness of the white people who dwell in the hut by the river."

Frequently the young braves visited the home, apparently unmindful of Jackson's decree; but as they were never molested, their visits either were unknown, or passed over without notice by the men in authority.

Weatherford remained in hiding till the close of the War of 1812, and then returning settled upon a rich farm in Alabama. He was well supplied with negro slaves, and soon gained a position of prominence and influence in all that region. The feelings aroused by the struggle became cooler, and almost all came to recognize in the great half-breed the qualities of a noble and true man. Not long after his return he married (it was his third venture in this line), and Sam Dale, strange as it may seem, was his best man at the wedding. Weatherford said that although he was born on the Hickory Ground he could not live

there. His old companions, the Creeks, did not forget their feelings towards him so easily, and while they had followed him bravely when he was their leader, they regarded the change in his life as wrong, and so, as Weatherford himself said, "I've come to live among gentlemen." His own nation had thrown him out. He became a successful business man, but never lost his love for the woods.

In 1826 he engaged with others in a bear hunt, but the perils and exertions proved to be too much for his weakened frame, and he died from the effects of the fatigue of that hunt.

Sam Dale entered more fully into the struggle, and before the war was ended received the commission of brevet brigadier-general. When the war closed he settled at Dale's Ferry on the Alabama river, and engaged in business. He, too, was successful, and came to occupy many responsible positions which his friends thrust upon him. He was a member of the convention that was called to divide the Mississippi Territory, and was also a delegate to the first general assembly of the Territory of Alabama, which, as we know, before that time was the eastern portion of Mississippi. He served several terms in the Legislature of Alabama, and was on the committee appointed to escort Lafayette when he visited the capital of the State. He was engaged much in public life, and when he died, on the twenty-fourth

day of May, 1841, he was in the seventieth year of his age. His struggle with the Indians in the canoe, which we have related in this book, was by many regarded, however, as the great deed of his life, and for many years it was a familiar story by the firesides, and found its way into the songs that were popular along the border.

General Jackson, at the close of the Creek war, returned, as we already know, to the "Hermitage," his home near Nashville. When General Harrison resigned, President Madison nominated him as a brigadier-general and a major-general by brevet. General Hampton, whose inefficiency we have already recorded in the "Boy Officers of 1812," left the army, and Andrew Jackson was appointed a full major-general in his place. He received both commissions at the same time, but we may be sure that the latter was the one he accepted.

In the summer of 1814 General Jackson was ordered to take command of the Seventh Military District, and established his headquarters at Mobile. The most stirring scenes in his life followed, and of these we shall have something to say in another book.

As for Tom and Jerry Curry they were not allowed to remain home long, and they, too, had a share in the exciting events that soon took place not far away; and Josiah Fletcher, making frequent visits

as he did at their home, so caught the spirit of the war and of the boys, that again he went with his young friends and shared in many of their experiences.

As for Tecumseh's young braves, they had no scruples in taking part in the struggle against the British and the Spaniards, and of their experiences also we shall have more to say. In the course of time these young men of whom we have told in this story, in a strange manner met some of our heroes whose deeds we have recorded in the other books of this series, but of that meeting we cannot here write.

The War of 1812 was not ended with the close of the Creek rebellion, and many stirring deeds were yet to be done. Of those deeds, and of the part some of our young acquaintances took in them, we shall tell in the next book of this series, which will be called —

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