

ears. For a lad is imitative by nature, and I had not listened to the interpreters for three days without profit.

The Hungry Wolf grunted again, after which he was silent for a long time. Then he said :—

“Let the Chief of the Long Knives have guard to-night.” And suddenly he was gone into the darkness.

I waded the creek and sped to Clark. He was alone now, the shutters of the room closed. And as I came in I could scarce believe that he was the same masterful man I had seen at the council that day, and at the conference an hour gone. He was once more the friend at whose feet I sat in private, who talked to me as a companion and a father.

“Where have you been, Davy?” he asked. And then, “What is it, my lad?”

I crept close to him and told him in a breathless undertone, and I knew that I was shaking the while. He listened gravely, and when I had finished laid a firm hand on my head.

“There,” he said, “you are a brave lad, and a canny.”

He thought a minute, his hand still resting on my head, and then rose and led me to the back door of the house. It was near midnight, and the sounds of the place were stilling, the crickets chirping in the grass.

“Run to Captain Bowman and tell him to send ten men to this door. But they must come man by man, to escape detection. Do you understand?” I nodded and was starting, but he still held me. “God bless you, Davy, you are a brave boy.”

He closed the door softly and I sped away, my moccasins making no sound on the soft dirt. I reached the garrison, was challenged by Jack Terrill, the guard, and brought by him to Bowman’s room. The Captain sat, undressed, at the edge of his bed. But he was a man of action, and strode into the long room where his company was sleeping and gave his orders without delay.

Half an hour later there was no light in the village. The Colonel’s headquarters were dark, but in the kitchen a dozen tall men were waiting.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SACRIFICE

So far as the world knew, the Chief of the Long Knives slept peacefully in his house. And such was his sense of power that not even a sentry paced the street without. For by these things is the Indian mind impressed. In the tiny kitchen a dozen men and a boy tried to hush their breathing, and sweltered. For it was very hot, and the pent-up odor of past cookings was stifling to men used to the open. In a corner, hooded under a box, was a lighted lantern, and Tom McChesney stood ready to seize it at the first alarm. On such occasions the current of time runs sluggish. Thrice our muscles were startled into tenseness by the baying of a hound, and once a cock crew out of all season. For the night was cloudy and pitchy black, and the dawn as far away as eternity.

Suddenly I knew that every man in the room was on the alert, for the skilled frontiersman, when watchful, has a sixth sense. None of them might have told you what he had heard. The next sound was the faint creaking of Colonel Clark’s door as it opened. Wrapping a blanket around the lantern, Tom led the way, and we massed ourselves behind the front door. Another breathing space, and then the war-cry of the Puans broke hideously on the night, and children woke, crying, from their sleep. In two bounds our little detachment was in the street, the fire spouting red from the Deckards, faint, shadowy forms fading along the line of trees. After that an uproar of awakening, cries here and there, a drum beating madly for the militia. The dozen flung themselves across the stream, I hot in their wake, through Mr. Brady’s gate, which was open; and there was a scene of sweet tranquillity

under the lantern's rays, — the North Wind and his friends wrapped in their blankets and sleeping the sleep of the just.

"Damn the sly varmints," cried Tom, and he turned over the North Wind with his foot, as a log.

With a grunt of fury the Indian shed his blanket and scrambled to his feet, and stood glaring at us through his paint. But suddenly he met the fixed sternness of Clark's gaze, and his own shifted. By this time his followers were up. The North Wind raised his hands to heaven in token of his innocence, and then spread his palms outward. Where was the proof?

"Look!" I cried, quivering with excitement; "look, their leggings and moccasins are wet!"

"There's no devil if they beant!" said Tom, and there was a murmur of approval from the other men.

"The boy is right," said the Colonel, and turned to Tom. "Sergeant, have the chiefs put in irons." He swung on his heel, and without more ado went back to his house to bed. The North Wind and two others were easily singled out as the leaders, and were straightway escorted to the garrison house, their air of injured innocence availing them not a whit. The militia was dismissed, and the village was hushed once more.

But all night long the chiefs went to and fro, taking counsel among themselves. What would the Chief of the Pale Faces do?

The morning came with a cloudy, damp dawning. Within a decent time (for the Indian is decorous) blanketed deputations filled the archways under the trees and waited there as the minutes ran into hours. The Chief of the Long Knives surveyed the morning from his door-step, and his eyes rested on a solemn figure at the gate. It was the Hungry Wolf. Sorrow was in his voice, and he bore messages from the twenty great chiefs who stood beyond. They were come to express their abhorrence of the night's doings, of which they were as innocent as the deer of the forest.

"Let the Hungry Wolf tell the chiefs," said Colonel

Clark, briefly, "that the council is the place for talk." And he went back into the house again.

Then he bade me run to Captain Bowman with an order to bring the North Wind and his confederates to the council field in irons.

The day followed the promise of the dawn. The clouds hung low, and now and again great drops struck the faces of the people in the field. And like the heavens, the assembly itself was charged with we knew not what. Was it peace or war? As before, a white man sat with supreme indifference at a table, and in front of him three most unhappy chiefs squatted in the grass, the shame of their irons hidden under the blanket folds. Audacity is truly a part of the equipment of genius. To have rescued the North Wind and his friends would have been child's play; to have retired from the council with threats of war, as easy.

And yet they craved pardon.

One chief after another rose with dignity in the ring and came to the table to plead. An argument deserving mention was that the North Wind had desired to test the friendship of the French for the Big Knives, — set forth without a smile. To all pleaders Colonel Clark shook his head. He, being a warrior, cared little whether such people were friends or foes. He held them in the hollow of his hand. And at length they came no more.

The very clouds seemed to hang motionless when he rose to speak, and you who will may read in his memoir what he said. The Hungry Wolf caught the spirit of it, and was eloquent in his own tongue, and no word of it was lost. First he told them of the causes of war, of the thirteen council fires with the English, and in terms that the Indian mind might grasp, and how their old father, the French King, had joined the Big Knives in this righteous fight.

"Warriors," said he, "here is a bloody belt and a white one; take which you choose. But behave like men. Should it be the bloody path, you may leave this town in safety to join the English, and we shall then see which of

us can stain our shirts with the most blood. But, should it be the path of peace as brothers of the Big Knives and of their friends the French, and then you go to your homes and listen to the bad birds, you will then no longer deserve to be called men and warriors, — but creatures of two tongues, which ought to be destroyed. Let us then part this evening in the hope that the Great Spirit will bring us together again with the sun as brothers.”

So the council broke up. White man and red went trooping into town, staring curiously at the guard which was leading the North Wind and his friends to another night of meditation. What their fate would be no man knew. Many thought the tomahawk.

That night the citizens of the little village of *Pain Court*, as St. Louis was called, might have seen the sky reddened in the eastward. It was the loom of many fires at Cahokia, and around them the chiefs of the forty tribes — all save the three in durance vile — were gathered in solemn talk. Would they take the bloody belt or the white one? No man cared so little as the Pale Face Chief. When their eyes were turned from the fitful blaze of the logs, the gala light of many candles greeted them. And above the sound of their own speeches rose the merrier note of the fiddle. The garrison windows shone like lanterns, and behind these Creole and backwoodsman swung the village ladies in the gay French dances. The man at whose bidding this merrymaking was held stood in a corner watching with folded arms, and none to look at him might know that he was playing for a stake.

The troubled fires of the Indians had died to embers long before the candles were snuffed in the garrison house and the music ceased.

The sun himself was pleased to hail that last morning of the great council, and beamed with torrid tolerance upon the ceremony of kindling the greatest of the fires. On this morning Colonel Clark did not sit alone, but was surrounded by men of weight, — by Monsieur Gratiot and other citizens, Captain Bowman and the Spanish officers. And when at length the brush crackled and the flames

caught the logs, three of the mightiest chiefs arose. The greatest, victor in fifty tribal wars, held in his hand the white belt of peace. The second bore a long-stemmed pipe with a huge bowl. And after him, with measured steps, a third came with a smoking censer, — the sacred fire with which to kindle the pipe. Halting before Clark, he first swung the censer to the heavens, then to the earth, then to all the spirits of the air, — calling these to witness that peace was come at last, — and finally to the Chief of the Long Knives and to the gentlemen of dignity about his person. Next the Indian turned, and spoke to his brethren in measured, sonorous tones. He bade them thank that Great Spirit who had cleared the sky and opened their ears and hearts that they might receive the truth, — who had laid bare to their understanding the lies of the English. Even as these English had served the Big Knives, so might they one day serve the Indians. Therefore he commanded them to cast the tomahawk into the river, and when they should return to their land to drive the evil birds from it. And they must send their wise men to Kaskaskia to hear the words of wisdom of the Great White Chief, Clark. He thanked the Great Spirit for this council fire which He had kindled at Cahokia.

Lifting the bowl of the censer, in the eyes of all the people he drew in a long whiff to bear witness of peace. After him the pipe went the interminable rounds of the chiefs. Colonel Clark took it, and puffed; Captain Bowman puffed, — everybody puffed.

“Davy must have a pull,” cried Tom; and even the chiefs smiled as I coughed and sputtered, while my friends roared with laughter. It gave me no great notion of the fragrance of tobacco. And then came such a hand-shaking and grunting as a man rarely sees in a lifetime.

There was but one disquieting question left: What was to become of the North Wind and his friends? None dared mention the matter at such a time. But at length, as the day wore on to afternoon, the Colonel was seen to speak quietly to Captain Bowman, and several backwoodsmen went off toward the town. And presently a silence

fell on the company as they beheld the dejected three crossing the field with a guard. They were led before Clark, and when he saw them his face hardened to sternness.

"It is only women who watch to catch a bear sleeping," he said. "The Big Knives do not kill women. I shall give you meat for your journey home, for women cannot hunt. If you remain here, you shall be treated as squaws. Set the women free."

Tom McChesney cast off their irons. As for Clark, he began to talk immediately with Monsieur Gratiot, as though he had dismissed them from his mind. And their agitation was a pitiful thing to see. In vain they pressed about him, in vain they even pulled the fringe of his shirt to gain his attention. And then they went about among the other chiefs, but these dared not intercede. Uneasiness was written on every man's face, and the talk went haltingly. But Clark was serenity itself. At length with a supreme effort they plucked up courage to come again to the table, one holding out the belt of peace, and the other the still smouldering pipe.

Clark paused in his talk. He took the belt, and flung it away over the heads of those around him. He seized the pipe, and taking up his sword from the table drew it, and with one blow clave the stem in half. There was no anger in either act, but much deliberation.

"The Big Knives," he said scornfully, "do not treat with women."

The pleading began again, the Hungry Wolf interpreting with tremors of earnestness. Their lives were spared, but to what purpose, since the White Chief looked with disfavor upon them? Let him know that bad men from Michilimackinac put the deed into their hearts.

"When the Big Knives come upon such people in the wilderness," Clark answered, "they shoot them down that they may not eat the deer. But they have never talked of it."

He turned from them once more; they went away in a dejection to wring our compassion, and we thought the matter ended at last. The sun was falling low, the people

beginning to move away, when, to the astonishment of all, the culprits were seen coming back again. With them were two young men of their own nation. The Indians opened up a path for them to pass through, and they came as men go to the grave. So mournful, so impressive withal, that the crowd fell into silence again, and the Colonel turned his eyes. The two young men sank down on the ground before him and shrouded their heads in their blankets.

"What is this?" Clark demanded.

The North Wind spoke in a voice of sorrow:—

"An atonement to the Great White Chief for the sins of our nation. Perchance the Great Chief will deign to strike a tomahawk into their heads, that our nation may be saved in war by the Big Knives." And the North Wind held forth the pipe once more.

"I have nothing to say to you," said Clark.

Still they stood irresolute, their minds now bereft of expedients. And the young men sat motionless on the ground. As Clark talked they peered out from under their blankets, once, twice, thrice. He was still talking to the wondering Monsieur Gratiot. But no other voice was heard, and the eyes of all were turned on him in amazement. But at last, when the drama had risen to the pitch of unbearable suspense, he looked down upon the two miserable pyramids at his feet, and touched them. The blankets quivered.

"Stand up," said the Colonel, "and uncover."

They rose, cast the blankets from them, and stood with a stoic dignity awaiting his pleasure. Wonderful, fine-limbed men they were, and for the first time Clark's eyes were seen to kindle.

"I thank the Great Spirit," said he, in a loud voice, "that I have found men among your nation. That I have at last discovered the real chiefs of your people. Had they sent such as you to treat with me in the beginning all might have been well. Go back to your people as their chiefs, and tell them that through you the Big Knives have granted peace to your nation."

Stepping forward, he grasped them each by the hand, and, despite training, joy shone in their faces, while a long-drawn murmur arose from the assemblage. But Clark did not stop there. He presented them to Captain Bowman and to the French and Spanish gentlemen present, and they were hailed by their own kind as chiefs of their nation. To cap it all our troops, backwoodsmen and Creole militia, paraded in line on the common, and fired a salute in their honor.

Thus did Clark gain the friendship of the forty tribes in the Northwest country.

CHAPTER XVIII

“AN’ YE HAD BEEN WHERE I HAD BEEN”

WE went back to Kaskaskia, Colonel Clark, Tom, and myself, and a great weight was lifted from our hearts.

A peaceful autumn passed, and we were happy save when we thought of those we had left at home. There is no space here to tell of many incidents. Great chiefs who had not been to the council came hundreds of leagues across wide rivers that they might see with their own eyes this man who had made peace without gold, and these had to be amused and entertained.

The apples ripened, and were shaken to the ground by the winds. The good Father Gibault, true to his promise, strove to teach me French. Indeed, I picked up much of that language in my intercourse with the inhabitants of Kaskaskia. How well I recall that simple life,—its dances, its songs, and the games with the laughing boys and girls on the common! And the good people were very kind to the orphan that dwelt with Colonel Clark, the drummer boy of his regiment.

But winter brought forebodings. When the garden patches grew bare and brown, and the bleak winds from across the Mississippi swept over the common, untoward tidings came like water dripping from a roof, bit by bit. And day by day Colonel Clark looked graver. The messengers he had sent to Vincennes came not back, and the *coureurs* and traders from time to time brought rumors of a British force gathering like a thundercloud in the northeast. Monsieur Vigo himself, who had gone to Vincennes on his own business, did not return. As for