and now and again a hideous yell from the forest, told of the grim deed wrought beyond the range of the firelock by the far-reaching great guns.

It was soon over, and although the garrison stood ready at their posts for an hour or more afterward, till the night was wearing into dawn, no further demonstration was made.

"Vastly fine! They will not return to the attack, — the fun's over," Captain Stuart cried hilariously; — his face and hands were as black with powder "as if he had been rubbing noses with the cannon," Corporal O'Flynn said, having crawled out of the hospital on his hands and knees to participate in the fight in some wise, if only as spectator.

"They have had a lesson," said Demeré, with grim triumph, "how severe, we can't judge till we see the ground."

This satisfaction, however, was to be denied them, for the corporal of the guard presently brought the report of a sentinel whose sharp eyes had descried, in the first faint gray siftings of the dawn through the black night, parties of Indians, chiefly women, carrying off the dead and disabled, and now and then a wild, shuddering groan or a half-smothered cry of the wounded attested their errand of mercy.

"They ought to show a white flag," said Demeré, exactingly, like the martinet he was.

"And they ought to wear top-boots on their feet, and Steinkirks around their gullets, and say their prayers, but they don't," retorted Stuart in high good humor, for his rigorous discipline and persistent formality were exerted only on his own forces; he cared not to require such punctiliousness of the enemy since it did not serve his interest. "Let them take the carrion away. We don't want to play scavenger for them — from an ambuscade they could make it mighty hot for us! And we should be compelled to do it for sanitary reasons — too close to the fort to let the bodies lie there and rot."

And with this prosaic reminder Captain Demeré was content to dispense with the polite formality of a flag of truce. They never knew what the loss might be on the Indian side, nor did the braves again venture within gunshot. Now and then the cannon sought to search the woods and locate the line, but no sound followed the deep-voiced roar, save the heavy reverberations of the echo from up and down the river and the sullen response of the craggy hills. The cannonade had served to acquaint the Cherokees with an accurate estimate of the range of the guns. The fact that a strong cordon was maintained just beyond this, was discovered when the post hunters were again sent out, on the theory that the repulse of the Indians had been sufficiently decisive to induce a suspension of hostilities and a

relinquishment of their designs to capture the fort, if not a relapse into the former pacific relations. The hunters were driven back by a smart fire, returning with one man shot through the leg, brought in by a comrade on horseback, and four others riding double, leaving their slain horses on the ground. It became very evident that the Cherokees intended to maintain a blockade, since the fort obviously could not be carried by storm, and the commandant was proof against surprise. To send the hunters out again was but to incur the futile loss of life and thus weaken the garrison. The supply of fresh game already in the fort being exhausted, the few head of cattle and the reserves of the smoke-house came into use.

The very fact that such reserves had been provided put new heart into the soldiers and roused afresh the confidence of the settlers, who had begun to quake at the idea of standing a siege so suddenly begun, without warning or preparation, save indeed for the forethought for all emergencies manifested by the senior officers. Both Demeré and Stuart became doubly popular, and when there was a call for volunteers to run the blockade and severally carry dispatches to Colonel Montgomery, they had but to choose among all the men in the fort. The tenor of these dispatches was to apprise Colonel Montgomery of the blockade of Fort Loudon and

ask relief, urging him to push forward at once and attack the Ottare towns, when valuable assistance could be rendered him by the ordnance of the fort, as well as by a detachment of infantry from the forces of the garrison attacking the Indians on the flank in support of the aggressions of his vanguard.

Gilfillan was selected as the earliest express sent out, and loud and woeful was Fifine's outcry when she discovered that her precious "Dill" was to be withdrawn from her sight. But when he declared that he needs must go to keep the Indians from cutting off her curls and starving out the garrison — Mrs. Dean's twin babies were represented as the most imminent victims, so much more precious than one, "being philopenas" as O'Flynn admonished her — she consented, and tearfully bade him adieu. And he kissed her very gravely, and very gravely at her request kissed the cat. So with these manifestations of his simple affection he goes out of these pages beyond all human ken, and into the great unknown. For Dill returned no more.

His long backwoods experience, his knowledge of Indian character, his wide familiarity with the face of the country, and many by-ways and unfrequented routes, his capacity to speak the Cherokee language, all combined to suggest his special fitness for the dangerous part he had undertaken to play.

The next express, going two days later and

following the beaten track, was a man who had frequently served in this capacity and knew half the Indians of the Lower Towns and Middle Settlements by name — a quick-witted pioneer, "half-trader, half-hunter, and half-packman," as he often described himself, and he had been in the country, he boasted, "ever since it was built."

The choice of these two men was evidently specially judicious, and after the mysterious disappearance of each, being smuggled out of the fort in dead silence and the darkest hour of the deep night, the garrison settled down to a regular routine, to wear away the time till they might wake some morning to hear the crack of Montgomery's musketry on the horizon, or the hissing of his grenades burning out their fuses and bursting among the dense jungles, where the Cherokees lay in ambush and blockaded Fort Loudon.

The military precision and order maintained continued as strict as heretofore. It argued no slight attention to detail and adroit handling of small opportunities that the comfort of the soldiers was in no wise reduced by the intrusion into their restricted domain of so considerable a number of people, many unprovided with the most ordinary conveniences of life. Even in such a matter as table and cooking utensils the food of the companies was served as heretofore, and only after the military had breakfasted

or dined, or supped, could their precious pewter platters and cups be borrowed by the families, to be rigorously cleaned and restored before the preparations began for the next meal. Every utensil in the place did double duty, yet not one failed to be ready for service when required. Mrs. Halsing ventured to cavil, and suggested that she had always heard elsewhere that it was polite to serve ladies and children first, instead of giving a lot of hulking soldiers precedence.

"Why, madam," Demeré said, with rebuking severity, "the men are the muscles of our defense, and must be kept in the best possible physical condition."

Nothing was allowed to interfere with the regular hours of the troops or break their rest. Tattoo and "lights out" had the same meaning for the women and children and wild young boys as for the soldiery; no boisterous callow cries and juvenile racing and chasing were permitted on the parade; no belated groups of gossipers; no nocturnal wailing of wickedly wakeful infants in earshot.

"A-body would think the men was cherubim or seraphim the way the commandant cares for them," plained Mrs. Halsing.

The supplies were regulated by the same careful supervision and served out duly by weight and allowance. Somewhat frugal seemed this dole, es-

pecially to those who had lived on the unlimited profusion of the woodland game, yet it was sufficient. No violent exercise, to which the men had been accustomed, required now the restoring of exhausted tissues by a generous food supply. There was ample provision, too, made for the occupation of the men's attention and their amusement. The regular cleaning of quarters, inspection, drill and guard duties, and dress-parades went on as heretofore, with the "fencibles" as an auxiliary body. The rude games of ball, ring toss, leap-frog were varied sometimes by an exhibition, given under the auspices of the officers, of feats of strength; certain martial Samsons lifted great weights, made astonishing leaps, ran like greyhounds competing with one another in a marked-off course, or engaged in wrestling-matches — to the unbounded applause of the audience, except the compassionate Fifine, who wept loudly and inconsolably whenever a stalwart fellow caught a fall. One rainy evening, in the officers' mess-hall, the society of the fort was invited to hear the performance of a clever but rascally fellow, more used to ride the wooden horse than to any other occupation, who was a bit of a ventriloquist. Among other feats he made Fifine's cat talk, and tell about Willinawaugh with "him top-feathers, him head, an' him ugly mouf," to the great relish of his comrades (who resented

the fact that the Indians, exceedingly vain of their own personal appearance,[12] were accustomed to speak of the paleface as the "ugly white people"); to the intense, shrieking delight of the elder children; and to the amazement of Fifine, who could not understand afterward why the *douce mignonne* would not talk to her. When the pretended conversation of the cat grew funnily profane, Captain Demeré only called out "Time's up," from the back of the hall, and the fellow came sheepishly down from the platform, holding the borrowed kitty by the nape of the neck, and half the audience did not catch the funny swear that he attributed to the exemplary feline. Then there was a shadow-pantomime, where immaterial roisterers "played Injun," and went through the horrid details of scalping and murders, with grotesque concomitant circumstances, — such as the terrifying ricochet effects on an unsophisticated red-man of riving a buzz-wig from the head of his victim in lieu of a real scalp, and the consequent sudden exchange of the characters of pursued and pursuer, — all of which, oddly enough, the people who stood in imminent danger of a horrible fate thought very funny indeed.

One evening the commandant devised a new plan to pass the time. All were summoned to the parade ground to share in an entertainment designated as "Songs of all nations."

"An' I could find it in my stommick to wish it was to share in 'Soups of all nations,'" said Corporal O'Flynn to a comrade. For it seemed that the quartermaster-sergeant had docked his rations by an ounce or two, a difference that made itself noted in so slender a dole and a convalescent's appetite.

It was a night long to be remembered. The great coils of Scorpio seemed covered with scintillating scales, so brilliant were the stars. No cloud was in the sky, unless one might so call that seeming glittering vapor, the resplendent nebulose clusters of the Galaxy. A wind was moving through the upper atmosphere, for the air was fresh and cool, but below was the soft, sweet stillness of the summer night, full of fragrant odors from the woods, the sound of the swift-flowing river, the outpour of the melody of a mocking-bird that had alighted on the tip of the great flagstaff, and seemed to contribute thence his share to the songs of all nations. He caught upon his white wing and tail-feathers, as he flirted them, the clear radiance of the moon, — not a great orb, but sending forth a light fair enough to be felt in all that sidereal glitter of the cloudless sky, to show the faces of Odalie and Belinda and others less comely, as the ladies sat in chairs under the line of trees on one side of the parade with a group of officers near them, and the

soldiers and "single men" and children of the settlers filling the benches of the post which were brought out for the occasion. So they all sang, beginning with a great chorus of "Rule Britannia," into which they threw more force and patriotism than melody. Then came certain solo performances, some of which were curious enough. Odalie's French chansonnettes acquired from her grand'maman, drifting out in a mellow contralto voice, and a big booming proclamation concerning the "Vaterland," by the drum-major, were the least queerly foreign. Mrs. Halsing, after much pressing, sang an outlandish, repetitious melody that was like an intricate wooden recitative, and the words were suspected of being Icelandic, — though she averred they were High Dutch, to the secret indignation of the drum-major, who, as O'Flynn afterward remarked, when discussing the details of the evening, felt himself qualified by descent to judge, his own father-in-law having been a German. The men who had sung in the Christmas carols remembered old English ditties, —

"How now, shepherd, what means that,
Why that willow in thy hat?"

and "Barbara Allen." Corporal O'Flynn, in the most incongruously sentimental and melancholy of tenors, sang "Savourneen Deelish eileen ogg." The sober Sandy gave a rollicking Scotch drinking-song that seemed to show the very bead on the liquor,

"Hey the browst, and hey the quaigh!" The officers' cook, a quaint old African, seated cross-legged on the ground, on the outskirts of the crowd, piped up at the commandant's bidding, and half sang, half recited, in a wide, deep, musical voice, and an unheard-of language that excited great interest for a time; but interpreting certain manifestations of applause among the soldiers as guying, he took himself and his ear-rings and a gay kerchief, which he wore, to the intense delight of the garrison, as a belt around the waistband of his knee-breeches, to his kitchen, replying with cavalier insubordination,— pioneer of the domestic manners of these days,— to Captain Stuart's remonstrances by the assertion that he had to wash his kettle.

There were even cradle songs, for Mrs. Dean, who certainly had ample field for efforts in that line, sang a sweet little theme, saying she knew nothing else, and a big grenadier, whose hair was touched with gray, and who spoke in a deep sonorous voice (the Cherokees had always called him *Kanoona*, "the bull-frog"), respectfully requested to know of the lady if she could sing one that he had not heard for forty years, in fact, not since his mother sang it to him. One or two of the settlers, hailing originally from England, remembered it too, and some discussion ensued touching the words and the exact turn of the tune. In the midst of this a wag among the

younger pioneers mischievously suggested that the grenadier should favor them with a rendition of his version, and the big soldier, in the simplicity of his heart and his fond old memories, in a great bass voice that fairly trembled with its own weight, began "Bye-low, bye-low"; and the ventriloquist who had made the cat swear, and who so often rode the wooden horse, was compelled during the performance to wear his hat adjusted over his face, for his grin was of a distention not to be tolerated in polite society.

Perhaps because of the several contradictory phases of interest involved in this contribution to the entertainment, it held the general attention more definitely than worthier vocal efforts that had preceded it, and the incident passed altogether unnoticed, except by Captain Stuart, when the corporal of the guard appeared in the distance, his metal buttons glimmering from afar in the dusk as he approached, and Captain Demeré softly signaled to him to pause, and rising quietly vanished in the shadow of the block-house. He encountered Stuart at the door, for he had also slipped away from the crowd, himself, like a shadow.

"Dispatches?" he asked.

"The express from Fort Prince George," Demeré replied, his voice tense, excited, with the realization of an impending crisis.