the gloss of satin and now and again showing the soft whiteness of a bare arm held upward to the clasp of a partner's hand in a lace ruffle and a red sleeve in the graceful attitudes prescribed by the dance. The measured and stately step, the slow, smooth whirl, the swinging changing postures, the fair smiling faces and shining eyes, all seemed curiously enhanced by the environment — the background of boughs of holly on the walls, and the military suggestions of the metallic flashing of the arms resting on the line of deer antlers that encircled the room — it was like a bird singing its roundelay perched in a cannon's mouth.

Hamish himself stood against the wall, and for a time it may be doubted if any one saw how very handsomely his "lovely locks" were plaited, so did he court the shadows. Sandy noted with secret amusement how persistently the boy's eyes followed the beautiful Miss Rush, for it was evident that she was nineteen or twenty years of age, at least three years older than her latest admirer.

Despite his sudden infatuation, however, Hamish was a person of excellent good sense, and he soon saw the fatuity of this worship from afar. "Let the ensign and the lieutenants pine to death," he thought — then with the rough old frontier joke, "I'm saving *my* scalp for the Injuns." Nevertheless he was acutely glad that his hair was like a gentleman's,

and when he finally ventured out of the crowd he secured, to his great elation, a partner for one of the contra-dances that succeeded the minuet, for the men so greatly outnumbered the women that this argued considerable enterprise on a newcomer's part. Hamish had determined to dance, if with nobody but Mrs. Halsing; but there were other girlish flowers, somewhat overshadowed by the queens of the parterre, whom he found when his eyes had lost their dazing gloat upon the beauty of the belle of the settlement — mere little daisies or violets, as near half wild as himself, knowing hardly more of civilized society than he did. Most of these were clad in bright homespun; one or two were so very young that they found it amazing sport, and in truth so did he, although he had the style of patronizing the enterprise, to plunge out of the great hall and scamper across the snowy parade to a room, emptied by the gradual exhaustion of the munitions it had contained, and now devoted to the entertainment of the children of the settlers, who it is needless to say had come necessarily with the elder members of the pioneer families to participate in the gayeties of the fort. It was a danger not to be contemplated to leave them in the wholly deserted settlement; so, sequestered here in this big room, bare of all but holly boughs upon the wall and a great fire and a bench

or two about the chimney corner, they added *éclat* to the occasion of the officers' ball by reason of the enthusiastic spirit that pervaded the Christmas games under the direction of Corporal O'Flynn. He had been delegated to supervise and control the juvenile contingent, being constituted master of the revels. With his wild Irish spirit aflame he was in his element. A finer looking Bruin than he was when enveloped in a great bearskin never came out of the woods, and certainly none more active as he chased the youthful pioneers, who were screaming shrilly, from one side of the hall to the other. As "Poor Puss" he struggled frantically for a corner, failing, however, when a settler of the advanced age of four, but mighty enterprising, made in swiftly between his knees, gave him a tremendous fall, and gained the coveted goal. "Mily, mily bright" was infinitely enlivened by the presence of the recruits from the ball-room, and the romp became tumultuous when Hamish undertook the *rôle* of one of the witches that waited by the way to intercept those — among whom was the corporal — who sought to get there by "candle-light," and who were assured that they could do this if their "legs were long enough." When he pursued the soldier and his juvenile party from one side of the room to the other, winding and doubling and almost tumbling into the fire, the

delighted screams of the children were as loud and shrill as if they were all being scalped, and caused the sentries in the block-house towers to look in surprise and doubt in that direction more than once, and finally brought Captain Stuart from the officers' quarters to see for himself what was going on. As he stood in the door with his imperious face, his bluff manner, his military dress, and his great muscular height, the children, inspired by that love of the incongruous which always characterizes childhood, swarmed about him with the insistence that he should be blindfolded in Blindman's Buff. And surely he proved the champion blind man of the world! After one benighted stumbling rush half across the room, amidst a storm of squealing ecstasy, he plunged among his pygmy enemies with such startling success as to have caught two or three by the hair of their heads with one hand, while with the other he was laying about him with such discrimination that his craft became apparent. He was not playing fair! — he could see! — he peeped! he peeped! and his laugh being much resented, he was put to the door by his small enemies, who evidently expected him to feel such repentance as he might experience if he were to be court-martialed.

O'Flynn, watching him go off across the snowy shadowy parade, noticed that he did not at once

return to the open door of the great hall where the swirl of the dance could be seen in a kaleidoscopic glow of color, and whence the glad music came forth in a mellow gush of sound; but stood at some little distance watching the progress of the corporal of the guard, who with the relief was on his way to the posts of the sentinels; then Stuart disappeared within one of the block-houses, evidently ascending to the tower; after an interval he came out and again traversed the parade, going diagonally across the whole enclosure without doubt to the block-house at the further bastion; thus from these two coigns of vantage he could survey the whole of the region on the four sides of the fort.

"I'll go bail, ould Foxy," said Corporal O'Flynn, apostrophizing his superior officer under his breath, "that there's nothin' that your sharp eyes doesn't see — if it's just a snake takin' advantage o' the privacy o' the dark hour to slough his skin. But I'd give ye," he hesitated, "me blessin', if you'd tell me what 'tis ye're lookin' for. I want to know, not from a meddlesome sphirit, but jist from sheer curiosity — because my mother was a woman an' not a witch."

For Captain Stuart had encountered a difficulty in these simple backwoods Christmas festivities which was altogether unexpected. He had diligently considered the odds against success, in which,

however, the chief seemed the lack of appropriate refreshment, for one could not serve venison and buffalo and wild fowl to hunters as luxuries, and the limited compass and utilitarian character of the goods sent from the base of supplies over the mountains rendered even the accumulation of the requisite materials for the punch-bowl a matter of forethought and skilled strategy. After the wheat-bread had been secured to make the ramequins this feature came near to being dropped because of the difficulty of obtaining the simple ingredients of eggs and cheese to compound the farce wherewith they should be spread. But this too had been accomplished. The method of providing for the safety and entertainment of the children of the settlers, without whom they could not leave home yet whose presence would have hindered if not destroyed the enjoyment of the elders, seemed a stroke of genius. The soldiers and non-commissioned officers were satisfactorily assigned a share in the entertainment appropriate to their military rank and in consonance with their taste, and were even now carousing gayly in their quarters, where there was more Christmas spirit in circulation than spirituous liquor, for the commandant's orders were niggardly indeed as to serving out the portions of tafia, not in the interests of temperance so much as of discipline in view of their perilous situation so far from help, so alone

in the midst of hordes of inimical savages; his parsimony in this regard passed with them as necessity, since they knew that rum was hard to come by, and even this meager dole was infrequent and a luxury. Therefore they drank their thimbleful with warm hearts and cool heads; the riotous roared out wild songs and vied with one another in wrestling matches or boxing encounters; the more sedate played cards or dominoes close in to the light of the flaring fire, or listened with ever fresh interest to the great stories often told by the gray-headed drum-major who had served under the Duke of Cumberland in foreign lands, and promptly smote upon the mouth any man who spoke of his royal highness as "Billy the Butcher";[8] for there were Scotchmen in the garrison intolerant of the title of "Hero of Culloden," having more or less remote associations with an experience delicately mentioned in Scotland as "being out in the Forty-five." With each fresh narration the drum-major produced new historical details of the duke's famous fields and added a few to the sum of the enemies killed and wounded, till it seemed that if the years should spare him, it would one day be demonstrated that the warlike William Augustus had in any specified battle slain more men by sword and bayonet and good leaden ball than were ever mustered into any army on the face of the earth. All the soldiers were in

their spruce parade trim, and every man had a bunch of holly in his hat.

Even the Indians had been considered. In response to the invitation, they had sent the previous day their symbolic white swan's wings painted with streaks of white clay, and these were conspicuously placed in the decorated hall. The gates of the fort that morning had been flung wide open to all who would come. Tafia — in judiciously small quantities, it is true — was served to the tribesmen about the parade, but the head-men, Atta-Kulla-Kulla, Willinawaugh, Rayetaeh, Otacite, more than all, Oconostota, the king of the Cherokee nation, were escorted to the great hall of the officers' quarters, the latter on the arm of Captain Stuart himself; the Indian king, being a trifle lame of one leg, — he was known among the soldiers as "Old Hop," — was evidently pleased by the exceptional attention and made the most of his infirmity, leaning heavily on the officer's arm. Arrayed in their finest fur robes with beautiful broad collars of white swan's down about their necks, with their faces mild and devoid of paint, seated in state before the great fire, the head-men were regaled with French brandy, duly diluted, and the best Virginia tobacco, offered in very curious pipes, which, with some medals and gorgets imported for the purpose, were presented as gifts when the ceremony was concluded,

and which the Cherokees accepted with a show of much pleasure; indeed, they conducted themselves always under such circumstances with a very good grace and a certain dignity and propriety of feeling which almost amounted to good breeding.

This was maintained when, invited by the commandant, they witnessed the dress parade, especially elaborate in honor of the occasion, and they listened attentively when Captain Stuart made a short address to the troops on the subject of the sacred character of the day and adjured them in a frank and soldierly fashion to have a care that they maintained the moral discipline in which they had all been drilled and gave no advantage to the Enemy because they were here, cut off from the main body of Christianity, so far from the ministrations of a chaplain and the beneficent usages of civilization. "Every soldier learns command from obedience," he said. "And if I should send a detail from the ranks on some special duty, the file-leader would know how to command it, although he had never given an order in his life. You are each, with all your spiritual forces, detached on special duty. You are veteran soldiers of the Cross and under marching orders!"

Oconostota, with a kingly gesture, signified that the interpreter should repeat in his ear this discourse, and now and again nodded his head during

its translation with cogitation and interest, and as if he understood and approved it. He watched too, as if with sympathy, the ranks go suddenly down upon their knees, as the commandant read the collect for the day followed by the unanimous delivery of the Lord's prayer, in their hearty, martial voices.

After the tap of the drum had given a resonant "Amen!" they marched off upon the word and broke ranks; and such little observance as the fort could offer in commemoration of the event was over.

The Indians all realized this, and were soon loitering out of the great gate, the commandant receiving their compliments upon the good behavior of his "young men" and their fine appearance, an elaborate and flowery speech of farewell. Then Oconostota took his presents, by far the largest and most elaborate of the collection, and, leaning on Stuart's arm, left the fort, the officer attending him in this fashion down to the river-bank, where his pettiaugre awaited him. Stuart evolved, apparently without effort, a felicitous phrase of farewell and esteem, graded carefully to suit the rank of the other head-men who followed with Captain Demeré and several lieutenants. These words, Atta-Kulla-Kulla, a Cherokee of an intelligent, spirited countenance, either had the good feeling or the art to seem to especially value.

"Such smoke as goes up from this pipe between my face and your face, my friend," he said through the interpreter, "shall never come between you and me. I shall always see you very clear, for I know your heart. Your ways are strange; you come from a far place; but I know you well, for I know your heart."

He laid his hand for a moment on the broad chest of the red coat of the tall, blond officer, then stepped into the canoe, and the little craft shoved off to join a very fleet of canoes, so full was the shining surface of the river of Indians who had come from the towns above to the celebration of the "big Sunday"* at the fort.

Captain Stuart felt relieved that all had gone off so well and that they were rid of the Cherokees for the day.

But now the unforeseen was upon him, the fatally uncovenanted event for which none can prepare. An express had come after nightfall from over the mountains, bringing, besides the mail, rumors of another Indian outbreak on the South Carolina frontier. A number of settlers had been massacred, and the perpetrators of the deed had escaped unpunished. Stuart, charging the man to say nothing of his news to blight the Christmas festivities — since

* The Indians in North Carolina called the Christmas holidays *Winick-kesbuse*, or "the Englishman's God's moon."

the reports might not be true — sent him to make merry among the soldiers. Anxiety had taken possession of that stout heart of Stuart's. When the settlers had begun to gather to the ball, the earliest arrivals brought no suggestion of difficulty. The next comers, however, had seen straggling bands of Indians across the river, but they were mentioned casually and with no sense of premonition. The guests to enter last had been somewhat surprised to notice numbers of canoes at the landing-place, and presently Captain Stuart was called aside by the officer of the day, who stated that in making the rounds he had learned that the sentinel at the gate had reported having observed bands of Indians lurking about on the edge of the woods, and that quite a number had come, singly and in groups, to the gate to demand admission. The gathering of the white people had roused their attention evidently. They had always held the cannon-mounted fort and the presence of the soldiery as a menace, and they now sought to discern what this unprecedented assemblage might portend. If their entrance were resisted, they who so often frequented the place, it was obviously inimical to them. They had heard — for the transmission of news among the Indians was incredibly swift — of the massacres on the frontier and feared some effort at reprisal. The scanty numbers of the garrison invited their blood-thirsty

rapacity, but they were awed by the cannon, and although entertaining vague ideas concerning the management and scope of artillery, realized its terrible potencies.

Perhaps it was with some idea of forcing an entrance by surprise — that they might be within the walls of the fort and out of the range of the guns at this critical juncture of the massing of the forces of the settlers and the garrison — that a party of thirty or forty Cherokees suddenly rushed past the sentinel on the counterscarp, who had hardly time to level his firelock and to call lustily on the guard. The guard at once turning out, the soldiers met the onset of the savages at the gate and bore them back with the bayonet. There was the sudden, quick iterative tramp on the frozen ground of a man running at full speed, and as Stuart dashed through the sally-port he called out "Bar the gates! Bar the gates!" in a wild, imperative voice.

In another moment he was standing outside among the savages, saying blandly in Cherokee, of which he had mastered sundry phrases — "How now, my friends, — my best friends!" and holding out his hand with his frank, genial manner first to one of the Indians, then to another.

They looked upon his hand in disdain and spat upon the ground.

The sentry in the gate-house above, his firelock ready leveled to his shoulder, gazed down at the officer, as he stood with his back to the heavy iron-spiked oaken gates; there was light enough in the reflection of the snow, that made a yellow moon, rising higher and higher into the blue night and above the brown, shadowy woods, seem strangely intense of color, and in the melancholy radiation from its weird, gibbous disk to show the officer's calm, impassive face; his attitude, with his arms folded, the rejected hand withdrawn; even the gold lace on his red coat and the color of his hair in the thick braid that hung down under his cocked hat. Even the latent expectation might be discerned in his eyes that the interval of silence would prove too irksome to the hot impulse, which had nerved the rush on the gates, to be long continued, and that the moment would reveal the leader and the purpose of the demonstration.

A Cherokee stepped suddenly forward — a man with a tuft of eagle feathers on his scalp-lock quivering with angry agitation, his face smeared with vermilion, clad in the buckskin shirt and leggings that the settlers had copied from the Indians, with pistols at his belt as well as a firelock in one hand — the barrel sawed off short to aid its efficacy. The air was bitterly cold, but the blood blazed hot in his face; in Cherokee he spoke and

he paused for no interpreter; if the *unaka* Captain did not understand him, so much the worse for the *unaka* Captain. Through his teeth the tense swift utterances came in half-suppressed breathless tones, save when a sudden loud exclamation now and again whizzed out on the air like the ascent of a bursting rocket. His fury was such that even without the disguise of the paint on his face, Stuart might hardly have recognized him were it not for his peculiarly sinewy, slight elegance of shape. He had advanced one foot and he brandished his tomahawk — a furious gesture, but without immediate intention, for now and again he thrust the weapon into his belt.

"The white captain calls on his friends — and where are they? Not on the outside of these great guns that bar us from our own. The fort is ours! *To-e-u-hah!* It is our own. *To-e-u-hah!* * Did we not bargain for it in solemn treaty! Did we not make our peace and smoke our pipe and give our belts of white wampum and sign names to the treaty we made with the white English? *Wahkane?* † Did we not join his cause and fight his battles and shed our blood in his wars against the French? *Wahkane*, John Stuart, *wahkane?* And for what? That the great King George should build us some forts in our nation to protect our women and

* It is most true. † Is it not so?

children, our old men and our young boys while the Cherokee braves are away fighting the battles of this great King George against the French — yes, and to make strong the arm of our warriors should the French come here with the great guns like these, that make naught of the small gun," — he looked scornfully at the firelock and shook it in his left hand — "and the bow and arrows —" he spat upon the ground. "And what does the great Earl of Loudon? He builds this fort for which we have paid with our blood! blood! blood! — these guns bought with long marches and burnt towns and the despiteful usage of the Virginians" — once more he spat upon the ground. "And then he sends his redcoat soldiers to hold our fort from us and man our great guns and be a threat and a danger forever to our peace and make us slaves to the fear of the great cannon! *Yo-he-wah! Yo-he-wah!* * And when we send a talk to tell him this, he sends more soldiers! And the white men gather together for grief to the red man, and take the Indians' fort paid for with the Indians' blood and turn the great cannon against him who bought them with a dear price, and bar out his entrance from his own" — the foam flew from his lips. "You call on your friend — where?

* It has been maintained that this exclamation constantly used by the Cherokees in solemn adjuration signified "Jehovah."

He turned a scornful fiery face to look at the scornful fiery faces about him. "Where?"

"Here!" Captain Stuart's calm, full voice struck the vibrating air at least an octave lower than the keen, high vociferation of the Cherokee. "Here is my friend! That is the moon, Atta-Kulla-Kulla, *neus-se a-nan-to-ge*" * — he lifted his arm and with his debonair, free gesture pointed at it. "Another sun has not risen. And yet this day, and before the sun was high, you told me that naught should come between you and me. You told me that even a cloud coming between you and me could not separate us because you knew my heart — and my heart swelled with pride at your words."

He hesitated for a moment; he detected a sudden change in the Indian's face. "My heart swelled with pride," he went on, firmly, "for I believed you! And I believe you still, for" — he laid his hand on the Cherokee's breast in imitation of the gesture of Atta-Kulla-Kulla as he repeated Atta-Kulla-Kulla's words — "for I know *your heart*."

There was a moment of tense silence. Then not waiting for the dramatic effect to be lost, he continued: "And now, if you say it is not well to shut the gates on this array of braves, I open them! I come here because I am sent — a *unaka* soldier

* Literally "the sun of the night."

has no will of his own. He is held to a strict law, and has no liberty such as your young fighting men, who sometimes grow rash, however, and make the wisdom of the plans of your 'beloved men,' your sage councils, mere folly. The Earl of Loudon sent the garrison here. Perhaps if you send a 'talk' to the new head-man, General Amherst, he will take the soldiers away. I go or stay according to orders — I march at a word. But to-night the children of the settlers make merry. I told you this morning of our religion. This day is the festival of the Child. So the children make merry — you can hear them now at their play." And indeed there was a sharp, wild squealing upon the air, and Stuart hoped that the beat of the dancing feet might be supposed to be of their making and the sound of the music for their behoof — for the dance of the Indians often heralds war and is not for sheer joy. "The parents bring them here and share their mirth. For this is the festival of the Child. Now your warriors are brave and splendid and terrible to look upon. If they go through the gates, the little children would be smitten with fear; the heart of a little child is like a leaf in the wind — so moved by fear. Do not the Cherokee children flee from me — who am not a great warrior and have not even paint for my face — when I come to visit you at Nachey Creek. Say the word — and I open the gates."