

side of the pen. Suddenly the boy remembered the juvenile account of the scalping of "Dill." Calling piteously to O'Flynn not to mind, if he could help it, Hamish placed one firm foot against the straight back of the soldier, and bracing himself with his left arm around a stanch young tree, he pulled at the arrow with all his might. There was a ripping sound of flesh, a human scream, a creak of riving wood, and Corporal O'Flynn lay face downward on the ground, freed, but with the shaft still in his arm, the blood spurting from it, and the wolf plunging and snarling unheeded at the very hair of his head.

CHAPTER IX

WITH a great effort Hamish dragged O'Flynn, who was a heavy, muscular fellow, out of the reach of the wolf. Fortunately there chanced to be a spring branch near at hand, and the ice-cold water hurriedly dashed into the corporal's face, together with an earnest reminder of the hideous danger of death and torture by the Indians, and a sense of the possibility of escape, served to sufficiently restore him to enable him to get upon his feet, unsteadily enough, however, and with Hamish's help make his way toward the fort at a pretty fair speed. He fainted after they crossed the ditch, and the great gates closed. These two were the last of the hunters who found rescue; the others who had straggled in previously, reported having been fired upon by Indians, and that several dead soldiers were left upon the ground.

The parade was a scene of wild turmoil, far different from its usual orderly military aspect. The settlers and their families, alarmed at last, had fled for refuge to the fort, bringing only a small portion of

their scanty possessions. Women were weeping in agitation and terror of the dangers passed, and in despair because of the loss of their little homes, which the Indians were even now pillaging; children were clinging about their mothers and peevishly plaining, their nerves unstrung by the rush and commotion, and the unaccustomed aspect of the place; bundles of clothing and bedding lay about on the ground; the pioneers moved hither and thither, now seeking to adjust discomforts and clear the domestic atmosphere, now aiding in the preparations for an expected attack.

Odalie, who had braced up her heart, found little to encourage her as she went from one to another of the matrons and sought to comfort them with the reflection that it might have been worse. "For my own part," she declared, "I think of what might have been. If my household gear were not sacrificed we should have been at home last night when the Indians came and found us gone and sacked and fired the house. And such a little thing to save us — Ffine's talk of seeing Willinawaugh."

"Him top-feathers, him head, an' him ugly mouf," reiterated Ffine, who had become impressed with the belief that she had done something very clever indeed, and was enchanted to hear it celebrated.

Odalie's exertions were more appreciated at the hospital, where she assisted in dressing the wounds and caring for the comfort of the soldiers who had been shot. Afterward, still determined to make the best of things and to help all she could, she discovered a mission to tax her powers in offering to assist in what manner she might the quartermaster-sergeant. That functionary looked as if the conundrum of the created world had suddenly been propounded to him. He was a short, square, red-faced man, with light, staring, gray eyes, and they seemed about to pop out of his head whenever the finding of quarters for another family was required of him.

"Why couldn't they have brought some conveniences, such as knives and forks and cups and platters, instead of fool trifles?" he demanded fiercely, aside, as he turned away from one group who were as destitute of all appliances as if they had expected to peck off the ground, or drink out of the bubbles of the spring branch. "I have got none to spare except those of the poor fellows who were killed and Corporal O'Flynn's, for he will be equal to nothing but spoon-meat for one while."

"Oh, the poor settlers, — I pity them, — and poor Mr. Green, — I feel very guilty, for I came here just such a charge on the resources of the fort, myself."

He paused pudgily, as if he were mentally in full run and had brought up with a short stop.

"Oh, you —" he exclaimed, in the tone of making an exception, "you are you."

He felt equal to any arrangements for merely military mortals, but the "squaw question," as he mentally called it, overwhelmed him. With a lot of anxious, troubled, houseless women and querulous, distraught, frightened children, and difficult half-grown boys, — and the commandant's general orders to quarter them all to their satisfaction and to furnish whatever was necessary, — the strain might have proved too great for the old bustling sergeant, and like undue pressure on the boiler of one of our modern locomotives, which he much resembled, as he went back and forth puffingly, might have exploded his valuable faculties, but for Odalie's well-meant hints.

"I should give Mrs. Halsing the larger room if I were you," she suggested. "Mrs. Beedie is a friend of mine and I will answer for it that she won't mind." Or — "If I might suggest, I wouldn't put Mrs. Dean and the twin babies next to Mrs. Rush. Nervous headaches and other people's twin babies won't keep step — not one bit. Put them next to me. I am conveniently deaf at times."

And Mrs. Halsing said, "That French thing flirts with every man in the fort, from the commandant

down to Mrs. Dean's one-year-old boy twin!" For Odalie was presently conveying this juvenile personage about in her arms, and he left off a whimper, characteristic of no particular age or sex, to exhibit a truly masculine interest in the big soldiers with their bright uniforms and clanking accouterments, and although constrained by the force of the concussion to blink and close his eyes whenever the great guns were fired, he fairly wheezed and squealed with manly ecstasy in the sound — for a cannonade had begun, seeking to deter the plunder of the deserted houses in the settlement.

The din suddenly ceased; the active military figures paused in the swift preparations that were in progress to meet the expected attack; the confusion and stir of the groups of settlers' families in the parade were petrified in a sort of aghast disarray; amongst them appeared half a dozen stalwart fellows bearing a stretcher, on which lay the body of the dead soldier whom the horse had brought into the fort, his young boyish face all smooth again and serenely upturned to the serene sky. He was dressed in his uniform, with his belt and gloves freshly pipe-clayed and glittering white. His melancholy progress from the crowded barracks to a vacant building where were kept the spare arms, — called the armory, — there to wait the few remaining hours of his sojourn in these familiar scenes, served to deepen the gloom

with the thought of the others of the little band, lying out in the woods, who would not receive even such simple honors of sepulture as the fort could bestow.

But after the next day, when the poor young soldier was buried (the children wept dreadfully at the sound of the muffled drum, the troops being touched by their sympathetic tears, and Captain Demeré read the burial service and alluded feelingly to the other dead of the garrison, to whom they could only do reverence in the heart and keep their memory green)—after all this the place took on an air of brisk cheerfulness and the parade ground presented somewhat the appearance of the esplanade of a watering-place, minus the wealth and show and fashion.

In the evenings after the dress-parade and the boom of the sunset-gun, the elder women sat about in the doors and porches, and knitted and gossiped, and the men walked up and down and discussed the stale war news from Europe—for the triumphs of British arms were then rife in all the world—or sat upon the grass and played dominoes or cards; the soldiers near the barracks threw horseshoes for quoits; the children rollicked about, shrill but joyous; Odalie and Belinda Rush in their cool fresh linen dresses, arm in arm, the admiration of all beholders, strolled up and down with measured

step and lissome grace; and the flag would slip down, and the twilight come on, and a star tremble in the blue summer sky; and the sweet fern that overhung the deep clear spring, always in the shadow of the oaks near one of the block-houses, would give out a fresh, pungent fragrance. Presently the moon would shed her bland benediction over all the scene, and the palisades would draw sharp-pointed shadows on the dark interior slope, and beside each cannon the similitude of another great gun would be mounted; a pearly glister would intimate where the river ran between the dense glossy foliage of the primeval woods, and only the voice of the chanting cicada, or the long dull drone of the frogs, or the hooting of an owl, would come from the deserted village, lying there so still and silent, guarded by the guns of the fort.

And after a little Odalie would be strolling on her husband's arm in the moonlight, and would silently gaze about with long, doubting, diplomatic eyelashes and inquiring eyes when asked where was Belinda Rush,—which conduct induced Mrs. Halsing's comment as to Mrs. MacLeod's proclivity toward match-making. For in the neighborhood of the northwestern bastion one might see, if one were very keen, sitting in the moonlight on the tread of the banquette, Belinda Rush and Ensign Whitson—talking and talking—of what?—so much!—in fact so much

that at other times Ensign Whitson had little to say, and Lieutenant Gilmore pined for lack of contradiction, and his powers of argument fell away.

Captain Demeré and Captain Stuart, on their way to a post of observation in the block-house tower, came near running over these young people seated thus one moonlight night — to Captain Demeré's manifest confusion and Captain Stuart's bluff delight, although both passed with serious mien, doffing their hats with some casual words of salutation. Despite his relish of the episode, Stuart glanced down at them afterward from the block-house tower and said, in a tone of commiseration, "Poor little love-story!"

"Why preëempt ill-fortune for them, John?" broke out Demeré, irritably.

"Bless you, my boy, I'm no prophet!" exclaimed Stuart easily.

The expected attack by the Indians took place one night late, in the dead hour, after the sinking of the moon, and with all the cunning of a designed surprise. The shadowy figures, that one might imagine would be indistinguishable from the darkness, had crept forward, encompassing the fort, approaching nearly to the glacis, when the crack of a sentry's firelock rang out, splitting the dead silence, and every cannon of the twelve roared in hideous unison, for the gunners throughout the



Belinda and the Ensign on the moonlit rampart.

night lay ready beside the pieces. A fusillade ill-directed upon the works, for the besiegers encountered the recoil of the surprise they had planned, met a furious response from the loop-holes where the firelocks of the garrison were reënforced by the rifles of the backwoodsmen. Every man had been assigned his post, and it seemed that the wild alarum of the drum had hardly begun to vibrate on the thrilling air when each, standing aside from the loop-hole according to orders, leveled his weapon without sighting and fired. Wild screams from without, now and again, attested the execution of these blind volleys into the black night, and the anguish that overcame the stoical fortitude of the warlike Cherokee. The crashing of the trees, as the cannon on all sides sent the heavy balls thundering beyond the open space into the forest, seemed to indicate that the retreat of the assailants was cut off, or that it must needs be made under the open fire of the artillery.

How the movement fared the defenders could ill judge, because of the tumult of their own rapidly delivered volleys — all firing to the word, the “fencibles” adopting the tactics of the garrison in which they had been so well drilled — and the regular reverberations of the rapidly served cannon. They only knew when the ineffectual fire of the assailants slackened, then ceased; the crash of riving timber,