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*Theodore Roosevelt*







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• **Captain Clark, Chaboneau, Sacágawea, and Papoose in the Cloud-burst near the Great Falls, on June 29, 1805.**

(From a drawing by Russell.)

NEW LIBRARY EDITION

THE  
WINNING OF THE WEST

AN ACCOUNT OF THE EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT  
OF OUR COUNTRY FROM THE ALLE-  
GHANIES TO THE PACIFIC

BY  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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THE  
WINNING OF THE WEST

the latter, the British and French at Detroit. They hoped thereby to offend neither side, and to escape unhurt themselves.

But this was wholly impossible. They occupied an utterly untenable position. Their villages lay midway between the white settlements southeast of the Ohio and the towns of the Indians round Sandusky, the bitterest foes of the Americans and those most completely under British influence. They were on the trail that the war-parties followed, whether they struck at Kentucky or at the valleys of the Alleghany and Monongahela. Consequently, the Sandusky Indians used the Moravian villages as half-way houses, at which to halt and refresh themselves whether starting on a foray or returning with scalps and plunder.

By the time the war had lasted four or five years both the wild or heathen Indians and the backwoodsmen had become fearfully exasperated with the unlucky Moravians. The Sandusky Indians were largely Wyandots, Shawnees, and Delawares, the latter being fellow-tribesmen of the Christian Indians; and so they regarded the Moravians as traitors to the cause of their kinsfolk, because they would not take up the hatchet against the whites. As they could not goad them into declaring war, they took malicious pleasure in trying to embroil them against their will, and

on returning from raids against the settlements often passed through their towns solely to cast suspicion on them and to draw down the wrath of the backwoodsmen on their heads. The British at Detroit feared lest the Americans might use the Moravian villages as a basis from which to attack the lake posts; they also coveted their men as allies; and so the baser among their officers urged the Sandusky tribes to break up the villages and drive off the missionaries. The other Indian tribes likewise regarded them with angry contempt and hostility; the Iroquois once sent word to the Chippewas and Ottawas that they gave them the Christian Indians "to make broth of."

The Americans became even more exasperated. The war-parties that plundered and destroyed their homes, killing their wives, children, and friends with torments too appalling to mention, got shelter and refreshment from the Moravians,<sup>1</sup>—who, indeed, dared not refuse it. The backwoodsmen, roused to a mad frenzy of rage by the awful nature of their wrongs, saw that the Moravians rendered valuable help to their cruel and inveterate foes, and refused to see that the help was given with the utmost reluctance. Moreover, some of the young Christian Indians backslid and joined their savage brethren, accompanying them

<sup>1</sup> Heckewelder's *Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren*, Philadelphia, 1820, p. 166.

on their war-parties and ravaging with as much cruelty as any of their number.<sup>1</sup> Soon the frontiersmen began to clamor for the destruction of the Moravian towns; yet for a little while they were restrained by the Continental officers of the few border forts, who always treated these harmless Indians with the utmost kindness.

On either side were foes, who grew less governable day by day, and the fate of the hapless and peaceful Moravians, if they continued to dwell on the Muskingum, was absolutely inevitable. With blind fatuity their leaders, the missionaries, refused to see the impending doom; and the poor, simple Indians clung to their homes till destroyed. The American commander at Pittsburg, Colonel Gibson, endeavored to get them to come into the American lines, where he would have the power, as he already had the wish, to protect them; he pointed out that where they were they served in some sort as a shield to the wild Indians, whom he had to spare so as not to harm the Moravians.<sup>2</sup> The Half King of the Wyandots, from the other side, likewise tried to persuade them to abandon their dangerous position, and to come well within the Indian and British lines, saying: "Two mighty and angry gods stand opposite to

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet* (Philadelphia, April 16, 1782); Heckewelder, 180; Loskiel's *History of the Mission of the United Brethren* (London, 1794), p. 172.      <sup>2</sup> Loskiel, p. 137.

each other with their mouths wide open, and you are between them, and are in danger of being crushed by one or the other, or by both." <sup>1</sup> But in spite of these warnings, and heedless of the safety that would have followed the adoption of either course, the Moravians followed the advice of their missionaries and continued where they were. They suffered greatly from the wanton cruelty of their red brethren; and their fate remains a monument to the cold-blooded and cowardly brutality of the borderers, a stain on frontier character that the lapse of time cannot wash away; but it is singular that historians have not yet pointed out the obvious truth, that no small share of the blame for their sad end should be put to the credit of the blind folly of their missionary leaders. Their only hope in such a conflict as was then raging was to be removed from their fatally dangerous position; and this the missionaries would not see. As long as they stayed where they were, it was a mere question of chance and time whether they would be destroyed by the Indians or the whites; for their destruction at the hands of either one party or the other was inevitable.

Their fate was not due to the fact that they were Indians; it resulted from their occupying an absolutely false position. This is clearly shown

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 41, vol. iii., pp. 78, 79; extract from diary of Rev. David Zeisburger.

by what happened twenty years previously to a small community of non-resistant Christian whites. They were Dunkards—Quaker-like Germans—who had built a settlement on the Monongahela. As they helped neither side, both distrusted and hated them. The whites harassed them in every way, and the Indians finally fell upon and massacred them.<sup>1</sup> The fates of these two communities, of white Dunkards and red Moravians, were exactly parallel. Each became hateful to both sets of combatants, was persecuted by both, and finally fell a victim to the ferocity of the race to which it did not belong.

The conduct of the backwoodsmen towards these peaceful and harmless Christian Indians was utterly abhorrent, and will ever be a subject of just reproach and condemnation; and at first sight it seems incredible that the perpetrators of so vile a deed should have gone unpunished and almost unblamed. It is a dark blot on the character of a people that otherwise had many fine and manly qualities to its credit. But the extraordinary conditions of life on the frontier must be kept in mind before passing too severe a judgment. In the turmoil of the harassing and long-continued Indian war, and the consequent loosening of social bonds, it was inevitable that, as regards outside matters, each man should do what

<sup>1</sup> Withers, 59.



seemed right in his own eyes. The bad and the good alike were left free and untrammelled to follow the bent of their desires. The people had all they could do to beat off their savage enemies, and to keep order among themselves. They were able to impose but slight checks on ruffianism that was aimed at outsiders. There were plenty of good and upright men who would not harm any Indians wrongfully, and who treated kindly those who were peaceable. On the other hand, there were many of violent and murderous temper. These knew that their neighbors would actively resent any wrong done to themselves, but knew, also, that, under the existing conditions, they would at the worst do nothing more than openly disapprove of an outrage perpetrated on Indians.

The violence of the bad is easily understood. The indifference displayed towards their actions by the better men of the community, who were certainly greatly in the majority, is harder to explain. It rose from varying causes. In the first place, the long continuance of Indian warfare, and the unspeakable horrors that were its invariable accompaniments, had gradually wrought up many even of the best of the backwoodsmen to the point where they barely considered an Indian as a human being. The warrior was not to them a creature of romance. They knew him for what he was—filthy, cruel, lecherous, and faithless. He

sometimes had excellent qualities, but these they seldom had a chance to see. They always met him at his worst. To them he was in peace a lazy, dirty, drunken beggar, whom they despised, and yet whom they feared; for the squalid, contemptible creature might at any moment be transformed into a foe whose like there was not to be found in all the wide world for ferocity, cunning, and blood-thirsty cruelty. The greatest Indians, chiefs like Logan and Cornstalk, who were capable of deeds of the loftiest and most sublime heroism, were also at times cruel monsters or drunken good-for-nothings. Their meaner followers had only such virtues as belong to the human wolf—stealth, craft, tireless endurance, and the courage that prefers to prey on the helpless, but will fight to the death without flinching if cornered.

Moreover, the backwoodsmen were a hard people—a people who still lived in an iron age. They did not spare themselves, nor those who were dear to them; far less would they spare their real or possible foes. Their lives were often stern and grim; they were wonted to hardship and suffering. In the histories or traditions of the different families there are recorded many tales of how they sacrificed themselves, and, in time of need, sacrificed others. The mother who was a captive among the Indians might lay down her life for her

child; but if she could not save it, and to stay with it forbade her own escape, it was possible that she would kiss it good-by and leave it to its certain fate, while she herself, facing death at every step, fled homewards through hundreds of miles of wilderness.<sup>1</sup> The man who daily imperilled his own life, would, if water was needed in the fort, send his wife and daughter to draw it from the spring round which he knew Indians lurked, trusting that the appearance of the women would make the savages think themselves undiscovered, and that they would therefore defer their attack.<sup>2</sup> Such people were not likely to spare their red-skinned foes. Many of their friends, who had

<sup>1</sup> See Hale's *Trans-Alleghany Pioneers*, the adventures of Mrs. Inglis. She was captured on the head-waters of the Kanawha, at the time of Braddock's defeat. The other inhabitants of the settlement were also taken prisoners or massacred by the savages, whom they had never wronged in any way. She was taken to the Big Bone Lick in Kentucky. On the way her baby was born, but she was not allowed to halt a day on account of this incident. She left it in the Indian camp, and made her escape in company with "an old Dutch woman." They lived on berries and nuts for forty days, while they made their way homewards. Both got in safely, though they separated after the old Dutch woman, in the extremity of hunger, had tried to kill her companion that she might eat her. When Cornstalk's party perpetrated the massacre of the Clendennins during Pontiac's war (see Stewart's "Narrative"), Mrs. Clendennin likewise left her baby to its death, and made her escape; her husband had previously been killed and his bloody scalp tied across her jaws as a gag.

<sup>2</sup> As at the siege of Bryan's Station.

never hurt the savages in any way, had perished, the victims of wanton aggression. They themselves had seen innumerable instances of Indian treachery. They had often known the chiefs of a tribe to profess warm friendship at the very moment that their young men were stealing and murdering. They grew to think of even the most peaceful Indians as merely sleeping wild beasts, and while their own wrongs were ever vividly before them, they rarely heard of or heeded those done to their foes. In a community where every strong, courageous man was a bulwark to the rest, he was sure to be censured lightly for merely killing a member of a loathed and hated race.

Many of the best of the backwoodsmen were Bible-readers, but they were brought up in a creed that made much of the Old Testament, and laid slight stress on pity, truth, or mercy. They looked at their foes as the Hebrew prophets looked at the enemies of Israel. What were the abominations because of which the Canaanites were destroyed before Joshua, when compared with the abominations of the red savages whose lands they, another chosen people, should in their turn inherit? They believed that the Lord was king for ever and ever, and they believed no less that they were but obeying His commandment as they strove mightily to bring about the day when the heathen should have perished out of the land;

for they had read in The Book that he was accursed who did the work of the Lord deceitfully, or kept his sword back from blood. There was many a stern frontier zealot who deemed all the red men, good and bad, corn ripe for the reaping. Such a one rejoiced to see his followers do to the harmless Moravians as the Danites once did to the people of Laish, who lived quiet and secure, after the manner of the Sidonians, and had no business with any man, and who yet were smitten with the edge of the sword, and their city burnt with fire.

Finally, it must not be forgotten that there were men on the frontier who did do their best to save the peaceful Indians, and that there were also many circumstances connected with the latter that justly laid them open to suspicion. When young backsliding Moravians appeared in the war-parties, as cruel and murderous as their associates, the whites were warranted in feeling doubtful as to whether their example might not infect the remainder of their people. War-parties, whose members in dreadful derision left women and children impaled by their trail to greet the sight of the pursuing husbands and fathers, found food and lodging at the Moravian towns. No matter how reluctant the aid thus given, the pursuers were right in feeling enraged, and in demanding that the towns should be removed to where they could no longer give comfort to the

enemy. When the missionaries refused to consent to this removal, they thereby became helpers of the hostile Indians; they wronged the frontiersmen, and they still more grievously wronged their own flocks.

They certainly had ample warning of the temper of the whites. Colonel Brodhead was in command at Fort Pitt until the end of 1781. At the time that General Sullivan ravaged the country of the Six Nations, he had led a force up the Alleghany and created a diversion by burning one or two Iroquois towns. In 1781, he led a successful expedition against a town of hostile Delawares on the Muskingum, taking it by surprise and surrounding it so completely that all within were captured. Sixteen noted warriors and marauders were singled out and put to death. The remainder fared but little better, for, while marching back to Fort Pitt, the militia fell on them and murdered all the men, leaving only the women and children. The militia also started to attack the Moravians, and were only prevented by the strenuous exertions of Brodhead. Even this proof of the brutality of their neighbors was wasted on the missionaries.

The first blow the Moravians received was from the wild Indians. In the fall of this same year (1781) their towns were suddenly visited by a horde of armed warriors, horsemen and footmen,

from Sandusky and Detroit. Conspicuous among them were the Wyandots under the Half King; the Delawares, also led by a famous chief, Captain Pipe; and a body of white rangers from Detroit, including British, French, and tories, commanded by the British Captain Elliott, and flying the British flag.<sup>1</sup> With them came also Shawnees, Chipewas, and Ottawas. All were acting in pursuance of the express orders of the commandant at Detroit.<sup>2</sup> These warriors insisted on the Christian Indians abandoning their villages and accompanying them back to Sandusky and Detroit; and they destroyed many of the houses, and much of the food for the men and the fodder for the horses and cattle. The Moravians begged humbly to be left where they were, but without avail. They were forced away to Lake Erie, the missionaries being taken to Detroit, while the Indians were left on the plains of Sandusky. The wild Indians were very savage against them, but the British commandant would not let them be seriously maltreated,<sup>3</sup> though they were kept in great want and almost starved.

A few Moravians escaped, and remained in their villages; but these, three or four weeks later, were

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 41, vol. iii., p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Haldimand MSS. De Peyster to Haldimand, October 5th and 21st, 1781; McKee to De Peyster, October 18th.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* December 11, 1781.

captured by a small detachment of American militia, under Colonel David Williamson, who had gone out to make the Moravians either move farther off or else come in under the protection of Fort Pitt. Williamson accordingly took the Indians to the fort, where the Continental commander, Colonel John Gibson, at once released them, and sent them back to the villages unharmed.<sup>1</sup> Gibson had all along been a firm friend of the Moravians. He had protected them against the violence of the borderers, and had written repeated and urgent letters to Congress and to his superior officers, asking that some steps might be taken to protect the friendly Christian Indians.<sup>2</sup> In the general weakness and exhaustion, however, nothing was done; and, as neither the State nor Federal government took any steps to protect them, and as their missionaries refused to learn wisdom, it was evident that the days of the Moravians were numbered. The failure of the government to protect them was perhaps inevitable, but was certainly discreditable.

The very day after Gibson sent the Christian Indians back to their homes, several murders were committed near Pittsburg, and many of the fron-

<sup>1</sup> Gibson was the old friend of the chief Logan. It is only just to remember that the Continental officers at Fort Pitt treated the Moravians even better than did the British officers at Detroit.

<sup>2</sup> Haldimand MSS. Jan. 22, 1780 (*Intercepted letters*).



tiersmen insisted that they were done with the good will or connivance of the Moravians. The settlements had suffered greatly all summer long, and the people clamored savagely against all the Indians, blaming both Gibson and Williamson for not having killed or kept captive their prisoners. The ruffianly and vicious, of course, clamored louder than any; the mass of people who are always led by others chimed in, in a somewhat lower key; and many good men were silent for the reasons given already. In a frontier democracy, military and civil officers are directly dependent upon popular approval, not only for their offices, but for what they are able to accomplish while filling them. They are therefore generally extremely sensitive to either praise or blame. Ambitious men flatter and bow to popular prejudice or opinion, and only those of genuine power and self-reliance dare to withstand it. Williamson was physically a fairly brave officer and not naturally cruel; but he was weak and ambitious, ready to yield to any popular demand, and, if it would advance his own interests, to connive at any act of barbarity.<sup>1</sup> Gibson, however, who was a very different man, paid no heed to the cry raised against him.

<sup>1</sup> This is the most favorable estimate of his character, based on what Doddridge says (p. 260). He was a very despicable person, but not the natural brute the missionaries painted him.

With incredible folly, the Moravians refused to heed even such rough warnings as they had received. During the long winter they suffered greatly from cold and hunger; at Sandusky, and before the spring of 1782 opened, a hundred and fifty of them returned to their deserted villages.

That year the Indian outrages on the frontiers began very early. In February, there was some fine weather; and while it lasted, several families of settlers were butchered, some under circumstances of peculiar atrocity. In particular, four Sandusky Indians having taken some prisoners, impaled two of them, a woman and a child, while on their way to the Moravian towns, where they rested and ate, prior to continuing their journey with their remaining captives. When they left they warned the Moravians that white men were on their trail.<sup>1</sup> A white man who had just escaped this same impaling party also warned the Moravians that the exasperated borderers were preparing a party to kill them; and Gibson, from Fort Pitt, sent a messenger to them, who, however, arrived too late. But the poor Christian Indians, usually very timid, now, in the presence of a real danger, showed a curious apathy; their senses were numbed and dulled by their misfortunes, and they quietly awaited their doom.<sup>2</sup>

It was not long deferred. Eighty or ninety

<sup>1</sup> Heckewelder, 311.

<sup>2</sup> Loskiel, 176.

frontiersmen, under Williamson, hastily gathered together to destroy the Moravian towns. It was, of course, just such an expedition as most attracted the brutal, the vicious, and the ruffianly; but a few decent men, to their shame, went along. They started in March, and on the third day reached the fated villages. That no circumstance might be wanting to fill the measure of their infamy, they spoke the Indians fair, assuring them that they meant well, and spent an hour or two in gathering together those who were in Salem and Gnadenhutten, putting them all in two houses at the latter place. Those at the third town of Schönbrunn got warning and made their escape.

As soon as the unsuspecting Indians were gathered in the two houses, the men in one, the women and children in the other, the whites held a council as to what should be done with them. The great majority were for putting them instantly to death. Eighteen men protested, and asked that the lives of the poor creatures should be spared; and then withdrew, calling God to witness that they were innocent of the crime about to be committed. By rights they should have protected the victims at any hazard. One of them took off with him a small Indian boy, whose life was thus spared. With this exception, only two lads escaped.

When the murderers told the doomed Moravians their fate, they merely requested a short delay in which to prepare themselves for death. They asked one another's pardon for whatever wrongs they might have done, knelt down and prayed, kissed one another farewell, "and began to sing hymns of hope and of praise to the Most High." Then the white butchers entered the houses and put to death the ninety-six men, women, and children that were within their walls. More than a hundred years have passed since this deed of revolting brutality; but even now a just man's blood boils in his veins at the remembrance. It is impossible not to regret that fate failed to send some strong war-party of savages across the path of these inhuman cowards, to inflict on them the punishment they so richly deserved. We know that a few of them were afterwards killed by the Indians; it is a matter of keen regret that any escaped.

When the full particulars of the affair were known all the best leaders of the border, almost all the most famous Indian fighters, joined in denouncing it.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it right that the whole of the frontier folk should bear the blame for the deed.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel James Smith, then of Kentucky, in 1799 calls it "an act of barbarity equal to any thing I ever knew to be committed by the savages themselves, except the burning of prisoners."

It is a fact, honorable and worthy of mention, that the Kentuckians were never implicated in this or any similar massacre.<sup>1</sup>

But at the time, and in their own neighborhood—the corner of the Upper Ohio valley where Pennsylvania and Virginia touch—the conduct of the murderers of the Moravians roused no condemnation. The borderers at first felt about it as the English whigs originally felt about the massacre of Glencoe. For some time the true circumstances of the affair were not widely known among them. They were hot with wrath against all the red-skinned race; and they rejoiced to hear of the death of a number of treacherous Indians who pretended to be peaceful, while harboring and giving aid and comfort to, and occasionally letting

<sup>1</sup> The Germans of up-country North Carolina were guilty of as brutal massacres as the Scotch-Irish backwoodsmen of Pennsylvania. See Adair, 245. There are two or three individual instances of the barbarity of Kentuckians—one being to the credit of McGarry,—but they are singularly few when the length and the dreadful nature of their Indian wars are taken into account. Throughout their history the Kentucky pioneers had the right on their side in their dealings with the Indians. They were not wanton aggressors; they entered upon vacant hunting-grounds, to which no tribe had a clear title, and to which most even of the doubtful titles had been fairly extinguished. They fought their foes fiercely, with varying fortune, and eventually wrested the land from them; but they very rarely wronged them; and for the numerous deeds of fearful cruelty that were done on Kentucky soil, the Indians were in almost every case to blame.

their own young men join, bands of avowed murderers. Of course, the large wicked and disorderly element was loud in praise of the deed. The decent people, by their silence, acquiesced.

A terrible day of reckoning was at hand; the retribution fell on but part of the real criminals, and bore most heavily on those who were innocent of any actual complicity in the deed of evil. Nevertheless, it is impossible to grieve overmuch for the misfortune that befell men who freely forgave and condoned such treacherous barbarity.

In May, a body of four hundred and eighty Pennsylvania and Virginia militia gathered at Mingo Bottom, on the Ohio, with the purpose of marching against and destroying the towns of the hostile Wyandots and Delawares in the neighborhood of the Sandusky River. The Sandusky Indians were those whose attacks were most severely felt by that portion of the frontier; and for their repeated and merciless ravages they deserved the severest chastisement. The expedition against them was from every point of view just; and it was undertaken to punish them, and without any definite idea of attacking the remnant of the Moravians who were settled among them. On the other hand, the militia included in their ranks most of those who had taken part in the murderous expedition of two months before; this fact, and their general character, made it certain that

the peaceable and inoffensive Indians would, if encountered, be slaughtered as pitilessly as their hostile brethren.

How little the militia volunteers disapproved of the Moravian massacre was shown when, as was the custom, they met to choose a leader. There were two competitors for the place, Williamson, who commanded at the massacre, being one, and he was beaten by only five votes. His successful opponent, Colonel William Crawford, was a fairly good officer, a just and upright man, but with no special fitness for such a task as that he had undertaken. Nor were the troops he led of very good stuff<sup>1</sup>; though they included a few veteran Indian fighters.

<sup>1</sup> A minute and exhaustive account of Crawford's campaign is given by Mr. C. W. Butterfield in his *Expedition against Sandusky* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1873). Mr. Butterfield shows conclusively that the accepted accounts are wholly inaccurate, being derived from the reports of the Moravian missionaries, whose untruthfulness (especially Heckewelder's) is clearly demonstrated. He shows the apocryphal nature of some of the pretended narratives of the expedition, such as two in *The American Pioneer*, etc. He also shows how inaccurate McClung's "sketches" are—for McClung was like a host of other early western annalists, preserving some valuable facts in a good deal of rubbish, and having very little appreciation indeed of the necessity of so much as approximate accuracy. Only a few of these early western historians had the least conception of the value of evidence or of the necessity of sifting it, or of weighing testimony.

On the other hand, Mr. Butterfield is drawn into grave errors, by his excessive partisanship of the borderers. He passes

The party left Mingo Bottom on the 25th of May. After nine days' steady marching through the unbroken forests they came out on the Sandusky plains; billowy stretches of prairie, covered with high coarse grass and dotted with islands of timber. As the men marched across them they roused quantities of prairie fowl, and saw many geese and sand-hill cranes, which circled about in the air, making a strange clamor.

Crawford hoped to surprise the Indian towns; but his progress was slow, and the militia every now and then fired off their guns. The spies of the savages dogged his march and knew all his movements<sup>1</sup>; and runners were sent to Detroit asking help. This the British commandant at once granted. He sent to the assistance of the threatened tribes a number of lake Indians and a body of rangers and Canadian volunteers, under Captain Caldwell.<sup>2</sup>

lightly over their atrocious outrages, colors favorably many of their acts, and praises the generalship of Crawford and the soldiership of his men; when in reality the campaign was badly conducted from beginning to end, and reflected discredit on most who took part in it; Crawford did poorly, and the bulk of his men acted like unruly cowards.

<sup>1</sup> Heckewelder, 336. Butterfield shows conclusively that there is not the slightest ground to accept Heckewelder's assertion that Crawford's people openly declared that "no Indian was to be spared, friend or foe."

<sup>2</sup> Haldimand MSS. De Peyster to Haldimand, May 14, 1782.



On the fourth of June Crawford's troops reached one of the Wyandot towns. It was found to be deserted; and the army marched on to try and find the others. Late in the afternoon, in the midst of the plains, near a cranberry marsh, they encountered Caldwell and his Detroit rangers, together with about two hundred Delawares, Wyandots, and lake Indians.<sup>1</sup> The British and Indians united certainly did not much exceed three hundred men; but they were hourly expecting reinforcements, and decided to give battle. They were posted in a grove of trees, from which they were driven by the first charge of the Americans. A hot skirmish ensued, in which, in spite of Crawford's superiority in force, and of the exceptionally favorable nature of the country, he failed to gain any marked advantage. His troops, containing so large a leaven of the murderers of the Moravians, certainly showed small fighting capacity when matched against armed men who could defend themselves. After the first few minutes neither side gained nor lost ground.

Of the Americans five were killed and nineteen wounded—in all twenty-four. Of their opponents the rangers lost two men killed and three wounded, Caldwell being one of the latter; and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Official report of Lieutenant John Turney, of the rangers, June 7, 1782.

the Indians four killed and eight wounded—in all seventeen.<sup>1</sup>

That night Crawford's men slept by their watchfires in the grove, their foes camping round about in the open prairie. Next morning the British and Indians were not inclined to renew the attack; they wished to wait until their numbers were increased. The only chance of the American militia was to crush their enemies before reinforcements arrived, yet they lay supine and idle all day long, save for an occasional harmless skirmish. Crawford's generalship was as poor as the soldiership of his men.

In the afternoon the Indians were joined by one hundred and forty Shawnees. At sight of this accession of strength the dissipated militia gave up all thought of anything but flight, though they were still equal in numbers to their foes. That night they began a hurried and disorderly retreat. The Shawnees and Delawares attacked them in the darkness, causing some loss and great confusion, and a few of the troops got into the marsh. Many thus became scattered, and next morning there were only about three hundred

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Probably some of this loss occurred on the following day. I rely on Butterfield for the American loss, as he quotes Irvine's official report, etc. He of course wrote without knowledge of the British reports; and his account of the Indian losses and numbers is all wrong. He fails signally in his effort to prove that the Americans behaved bravely.

men left together in a body. Crawford himself was among the missing, so Williamson took command, and hastily continued the retreat. The savages did not make a very hot pursuit; nevertheless, in the afternoon of that day a small number of Indians and Detroit rangers overtook the Americans. They were all mounted. A slight skirmish followed, and the Americans lost eleven men, but repulsed their pursuers.<sup>1</sup> After this they suffered little molestation, and reached Mingo Bottom on the thirteenth of the month.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the stragglers came in afterwards. In all about seventy either died of their wounds, were killed outright, or were captured. Of the latter, those who were made prisoners by the Wyandots were tomahawked and their heads stuck on poles; but if they fell into the hands of the Shawnees or Delawares they were tortured to death with fiendish cruelty. Among them was Crawford himself, who had become separated from the main body when it began its disorderly night retreat. After abandoning his jaded horse he started homewards on foot, but fell into the hands of a small party of Delawares, together with a companion named Knight.

<sup>1</sup> Who were probably at this point much fewer in number than the Americans; Butterfield says the reverse, but his account is untrustworthy on these matters.

<sup>2</sup> As Butterfield shows, Heckewelder's account of Crawford's whole expedition is a piece of sheer romancing.

These two prisoners were taken to one of the Delaware villages. The Indians were fearfully exasperated by the Moravian massacre<sup>1</sup>; and some of the former Moravians, who had rejoined their wild tribesmen, told the prisoners that from that time on not a single captive should escape torture. Nevertheless, it is likely that Crawford would have been burned in any event, and that most of the prisoners would have been tortured to death even had the Moravians<sup>2</sup> never been harmed; for such had always been the custom of the Delawares.

The British, who had cared for the remnants of the Moravians, now did their best to stop the cruelties of the Indians,<sup>2</sup> but could accomplish little or nothing. Even the Mingos and Hurons told them that though they would not torture any Americans, they intended thenceforth to put all their prisoners to death.<sup>3</sup>

Crawford was tied to the stake in the presence of a hundred Indians. Among them were Simon Girty, the white renegade, and a few Wyandots. Knight, Crawford's fellow-captive, was a horrified spectator of the awful sufferings which he knew he was destined by his captors ultimately to share. Crawford, stripped naked, and with his hands

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand MSS. De Peyster to Haldimand, June 23, 1782.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* August 18, 1782.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* December 1, 1782.

bound behind him, was fastened to a high stake by a strong rope; the rope was long enough for him to walk once or twice round the stake. The fire, of small hickory poles, was several yards from the post, so as only to roast and scorch him. Powder was shot into his body, and burning fagots shoved against him, while red embers were strewn beneath his feet. For two hours he bore his torments with manly fortitude, speaking low, and beseeching the Almighty to have mercy on his soul. Then he fell down, and his torturers scalped him and threw burning coals on his bare skull. Rising, he walked about the post once or twice again, and then died. Girty and the Wyandots looked on, laughing at his agony, but taking no part in the torture. When the news of his dreadful fate was brought to the settlements, it excited the greatest horror, not only along the whole frontier, but elsewhere in the country; for he was widely known, was a valued friend of Washington, and was everywhere beloved and respected.

Knight, a small and weak-looking man, was sent to be burned at the Shawnee towns, under the care of a burly savage. Making friends with the latter, he lulled his suspicions, the more easily because the Indian evidently regarded so small a man with contempt; and then, watching his opportunity, he knocked his guard down and ran off

into the woods, eventually making his way to the settlements.

Another of the captives, Slover by name, made a more remarkable escape. Slover's life history had been curious. When a boy eight years old, living near the springs of the Kanawha, his family was captured by Indians, his brother alone escaping. His father was killed, and his two little sisters died of fatigue on the road to the Indian villages; his mother was afterwards ransomed. He lived twelve years with the savages, at first in the Miami towns, and then with the Shawnees. When twenty years old he went to Fort Pitt, where, by accident, he was made known to some of his relations. They pressed him to rejoin his people, but he had become so wedded to savage life that he at first refused. At last he yielded, however, took up his abode with the men of his own color, and became a good citizen and a worthy member of the Presbyterian Church. At the outbreak of the Revolution he served fifteen months as a Continental soldier, and when Crawford started against the Sandusky Indians, he went along as a scout.

Slover, when captured, was taken round to various Indian towns, and saw a number of his companions, as well as other white prisoners, tomahawked or tortured to death. He was examined publicly about many matters at several Great Councils—for he spoke two or three different

Indian languages fluently. At one of the councils he heard the Indians solemnly resolve to take no more prisoners thereafter, but to kill all Americans, of whatever sex and age, some of the British agents from Detroit signifying their approval of the resolution.<sup>1</sup>

At last he was condemned to be burned, and was actually tied to the stake. But a heavy shower came on, so wetting the wood that it was determined to reprieve him till the morrow. That night he was bound and put in a wigwam under the care of three warriors. They laughed and chatted with the prisoner, mocking him, and describing to him with relish all the torments that he was to suffer. At last they fell asleep, and, just before daybreak, he managed to slip out of his rope and escape, entirely naked.

<sup>1</sup> Slover asserts that it was taken in consequence of a message sent advising it by the commandant at Detroit. This is doubtless untrue; the commandant at Detroit did what he could to stop such outrages, although many of his more reckless and uncontrollable subordinates very probably pursued an opposite course. The ignorant and violently prejudiced backwoodsmen naturally believed all manner of evil of their British foes; but it is singular that writers who ought to be well informed should even now continue to accept all their wild assertions as unquestioned facts. The conduct of the British was very bad; but it is silly to describe it in the terms often used. The year after their escape Slover dictated, and Knight wrote, narratives of their adventures, which were together published in book form at Philadelphia in 1783. They are very interesting.

Catching a horse he galloped away sitting on a piece of old rug, and guiding the animal with the halter. He rode steadily and at speed for seventy miles, until his horse dropped dead under him late in the afternoon. Springing off, he continued the race on foot. At last he halted, sick and weary; but, when he had rested an hour or two, he heard afar off the halloo of his pursuers. Struggling to his feet he continued his flight, and ran until after dark. He then threw himself down and snatched a few hours' restless sleep, but, as soon as the moon rose, he renewed his run for life, carefully covering his trail whenever possible. At last he distanced his enemies. For five days he went straight through the woods, naked, bruised, and torn, living on a few berries and a couple of small crawfish he caught in a stream. He could not sleep nor sometimes even lie down at night because of the mosquitoes. On the morning of the sixth day he reached Wheeling, after experiencing such hardship and suffering as none but an iron will and frame could have withstood.

Until near the close of the year 1782 the frontiers suffered heavily. A terrible and deserved retribution fell on the borderers for their crime in failing to punish the dastardly deed of Williamson and his associates. The Indians were roused to savage anger by the murder of the Moravians, and were greatly encouraged by their easy defeat of



Crawford's troops. They harassed the settlements all along the Upper Ohio, the Alleghany, and the Monongahela, and far into the interior,<sup>1</sup> burning, ravaging, and murdering, and bringing dire dismay to every lonely clearing and every palisaded hamlet of rough log cabins.

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iii., 235.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONQUERED FRENCH SETTLEMENTS, 1779-1783

THE Virginian Government took immediate steps to provide for the civil administration of the country Clark had conquered. In the fall of 1778 the entire region northwest of the Ohio was constituted the county of Illinois, with John Todd as county lieutenant or commandant.

Todd was a firm friend and follower of Clark's and had gone with him on his campaign against Vincennes. It therefore happened that he received his commission while at the latter town, early in the spring of '79. In May, he went to Kaskaskia, to organize the county; and Clark, who remained military commandant of the Virginia State troops that were quartered in the district, was glad to turn over the civil government to the charge of his old friend.

Together with his commission, Todd received a long and excellent letter of instructions from Governor Patrick Henry. He was empowered to choose a deputy-commandant and officers for the militia; but the judges and officers of the court

were to be elected by the people themselves. He was given large discretionary power, Henry impressing upon him with especial earnestness the necessity to "cultivate and conciliate the French and Indians."<sup>1</sup> With this end in view, he was bidden to pay special heed to the customs of the creoles, to avoid shocking their prejudices, and to continually consult with their most intelligent and upright men. He was to co-operate in every way with Clark and his troops, while at the same time the militia were to be exclusively under his own control. The inhabitants were to have strict justice done them if wronged by the troops; and Clark was to put down rigorously any licentiousness on the part of the soldiers. The wife and children of the former British commandant—the creole Rocheblave—were to be treated with particular respect, and not suffered to want for anything. He was exhorted to use all his diligence and ability to accomplish the difficult task set him. Finally, Henry advised him to lose no opportunity of inculcating in the minds of the French the value of the liberty the Americans

<sup>1</sup> See Colonel John Todd's "Record Book," while County Lieutenant of Illinois. There is an MS. copy in Colonel Durrett's library at Louisville. It is our best authority for these years in Illinois. The substance of it is given on pp. 49-68 of Mr. Edward G. Mason's interesting and valuable pamphlet on *Illinois in the 18th Century* (Chicago, Fergus Printing Co., 1881).

brought them, as contrasted with "the slavery to which the Illinois was destined" by the British.

This last sentence was proved by subsequent events to be a touch of wholly unconscious but very grim humor. The French were utterly unsuited for liberty, as the Americans understood the term, and to most of them the destruction of British rule was a misfortune. The bold, self-reliant, and energetic spirits among them, who were able to become Americanized, and to adapt themselves to the new conditions, undoubtedly profited immensely by the change. As soon as they adopted American ways, they were received by Americans on terms of perfect and cordial equality, and they enjoyed a far higher kind of life than could possibly have been theirs formerly, and achieved a much greater measure of success. But most of the creoles were helplessly unable to grapple with the new life. They had been accustomed to the paternal rule of priest and military commandant, and they were quite unable to govern themselves, or to hold their own with the pushing, eager, and often unscrupulous newcomers. So little able were they to understand precisely what the new form of government was, that when they went down to receive Todd as commandant, it is said that some of them, joining in the cheering, from force of habit cried: "*Vive le roi.*"

For the first year of Todd's administration, while Clark still remained in the county as commandant of the State troops, matters went fairly well. Clark kept the Indians completely in check, and when some of them finally broke out, and started on a marauding expedition against Cahokia, he promptly repulsed them, and by a quick march burned their towns on Rock River, and forced them to sue for peace.<sup>1</sup>

Todd appointed a Virginian, Richard Winston, as commandant at Kaskaskia; all his other appointees were Frenchmen. An election was forthwith held for justices—to the no small astonishment of the creoles, unaccustomed as they were to American methods of self-government. Among those whom they elected as judges and court-officers were some of the previously appointed militia captains and lieutenants, who thus held two positions. The judges governed their decisions solely by the old French laws and customs.<sup>2</sup> Todd at once made the court proceed to business. On its recommendation, he granted licenses to trade to men of assured loyalty. He also issued a proclamation in reference to new settlers taking up lands. Being a shrewd man, he clearly foresaw the ruin that was sure to arise from the new Virginia land laws as applied to Kentucky, and he

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning of 1780. Bradford MS.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., No. 48, p. 51.

feared the inrush of a horde of speculators, who would buy land with no immediate intention of settling thereon. Besides, the land was so fertile in the river bottoms that he deemed the amount Virginia allotted to each person excessive. So he decreed that each settler should take up his land in the shape of one of the long narrow French farms that stretched back from the water front, and that no claim should contain a greater number of acres than did one of these same farms. This proclamation undoubtedly had a very good effect.

He next wrestled steadily, but much less successfully, with the financial question. He attempted to establish a land bank, as it were, setting aside a great tract of land to secure certain issues of Continental money. The scheme failed, and in spite of his public assurance that the Continental currency would shortly be equal in value to gold and silver, it swiftly sank until it was not worth two cents on the dollar.

This wretched and worthless paper-money which the Americans brought with them was a perfect curse to the country. Its rapid depreciation made it almost impossible to pay the troops, or to secure them supplies, and as a consequence they became disorderly and mutinous. Two or three prominent creoles, who were devoted adherents to the American cause, made loans of silver to the Virginian Government, as repre-

sented by Clark, thereby helping him materially in the prosecution of his campaign. Chief among these public-spirited patriots were Francis Vigo and the priest Gibault, both of them already honorably mentioned. Vigo advanced nearly nine thousand dollars in specie,—piastres or Spanish milled dollars,—receiving in return bills on the “Agent of Virginia,” which came back protested for want of funds; and neither he nor his heirs ever got a dollar of what was due them. He did even more. The creoles at first refused to receive anything but peltries or silver for their goods; they would have nothing to do with the paper, and to all explanations as to its uses, simply answered “that their commandants never made money.”<sup>1</sup> Finally, they were persuaded to take it on Vigo’s personal guaranty, and his receiving it in his store. Even he, however, could not buoy it up long.

Gibault likewise<sup>2</sup> advanced a large sum of money, parted with his titles and beasts, so as to set a good example to his parishioners, and, with the same purpose, furnished goods to the troops at ordinary prices, taking the paper in exchange as if it had been silver. In consequence, he lost

<sup>1</sup> Law’s *Vincennes*, pp. 49, 126. For some inscrutable reason, by the way, the Americans for a long time persisted in speaking of the place as *St. Vincennes*.

<sup>2</sup> See his letter to Governor St. Clair, May 1, 1790.

over fifteen hundred dollars, was forced to sell his only two slaves, and became almost destitute; though in the end he received from the government a tract of land which partially reimbursed him. Being driven to desperate straits, the priest tried a rather doubtful shift. He sold, or pretended to sell, a great natural meadow, known as *la prairie du pont*, which the people of Cahokia claimed as a common pasture for their cattle. His conduct drew forth a sharp remonstrance from the Cahokians, in the course of which they frankly announced that they believed the priest should confine himself to ecclesiastical matters, and should not meddle with land grants, especially when the land he granted did not belong to him.<sup>1</sup>

It grew steadily more difficult to get the creoles to furnish supplies; Todd had to forbid the exportation of any provisions whatever, and, finally, the soldiers were compelled to levy on all that they needed. Todd paid for these impressed goods, as well as for what the contractors furnished, at the regulation prices—one third in paper money and two thirds in peltries; and thus the garrisons at Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes were supplied with powder, lead, sugar, flour, and, above all, hogsheads of taffia, of which they drank an inordinate quantity.

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 48, p. 41. Petition of J. B. La Croix and A. Girardin.



The justices did not have very much work; in most of the cases that came before them the plaintiff and defendant were both of the same race. One piece of recorded testimony is rather amusing, being to the effect that "Monsieur Smith est un grand vilain coquin."<sup>1</sup>

Yet there are two entries in the proceedings of the creole courts for the summer of 1779, as preserved in Todd's "Record Book," which are of startling significance. To understand them it must be remembered that the creoles were very ignorant and superstitious, and that they one and all, including, apparently, even their priests, firmly believed in witchcraft and sorcery. Some of their negro slaves had been born in Africa, the others had come from the Lower Mississippi or the West Indies; they practised the strange rites of voodooism, and a few were adepts in the art of poisoning. Accordingly, the French were always on the look-out lest their slaves should, by spell or poison, take their lives. It must also be kept in mind that the pardoning power of the commandant did not extend to cases of treason or murder,—a witchcraft trial being generally one for murder,—and that he was expressly forbidden to interfere with the customs and laws, or go counter to the prejudices of the inhabitants.

<sup>1</sup> This and most of the other statements for which no authority is quoted are based on Todd's MS. "Record Book."

At this time the creoles were smitten by a sudden epidemic of fear that their negro slaves were trying to bewitch and poison them. Several of the negroes were seized and tried, and in June two were condemned to death. One, named Moreau, was sentenced to be hung outside Cahokia. The other, a Kaskaskian slave named Manuel, suffered a worse fate. He was sentenced "to be chained to a post at the water-side, and there to be burnt alive and his ashes scattered."<sup>1</sup> These two sentences, and the directions for their immediate execution, reveal a dark chapter in the early history of Illinois. It seems a strange thing that, in the United States, three years after the Declaration of Independence, men should have been burnt and hung for witchcraft, in accordance with the laws and with the decision of the proper court. The fact that the victim, before being burned, was forced to make "honorable fine" at the door of the Catholic church shows that the priest at least acquiesced in the decision. The blame justly resting on the Puritans of seventeenth-century New England must likewise fall on the Catholic French of eighteenth-century Illinois.

Early in the spring of 1780 Clark left the country;

<sup>1</sup> The entries merely record the sentences, with directions that they be immediately executed. But there seems very little doubt that they were for witchcraft, or voodooism, probably with poisoning at the bottom—and that they were actually carried out. See Mason's pamphlet, p. 59.

he did not again return to take command, for after visiting the fort on the Mississippi, and spending the summer in the defence of Kentucky, he went to Virginia to try to arrange for an expedition against Detroit. Todd also left about the same time, having been elected a Kentucky delegate to the Virginia Legislature. He afterwards made one or two flying visits to Illinois, but exerted little influence over her destiny, leaving the management of affairs entirely in the hands of his deputy, or lieutenant-commandant for the time being. He usually chose for this position either Richard Winston, the Virginian, or else a creole named Thimothé Demunbrunt.

Todd's departure was a blow to the country; but Clark's was a far more serious calamity. By his personal influence he had kept the Indians in check, the creoles contented, and the troops well fed and fairly disciplined. As soon as he went, trouble broke out. The officers did not know how to support their authority; they were very improvident, and one or two became implicated in serious scandals. The soldiers soon grew turbulent, and there was constant clashing between the civil and military rulers. Gradually the mass of the creoles became so angered with the Americans that they wished to lay their grievances before the French Minister at Philadelphia; and many of them crossed the Mississippi and settled

under the Spanish flag. The courts rapidly lost their power, and the worst people, both Americans and creoles, practised every kind of rascality with impunity. All decent men joined in clamoring for Clark's return; but it was impossible for him to come back. The freshets and the maladministration combined to produce a dearth, almost a famine, in the land. The evils were felt most severely in Vincennes, where Helm, the captain of the post, though a brave and capable man, was utterly unable to procure supplies of any kind. He did not hear of Clark's success against Piqua and Chillicothe until October. Then he wrote to one of the officers at the Falls, saying that he was "sitting by the fire with a piece of lightwood and two ribs of an old buffloe, which is all the meat we have seen this many days. I congratulate your success against the Shawanohs, but there's never doubts where that brave Col. Clark commands; we well know the loss of him in Illinois. . . . Excuse Haste as the Lightwood's Just out and mouth watering for part of the two ribs."<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1780 a Frenchman, named la Balme, led an expedition composed purely of creoles against Detroit. He believed that he could win over the French at that place to his side, and thus capture the fort as Clark had cap-

<sup>1</sup> Calendar of *Virginia State Papers*, vol. i., pp. 380, 382, 383, October 24-29, 1780.

tured Vincennes. He raised some fifty volunteers round Cahokia and Kaskaskia, perhaps as many more on the Wabash, and marched to the Maumee River. Here he stopped to plunder some British traders; and in November the neighboring Indians fell on his camp, killed him and thirty or forty of his men, and scattered the rest.<sup>1</sup> His march had been so quick and unexpected that it rendered the British very uneasy, and they were much rejoiced at his discomfiture and death.

The following year a new element of confusion was added. In 1779, Spain declared war on Great Britain. The Spanish commandant at New Orleans was Don Bernard de Galvez, one of the very few strikingly able men Spain has sent to the western hemisphere during the past two centuries. He was bold, resolute, and ambitious; there is reason to believe that at one time he meditated a separation from Spain, the establishment of a Spanish-American empire, and the founding of a new imperial house. However this may be, he threw himself heart and soul into the war against Britain; and attacked British West Florida with a fiery energy worthy of Wolfe or Montcalm. He favored the Americans; but it was patent to all that he favored them only the better to harass the British.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the creoles and the British garrisons,

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand MSS. De Peyster to Haldimand, November 16, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., No. 50, p. 109.

there were quite a number of American settlers in West Florida. In the immediate presence of Spanish and Indian foes, these, for the most part, remained royalists. In 1778, a party of armed Americans, coming down the Ohio and Mississippi, tried to persuade them to turn whig, but, becoming embroiled with them, the militant missionaries were scattered and driven off. Afterwards the royalists fought among themselves; but this was a mere faction quarrel, and was soon healed. Towards the end of 1779, Galvez, with an army of Spanish and French creole troops, attacked the forts along the Mississippi—Manchac, Baton Rouge, Natchez, and one or two smaller places,—speedily carrying them and capturing their garrisons of British regulars and royalist militia. During the next eighteen months he laid siege to and took Mobile and Pensacola. While he was away on his expedition against the latter place, the royalist Americans around Natchez rose and retook the fort from the Spaniards; but at the approach of Galvez they fled in terror, marching overland towards Georgia, then in the hands of the tories. On the way they suffered great loss and damage from the Creeks and Choctaws.

The Spanish commander at St. Louis was inspired by the news of these brilliant victories to try if he, too, could not gain a small wreath at the expense of Spain's enemies. Clark had already

become thoroughly convinced of the duplicity of the Spaniards on the upper Mississippi; he believed that they were anxious to have the British retake Illinois, so that they, in their turn, might conquer and keep it.<sup>1</sup> They never had the chance to execute this plan; but, on January 2, 1781, a Spanish captain, Don Eugénio Pierro, led a hundred and twenty men, chiefly Indians and creoles, against the little French village, or fur post, of St. Joseph, where they burned the houses of one or two British traders, claimed the country round the Illinois River as conquered for the Spanish king, and forthwith returned to St. Louis, not daring to leave a garrison of any sort behind them, and being harassed on their retreat by the Indians. On the strength of this exploit Spain afterwards claimed a large stretch of country to the east of the Mississippi. In reality it was a mere plundering foray. The British at once retook possession of the place, and, indeed, were for some time ignorant whether the raiders had been Americans or Spaniards.<sup>2</sup> Soon after the recapture, the Detroit authorities<sup>3</sup> sent a scouting party to dislodge

<sup>1</sup> Clark to Todd, March, 1780. *Virginia State Papers*, vol. i., p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> Haldimand MSS. Haldimand to De Peyster, April 10, 1781. Report of Council at St. Joseph, March 11, 1781.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Haldimand to De Peyster, May 19, 1782. This is the first record of an effort to make a permanent settlement at Chicago.

some Illinois people who had attempted to make a settlement at Chicago.

At the end of the year 1781 the unpaid troops in Vincennes were on the verge of mutiny, and it was impossible longer even to feed them, for the inhabitants themselves were almost starving. The garrison was therefore withdrawn; and immediately the Wabash Indians joined those of the Miami, the Sandusky, and the Lakes in their raids on the settlements.<sup>1</sup> By this time, however, Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown, and the British were even more exhausted than the Americans. Some of the French partisans of the British at Detroit, such as Rocheblave and Lamothe, who had been captured by Clark, were eager for revenge, and desired to be allowed to try and retake Vincennes and the Illinois; they saw that the Americans must either be exterminated or else the land abandoned to them.<sup>2</sup> But the British commandant was in no condition to comply with their request, or to begin offensive operations. Clark had not only conquered the land, but he had held it firmly while he dwelt therein; and even when his hand was no longer felt, the order he had established took some little time before crumbling. Meanwhile, his presence at the Falls, his raids into

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., p. 502.

<sup>2</sup> Haldimand MSS. Letter of Rocheblave, October 7, 1781; of Lamothe, April 24, 1782.



the Indian country, and his preparations for an onslaught on Detroit kept the British authorities at the latter place fully occupied, and prevented their making any attempt to recover what they had lost. By the beginning of 1782, the active operations of the Revolutionary War were at an end, and the worn-out British had abandoned all thought of taking the offensive anywhere, though the Indian hostilities continued with unabated vigor. Thus the grasp with which the Americans held the conquered country was not relaxed until all danger that it would be taken from them had ceased.

In 1782, the whole Illinois region lapsed into anarchy and confusion. It was, perhaps, worst at Vincennes, where the departure of the troops had left the French free to do as they wished. Accustomed for generations to a master, they could do nothing with their new-found liberty beyond making it a curse to themselves and their neighbors. They had been provided with their own civil government in the shape of their elective court, but the judges had literally no idea of their proper functions as a governing body to administer justice. At first they did nothing whatever beyond meet and adjourn. Finally, it occurred to them that perhaps their official position could be turned to their own advantage. Their townsmen were much too poor to be plundered;

but there were vast tracts of fertile wild land on every side, to which, as far as they knew, there was no title, and which speculators assured them would ultimately be of great value. Vaguely remembering Todd's opinion, that he had power to interfere under certain conditions with the settlement of the lands, and concluding that he had delegated this power, as well as others, to themselves, the justices of the court proceeded to make immense grants of territory, reciting that they did so under "*les pouvoirs donnés a Mons'rs Les Magistrats de la cour de Vincennes par le Snr. Jean Todd, colonel et Grand JUDGE civil pour les États Unis*"; Todd's title having suffered a change and exaltation in their memories. They granted one another about fifteen thousand square miles of land round the Wabash; each member of the court in turn absenting himself for the day on which his associates granted him his share.

This vast mass of virgin soil they sold to speculators at nominal prices, sometimes receiving a horse or a gun for a thousand acres. The speculators, of course, knew that their titles were worthless, and made haste to dispose of different lots at very low prices to intending settlers. These small buyers were those who ultimately suffered by the transaction, as they found they had paid for worthless claims. The speculators reaped the richest harvest; and it is hard to decide whether

to be amused or annoyed at the childish and transparent rascality of the French creoles.<sup>1</sup>

In the Illinois country proper the troops, the American settlers, speculators, and civil officials, and the creole inhabitants all quarrelled together indiscriminately. The more lawless newcomers stole horses from the quieter creoles; the worst among the French, the idle *coureurs de bois*, *voyageurs*, and trappers plundered and sometimes killed the peaceable citizens of either nationality. The soldiers became little better than an unruly mob; some deserted, or else, in company with other ruffians, both French and American, indulged in furious and sometimes murderous orgies, to the terror of the creoles who had property. The civil authorities, growing day by day weaker, were finally shorn of all power by the military. This, however, was in nowise a quarrel between the French and the Americans. As already explained, in Todd's absence the position of deputy was sometimes filled by a creole and sometimes by an American. He had been particular to caution them in writing to keep up a good understanding with the officers and troops, adding, as a final warning: "If this is not the case you will be unhappy." Unfortunately for one of the deputies, Richard Winston, he failed to keep up the

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS.. Nos. 30 and 48. Law's *Vincennes*.

good understanding, and, as Todd had laconically foretold, he in consequence speedily became very "unhappy." We have only his own account of the matter. According to this, in April, 1782, he was taken out of his house "in despite of the civil authority, disregarding the laws and on the malicious alugation of Jno. Williams and Michel Pevante." Thus a Frenchman and an American joined in the accusation, for some of the French supported the civil, others the military, authorities. The soldiers had the upper hand, however, and Winston records that he was forthwith "confined by tyrannick military force." From that time the authority of the laws was at an end, and as the officers of the troops had but little control, every man did what pleased him best.

In January, 1781, the Virginia Legislature passed an act ceding to Congress, for the benefit of the United States, all of Virginia's claim to the territory northwest of the Ohio; but the cession was not consummated until after the close of the war with Great Britain, and the only immediate effect of the act was to still further derange affairs in Illinois. The whole subject of the land cessions of the various States, by which the northwest territory became federal property, and the heart of the Union, can best be considered in treating of post-Revolutionary times.

The French creoles had been plunged in chaos.

In their deep distress they sent to the powers that the chances of war had set above them petition after petition, reciting their wrongs and praying that they might be righted. There is one striking difference between these petitions and the similar requests and complaints made from time to time by the different groups of American settlers west of the Alleghanies. Both alike set forth the evils from which the petitioners suffered, and the necessity of governmental remedy. But whereas the Americans invariably asked that they be allowed to govern themselves, being delighted to undertake the betterment of their condition on their own account, the French, on the contrary, habituated through generations to paternal rule, were more inclined to request that somebody fitted for the task should be sent to govern them. They humbly asked Congress either to "immediately establish some form of government among them, and appoint officers to execute the same," or else "to nominate commissioners to repair to the Illinois and inquire into the situation."<sup>1</sup>

One of the petitions is pathetic in its showing of the bewilderment into which the poor creoles were thrown as to who their governors really were. It requests "their Sovereign Lords,"<sup>2</sup> whether of

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 30, p. 453. Memorial of François Carbonneaux, agent for the inhabitants of Illinois.

<sup>2</sup> "*Nos Souverains Seigneurs.*" The letter is ill written

the Congress of the United States or of the Province of Virginia, whichever might be the owner of the country, to nominate "a lieutenant or a governor, whomever it may please our Lords to send us." <sup>1</sup> The letter goes on to ask that this governor may speak French, so that he may preside over the court; and it earnestly beseeches that the laws may be enforced and crime and wrong-doing put down with a strong hand.

The conquest of the Illinois territory was fraught with the deepest and most far-reaching benefits to all the American people; it likewise benefited, in at least an equal degree, the boldest and most energetic among the French inhabitants, those who could hold their own among freemen, who could swim in troubled waters; but it may well be doubted whether to the mass of the ignorant and simple creoles it was not a curse rather than a blessing.

and worse spelt, in an extraordinary French patois. State Department MSS., No. 30, page 459. It is dated December 3, 1782. Many of the surnames attached are marked with a cross; others are signed. Two are given respectively as "*Bienvenus fils*" and "*Blouin fils*."

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, "*de nomer un lieutenant ou un gouverneur tel qu'il plaira a nos Seigneurs de nous l'envoyer.*"

## CHAPTER III

KENTUCKY UNTIL THE END OF THE REVOLUTION,  
1782-1783

SEVENTEEN hundred and eighty-two proved to be Kentucky's year of blood. The British at Detroit had strained every nerve to drag into the war the entire Indian population of the Northwest. They had finally succeeded in arousing even the most distant tribes—not to speak of the twelve thousand savages immediately tributary to Detroit.<sup>1</sup> So lavish had been the expenditure of money and presents to secure the good will of the savages and enlist their active services against the Americans, that it had caused serious complaint at headquarters.<sup>2</sup>

Early in the spring the Indians renewed their forays; horses were stolen, cabins burned, and women and children carried off captive. The people were confined closely to their stockaded forts, from which small bands of riflemen sallied to patrol the country. From time to time these encountered marauding parties, and in the fights

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand MSS. Census for 1782, 11,402.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Haldimand to De Peyster, April 10, October 6, 1781.

that followed sometimes the whites, sometimes the reds, were victorious.

One of these conflicts attracted wide attention on the border because of the obstinacy with which it was waged and the bloodshed that accompanied it. In March a party of twenty-five Wyandots came into the settlements, passed Boonsborough, and killed and scalped a girl within sight of Estill's Station. The men from the latter, also to the number of twenty-five, hastily gathered under Captain Estill, and after two days' hot pursuit overtook the Wyandots. A fair stand-up fight followed, the better marksmanship of the whites being offset, as so often before, by the superiority their foes showed in sheltering themselves. At last victory declared for the Indians. Estill had despatched a lieutenant and seven men to get round the Wyandots and assail them in the rear; but either the lieutenant's heart or his judgment failed him; he took too long, and meanwhile the Wyandots closed in on the others, killing nine, including Estill, and wounding four, who, with their unhurt comrades, escaped. It is said that the Wyandots themselves suffered heavily.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course not as much as their foes. The backwoodsmen (like the regular officers of both the British and American armies in similar cases, as at Grant's and St. Clair's defeats) were fond of consoling themselves for their defeats by snatching at any wild tale of the losses of the victors. In



These various ravages and skirmishes were but the prelude to a far more serious attack. In July, the British captains Caldwell and McKee came down from Detroit with a party of rangers, and gathered together a great army of over a thousand Indians<sup>1</sup>—the largest body of either red men or white that was ever mustered west of the Alleghanies during the Revolution. They meant to strike at Wheeling; but while on their march thither were suddenly alarmed by the rumor that Clark intended to attack the Shawnee towns.<sup>2</sup> They at once countermarched, but on reaching the threatened towns found that the alarm had been groundless. Most of the savages, with characteristic fickleness of temper, then declined to go farther; but a body of somewhat over three hundred Hurons and Lake Indians remained. With these and their Detroit rangers, Caldwell and McKee crossed the Ohio and marched into Kentucky, to attack the small forts of Fayette County.

the present instance, it is even possible that the loss of the Wyandots was very light instead of very heavy.

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand MSS. Letter from Captain Caldwell, August 26, 1782; and letter of Captain McKee, August 28, 1782. These two letters are very important as they give for the first time the British and Indian accounts of the battle of the Blue Licks; I print them as Appendices A and B.

<sup>2</sup> This rumor was caused by Clark's gunboat, which, as will be hereafter mentioned, had been sent up to the mouth of the Licking; some Shawnees saw it, and thought Clark was preparing for an inroad.

Fayette lay between the Kentucky and the Ohio rivers, and was then the least populous and most exposed of the three counties into which the growing young commonwealth was divided. In 1782 it contained but five of the small stockaded towns in which all the early settlers were obliged to gather. The best defended and most central was Lexington, round which were grouped the other four—Bryan's (which was the largest), McGee's, McConnell's, and Boon's. Boon's Station, sometimes called Boon's new station, where the tranquil, resolute old pioneer at that time dwelt, must not be confounded with his former fort of Boonsborough, from which it was several miles distant, north of the Kentucky. Since the destruction of Martin's and Ruddle's stations on the Licking, Bryan's on the south bank of the Elkhorn was left as the northernmost outpost of the settlers. Its stout, loopholed palisades enclosed some forty cabins, there were strong blockhouses at the corners, and it was garrisoned by fifty good riflemen.

These five stations were held by backwoodsmen of the usual Kentucky stamp, from the up-country of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. Generations of frontier life had made them with their fellows the most distinctive and typical Americans on the continent, utterly different from their old-world kinsfolk. Yet they still showed strong traces of the covenanting spirit,

which they drew from the Irish-Presbyterian, the master strain in their mixed blood. For years they had not seen the inside of a church; nevertheless, mingled with men who were loose of tongue and life, there still remained many Sabbath-keepers and Bible-readers, who studied their catechisms on Sundays, and disliked almost equally profane language and debauchery.<sup>1</sup>

An incident that occurred at this time illustrates well their feelings. In June, a fourth of the active militia of the county was ordered on duty, to scout and patrol the country. Accordingly, forty men turned out under Captain Robert Patterson. They were given ammunition, as well as two pack-horses, by the Commissary Department. Every man was entitled to pay for the time he was out. Whether he would ever get it was problematical; at the best it was certain to be given him in worthless paper-money. Their hunters kept them supplied with game, and each man carried a small quantity of parched corn.

The company was ordered to the mouth of the Kentucky to meet the armed row-boat sent by Clark from the Falls. On the way Patterson was much annoyed by a "very profane, swearing man" from Bryan's Station, named Aaron Reynolds. Reynolds was a good-hearted, active young fellow, with a biting tongue, not only given to many

<sup>1</sup> McAfee MSS.

oaths, but likewise skilled in the rough, coarse banter so popular with the backwoodsmen. After having borne with him four days Patterson made up his mind that he would have to reprove him, and, if no amendment took place, send him home. He waited until, at a halt, Reynolds got a crowd round him, and began to entertain them "with oaths and wicked expressions," whereupon he promptly stepped in "and observed to him that he was a very wicked and profane man," and that both the company as well as he, the Captain, would thank him to desist. On the next day, however, Reynolds began to swear again; this time Patterson not only reprovved him severely, but also tried the effect of judicious gentleness, promising to give him a quart of spirits on reaching the boat if he immediately "quit his profanity and swearing." Four days afterwards they reached the boat, and Aaron Reynolds demanded the quart of spirits. Patterson suggested a doubt as to whether he had kept his promise, whereupon Reynolds appealed to the company, then on parade, and they pronounced in his favor, saying that they had not heard him swear since he was reprovved. Patterson, who himself records the incident, concludes with the remark:<sup>1</sup> "The spirits

<sup>1</sup> Patterson's paper, given by Colonel John Mason Brown, in his excellent pamphlet on the *Battle of the Blue Licks* (Franklin, Ky., 1882). I cannot forbear again commenting

were drank." Evidently the company, who had so impartially acted as judges between their fellow-soldier and their superior officer, viewed with the same equanimity the zeal of the latter and the mixed system of command, entreaty, and reward by which he carried his point. As will be seen, the event had a striking sequel at the battle of the Blue Licks.

Throughout June and July the gunboat patrolled the Ohio, going up to the Licking. Parties of backwoods riflemen, embodied as militia, likewise patrolled the woods, always keeping their scouts and spies well spread out, and exercising the greatest care to avoid being surprised. They greatly hampered the Indian war bands, but now and then the latter slipped by and fell on the people they protected. Early in August such a band committed some ravages south of the Kentucky, beating back with loss a few militia who followed it. Some of the Fayette men were about setting forth to try and cut off its retreat, when the sudden and unlooked-for approach of Caldwell and McKee's great war-party obliged them to bend all their energies to their own defence.

The blow fell on Bryan's Station. The rangers and warriors moved down through the forest with the utmost speed and stealth, hoping to take this,

on the really admirable historic work now being done by Messrs. Brown, Durrett, Speed, and the other members of the Louisville "Filson Club."

the northernmost of the stockades, by surprise. If they had succeeded, Lexington and the three smaller stations north of the Kentucky would probably likewise have fallen.

The attack was made early on the morning of the 16th of August. Some of the settlers were in the corn-fields, and the rest inside the palisade of standing logs; they were preparing to follow the band of marauders who had gone south of the Kentucky. A few outlying Indian<sup>1</sup> spies were discovered, owing to their eagerness; and the whites being put on their guard, the attempt to carry the fort by the first rush was, of course, foiled. Like so many other stations—but unlike Lexington—Bryan's had no spring within its walls; and as soon as there was reason to dread an attack, it became a matter of vital importance to lay in a supply of water. It was feared that to send the men to the spring would arouse suspicion in the minds of the hiding savages; and, accordingly, the women went down with their pails and buckets, as usual. The younger girls showed some nervousness, but the old housewives marshalled them as coolly as possible, talking and laughing together, and by their unconcern completely deceived the few Indians who were lurking nearby<sup>1</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Caldwell's letter says that a small party of Indians was sent ahead first; the watering incident apparently took place immediately on this small party being discovered.

for the main body had not yet come up. This advance guard of the savages feared that, if they attacked the women, all chance of surprising the fort would be lost; and so the water-carriers were suffered to go back unharmed.<sup>1</sup> Hardly were they within the fort, however, when some of the Indians found that they had been discovered, and the attack began so quickly that one or two of the men who had lingered in the corn-fields were killed, or else were cut off and fled to Lexington; while, at the same time, swift-footed runners were sent

<sup>1</sup> This account rests on tradition; it is recorded by McClung, a most untrustworthy writer; his account of the battle of the Blue Licks is wrong from beginning to end. But a number of gentlemen in Kentucky have informed me that old pioneers whom they knew in their youth had told them that they had themselves seen the incident, and that, as written down, it was substantially true. So with Reynolds's speech to Girty. Of course, his exact words, as given by McClung, are incorrect; but Mr. L. C. Draper informs me that, in his youth, he knew several old men who had been in Bryan's Station and had themselves heard the speech. If it were not for this I should reject it, for the British accounts do not even mention that Girty was along, and do not hint at the incident. It was probably an unauthorized ruse of Girty's. The account of the decoy party of Indians is partially confirmed by the British letters. Both Marshall and McClung get this siege and battle very much twisted in their narratives; they make so many mistakes that it is difficult to know what portion of their accounts to accept. Nevertheless, it would be a great mistake to neglect all, even of McClung's statements. Thus Boon and Levi Todd in their reports make no mention of McGarry's conduct; and it might be supposed to be a traditional myth, but McClung's

out to carry the alarm to the different stockades and summon their riflemen to the rescue.

At first but a few Indians appeared, on the side of the Lexington road; they whooped and danced defiance to the fort, evidently inviting an attack. Their purpose was to lure the defenders into sallying out after them, when their main body was to rush at the stockade from the other side. But they did not succeed in deceiving the veteran Indian fighters who manned the heavy gates of the fort, stood behind the loopholed walls, or scanned the country round about from the high block-houses at the corners. A dozen active young men were sent out on the Lexington road to carry on a mock skirmish with the decoy party, while the rest of the defenders gathered behind the wall on the opposite side. As soon as a noisy but harmless skirmish had been begun by the sallying party, the main body of warriors burst out of the woods and rushed towards the western gate. A single volley from the loopholes drove them back, while the sallying party returned at a run and entered

account is unexpectedly corroborated by Arthur Campbell's letter, hereafter to be quoted, which was written at the time.

Marshall is the authority for Netherland's feat at the ford. Boon's description in the Filson "Narrative" differs on several points from his earlier official letter, one or two grave errors being made; it is one of the incidents which shows how cautiously the Filson sketch must be used, though it is usually accepted as unquestionable authority.



the Lexington gate unharmed, laughing at the success of their counter stratagem.

The Indians surrounded the fort, each crawling up as close as he could find shelter behind some stump, tree, or fence. An irregular fire began, the whites, who were better covered, having slightly the advantage, but neither side suffering much. This lasted for several hours, until early in the afternoon a party from Lexington suddenly appeared and tried to force its way into the fort.

The runners who slipped out of the fort at the first alarm went straight to Lexington. There they found that the men had just started out to cut off the retreat of the marauding savages who were ravaging south of the Kentucky. Following their trail they speedily overtook the troops, and told of the attack on Bryan's. Instantly forty men under Major Levi Todd countermarched to the rescue. Being ignorant of the strength of the Indians they did not wait for the others, but pushed boldly forward, seventeen being mounted and the others on foot.<sup>1</sup>

The road from Lexington to Bryan's for the last few hundred yards led beside a field of growing corn, taller than a man. Some of the Indians were lying in this field when they were surprised by the sudden appearance of the rescuers, and promptly

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., p. 300. McClung's and Collins's accounts of this incident are pure romance.

fired on them. Levi Todd and the horsemen, who were marching in advance, struck spurs into their steeds, and, galloping hard through the dust and smoke, reached the fort in safety. The footmen were quickly forced to retreat towards Lexington; but the Indians were too surprised by the unlooked-for approach to follow, and they escaped with the loss of one man killed and three wounded.<sup>1</sup>

That night the Indians tried to burn the fort, shooting flaming arrows onto the roofs of the cabins and rushing up to the wooden wall with lighted torches. But they were beaten off at each attempt. When day broke they realized that it was hopeless to make any further effort, though they still kept up a desultory fire on the fort's defenders; they had killed most of the cattle and pigs and some of the horses, and had driven away the rest.

Girty, who was among the assailants, as a last shift, tried to get the garrison to surrender, assuring them that the Indians were hourly expecting reinforcements, including the artillery brought against Ruddle's and Martin's stations two years previously; and that if forced to batter down the walls no quarter would be given to any one. Among the fort's defenders was young Aaron Reynolds, the man whose profanity had formerly roused Captain Patterson's ire; and he now under-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

took to be spokesman for the rest. Springing up into sight, he answered Girty in the tone of rough banter so dear to the backwoodsmen, telling the renegade that he knew him well, and despised him, that the men in the fort feared neither cannon nor reinforcements, and, if need be, could drive Girty's tawny followers back from the walls with switches; and he ended by assuring him that the whites, too, were expecting help, for the country was roused, and if the renegade and his followers dared to linger where they were for another twenty-four hours, their scalps would surely be sun-dried on the roofs of the cabins.

The Indians knew well that the riflemen were mustering at all the neighboring forts; and, as soon as their effort to treat failed, they withdrew during the forenoon of the 17th.<sup>1</sup> They were

<sup>1</sup> There are four contemporary official reports of this battle: two American, those of Boon and Levi Todd; and two British, those of McKee and Caldwell. All four agree that the fort was attacked on one day, the siege abandoned on the next, pursuit made on the third, and the battle fought on the fourth. Boon and Todd make the siege begin on August 16th and the battle take place on the 19th; Caldwell makes the dates the 15th and 18th; McKee makes them the 18th and 21st. I therefore take Boon's and Todd's dates.

McClung and Marshall make the siege last three or four days instead of less than two.

All the accounts of the battle of the Blue Licks, so far, have been very inaccurate, because the British reports have never been even known to exist, and the reports of the American commanders, printed in the *Virginia State Papers*, have but

angry and sullen at their discomfiture. Five of their number had been killed and several wounded. Of the fort's defenders four had been killed and three wounded. Among the children within its walls during the siege there was one, the youngest, a Kentucky-born baby, named Richard Johnson; over thirty years later he led the Kentucky mounted riflemen at the victory of the Thames, when they killed not only the great Indian chief Tecumseh, but also, it is said, the implacable renegade Simon Girty himself, then in extreme old age.

All this time the runners sent out from Bryan's had been speeding through the woods, summoning help from each of the little walled towns. The Fayette troops quickly gathered. As soon as Boon heard the news he marched at the head of the men of his station, among them his youngest son Israel, destined shortly to be slain before his eyes. The men from Lexington, McConnell's, and McGee's, rallied under John Todd, who was County Lieutenant, and, by virtue of his commission in the Virginia line, the ranking officer of Kentucky, second only to Clark. Troops also came from south of the Kentucky River; Lieutenant-Colonel Trigg and Majors McGarry and Harlan

recently seen the light. Mr. Whitsitt, in his recent excellent *Life of Judge Wallace*, uses the latter, but makes the great mistake of incorporating into his narrative some of the most glaring errors of McClung and Marshall.

led the men from Harrodsburg, who were soonest ready to march, and likewise brought the news that Logan, their County Lieutenant, was raising the whole force of Lincoln in hot haste, and would follow in a couple of days.

These bands of rescuers reached Bryan's Station on the afternoon of the day the Indians had left. The men thus gathered were the very pick of the Kentucky pioneers; sinewy veterans of border strife, skilled hunters and woodsmen, long wonted to every kind of hardship and danger. They were men of the most dauntless courage, but unruly and impatient of all control. Only a few of the cooler heads were willing to look before they leaped; and even their chosen and trusted leaders were forced to advise and exhort rather than to command them. All were eager for battle and vengeance, and were excited and elated by the repulse that had just been inflicted on the savages; and they feared to wait for Logan lest the foe should escape. Next morning they rode out in pursuit, one hundred and eighty-two strong, all on horseback, and all carrying long rifles. There was but one sword among them, which Todd had borrowed from Boon—a rough weapon, with short steel blade and buckhorn hilt. As with most frontier levies, the officers were in large proportion; for, owing to the system of armed settlement and half-military organization, each wooden

fort, each little group of hunters or hard-fighting backwoods farmers, was forced to have its own captain, lieutenant, ensign, and sergeant.<sup>1</sup>

The Indians, in their unhurried retreat, followed the great buffalo trace that led to the Blue

<sup>1</sup> For the American side of the battle of Blue Licks, I take the contemporary reports of Boon, Levi Todd, and Logan, *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., pp. 276, 280, 300, 333. Boon and Todd both are explicit that there were one hundred and eighty-two riflemen, all on horseback, and substantially agree as to the loss of the frontiersmen. Later reports underestimate both the numbers and loss of the whites. Boon's "Narrative," written two years after the event, from memory, conflicts in one or two particulars with his earlier report. Patterson, writing long afterwards, and from memory, falls into gross errors, both as to the number of troops and as to some of them being on foot; his account must be relied on chiefly for his own adventures. Most of the historians of Kentucky give the affair very incorrectly. Butler follows Marshall; but from the Clark papers he got the right number of men engaged. Marshall gives a few valuable facts; but he is all wrong on certain important points. For instance, he says Todd hurried into action for fear Logan would supersede him in the command; but in reality Todd ranked Logan. McClung's ornate narrative, that usually followed, hangs on the very slenderest thread of truth; it is mainly sheer fiction. Prolix, tedious Collins follows the plan he usually does when his rancorous prejudices do not influence him, and presents half a dozen utterly inconsistent accounts, with no effort whatever to reconcile them. He was an industrious collector of information, and gathered an enormous quantity, some of it very useful; he recorded with the like complacency authentic incidents of the highest importance and palpable fabrications or irrelevant trivialities; and it never entered his head to sift evidence or to exercise a little critical power and judgment.

Licks, a broad road, beaten out through the forest by the passing and repassing of the mighty herds through countless generations. They camped on the farther side of the river; some of the savages had left, but there were still nearly three hundred men in all—Hurons and Lake Indians, with the small party of rangers.<sup>1</sup>

The backwoods horsemen rode swiftly on the trail of their foes, and before evening came to where they had camped the night before. A careful examination of the camp-fires convinced the leaders that they were heavily outnumbered; nevertheless they continued the pursuit, and overtook the savages early the following morning, the 19th of August.

As they reached the Blue Licks, they saw a few Indians retreating up a rocky ridge that led from the north bank of the river. The backwoodsmen halted on the south bank, and a short council was held. All turned naturally to Boon, the most

<sup>1</sup> Caldwell says that he had at first "three hundred Indians and Rangers," but that before the battle "nigh 100 Indians left." McKee says that there were at first "upwards of three hundred Hurons and Lake Indians," besides the rangers and a very few Mingos, Delawares, and Shawnees. Later, he says of the battle: "We were not much superior to them in numbers, they being about two hundred."

Levi Todd put the number of the Indians at three hundred, which was pretty near the truth; Boon thought it four hundred; later writers exaggerate wildly, putting it even at one thousand.

experienced Indian fighter present, in whose cool courage and tranquil self-possession all confided. The wary old pioneer strongly urged that no attack be made at the moment, but that they should await the troops coming up under Logan. The Indians were certainly much superior in numbers to the whites; they were aware that they were being followed by a small force, and from the confident, leisurely way in which they had managed their retreat, were undoubtedly anxious to be overtaken and attacked. The hurried pursuit had been quite proper in the first place, for if the Indians had fled rapidly they would surely have broken up into different bands, which could have been attacked on even terms, while delay would have permitted them to go off unscathed. But, as it was, the attack would be very dangerous; while the delay of waiting for Logan would be a small matter, for the Indians could still be overtaken after he had arrived.

Well would it have been for the frontiersmen had they followed Boon's advice.<sup>1</sup> Todd and

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iii., 337. Colonel Campbell's letter of October 3, 1782. The letter is interesting as showing by contemporary authority that Boon's advice and McGarry's misbehavior are not mere matters of tradition. It is possible that there was some jealousy between the troops from Lincoln and those from Fayette; the latter had suffered much from the Indians, and were less rash in consequence; while many of the Lincoln men were hot for instant battle.



Trigg both agreed with him, and so did many of the cooler riflemen—among others a man named Netherland, whose caution caused the young hotheads to jeer at him as a coward. But the decision was not suffered to rest with the three colonels who nominally commanded. Doubtless the council was hasty and tumultuous, being held by the officers in the open, closely pressed upon and surrounded by a throng of eager, unruly soldiers, who did not hesitate to offer advice or express dissatisfaction. Many of the more headlong and impatient among the bold spirits looking on desired instant action; and these found a sudden leader in Major Hugh McGarry. He was a man utterly unsuited to command of any kind; and his retention in office after repeated acts of violence and insubordination shows the inherent weakness of the frontier militia system. He not only chafed at control, but he absolutely refused to submit to it; and his courage was of a kind better fitted to lead him into a fight than to make him bear himself well after it was begun. He wished no delay, and was greatly angered at the decision of the council; nor did he hesitate to at once appeal therefrom. Turning to the crowd of backwoodsmen he suddenly raised the thrilling war-cry, and spurred his horse into the stream, waving his hat over his head and calling on all who were not cowards to follow him. The effect

was electrical. In an instant all the hunter-soldiers plunged in after him with a shout, and splashed across the ford of the shallow river in huddled confusion.

Boon and Todd had nothing to do but follow. On the other side they got the men into order, and led them on, the only thing that was possible under the circumstances. These two leaders acted excellently throughout; and they now did their best to bring the men with honor through the disaster into which they had been plunged by their own headstrong folly.

As the Indians were immediately ahead, the array of battle was at once formed. The troops spread out into a single line. The right was led by Trigg, the centre by Colonel-Commandant Todd in person, with McGarry under him, and an advance guard of twenty-five men under Harlan in front; while the left was under Boon. The ground was equally favorable to both parties, the timber being open and good. But the Indians had the advantage in numbers, and were able to outflank the whites.

In a minute the spies brought word that the enemy were close in front.<sup>2</sup> The Kentuckians

<sup>1</sup> Levi Todd's letter, August 26, 1782.

<sup>2</sup> It is absolutely erroneous to paint the battle as in any way a surprise. Boon says: "We discovered the enemy lying in wait for us; on this discovery we formed our columns into a single line, and marched up in their front." There

galloped up at speed to within sixty yards of their foes, leaped from their horses, and instantly gave and received a heavy fire.<sup>1</sup> Boon was the first to open the combat; and under his command the left wing pushed the Indians opposite them back for a hundred yards. The old hunter, of course, led in person; his men stoutly backed him up, and their resolute bearing and skilful marksmanship gave to the whites in this part of the line a momentary victory. But on the right of the Kentucky advance affairs went badly from the start. The Indians were thrown out so as to completely surround Trigg's wing. Almost as soon as the firing became heavy in front, crowds of painted warriors rose from some hollows of long grass that lay on Trigg's right and poured in a close and deadly volley. Rushing forward, they took his men in rear and flank, and rolled them up on the centre, killing Trigg himself. Harlan's advance guard was cut down almost to a man, their commander being among the slain. The centre was then assailed from both sides by overwhelming numbers. Todd did all he could by voice and example to keep his men firm and cover

was no ambush, except that of course the Indians, as usual, sheltered themselves behind trees or in the long grass. From what Boon and Levi Todd say, it is evident that the firing began on both sides at the same time. Caldwell says the Indians fired one gun, whereupon the Kentuckians fired a volley.

<sup>1</sup> Levi Todd's letter.

Boon's successful advance, but in vain. Riding to and fro on his white horse he was shot through the body, and mortally wounded. He leaped on his horse again, but his strength failed him; the blood gushed from his mouth; he leaned forward, and fell heavily from the saddle. Some say that his horse carried him to the river, and that he fell into its current. With his death the centre gave way; and of course Boon and the men of the left wing, thrust in advance, were surrounded on three sides. A wild rout followed, every one pushing in headlong haste for the ford. "He that could remount a horse was well off; he that could not, had no time for delay," wrote Levi Todd. The actual fighting had only occupied five minutes.<sup>1</sup>

In a mad and panic race the Kentuckians reached the ford, which was fortunately but a few hundred yards from the battle-field, the Indians being mixed in with them. Among the first to cross was Netherland, whose cautious advice had been laughed at before the battle. No sooner had he reached the south bank, than he reined up his horse and leaped off, calling on his comrades to stop and cover the flight of the others; and most of them obeyed him. The ford was choked with a struggling mass of horsemen and footmen, fleeing whites and following Indians. Nether-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

land and his companions opened a brisk fire upon the latter, forcing them to withdraw for a moment and let the remainder of the fugitives cross in safety. Then the flight began again. The check that had been given the Indians allowed the whites time to recover heart and breath. Retreating in groups or singly through the forest, with their weapons reloaded, their speed of foot and woodcraft enabled such as had crossed the river to escape without further serious loss.

Boon was among the last to leave the field. His son Israel was slain, and he himself was cut off from the river; but, turning abruptly to one side, he broke through the ranks of the pursuers, outran them, swam the river, and returned unharmed to Bryan's Station.

Among the men in the battle were Captain Robert Patterson and young Aaron Reynolds. When the retreat began Patterson could not get a horse. He was suffering from some old and unhealed wounds received in a former Indian fight, and he speedily became exhausted. As he was on the point of sinking, Reynolds suddenly rode up beside him, jumped off his horse, and, without asking Patterson whether he would accept, bade him mount the horse and flee. Patterson did so, and was the last man over the ford. He escaped unhurt, though the Indians were running alongside and firing at him. Meanwhile Reynolds, who

possessed extraordinary activity, reached the river in safety and swam across. He then sat down to take off his buckskin trousers, which, being soaked through, hampered him much, and two Indians suddenly pounced on and captured him. He was disarmed and left in charge of one. Watching his chance, he knocked the savage down, and running off into the woods escaped with safety. When Patterson thanked him for saving his life, and asked him why he had done it, he answered, that ever since Patterson had reproved him for swearing, he had felt a strong and continued attachment for him. The effect of the reproof, combined with his narrow escape, changed him completely, and he became a devout member of the Baptist Church. Patterson, to show the gratitude he felt, gave him a horse and saddle and a hundred acres of prime land, the first he had ever owned.

The loss of the defeated Kentuckians had been very great. Seventy were killed outright, including Colonel Todd and Lieutenant-Colonel Trigg, the first and third in command. Seven were captured, and twelve of those who escaped were badly wounded.<sup>1</sup> The victors lost one of the Detroit Rangers (a Frenchman), and six Indians

<sup>1</sup> Those are the figures of Boon's official report, and must be nearly accurate. The later accounts give all sorts of numbers.

killed and ten Indians wounded.<sup>1</sup> Almost their whole loss was caused by the successful advance of Boon's troops, save what was due to Netherland when he rallied the flying backwoodsmen at the ford.

Of the seven white captives four were put to death with torture, three eventually rejoining their people. One of them owed his being spared to a singular and amusing feat of strength and daring. When forced to run the gauntlet he, by his activity, actually succeeded in reaching the council-house unharmed; when almost to it, he turned, seized a powerful Indian and hurled him violently to the ground, and then, thrusting his head between the legs of another pursuer, he tossed him clean over his back, after which he sprang on a log, leaped up and knocked his heels together, crowed in the fashion of backwoods victors, and rallied the Indians as a pack of cowards. One of the old chiefs immediately adopted him into the tribe as his son.

All the little fortified villages north of the Kentucky, and those lying near its southern bank,

<sup>1</sup> Caldwell's letter. But there are some slight discrepancies between the letters of McKee and Caldwell. Caldwell makes the loss at Bryan's Station and the Blue Licks together twelve killed and twelve wounded; McKee says eleven killed and fourteen wounded. Both exaggerate the American loss, but not as much as the Americans exaggerated that of the Indians, Boon in his "Narrative" giving the wildest of all the estimates.

were plunged into woe and mourning by the defeat.<sup>1</sup> In every stockade, in almost every cabin, there was weeping for husband or father, son, brother, or lover, The best and bravest blood in the land had been shed like water. There was no one who had not lost some close and dear friend, and the heads of all the people were bowed and their hearts sore stricken.

The bodies of the dead lay where they had fallen, on the hill-slope, and in the shallow river, torn by wolf, vulture, and raven, or eaten by fishes. In a day or two Logan came up with four hundred men from south of the Kentucky, tall Simon Kenton marching at the head of the troops, as captain of a company.<sup>2</sup> They buried the bodies of the slain on the battle-field, in long trenches, and heaped over them stones and logs. Meanwhile, the victorious Indians, glutted with vengeance, recrossed the Ohio and vanished into the northern forests.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Campbell, in the letter already quoted, comments with intense bitterness on the defeat, which, he says, was due largely to McGarry's "vain and seditious expressions." He adds that Todd and Trigg had capacity but no experience, and Boon experience but no capacity, while Logan was "a dull and narrow body," and Clark "a sot, if nothing worse." Campbell was a Holston Virginian, an able but very jealous man, who disliked the Kentucky leaders and indeed had no love for Kentucky itself; he had strenuously opposed its first erection as a separate county.

<sup>2</sup> McBride's *Pioneer Biography*, i., 210.



The Indian ravages continued throughout the early fall months; all the outlying cabins were destroyed, the settlers were harried from the clearings, and a station on Salt River was taken by surprise, thirty-seven people being captured. Stunned by the crushing disaster at the Blue Licks, and utterly disheartened and cast down by the continued ravages, many of the settlers threatened to leave the country. The county officers sent long petitions to the Virginia Legislature, complaining that the troops posted at the Falls were of no assistance in checking the raids of the Indians, and asserting that the operations carried on by order of the Executive for the past eighteen months had been a detriment rather than a help. The utmost confusion and discouragement prevailed everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

At last the news of repeated disaster roused

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iii., pp. 301, 331. Letter of William Christian, September 28th. Petition of Boon, Todd, Netherland, etc., September 11th. In Morehead's Address is a letter from Nathaniel Hart. He was himself, as a boy, witness of what he describes. His father, who had been Henderson's partner and bore the same name as himself, was from North Carolina. He founded in Kentucky a station known as White Oak Springs, and was slain by the savages during this year. The letter runs: "It is impossible at this day to make a just impression of the sufferings of the pioneers about the period spoken of. The White Oak Springs fort in 1782, with perhaps one hundred souls in it, was reduced in August to three fighting white men—and I can say with truth that for two or three weeks my mother's family never

Clark into his old-time energy. He sent outrunners through the settlements, summoning all the able-bodied men to make ready for a blow at the Indians. The pioneers turned with eager relief towards the man who had so often led them to unclothed themselves to sleep, nor were all of them within that time at their meals together, nor was any household business attempted. Food was prepared and placed where those who chose could eat. It was the period when Bryant's station was besieged, and for many days before and after that gloomy event we were in constant expectation of being made prisoners. We made application to Col. Logan for a guard and obtained one, but not until the danger was measurably over. It then consisted of two men only. Col. Logan did everything in his power, as County Lieutenant, to sustain the different forts—but it was not a very easy matter to order a married man from a fort where his family was to defend some other when his own was in imminent danger.

“I went with my mother in January, 1783, to Logan's station to prove my father's will. He had fallen in the preceding July. Twenty armed men were of the party. Twenty-three widows were in attendance upon the court to obtain letters of administration on the estates of their husbands who had been killed during the past year.”

The letter also mentions that most of the original settlers of the fort were from Pennsylvania, “orderly respectable people and the men good soldiers. But they were unaccustomed to Indian warfare, and the consequence was that of some ten or twelve men all were killed but two or three.” This incident illustrates the folly of the hope, at one time entertained, that the Continental troops, by settling in the West on lands granted them, would prove a good barrier against the Indians; the best Continentals in Washington's army would have been almost as helpless as British grenadiers in the woods.

success. They answered his call with quick enthusiasm; beeves, pack-horses, and supplies were offered in abundance, and every man who could shoot and ride marched to the appointed meeting-places. The men from the eastern stations gathered at Bryan's, under Logan; those from the western, at the Falls, under Floyd. The two divisions met at the mouth of the Licking, where Clark took supreme command. On the 4th of November, he left the banks of the Ohio, and struck off northward through the forest, at the head of one thousand and fifty mounted riflemen. On the tenth he attacked the Miami towns. His approach was discovered just in time to prevent a surprise. The Indians hurriedly fled to the woods, those first discovered raising the alarm-cry, which could be heard an incredible distance, and thus warning their fellows. In consequence, no fight followed, though there was sharp skirmishing between the advance guard and the hindermost Indians. Ten scalps were taken and seven prisoners, besides two whites being recaptured. Of Clark's men, one was killed and one wounded. The flight of the Indians was too hasty to permit them to save any of their belongings. All the cabins were burned, together with an immense quantity of corn and provisions—a severe loss at the opening of winter. McKee, the Detroit partisan, attempted to come to the rescue with what

Indians he could gather, but was met and his force promptly scattered.<sup>1</sup> Logan led a detachment to the head of the Miami, and burned the stores of the British traders. The loss to the savages at the beginning of cold weather was very great; they were utterly cast down and panic-stricken at such a proof of the power of the whites, coming as it did so soon after the battle of the Blue Licks. The expedition returned in triumph, and the Kentuckians completely regained their self-confidence; and though for ten years longer Kentucky suffered from the inroads of small parties of savages, it was never again threatened by a serious invasion.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of 1783, when the news of peace was spread abroad, immigration began to flow to Kentucky down the Ohio, and over the Wilderness Road, in a flood of which the volume dwarfed all former streams into rivulets. Indian hostilities continued at intervals throughout this year,<sup>3</sup> but they were not of a serious nature. Most of the tribes concluded at least a nominal

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand MSS. Letter of Alex. McKee, November 15, 1782. He makes no attempt to hide the severity of the blow; his letter shows a curious contrast in tone to the one he wrote after the Blue Licks. He states that the victory has opened the road to Detroit to the Americans.

<sup>2</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, p. 381. Clark's letter of November 27, 1782.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522. Letter of Benjamin Logan, August 11, 1783.

peace, and liberated over two hundred white prisoners, though they retained nearly as many more.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless in the spring one man of note fell victim to the savages, for John Floyd was waylaid and slain as he was riding out with his brother. Thus, within the space of eight months, two of the three county lieutenants had been killed, in battle or ambush.

The inrush of new settlers was enormous,<sup>2</sup> and Kentucky fairly entered on its second stage of growth. The days of the first game-hunters and Indian fighters were over. By this year the herds of the buffalo, of which the flesh and hides had been so important to the early pioneers, were nearly exterminated; though bands still lingered in the remote recesses of the mountains, and they were plentiful in Illinois. The land claims began to clash, and interminable litigation followed. This rendered very important the improvement in the judiciary system which was begun in March by the erection of the three counties into the "District of Kentucky," with a court of common law and chancery jurisdiction co-extensive with its limits. The name of Kentucky, which had been dropped when the original county was divided into three, was thus permanently revived. The first court sat at Harrodsburg, but as there was

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, No. 1079, August 12, 1783.

<sup>2</sup> McAfee MSS.

no building where it could properly be held, it adjourned to the Dutch Reformed Meeting-house six miles off. The first grand jury empanelled presented nine persons for selling liquor without license, eight for adultery and fornication, and the clerk of Lincoln County for not keeping a table of fees; besides several for smaller offences.<sup>1</sup> A log court-house and a log jail were immediately built.

Manufactories of salt were started at the Licks, where it was sold at from three to five silver dollars a bushel.<sup>2</sup> This was not only used by the settlers for themselves, but for their stock, which ranged freely in the woods; to provide for the latter a tree was chopped down and the salt placed in notches or small troughs cut in the trunk, making it what was called a lick-log. Large grist-mills were erected at some of the stations; wheat crops were raised; and small distilleries were built. The gigantic system of river commerce of the Mississippi had been begun the preceding year by one Jacob Yoder, who loaded a flat-boat at the old Redstone fort, on the Monongahela, and drifted down to New Orleans, where he sold his goods and returned to the Falls of the Ohio by a roundabout course, leading through Havana, Philadelphia, and Pittsburg. Several regular schools were started. There were already

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, i., 159.

<sup>2</sup> McAfee MSS.

meeting-houses of the Baptist and Dutch Reformed congregations, the preachers spending the week-days in clearing and tilling the fields, splitting rails, and raising hogs; in 1783 a permanent Presbyterian minister arrived, and a log church was speedily built for him. The sport-loving Kentuckians this year laid out a race-track at Shallowford Station. It was a straight quarter-of-a-mile course, within two hundred yards of the stockade; at its farther end was a canebrake, whercin an Indian once lay hid and shot a rider, who was pulling up his horse at the close of a race. There was still but one ferry, that over the Kentucky River at Boonsborough; the price of ferriage was three shillings for either man or horse. The surveying was still chiefly done by hunters, and much of it was in consequence very loose indeed.<sup>1</sup>

The first retail store Kentucky had seen since Henderson's, at Boonsborough, was closed in 1775, was established this year at the Falls; the goods were brought in wagons from Philadelphia to Pittsburg, and thence down the Ohio in flat-boats. The game had been all killed off in the immediate neighborhood of the town at the Falls, and Clark undertook to supply the inhabitants with meat, as a commercial speculation. Accordingly he made a contract with John Saunders, the hunter who had guided him on his march to

<sup>1</sup> McAfee MSS. Marshall, Collins, Brown's pamphlets.

the Illinois towns; the latter had presumably forgiven his chief for having threatened him with death when he lost the way. Clark was to furnish Saunders with three men, a pack-horse, salt, and ammunition; while Saunders agreed to do his best and be "assiduously industrious" in hunting. Buffalo beef, bear's meat, deer hams, and bear oil were the commodities most sought after. The meat was to be properly cured and salted in camp, and sent from time to time to the Falls, where Clark was to dispose of it in market, a third of the price going to Saunders. The hunting season was to last from November 1st to January 15th.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the settlers could no longer always kill their own game; and there were churches, schools, mills, stores, race-tracks, and markets in Kentucky.

<sup>1</sup> Original agreement in Durrett MSS.; bound volume of "Papers Relating to G. R. Clark." This particular agreement is for 1784; but apparently he entered into several such in different years.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOLSTON SETTLEMENTS, 1777-1779

THE history of Kentucky and the Northwest has now been traced from the date of the Cherokee war to the close of the Revolution. Those portions of the southwestern lands that were afterwards made into the State of Tennessee had meanwhile developed with almost equal rapidity. Both Kentucky and Tennessee grew into existence and power at the same time, and were originally settled and built up by precisely the same class of American backwoodsmen. But there were one or two points of difference in their methods of growth. Kentucky sprang up afar off in the wilderness, and as a separate entity from the beginning. The present State has grown steadily from a single centre, which was the part first settled; and the popular name of the commonwealth has always been Kentucky. Tennessee, on the other hand, did not assume her present name until a quarter of a century after the first exploration and settlement had begun; and the State grew from two entirely distinct centres. The first settlements, known as the

Watauga, or afterwards more generally as the Holston, settlements, grew up while keeping close touch with the Virginians, who lived around the Tennessee headwaters, and also in direct communication with North Carolina, to which State they belonged. It was not until 1779 that a portion of these Holston people moved to the bend of the Cumberland River and started a new community, exactly as Kentucky had been started before. At first this new community, known as the Cumberland settlement, was connected by only the loosest tie with the Holston settlements. The people of the two places were not grouped together; they did not even have a common name. The three clusters of Holston, Cumberland, and Kentucky settlements developed independently of one another, and though their founders were in each case of the same kind, they were at first only knit one to another by a lax bond of comradeship.

In 1776, the Watauga pioneers probably numbered some six hundred souls in all. Having at last found out the State in which they lived, they petitioned North Carolina to be annexed thereto as a district or county. The older settlements had evidently been jealous of them, for they found it necessary to deny that they were, as had been asserted, "a lawless mob"; it may be remarked that the Transylvanian colonists had been obliged to come out with a similar statement. In

their petition they christened their country "Washington District," in honor of the great chief whose name already stood first in the hearts of all Americans. The document was written by Sevier. It set forth the history of the settlers, their land purchases from the Indians, their successful effort at self-government, their military organization, with Robertson as captain, and finally their devotion to the Revolutionary cause; and recited their lack of proper authority to deal promptly with felons, murderers, and the like, who came in from the neighboring States, as the reason why they wished to become a self-governing portion of North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> The legislature of the State granted the prayer of the petitioners, Washington District was annexed, and four representatives therefrom, one of them Sevier, took their seats that fall in the Provincial Congress at Halifax. But no change whatever was made in the government of the Watauga people until 1777. In the spring of that year laws were passed providing for the establishment of courts of pleas and quarter sessions in the district, as well as for the appointment of justices of the peace, sheriffs, and militia officers; and in the fall the district was made a county, under the same name. The

<sup>1</sup> The petition, drawn up in the summer of '76, was signed by 112 men. It is given in full by Ramsey, p. 138. See also Phelan, p. 40.

boundaries of Washington County were the same as those of the present State of Tennessee, and seem to have been outlined by Sevier, the only man who at that time had a clear idea as to what should be the logical and definite limits of the future State.

The nominal change of government worked little real alteration in the way the Holston people managed their affairs. The members of the old committee became the justices of the new court, and, with a slight difference in forms, proceeded against all offenders with their former vigor. Being eminently practical men, and not learned in legal technicalities, their decisions seem to have been governed mainly by their own ideas of justice, which, though genuine, were rough. As the war progressed and the Southern States fell into the hands of the British, the disorderly men who had streamed across the mountains became openly defiant towards the law. The tories gathered in bands, and every man who was impatient of legal restraint, every murderer, horse-thief, and highway robber in the community flocked to join them. The militia who hunted them down soon ceased to discriminate between tories and other criminals, and the courts rendered decisions to the same effect. The caption of one indictment that has been preserved reads against the defendant "in toryism." He was condemned

to imprisonment during the war, half his goods was confiscated to the use of the State, and the other half was turned over for the support of his family. In another case the court granted a still more remarkable order, upon the motion of the State attorney, which set forth that fifteen hundred pounds, due to a certain H., should be retained in the hands of the debtor, because "there is sufficient reason to believe that the said H's estate will be confiscated to the use of the State for his misdemeanours."

There is something refreshing in the solemnity with which these decisions are recorded, and the evident lack of perception on the part of the judges that their records would, to their grandchildren, have a distinctly humorous side. Tories and evil-doers generally, the humor was doubtless very grim; but, as a matter of fact, the decisions, though certainly of unusual character, were needful and just. The friends of order had to do their work with rough weapons, and they used them most efficiently. Under the stress of so dire an emergency as that they confronted they were quite right in attending only to the spirit of law and justice, and refusing to be hampered by the letter. They would have discredited their own energy and hard common sense had they acted otherwise, and, moreover, would have inevitably failed to accomplish their purpose.

In the summer of '78, when Indian hostilities almost entirely ceased, most of the militia were disbanded, and, in consequence, the parties of Tories and horse-thieves sprang into renewed strength, and threatened to overawe the courts and government officers. Immediately the leaders among the Whigs, the friends of order and liberty, gathered together and organized a vigilance committee. The committee raised two companies of mounted riflemen, who were to patrol the country and put to death all suspicious characters who resisted them or who refused to give security to appear before the committee in December. The proceedings of the committee were thus perfectly open; the members had no idea of acting secretly or against order. It was merely that in a time of general confusion they consolidated themselves into a body which was a most effective, though irregular, supporter of the cause of law. The mounted riflemen scoured the country and broke up the gangs of evil-doers, hanging six or seven of the leaders, while a number of the less prominent were brought before the committee, who fined some and condemned others to be whipped or branded. All of doubtful loyalty were compelled to take the test oath.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haywood, p. 58. As Haywood's narrative is based largely on what the pioneers in their old age told him, his dates, and especially his accounts of the numbers and losses

Such drastic measures soon brought about peace; but it was broken again and again by similar risings and disturbances. By degrees, most of the worst characters fled to the Cherokees or joined the British as their forces approached the up country. Until the battle of King's Mountain, the pioneers had to watch the tories as closely as they did the Indians; there was a constant succession of murders, thefts, and savage retaliations. Once a number of tories attempted to surprise and murder Sevier in his own house; but the plot was revealed by the wife of the leader, to whom Sevier's wife had shown great kindness in her time of trouble. In consequence, the tories were themselves surprised and their ringleaders slain. Every man in the country was obliged to bear arms the whole time, not only because of the Indian warfare, but also on account of the inveterate hatred and constant collisions between the whigs and the loyalists. Many dark deeds were done, and though the tories, with whom the criminal classes were in close alliance, were generally the first and chief offenders, yet the patriots cannot be held guiltless of murderous and ferocious of the Indians in their battles, are often very inaccurate. In this very chapter he gives, with gross inaccuracy of detail, an account of one of Sevier's campaigns as taking place in 1779, whereas it really occurred after his return from King's Mountain. There is, therefore, need to be cautious in using him.

reprisals. They often completely failed to distinguish between the offenders against civil order and those whose only crime was an honest, if mistaken, devotion to the cause of the king.

Early in '78 a land office was opened in the Holston settlements, and the settlers were required to make entries according to the North Carolina land laws. Hitherto they had lived on their clearings undisturbed, resting their title upon purchase from the Indians and upon their own mutual agreements. The old settlers were given the prior right to the locations, and until the beginning of '79 in which to pay for them. Each head of a family was allowed to take up six hundred and forty acres for himself, one hundred for his wife, and one hundred for each of his children, at the price of forty shillings per hundred acres, while any additional amount cost at the rate of one hundred shillings, instead of forty. All of the men of the Holston settlements were at the time in the service of the State as militia, in the campaign against the Indians; and when the land office was opened, the money that was due them sufficed to pay for their claims. They thus had no difficulty in keeping possession of their lands, much to the disappointment of the land speculators, many of whom had come out at the opening of the office. Afterwards, large tracts were given as bounty, or in lieu of pay, to the Revolutionary



soldiers. All the struggling colonies used their wild land as a sort of military chest; it was often the only security of value in their possession.

The same year that the land office was opened, it was enacted that the bridle-path across the mountains should be chopped out and made into a rough wagon-road.<sup>1</sup> The following spring the successful expedition against the Chickamaugas temporarily put a stop to Indian troubles. The growing security, the opening of the land office, and the increase of knowledge concerning the country, produced a great inflow of settlers in 1779, and from that time onward the volume of immigration steadily increased.

Many of these new-comers were "poor whites," or crackers; lank, sallow, ragged creatures, living in poverty, ignorance, and dirt, who regarded all strangers with suspicion as "outlandish folks."<sup>2</sup> With every chance to rise, these people remained mere squalid cumberers of the earth's surface, a rank, up-country growth, containing within itself the seeds of vicious, idle pauperism and semi-criminality. They clustered in little groups, scattered throughout the backwoods settlements, in strong contrast to the vigorous and manly people around them.

<sup>1</sup> However this was not actually done until some years later.

<sup>2</sup> Smyth's *Tour*, i., 103, describes the up-country crackers of North Carolina and Virginia.

By far the largest number of the new-comers were of the true hardy backwoods stock, fitted to grapple with the wilderness and to hew out of it a prosperous commonwealth. The leading settlers began, by thrift and industry, to acquire what in the backwoods passed for wealth. Their horses, cattle, and hogs throve and multiplied. The stumps were grubbed out of the clearings, and different kinds of grains and roots were planted. Wings were added to the houses, and sometimes they were roofed with shingles. The little town of Jonesboro, the first that was not a mere stockaded fort, was laid off midway between the Watauga and the Nolichucky.

As soon as the region grew at all well settled, clergymen began to come in. Here, as elsewhere, most of the frontiersmen who had any religion at all professed the faith of the Scotch-Irish; and the first regular church in this cradle-spot of Tennessee was a Presbyterian log meeting-house built near Jonesboro in 1777, and christened Salem Church. Its pastor was a pioneer preacher, who worked with fiery and successful energy to spread learning and religion among the early settlers of the Southwest. His name was Samuel Doak. He came from New Jersey, and had been educated in Princeton. Possessed of the vigorous energy that marks the true pioneer spirit, he determined to cast in his lot with the frontier folk. He walked

through Maryland and Virginia, driving before him an old "flea-bitten grey" horse, loaded with a sackful of books; crossed the Alleghanies, and came down along blazed trails to the Holston settlements. The hardy people among whom he took up his abode were able to appreciate his learning and religion as much as they admired his adventurous and indomitable temper; and the stern, hard, God-fearing man became a most powerful influence for good throughout the whole formative period of the Southwest.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did he found a church, but near it he built a log high school, which soon became Washington College, the first institution of the kind west of the Alleghanies. Other churches, and many other schools, were soon built. Any young man or woman who could read, write, and cipher felt competent to teach an ordinary school; higher education, as elsewhere at this time in the West, was in the hands of the clergy.

As elsewhere, the settlers were predominantly of Calvinistic stock; for of all the then prominent faiths Calvinism was nearest to their feelings and ways of thought. Of the great recognized creeds it was the most republican in its tendencies, and so the best suited to the backwoodsmen. They disliked Anglicanism as much as they abhorred

<sup>1</sup> See *East Tennessee a Hundred Years ago*, by the Honorable John Allison, Nashville, 1887, p. 8.

and despised Romanism—theoretically at least, for practically then, as now, frontiersmen were liberal to one another's religious opinions, and the staunch friend and good hunter might follow whatever creed he wished, provided he did not intrude it on others. But backwoods Calvinism differed widely from the creed as first taught. It was professed by thorough-going Americans, essentially free and liberty-loving, who would not for a moment have tolerated a theocracy in their midst. Their social, religious, and political systems were such as naturally flourished in a country remarkable for its temper of rough and self-asserting equality. Nevertheless, the old Calvinistic spirit left a peculiar stamp on this wild border democracy. More than anything else, it gave the backwoodsmen their code of right and wrong. Though they were a hard, narrow, dogged people, yet they intensely believed in their own standards and ideals. Often warped and twisted, mentally and morally, by the strain of their existence, they at least always retained the fundamental virtues of hardihood and manliness.

Presbyterianism was not, however, destined even here to remain the leading frontier creed. Other sects still more democratic, still more in keeping with backwoods life and thought, largely supplanted it. Methodism did not become a power until after the close of the Revolution; but

the Baptists followed close on the heels of the Presbyterians. They, too, soon built log meeting-houses here and there, while their preachers cleared the forest and hunted elk and buffalo like the other pioneer settlers.<sup>1</sup>

To all the churches the preacher and congregation alike went armed, the latter leaning their rifles in their pews or near their seats, while the pastor let his stand beside the pulpit. On week-days the clergymen usually worked in the fields in company with the rest of the settlers; all with their rifles close at hand and a guard stationed. In more than one instance when such a party was attacked by Indians the servant of the Lord showed himself as skilled in the use of carnal weapons as were any of his warlike parishioners.

The leaders of the frontiersmen were drawn from among several families, which, having taken firm root, were growing into the position of backwoods gentry. Of course, the use of this term does not imply any sharp social distinctions in backwoods life, for there were none such. The poorest and richest met on terms of perfect equality, slept in one another's houses and dined at one another's tables. But certain families, by dint of their thrift, the ability they showed in civil affairs, or the prowess of some of their members in time of war, had risen to acknowledged headship.

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey, 144.

The part of Washington County northwest of the Holston was cut off and made into the county of Sullivan by the North Carolina Legislature in 1779. In this part the Shelbys were the leading family; and Isaac Shelby was made County Lieutenant. It had been the debatable ground between Virginia and North Carolina, the inhabitants not knowing to which province they belonged, and sometimes serving the two governments alternately. When the line was finally drawn, old Evan Shelby's estate was found to lie on both sides of it; and as he derived his title from Virginia, he continued to consider himself a Virginian, and held office as such.<sup>1</sup>

In Washington County Sevier was treated as practically commander of the militia some time before he received his commission as County Lieutenant. He was rapidly becoming the leader of the whole district. He lived in a great, rambling one-story log-house on the Nolichucky, a rude, irregular building with broad verandas and great stone fireplaces. The rooms were in two groups, which were connected by a covered porch—a "dog alley," as old settlers still call it, because the dogs are apt to sleep there at night. Here he kept open house to all comers, for he was lavishly hospitable, and every one was welcome to bed and board, to apple-jack and cider, hominy and

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. "Notes," by Governor David Campbell.

corn-bread, beef, venison, bear meat, and wild fowl. When there was a wedding or a merry-making of any kind he feasted the neighborhood, barbecuing oxen—that is, roasting them whole on great spits—and spreading board tables out under the trees. He was ever on the alert to lead his mounted riflemen against the small parties of marauding Indians that came into the country. He soon became the best commander against Indians that there was on this part of the border, moving with a rapidity that enabled him again and again to overtake and scatter their roving parties, recovering the plunder and captives, and now and then taking a scalp or two himself. His skill and daring, together with his unfailing courtesy, ready tact, and hospitality, gained him unbounded influence with the frontiersmen, among whom he was universally known as “Nolichucky Jack.”<sup>1</sup>

The Virginian settlements on the Holston, adjoining those of North Carolina, were in 1777 likewise made into a county of Washington. The people were exactly the same in character as those across the line; and for some years the fates of all these districts were bound up together. Their inhabitants were still of the usual backwoods type, living by tilling their clearings and hunting; the

<sup>1</sup> MSS. “Notes of Conversations with Old Pioneers,” by Ramsey, in Tennessee Historical Society. Campbell MSS.

elk and buffalo had become very scarce, but there were plenty of deer and bear, and in winter countless wild swans settled down on the small lakes and ponds. The boys followed these eagerly; one of them, when an old man, used to relate how his mother gave him a pint of cream for every swan he shot, with the result that he got the pint almost every day.<sup>1</sup>

The leading family among these Holston Virginians was that of the Campbells, who lived near Abingdon. They were frontier farmers, who chopped down the forest and tilled the soil with their own hands. They used the axe and guided the plough as skilfully as they handled their rifles; they were also mighty hunters, and accustomed from boyhood to Indian warfare. The children received the best schooling the back country could afford, for they were a book-loving race, fond of reading and study as well as of outdoor sports. The two chief members were cousins, Arthur and William. Arthur was captured by the northern Indians when sixteen, and was kept a prisoner among them several years; when Lord Dunmore's war broke out he made his escape, and acted as scout to the Earl's army. He served as militia colonel in different Indian campaigns, and

<sup>1</sup> *Sketch of Mrs. Elizabeth Russell*, by her grandson, Thomas L. Preston, Nashville, 1888, p. 29. An interesting pamphlet.



was for thirty years a magistrate of the county; he was a man of fine presence, but of jealous, ambitious, overbearing temper. He combined with his fondness for Indian and hunter life a strong taste for books, and gradually collected a large library. So keen were the jealousies, bred of ambition, between himself and his cousin William Campbell, they being the two ranking officers of the local forces, that they finally agreed to go alternately on the different military expeditions; and thus it happened that Arthur missed the battle of King's Mountain, though he was at the time County Lieutenant.

William Campbell stood next in rank. He was a man of giant strength, standing six feet two inches in height, and straight as a spear-shaft, with fair complexion, red hair, and piercing, light blue eyes. A firm friend and staunch patriot, a tender and loving husband and father, gentle and courteous in ordinary intercourse with his fellows, he was, nevertheless, if angered, subject to fits of raging wrath that impelled him to any deed of violence.<sup>1</sup> He was a true type of the Roundheads of the frontier, the earnest, eager men who pushed the border ever farther westward across the continent. He followed Indians and Tories with relentless and undying hatred; for the long list of backwoods virtues did not include pity for either

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. "Notes," by Governor David Campbell.

public or private foes. The tories threatened his life and the lives of his friends and families; they were hand in glove with the outlaws who infested the borders, the murderers, horse-thieves, and passers of counterfeit money. He hunted them down with a furious zest, and did his work with merciless thoroughness, firm in the belief that he thus best served the Lord and the nation. One or two of his deeds illustrate admirably the grimness of the times, and the harsh contrast between the kindly relations of the border folks with their friends and their ferocity towards their foes. They show how the better backwoodsmen,—the upright, churchgoing men, who loved their families, did justice to their neighbors, and sincerely tried to serve God—not only waged an unceasing war on the red and white foes of the State and of order, but carried it on with a certain ruthlessness that indicated less a disbelief in, than an utter lack of knowledge of, such a virtue as leniency to enemies.

One Sunday, Campbell was returning from church with his wife and some friends, carrying his baby on a pillow in front of his saddle, for they were all mounted. Suddenly a horseman crossed the road close in front of them, and was recognized by one of the party as a noted tory. Upon being challenged, he rode off at full speed. Instantly Campbell handed the baby to a negro slave, struck spur into his horse, and galloping after the fugitive,

overtook and captured him. The other men of the party came up a minute later. Several recognized the prisoner as a well-known tory; he was riding a stolen horse; he had on him letters to the British agents among the Cherokees, arranging for an Indian rising. The party of returning churchgoers were accustomed to the quick and summary justice of lynch law. With stern gravity they organized themselves into a court. The prisoner was adjudged guilty, and was given but a short shrift; for the horsemen hung him to a sycamore-tree before they returned to the road where they had left their families.

On another occasion, while Campbell was in command of a camp of militia, at the time of a Cherokee outbreak, he wrote a letter to his wife, a sister of Patrick Henry, that gives us a glimpse of the way in which he looked at Indians. His letter began, "My dearest Betsy"; in it he spoke of his joy at receiving her "sweet and affectionate letter"; he told how he had finally got the needles and pins she wished, and how pleased a friend had been with the apples she had sent him. He urged her to buy a saddle-horse, of which she had spoken, but to be careful that it did not start nor stumble, which were bad faults, "especially in a woman's hackney." In terms of endearment that showed he had not sunk the lover in the husband, he spoke of his delight at being again in the house where he

had for the first time seen her loved face, "from which happy moment he dated the hour of all his bliss," and besought her not to trouble herself too much about him, quoting to her Solomon's account of a good wife, as reminding him always of her; and he ended by commending her to the peculiar care of Heaven. It was a letter that it was an honor to a true man to have written; such a letter as the best of women and wives might be proud to have received. Yet in the middle of it he promised to bring a strange trophy to show his tender and God-fearing spouse. He was speaking of the Indians; how they had murdered men, women, and children nearby, and how they had been beaten back; and he added: "I have now the scalp of one who was killed eight or nine miles from my house about three weeks ago. The first time I go up I shall take it along to let you see it." Evidently, it was as natural for him to bring home to his wife and children the scalp of a slain Indian as the skin of a slain deer.<sup>1</sup>

The times were hard, and they called for men of flinty fibre. Those of softer, gentler mould would have failed in the midst of such surroundings. The iron men of the border had a harsh and terrible task allotted them; and though they did it roughly, they did it thoroughly and on the whole well. They may have failed to learn that it is

<sup>1</sup> See Preston's pamphlet on Mrs. Russell, pp. 11-18.

good to be merciful, but at least they knew that it is still better to be just and strong and brave; to see clearly one's rights, and to guard them with a ready hand.

These frontier leaders were generally very jealous of one another. The ordinary backwoodsmen vied together as hunters, axemen, or wrestlers; as they rose to leadership their rivalries grew likewise, and the more ambitious, who desired to become the civil and military chiefs of the community, were sure to find their interests clash. Thus old Evan Shelby distrusted Sevier; Arthur Campbell was jealous of both Sevier and Isaac Shelby; and the two latter bore similar feelings to William Campbell. When a great crisis occurred all these petty envies were sunk; the nobler natures of the men came uppermost; and they joined with unselfish courage, heart and hand, to defend their country in the hour of her extreme need. But when the danger was over the old jealousies cropped out again.

Some one or other of the leaders was almost always employed against the Indians. The Cherokees and Creeks were never absolutely quiet and at peace. After the chastisement inflicted upon the former by the united forces of all the southern backwoodsmen, treaties were held with them,<sup>1</sup> in the spring and summer of 1777. The

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, Vol. II., Chap. III.

negotiations consumed much time, the delegates from both sides meeting again and again to complete the preliminaries. The credit of the State being low, Isaac Shelby furnished on his own responsibility the goods and provisions needed by the Virginians and Holston people in coming to an agreement with the Otari, or Upper Cherokees<sup>1</sup>; and some land was formally ceded to the whites.

But the chief Dragging Canoe would not make peace. Gathering the boldest and most turbulent of the young braves about him, he withdrew to the great whirl in the Tennessee,<sup>2</sup> at the crossing-place of the Creek war-parties, when they followed the trail that led to the bend of the Cumberland River. Here he was joined by many Creeks, and also by adventurous and unruly members from almost all the western tribes<sup>3</sup>—Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Indians from the Ohio. He soon had a great band of red outlaws round him. These freebooters were generally known as the Chickamaugas, and they were the most dangerous and least controllable of all the foes who menaced the western settlements. Many Tories and white refugees from border justice joined them, and shared in their misdeeds. Their shifting villages

<sup>1</sup> Shelby's MS. Autobiography, copy in Col. Durrett's library.

<sup>2</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iii., 271; the settlers always spoke of it as the "suck" or "whirl."

<sup>3</sup> Shelby MSS.

stretched from Chickamauga Creek to Running Water. Between these places the Tennessee twists down through the sombre gorges by which the chains of the Cumberland ranges are riven in sunder. Some miles below Chickamauga Creek, near Chattanooga, Lookout Mountain towers aloft into the clouds; at its base the river bends round Moccasin Point, and then rushes through a gap between Walden's Ridge and the Raccoon Hills. Then for several miles it foams through the winding Narrows between jutting cliffs and sheer rock walls, while in its boulder-strewn bed the swift torrent is churned into whirlpools, cataracts, and rapids. Near the Great Crossing, where the war-parties and hunting-parties were ferried over the river, lies Nick-a-jack Cave, a vast cavern in the mountain-side. Out of it flows a stream, up which a canoe can be paddled two or three miles into the heart of the mountain. In these high fastnesses, inaccessible ravines, and gloomy caverns the Chickamaugas built their towns, and to them they retired with their prisoners and booty after every raid on the settlements.

No sooner had the preliminary treaty been agreed to in the spring of '77 than the Indians again began their ravages. In fact, there never was any real peace. After each treaty the settlers would usually press forward into the Indian lands, and if they failed to do this the young braves were

sure themselves to give offence by making forays against the whites. On this occasion the first truce or treaty was promptly broken by the red men. The young warriors refused to be bound by the promises of the chiefs and headmen, and they continued their raids for scalps, horses, and plunder. Within a week of the departure of the Indian delegates from the treaty ground in April, twelve whites were murdered and many horses stolen. Robertson, with nine men, followed one of these marauding parties, killed one Indian, and retook ten horses; on his return he was attacked by a large band of Creeks and Cherokees, and two of his men were wounded; but he kept hold of the recaptured horses and brought them safely in.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a white scoundrel killed an Indian on the treaty ground in July, the month in which the treaties were finally completed in due form. By act of the Legislature, the Holston militia were kept under arms throughout most of the year, companies of rangers, under Sevier's command, scouring the woods and canebrakes, and causing such loss to the small Indian war-parties that they finally almost ceased their forays. Bands of these Holston rangers likewise crossed the mountains by Boon's trail, and went to the relief of Boonsborough and St. Asaphs, in Ken-

<sup>1</sup> Charles Robertson to Captain-General of North Carolina, April 27, 1777.



tucky, then much harassed by the northwestern warriors.<sup>1</sup> Though they did little or no fighting, and stayed but a few days, they yet by their presence brought welcome relief to the hard-pressed Kentuckians.<sup>2</sup> Kentucky, during her earliest and most trying years, received comparatively little help from sorely beset Virginia; but the backwoodsmen of the upper Tennessee valley—on both sides of the boundary—did her real and lasting service.

In 1778, the militia were disbanded, as the settlements were very little harried; but as soon as the vigilance of the whites was relaxed the depredations and massacres began again, and soon became worse than ever. Robertson had been made superintendent of Indian affairs for North Carolina; and he had taken up his abode among the Cherokees at the town of Chota in the latter half of the year 1777. He succeeded in keeping them comparatively quiet and peaceable during 1778 and until his departure, which took place the following year, when he went to found the settlements on the Cumberland River.

But the Chickamaugas refused to make peace, and in their frequent and harassing forays they

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, Vol. II., Chap. v.

<sup>2</sup> Monette (followed by Ramsey and others) hopelessly confuses these small relief expeditions; he portrays Logan as a messenger from Boon's Station, is in error as to the siege of the latter. etc.

were from time to time joined by parties of young braves from all the Cherokee towns that were beyond the reach of Robertson's influence—that is, by all save those in the neighborhood of Chota. The Chickasaws and Choctaws likewise gave active support to the king's cause; the former scouted along the Ohio, the latter sent bands of young warriors to aid the Creeks and Cherokees in their raids against the settlements.<sup>1</sup>

The British agents among the southern Indians had received the letters Hamilton sent them after he took Vincennes; in these they were urged at once to send out parties against the frontier, and to make ready for a grand stroke in the spring. In response, the chief agent, who was the Scotch captain Cameron, a noted royalist leader, wrote to his official superior that the instant he heard of any movement of the northwestern Indians he would see that it was backed up, for the Creeks were eager for war, and the Cherokees likewise were ardently attached to the British cause; as a proof of the devotion of the latter, he added<sup>2</sup>: "They keep continually killing and scalping in Virginia, North Carolina, and the frontier of Georgia, although the rebels are daily threatening

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand MSS. Letter of Rainsford and Tait to Hamilton, April 9, 1779.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Series B, vol. cxvii., p. 131. Letter of Alexander Cameron, July 15, 1779.

to send in armies from all quarters and extirpate the whole tribe." It would certainly be impossible to desire better proof than that thus furnished by this royal officer, both of the ferocity of the British policy towards the frontiersmen, and of the treachery of the Indians, who so richly deserved the fate that afterwards befell them.

While waiting for the signal from Hamilton, Cameron organized two Indian expeditions against the frontier, to aid the movements of the British army that had already conquered Georgia. A great body of Creeks, accompanied by the British commissaries and most of the white traders (who were, of course, Tories), set out in March to join the king's forces at Savannah; but when they reached the frontier they scattered out to plunder and ravage. A body of Americans fell on one of their parties and crushed it; whereupon the rest returned home in a fright, save about seventy, who went on and joined the British. At the same time three hundred Chickamaugas, likewise led by the resident British commissaries, started out against the Carolina frontier. But Robertson, at Chota, received news of the march, and promptly sent warning to the Holston settlements<sup>1</sup>; and the Holston men, both of Virginia

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* "A rebel commissioner in Chote being informed of their movements here sent express into Holston river." This "rebel commissioner" was in all probability Robertson

and North Carolina, decided immediately to send an expedition against the homes of the war-party. This would not only at once recall them from the frontier, but would give them a salutary lesson.

Accordingly, the backwoods levies gathered on Clinch River, at the mouth of Big Creek, April 10th, and embarked in pirogues and canoes to descend the Tennessee. There were several hundred of them<sup>1</sup> under the command of Evan Shelby; Isaac Shelby having collected the supplies for the expedition by his individual activity and on his personal credit. The backwoodsmen went down the river so swiftly that they took the Chickamaugas completely by surprise, and the few warriors who were left in the villages fled to the wooded mountains without offering any resistance. Several Indians were killed<sup>2</sup> and a

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. No. 51, vol. ii., p. 17, a letter from the British agents among the Creeks to Lord George Germain, of July 12, 1779. It says "near 300 rebels"; Haywood, whose accounts are derived from oral tradition, says one thousand. Cameron's letter of July 15th in the Haldimand MSS. says seven hundred. Some of them were Virginians who had been designed for Clark's assistance in his Illinois campaign, but who were not sent him. Shelby made a very clever stroke, but it had no permanent effect, and it is nonsense to couple it, as has been recently done, with Clark's campaigns.

<sup>2</sup> Cameron in his letter says four, which is probably near the truth. Haywood says forty, which merely represents the backwoods tradition on the subject, and is doubtless a great exaggeration.

number of their towns were burnt, together with a great deal of corn; many horses and cattle were recaptured, and among the spoils were large piles of deer-hides, owned by a tory trader. The troops then destroyed their canoes and returned home on foot, killing game for their food; and they spread among the settlements many stories of the beauty of the lands through which they had passed, so that the pioneers became eager to possess them. The Chickamaugas were alarmed and confounded by this sudden stroke; their great war band returned at once to the burned towns, on being informed by swift runners of the destruction that had befallen them. \* All thoughts of an immediate expedition against the frontier were given up; peace-talks were sent to Evan Shelby<sup>1</sup>; and throughout the summer the settlements were but little molested.

Yet all the while they were planning further attacks; at the same time that they sent peace-talks to Shelby they sent war-talks to the northwestern Indians, inviting them to join in a great combined movement against the Americans.<sup>2</sup> When the

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. No. 71, vol. i., p. 255, letter of Evan Shelby, June 4, 1779.

<sup>2</sup> Haldimand MSS., Series B, vol. cxvii., p. 157. A talk from the Cherokees to the envoy from the Wabash and other Indians, July 12, 1779. One paragraph is interesting: "We cannot forget the talk you brought us some years ago into this Nation, which was to take up the hatchet against the

news of Hamilton's capture was brought it wrought a momentary discouragement; but the efforts of the British agents were unceasing, and by the end of the year most of the southwestern Indians were again ready to take up the hatchet. The rapid successes of the royal armies in the Southern States had turned the Creeks into open antagonists of the Americans, and their war-parties were sent out in quick succession, the British agents keeping alive the alliance by a continued series of gifts—for the Creeks were a venal, fickle race whose friendship could not otherwise be permanently kept.<sup>1</sup>

Virginians. We heard and listened to it with great attention and before the time that was appointed to lift it we took it up and struck the Virginians. Our Nation was alone and surrounded by them. They were numerous and their hatchets were sharp; and after we had lost some of our best warriors, we were forced to leave our towns and corn to be burnt by them, and now we live in the grass as you see us. But we are not yet conquered, and to convince you that we have not thrown away your talk here are 4 strands of whampums we received from you when you came before as a messenger to our Nation."

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Papers Continental Congress. *Intercepted Letters*, No. 51, vol. ii. Letter of British agents Messrs. Rainsford, Mitchell, and McCullough, of July 12, 1779. "The present unanimity of the Creek Nation is no doubt greatly owing to the rapid successes of His Majesty's forces in the Southern provinces, as they have now no cause to apprehend the least danger from the Rebels . . . We have found by experience that without presents the Indians are not to be depended on."

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As for the Cherokees, they had not confined themselves to sending the war-belt to the north-western tribes, while professing friendship for the Americans; they had continued in close communication with the British Indian agents, assuring them that their peace negotiations were only shams, intended to blind the settlers, and that they would be soon ready to take up the hatchet.<sup>1</sup> This time Cameron himself marched into the Cherokee country with his company of fifty tories, brutal outlaws, accustomed to savage warfare, and ready to take part in the worst Indian outrages.<sup>2</sup> The ensuing Cherokee war was due not to the misdeeds of the settlers—though doubtless a few lawless whites occasionally did wrong to their red neighbors—but to the short-sighted treachery and ferocity of the savages themselves, and especially to the machinations of the tories and British agents. The latter unceasingly incited the Indians to ravage the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 71, vol. ii., p. 189. Letter of David Tait to Oconostota. "I believe what you say about telling lies to the Virginians to be very right."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 51, vol. ii. Letter of the three agents. "The Cherokees are now exceedingly well disposed. Mr. Cameron is now among them. . . . Captain Cameron has his company of Loyal Refugees with him, who are well qualified for the service they are engaged in. . . . He carried up with him a considerable quantity of presents and ammunition which are absolutely necessary to engage the Indians to go upon service."

frontier with torch and scalping-knife. They deliberately made the deeds of the torturers and woman-killers their own, and this they did with the approbation of the British Government, and to its merited and lasting shame.

Yet by the end of 1779 the inrush of settlers to the Holston regions had been so great that, as with Kentucky, there was never any real danger after this year that the whites would be driven from the land by the red tribes whose hunting-ground it once had been.



## CHAPTER V

### KING'S MOUNTAIN, 1780

**D**URING the Revolutionary War the men of the West for the most part took no share in the actual campaigning against the British and Hessians. Their duty was to conquer and hold the wooded wilderness that stretched westward to the Mississippi; and to lay therein the foundations of many future commonwealths. Yet at a crisis in the great struggle for liberty, at one of the darkest hours for the patriot cause, it was given to a band of western men to come to the relief of their brethren of the seaboard and to strike a telling and decisive blow for all America. When the three southern provinces lay crushed and helpless at the feet of Cornwallis, the Holston backwoodsmen suddenly gathered to assail the triumphant conqueror. Crossing the mountains that divided them from the beaten and despairing people of the tidewater region, they killed the ablest lieutenant of the British commander, and at a single stroke undid all that he had done.

By the end of 1779 the British had reconquered Georgia. In May, 1780, they captured Charleston,

speedily reduced all South Carolina to submission, and then marched into the old North State. Cornwallis, much the ablest of the British generals, was in command over a mixed force of British, Hessian, and loyal American regulars, aided by Irish volunteers and bodies of refugees from Florida. In addition, the friends to the king's cause, who were very numerous in the southernmost States, rose at once on the news of the British successes, and thronged to the royal standards; so that a number of regiments of tory militia were soon embodied. McGillivray, the Creek chief, sent bands of his warriors to assist the British and tories on the frontier, and the Cherokees likewise came to their help. The patriots for the moment abandoned hope, and bowed before their victorious foes.

Cornwallis himself led the main army northward against the American forces. Meanwhile, he entrusted to two of his most redoubtable officers the task of scouring the country, raising the loyalists, scattering the patriot troops that were still embodied, and finally crushing out all remaining opposition. These two men were Tarleton, the dashing cavalryman, and Ferguson the rifleman, the skilled partisan leader.

Patrick Ferguson, the son of Lord Pitfour, was a Scotch soldier, at this time about thirty-six years old, who had been twenty years in the British

army. He had served with distinction against the French in Germany, had quelled a Carib uprising in the West Indies, and in 1777 was given the command of a company of riflemen in the army opposed to Washington.<sup>1</sup> He played a good part at Brandywine and Monmouth. At the former battle he was wounded by an American sharpshooter, and had an opportunity, of which he forbore taking advantage, to himself shoot an American officer of high rank, who unsuspectingly approached the place where he lay hid; he always insisted that the man he thus spared was no less a person than Washington. While suffering from his wound, Sir William Howe disbanded his rifle corps, distributing it among the light companies of the different regiments; and its commander in consequence became an unattached volunteer in the army. But he was too able to be allowed to remain long unemployed. When the British moved to New York he was given the command of several small independent expeditions, and was successful in each case; once, in particular, he surprised and routed Pulaski's legion, committing great havoc with the bayonet, which was always with him a favorite weapon. His energy and

<sup>1</sup> *Biographical Sketch or Memoir of Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick Ferguson*, by Adam Ferguson, LL.D., Edinburgh, 1817, p. 11. The copy was kindly lent me by Mr. George H. Moore of the Lenox Library.

valor attracted much attention; and when a British army was sent against Charleston and the South he went along as a lieutenant-colonel of a recently raised regular regiment, known as the American Volunteers.<sup>1</sup>

Cornwallis speedily found him to be peculiarly fitted for just such service as was needed; for he possessed rare personal qualities. He was of middle height and slender build, with a quiet serious face and a singularly winning manner; and withal, he was of literally dauntless courage, of hopeful, eager temper, and remarkably fertile in shifts and expedients. He was particularly fond of night attacks, surprises, and swift, sudden movements generally, and was unwearied in drilling and disciplining his men. Not only was he an able leader, but he was also a finished horseman, and the best marksman with both pistol and rifle in the British army. Being of quick, inventive mind, he constructed a breech-loading rifle, which he used in battle with deadly effect. This invention had been one of the chief causes of his being brought into prominence in the war against America, for the British officers especially dreaded the American

<sup>1</sup> Though called volunteers, they were simply a regular regiment raised in America instead of England; Ferguson's *Memoir*, p. 30, etc., always speaks of them as regulars. The British gave an absurd number of titles to their various officers; thus Ferguson was a brigadier-general of militia, lieutenant-colonel of volunteers, a major in the army, etc.

sharpshooters.<sup>1</sup> It would be difficult to imagine a better partisan leader, or one more fitted by his feats of prowess and individual skill to impress the minds of his followers. Moreover, his courtesy stood him in good stead with the people of the country; he was always kind and civil, and would spend hours in talking affairs over with them and pointing out the mischief of rebelling against their lawful sovereign. He soon became a potent force in winning the doubtful to the British side, and exerted a great influence over the tories; they gathered eagerly to his standard, and he drilled them with patient perseverance.

After the taking of Charleston Ferguson's volunteers and Tarleton's legion, acting separately or together, speedily destroyed the different bodies of patriot soldiers. Their activity and energy was such that the opposing commanders seemed for the time being quite unable to cope with them, and the American detachments were routed and scattered in quick succession.<sup>2</sup> On one of these occasions, the surprise at Monk's Corners, where the American commander, Huger, was slain, Ferguson's troops again had a chance to show their skill in the use of the bayonet.

<sup>1</sup> Ferguson's *Memoir*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton, London (1787). See also the *Strictures* thereon, by Roderick Mackenzie, London, same date.

Tarleton did his work with brutal ruthlessness; his men plundered and ravaged, maltreated prisoners, outraged women, and hung without mercy all who were suspected of turning from the loyalist to the whig side. His victories were almost always followed by massacres; in particular, when he routed with small loss a certain Captain Buford, his soldiers refused to grant quarter, and mercilessly butchered the beaten Americans.<sup>1</sup>

Ferguson, on the contrary, while quite as valiant and successful a commander, showed a generous heart, and treated the inhabitants of the country fairly well. He was especially incensed at any outrage upon women, punishing the offender with the utmost severity, and as far as possible he spared his conquered foes. Yet even Ferguson's tender mercies must have seemed cruel to the whigs, as may be judged by the following extract from a diary kept by one of his lieutenants<sup>2</sup>: "This day Col. Ferguson got the rear guard in order to do his King and country justice by protecting friends and widows, and destroying rebel property; also to collect live stock for the use of the army. All of which we effect as we go

<sup>1</sup> It is worth while remembering that it was not merely the tories who were guilty of gross crimes; the British regulars, including even some of their officers, often behaved with abhorrent brutality.

<sup>2</sup> Diary of Lieutenant Anthony Allaire, entry for March 24. 1780.

by destroying furniture, breaking windows, etc., taking all their horned cattle, horses, mules, sheep, etc., and their negroes to drive them." When such were the authorized proceedings of troops under even the most merciful of the British commanders, it is easy to guess what deeds were done by uncontrolled bodies of stragglers bent on plunder.

When Ferguson moved into the back country of the two Carolinas still worse outrages followed. In the three southernmost of the thirteen rebellious colonies there was a very large tory party.<sup>1</sup> In consequence, the struggle in the Carolinas and Georgia took the form of a ferocious civil war. Each side in turn followed up its successes by a series of hangings and confiscations, while the lawless and violent characters fairly revelled in the confusion. Neither side can be held guiltless of many and grave misdeeds; but, for reasons already given, the bulk—but by no means the whole—of the criminal and disorderly classes espoused the king's cause in the regions where the struggle was fiercest. They murdered, robbed, or drove off the whigs in their hour of triumph; and in turn

<sup>1</sup> Gates MSS., *passim*, for July–October, 1780. *E. g.*, letter of Mr. Ramsey, August 9, 1780, describes how "the Scotch are all lying out," the number of tories in the "Drowning Creek region," their resistance to the levy of cattle, etc. In these colonies, as in the middle colonies, the tory party was very strong.

brought down ferocious reprisals on their own heads and on those of their luckless associates.

Moreover, Cornwallis and his under-officers tried to cow and overawe the inhabitants by executing some of the men whom they deemed the chief and most criminal leaders of the rebellion, especially such as had sworn allegiance and then again taken up arms<sup>1</sup>; of course, retaliation in kind followed. Ferguson himself hung some men; and though he did his best to spare the country people, there was much plundering and murdering by his militia.

In June, he marched to upper South Carolina, moving to and fro, calling out the loyal militia. They responded enthusiastically, and three or four thousand Tories were embodied in different bands. Those who came to Ferguson's own standard were divided into companies and regiments, and taught the rudiments of discipline by himself and his subalterns. He soon had a large but fluctuating force under him, in part composed of good men, loyal adherents of the king (these being very frequently recent arrivals from England, or else Scotch highlanders), in part also of cut-throats, horse-thieves, and desperadoes of all kinds who wished for revenge on the Whigs and were eager to plunder them. His own regular

<sup>1</sup> Gates MSS. See letter from Sumter, August 12th, and *passim*, for instances of hanging by express command of the British officers.



force was also mainly composed of Americans, although it contained many Englishmen. His chief subordinates were Lieutenant-Colonels De Peyster<sup>1</sup> and Cruger; the former usually serving under him, the latter commanding at Ninety-Six. They were both New York loyalists, members of old Knickerbocker families; for in New York many of the gentry and merchants stood by the king.

Ferguson moved rapidly from place to place, breaking up the bodies of armed whigs; and the latter now and then skirmished fiercely with similar bands of Tories, sometimes one side winning, sometimes the other. Having reduced South Carolina to submission, the British commander then threatened North Carolina; and Colonel McDowell, the commander of the whig militia in that district, sent across the mountains to the Holston men, praying that they would come to his help. Though suffering continually from Indian ravages, and momentarily expecting a formidable inroad, they responded nobly to the call. Sevier remained to patrol the border and watch the Cherokees, while Isaac Shelby crossed the mountains with a couple of hundred mounted riflemen early in July. The mountain men were joined by McDowell, with whom they found also a handful of Georgians and some South Carolinians

<sup>1</sup> A relative of the Detroit commander.

who, when their States were subdued, had fled northward, resolute to fight their oppressors to the last.

The arrival of the mountain men put new life into the dispirited whigs. On July 30th, a mixed force, under Shelby and two or three local militia colonels, captured Thickett's fort, with ninety Tories, near the Pacolet. They then camped at the Cherokee ford of Broad River, and sent out parties of mounted men to carry on a guerilla or partisan warfare against detachments, not choosing to face Ferguson's main body. After a while they moved south to Cedar Spring. Here, on the 8th of August, they were set upon by Ferguson's advanced guard of dragoons and mounted riflemen. These they repulsed, handling the British rather roughly; but, as Ferguson himself came up, they fled, and though he pursued them vigorously, he could not overtake them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shelby's MS. Autobiography, and the various accounts he wrote of these affairs in his old age (which Haywood and most of the other local American historians follow or amplify) certainly greatly exaggerate the British force and loss, as well as the part Shelby himself played, compared to the Georgia and Carolina leaders. The Americans seemed to have outnumbered Ferguson's advance guard, which was less than two hundred strong, about three to one. Shelby's account of the Musgrove affair is especially erroneous. See p. 120 of L. C. Draper's *King's Mountain and Its Heroes* (Cincinnati, 1881). Mr. Draper has with infinite industry and research gathered all the published and unpublished accounts and all

On the 18th of the month, the mountain men, assisted as usual by some parties of local militia, all under their various colonels, performed another feat—one of those swift, sudden strokes so dear to the hearts of these rifle-bearing horsemen. It was of a kind peculiarly suited to their powers; for they were brave and hardy, able to thread their way unerringly through the forests and fond of surprises; and, though they always fought on foot, they moved on horseback, and therefore with great celerity. Their operations should be carefully studied by all who wish to learn the possibilities of mounted riflemen. Yet they were impatient of discipline or of regular service, and they really had no one commander. The different militia officers combined to perform some definite piece of work, but, like their troops, they were incapable of long-continued campaigns; and there the traditions concerning the battle; his book is a mine of information on the subject. He is generally quite impartial but some of his conclusions are certainly biassed; and the many traditional statements, as well as those made by very old men concerning events that took place fifty or sixty years previously, must be received with extreme caution. A great many of them should never have been put in the book at all. When they take the shape of anecdotes, telling how the British are overawed by the mere appearance of the Americans on some occasion (as pp. 94, 95, etc.), they must be discarded at once as absolutely worthless, as well as ridiculous. The British and tory accounts, being forced to explain ultimate defeat, are, if possible, even more untrustworthy, when taken solely by themselves, than the American.

were frequent and bitter quarrels between the several commanders, as well as between the bodies of men they led.

It seems certain that the mountaineers were, as a rule, more formidable fighters than the lowland militia, beside or against whom they battled; and they formed the main strength of the attacking party that left the camp at the Cherokee ford before sunset on the seventeenth. Ferguson's army was encamped southwest of them, at Fair Forest Shoals; they marched round him, and went straight on, leaving him in their rear. Sometimes they rode through open forest, more often they followed the dim wood roads; their horses pacing or cantering steadily through the night. As the day dawned they reached Musgrove's Ford, on the Enoree, having gone forty miles. Here they hoped to find a detachment of tory militia; but it had been joined by a body of provincial regulars, the united force being probably somewhat more numerous than that of the Americans. The latter were discovered by a patrol, and the British after a short delay marched out to attack them. The Americans in the meantime made good use of their axes, felling trees for a breastwork, and when assailed they beat back and finally completely routed their assailants.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shelby's account of this action, written in his old age, is completely at fault; he not only exaggerates the British

However, the victory was of little effect, for just as it was won word was brought to Shelby that the day before Cornwallis had met Gates at Camden, and had not only defeated but practically destroyed the American army; and on the very day of the fight on the Enoree, Tarleton surprised Sumter, and scattered his forces to the four winds. The panic among the whigs was tremendous, and the mountaineers shared it. They knew that Ferguson, angered at the loss of his detachment, would soon be in hot pursuit, and there was no time for delay. The local militia made off in various directions; while Shelby and his men pushed straight for the mountains, crossed them, and returned each man to his own home. Ferguson speedily stamped out the few remaining sparks of rebellion in South Carolina, and crossing the boundary into the North State he there repeated the process. On September 12th, he caught McDowell and the only remaining body of militia at Cane Creek, of the Catawba, and beat force and loss, but he likewise greatly overestimates the number of the Americans—always a favorite trick of his. Each of the militia colonels, of course, claimed the chief share of the glory of the day. Haywood, Ramsey, and even Phelan simply follow Shelby. Draper gives all the different accounts; it is quite impossible to reconcile them, but all admit that the British were defeated.

I have used the word "British"; but though there were some Englishmen and Scotchmen among the tories and provincials, they were mainly loyalist Americans.

them thoroughly,<sup>1</sup> the survivors, including their commander, fleeing over the mountains to take refuge with the Holston men. Except for an occasional small guerilla party, there was not a single organized body of American troops left south of Gates's broken and dispirited army.

All the southern lands lay at the feet of the conquerors. The British leaders, overbearing and arrogant, held almost unchecked sway throughout the Carolinas and Georgia; and looking northward they made ready for the conquest of Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Their right flank was covered by the waters of the ocean, their left by the high mountain barrier-chains, beyond which stretched the interminable forest; and they had as little thought of danger from one side as from the other.

Suddenly and without warning, the wilderness sent forth a swarm of stalwart and hardy riflemen, of whose very existence the British had hitherto been ignorant.<sup>3</sup> Riders spurring in hot haste

<sup>1</sup> Draper apparently endorses the absurd tradition that makes this a whig victory instead of a defeat. It seems certain (see Draper), contrary to the statements of the Tennessee historians, that Sevier had no part in these preliminary operations.

<sup>2</sup> The northern portion of North Carolina was still in possession of the remainder of Gates's army, but they could have been brushed aside without an effort.

<sup>3</sup> "A numerous army now appeared on the frontier drawn from Nolachucky and other settlements beyond the mountains, whose very names had been unknown to us." Lord

brought word to the king's commanders that the backwater men had come over the mountains. The Indian fighters of the frontier, leaving unguarded their homes on the western waters, had crossed by wooded and precipitous defiles, and were pouring down to the help of their brethren of the plains.

Ferguson had pushed his victories to the foot of the Smoky and the Yellow mountains. Here he learned, perhaps for the first time, that there were a few small settlements beyond the high ranges he saw in his front; and he heard that some of these backwoods mountaineers had already borne arms against him, and were now harboring men who had fled from before his advance. By a prisoner whom he had taken he at once sent them warning to cease their hostilities, and threatened that if they did not desist he would march across the mountains, hang their leaders, put their fighting men to the sword, and waste their settlements with fire. He had been joined by refugee Tories from the Watauga, who could have piloted him thither; and perhaps he intended to make his threats good. It seems more likely that he paid little heed to the mountaineers, scorning their

Rawdon's letter of October 24, 1780. Clarke of Georgia had plundered a convoy of presents intended for the Indians, at Augusta, and the British wrongly supposed this to be likewise the aim of the mountaineers.

power to do him hurt; though he did not regard them with the haughty and ignorant disdain usually felt for such irregulars by the British army officers.

When the Holston men learned that Ferguson had come to the other side of the mountains, and threatened their chiefs with the halter and their homes with the torch, a flame of passionate anger was kindled in all their hearts. They did not wait for his attack; they sallied from their strongholds to meet him. Their crops were garnered, their young men were ready for the march; and though the Otari war bands lowered like thunder-clouds on their southern border, they determined to leave only enough men to keep the savages at bay for the moment, and with the rest to overwhelm Ferguson before he could retreat out of their reach. Hitherto, the war with the British had been something afar off; now it had come to their thresholds, and their spirits rose to the danger.

Shelby was the first to hear the news. He at once rode down to Sevier's home on the Nolichucky; for they were the two County Lieutenants,<sup>1</sup> who had control of all the militia of the district. At Sevier's log-house there was feasting

<sup>1</sup> Shelby was regularly commissioned as County Lieutenant. Sevier's commission was not sent him until several weeks later; but he had long acted as such by the agreement of the settlers, who paid very little heed to the weak and disorganized North Carolina government.



and merrymaking, for he had given a barbecue, and a great horserace was to be run, while the backwoods champions tried their skill as marksmen and wrestlers. In the midst of the merry-making Shelby appeared, hot with hard riding, to tell of the British advance, and to urge that the time was ripe for fighting, not feasting. Sevier at once entered heartily into his friend's plan, and agreed to raise his rifle-rangers, and to gather the broken and disorganized refugees who had fled across the mountains under McDowell. While this was being done, Shelby returned to his home to call out his own militia and to summon the Holston Virginians to his aid. With the latter purpose he sent one of his brothers to Arthur Campbell, the County Lieutenant of his neighbors across the border. Arthur at once proceeded to urge the adoption of the plan on his cousin, William Campbell, who had just returned from a short and successful campaign against the Tories round the head of the Kanawha, where he had speedily quelled an attempted uprising.

Gates had already sent William Campbell an earnest request to march down with his troops and join the main army. This he could not do, as his militia had only been called out to put down their own internal foes,<sup>1</sup> and their time of service

<sup>1</sup> Gates MSS. Letter of William Campbell, September 6, 1780. He evidently at the time failed to appreciate the

had expired. But the continued advance of the British at last thoroughly alarmed the Virginians of the mountain region. They promptly set about raising a corps of riflemen,<sup>1</sup> and as soon as this course of action was determined on Campbell was foremost in embodying all the Holston men who could be spared, intending to march westward and join any Virginia army that might be raised to oppose Cornwallis. While thus employed he received Shelby's request, and, for answer, at first sent word that he could not change his plans; but on receiving a second and more urgent message he agreed to come as desired.<sup>2</sup>

The appointed meeting-place was at the Sycapressing danger; but he ended by saying that "if the Indians were not harassing their frontier," and a corps of riflemen were formed, he would do all in his power to forward them to Gates.

<sup>1</sup> Gates MSS. Letter of William Preston, September 18, 1780. The corps was destined to join Gates, as Preston says; hence Campbell's reluctance to go with Shelby and Sevier. There were to be from five hundred to one thousand men. See letter of William Davidson, September 18, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> Shelby's MS. Autobiography. Campbell MSS., especially MS. letters of Colonel Arthur Campbell of September 3, 1810, October 18, 1810, etc.; MS. notes on Sevier in Tennessee Historical Society. The latter consist of memoranda by his old soldiers, who were with him in the battle; many of their statements are to be received cautiously, but there seems no reason to doubt their account of his receiving the news while giving a great barbecue. Shelby is certainly entitled to the credit of planning and starting the campaign against Ferguson.

more Shoals of the Watauga. There the riflemen gathered on the 25th of September, Campbell bringing four hundred men, Sevier and Shelby two hundred and forty each, while the refugees under McDowell amounted to about one hundred and sixty. With Shelby came his two brothers, one of whom was afterwards slightly wounded at King's Mountain; while Sevier had in his regiment no less than six relations of his own name, his two sons being privates, and his two brothers captains. One of the latter was mortally wounded in the battle.

To raise money for provisions, Sevier and Shelby were obliged to take, on their individual guaranties the funds in the entry-taker's offices that had been received from the sale of lands. They amounted in all to nearly thirteen thousand dollars, every dollar of which they afterward refunded.

On the twenty-sixth<sup>1</sup> they began the march, over a thousand strong, most of them mounted on swift, wiry horses. They were led by leaders they trusted, they were wonted to Indian warfare,

<sup>1</sup> *State of the Proceedings of the Western Army from Sept. 25, 1780, to the Reduction of Major Ferguson and the Army under his Command*, signed by Campbell, Shelby, and Cleveland. The official report; it is in the Gates MSS. in the New York Historical Society. It was published complete at the time, except the tabulated statement of loss, which has never been printed; I give it farther on.

they were skilled as horsemen and marksmen, they knew how to face every kind of danger, hardship, and privation. Their fringed and tasselled hunting-shirts were girded in by bead-worked belts, and the trappings of their horses were stained red and yellow. On their heads they wore caps of coonskin or minkskin, with the tails hanging down, or else felt hats, in each of which was thrust a bucktail or a sprig of evergreen. Every man carried a small-bore rifle, a tomahawk, and a scalping-knife. A very few of the officers had swords, and there was not a bayonet nor a tent in the army.<sup>1</sup> Before leaving their camping-ground at the Sycamore Shoals they gathered in an open grove to hear a stern old Presbyterian preacher<sup>2</sup> invoke on the enterprise the blessing of Jehovah. Leaning on their long rifles, they stood in rings round the black-frocked minister, a grim and wild congregation, who listened in silence to his words of burning zeal as he called on them to stand stoutly in the battle and to smite their foes with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

The army marched along Doe River, driving

<sup>1</sup> General William Lenoir's account, prepared for Judge A. D. Murphy's intended history of North Carolina. Lenoir was a private in the battle.

<sup>2</sup> Reverend Samuel Doak. Draper, 176. A tradition, but probably truthful, being based on the statements of Sevier and Shelby's soldiers in their old age. It is the kind of an incident that tradition will often faithfully preserve.

their beef cattle with them, and camped that night at the "Resting-Place," under Shelving Rock, beyond Crab Orchard. Next morning they started late, and went up the pass between Roan and Yellow mountains. The table-land on the top was deep in snow.<sup>1</sup> Here two Tories who were in Sevier's band deserted and fled to warn Ferguson; and the troops, on learning of the desertion, abandoned their purpose of following the direct route, and turned to the left, taking a more northerly trail. It was of so difficult a character that Shelby afterwards described it as "the worst route ever followed by an army of horsemen."<sup>2</sup> That afternoon they partly descended the east side of the range, camping in Elk Hollow, near Roaring Run. The following day they went down through the ravines and across the spurs by a stony and precipitous path, in the midst of magnificent scenery, and camped at the mouth of Grassy Creek. On the 29th they crossed the Blue Ridge at Gillespie's Gap, and saw afar off, in the mountain coves and rich valleys of the upper Catawba, the advanced settlements of the Carolina pioneers,—for hitherto they had gone through an uninhabited waste. The mountaineers, fresh from their bleak and rugged hills, gazed with delight on the soft and fertile beauty of the landscape. That night they camped on the North

<sup>1</sup> "Diary" of Ensign Robert Campbell.    <sup>2</sup> Shelby MS.

Fork of the Catawba, and next day they went down the river to Quaker Meadows, McDowell's home.

At this point they were joined by three hundred and fifty North Carolina militia from the counties of Wilkes and Surrey, who were creeping along through the woods, hoping to fall in with some party going to harass the enemy.<sup>1</sup> They were under Colonel Benjamin Cleavland, a mighty hunter and Indian fighter, and an adventurous wanderer in the wilderness. He was an uneducated backwoodsman, famous for his great size and his skill with the rifle, no less than for the curious mixture of courage, rough good-humor, and brutality in his character. He bore a ferocious hatred to the royalists, and in the course of the vindictive civil war carried on between the whigs and tories in North Carolina he suffered much. In return he persecuted his public and private foes with ruthless ferocity, hanging and mutilating any tories against whom the neighboring whigs chose to bear evidence. As the fortunes of the war veered about he himself received

<sup>1</sup> Shelby MS. Autobiography. See also Gates MSS. Letter of William Davidson, September 14, 1780. Davidson had foreseen that there would be a fight between the western militia and Ferguson, and he had sent word to his militia subordinates to join any force—as McDowell's—that might go against the British leader. The alarm caused by the latter had prevented the militia from joining Davidson himself.

many injuries. His goods were destroyed, and his friends and relations were killed or had their ears cropped off. Such deeds often repeated roused to a fury of revenge his fierce and passionate nature, to which every principle of self-control was foreign. He had no hope of redress, save in his own strength and courage, and on every favorable opportunity he hastened to take more than ample vengeance. Admitting all the wrongs he suffered, it still remains true that many of his acts of brutality were past excuse. His wife was a worthy helpmeet. Once, in his absence, a tory horse-thief was brought to their home and, after some discussion, the captors, Cleavland's sons, turned to their mother, who was placidly going on with her ordinary domestic avocations, to know what they should do with the prisoner. Taking from her mouth the corn-cob pipe she had been smoking, she coolly sentenced him to be hung, and hung he was without further delay or scruple.<sup>1</sup> Yet Cleavland was a good friend and neighbor, devoted to his country, and also a staunch Presbyterian.<sup>2</sup>

The tories were already on the alert. Some of them had been harassing Cleavland, and they had ambushed his advance guard, and shot his brother, crippling him for life. But they did not dare try

<sup>1</sup> Draper, 448.

<sup>2</sup> Allaire's "Diary," entry for October 29, 1780.

to arrest the progress of so formidable a body of men as had been gathered together at Quaker Meadows; and contented themselves with sending repeated warnings to Ferguson.

On October 1st the combined forces marched past Pilot Mountain, and camped near the heads of Cane and Silver creeks. Hitherto each colonel had commanded his own men, there being no general head, and every morning and evening the colonels had met in concert to decide the day's movements. The whole expedition was one of volunteers, the agreement between the officers and the obedience rendered them by the soldiers simply depending on their own free-will; there was no legal authority on which to go, for the commanders had called out the militia without any instructions from the executives of their several States.<sup>1</sup> Disorders had naturally broken out. The men of the different companies felt some rivalry towards one another; and those of bad character, sure to be found in any such gathering, could not be properly controlled. Some of Cleveland's and McDowell's people were very unruly; and a few of the Watauga troops also behaved badly, plundering both whigs and tories,<sup>2</sup> and even

<sup>1</sup> Gates MSS. Letter of Campbell, Shelby, Cleveland, etc., October 4, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> Deposition of Colonel Matthew Willoughby (who was in the fight), April 30, 1823, *Richmond Enquirer*, May 9, 1823.



starting to drive the stolen stock back across the mountains.

At so important a crisis the good sense and sincere patriotism of the men in command made them sink all personal and local rivalries. On the 2d of October they all gathered to see what could be done to stop the disorders and give the army a single head; for it was thought that in a day or two they would close in with Ferguson. They were in Colonel Charles McDowell's district, and he was the senior officer; but the others distrusted his activity and judgment, and were not willing that he should command. To solve the difficulty, Shelby proposed that supreme command should be given to Colonel Campbell, who had brought the largest body of men with him, and who was a Virginian, whereas the other four colonels were North Carolinians.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, McDowell should go to Gates's army to get a general to command them, leaving his men under the charge of his brother Joseph, who was a major. This proposition was at once agreed to; and its adoption did much to ensure the subsequent success. Shelby not only acted wisely, but magnanimously; for he was himself of superior rank to Campbell, and

<sup>1</sup> Though by birth three were Virginians, and one, Shelby, a Marylander. All were Presbyterians. McDowell, like Campbell, was of Irish descent, Cleaveland of English, Shelby of Welsh, and Sevier of French Huguenot. The families of the first two had originally settled in Pennsylvania.

moreover was a proud, ambitious man, desirous of military glory.

The army had been joined by two or three squads of partisans, including some refugee Georgians. They were about to receive a larger reinforcement; for at this time several small guerilla bands of North and South Carolina whigs were encamped at Flint Hill, some distance west of the encampment of the mountain men. These Flint Hill bands numbered about four hundred men, all told, under the leadership of various militia colonels—Hill, Lacey, Williams, Graham, and Hambright.<sup>1</sup> Hill and Lacey were two of Sumter's lieutenants, and had under them some of his men; Williams,<sup>2</sup> who was also a South Carolinian, claimed command of them because he had just been commissioned a brigadier-general of militia. His own force was very small, and he did not wish

<sup>1</sup> Hambright was a Pennsylvania German, the father of eighteen children. Hill, who was suffering from a severe wound, was unfit to take an active part in the King's Mountain fight. His MS. narrative of the campaign is largely quoted by Draper.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft gives Williams an altogether undeserved prominence. As he had a commission as brigadier-general, some of the British thought he was in supreme command at King's Mountain; in a recent magazine article, General De Peyster again sets forth his claims. In reality he only had a small subordinate or independent command, and had no share whatever in conducting the campaign, and very little in the actual battle, though he behaved with much courage and was killed.

to attack Ferguson, but to march southwards to Ninety-Six. Sumter's men, who were more numerous, were eager to join the mountaineers, and entirely refused to submit to Williams. A hot quarrel, almost resulting in a fight, ensued, Hill and Lacey accusing Williams of being bent merely on plundering the wealthy tories and of desiring to avoid a battle with the British. Their imputation on his courage was certainly unjust; but they were probably quite right when they accused him of a desire to rob and plunder the tories. A succession of such quarrels speedily turned this assemblage of militia into an armed and warlike rabble. Fortunately, Hill and Lacey prevailed, word was sent to the mountaineers, and the Flint Hill bands marched in loose order to join them at the Cowpens.<sup>1</sup>

The mountain army had again begun its march on the afternoon of the third day of the month. Before starting, the colonels summoned their men, told them the nature and danger of the service, and asked such as were unwilling to go farther to step to the rear; but not a man did so. Then Shelby made them a short speech, well adapted to such a levy. He told them when they encountered the enemy not to wait for the word of command, but each to "be his own officer," and do all he

<sup>1</sup>Gates MSS. Letter of General William Davidson, October 3, 1780. Also Hill's "Narrative."

could, sheltering himself as far as possible, and not to throw away a chance; if they came on the British in the woods they were "to give them Indian play," and advance from tree to tree, pressing the enemy unceasingly. He ended by promising them that their officers would shrink from no danger, but would lead them everywhere, and, in their turn, they must be on the alert and obey orders.

When they set out their uncertainty as to Ferguson's movements caused them to go slowly, their scouts sometimes skirmishing with lurking Tories. They reached the mouth of Cane Creek, near Gilbert Town, on October 4th. With the partisans that had joined them they then numbered fifteen hundred men. McDowell left them at this point to go to Gates with the request for the appointment of a general to command them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gates MSS. (in New York Historical Society). It is possible that Campbell was not chosen chief commander until this time; Ensign Robert Campbell's account (MSS. in Tennessee Historical Society) explicitly states this to be the case. The Shelby MS. and the official report make the date the 1st or 2d. One letter in the Gates MSS. has apparently escaped all notice from historians and investigators; it is the document which McDowell bore with him to Gates. It is dated "October 4th, 1780, near Gilbert town," and is signed by Cleavland, Shelby, Sevier, Campbell, Andrew Hampton, and J. Winston. It begins: "We have collected at this place 1500 good men drawn from the counties of Surrey, Wilkes, Burk, Washington, and Sullivan counties [*sic*] in this State and Washington County in Virginia." It says that they expect to be joined in a few days by Clarke of Georgia and Williams

For some days the men had been living on the ears of green corn which they plucked from the fields, but at this camping-place they slaughtered some beeves and made a feast.

The mountaineers had hoped to catch Ferguson at Gilbert Town, but they found that he had fled towards the northeast, so they followed after him. Many of their horses were crippled and exhausted, and many of the footmen footsore and weary; and the next day they were able to go but a dozen miles to the ford of Green River.

That evening Campbell and his fellow-officers held a council to decide what course was best to

of South Carolina with one thousand men (in reality, Clarke, who had nearly six hundred troops, never met them); asks for a general; says they have great need of ammunition, and remarks on the fact of their "troops being all militia, and but little acquainted with discipline." It was this document that gave the first impression to contemporaries that the battle was fought by 1500 Americans. Thus General Davidson's letter of October 10th to Gates, giving him the news of the victory, has served as a basis for most subsequent writers about the numbers. He got his particulars from one of Sumter's men, who was in the fight; but he evidently mixed them up in his mind, for he speaks of Williams, Lacey, and their companions as joining the others at Gilbert Town, instead of the Cowpens; makes the total number 3000, whereas, by the official report of October 4th, Campbell's party only numbered 1500, and Williams, Lacey, etc., had but 400, or 1900 in all; says that 1600 good horses were chosen out, evidently confusing this with the number at Gilbert Town; credits Ferguson with 1400 men, and puts the American loss at only 20 killed.

follow. Lacey, riding over from the militia companies who were marching from Flint Hill, had just reached their camp; he told them the direction in which Ferguson had fled, and at the same time appointed the Cowpens as the meeting-place for their respective forces. Their whole army was so jaded that the leaders knew they could not possibly urge it on fast enough to overtake Ferguson, and the flight of the latter made them feel all the more confident that they could beat him, and extremely reluctant that he should get away. In consequence, they determined to take seven or eight hundred of the least tired, best armed, and best mounted men, and push rapidly after their foe, picking up on the way any militia they met, and leaving the other half of their army to follow as fast as it could.

At daybreak on the morning of the sixth the picked men set out, about seven hundred and fifty in number.<sup>1</sup> In the afternoon they passed by several large bands of Tories, who had assembled to join Ferguson; but the Holston men were reso-

<sup>1</sup> MS. "Narrative" of Ensign Robert Campbell (see also Draper, 221) says seven hundred; and about fifty of the footmen who were in good training followed so quickly after them that they were able to take part in the battle. Lenoir says the number was only five or six hundred. The modern accounts generally fail to notice this Green River weeding out of the weak men, or confuse it with what took place at the Cowpens; hence many of them greatly exaggerate the number of Americans who fought in the battle.

lute in their determination to strike at the latter, and would not be diverted from it, nor waste time by following their lesser enemies.

Riding all day they reached the Cowpens when the sun had already set, a few minutes after the arrival of the Flint Hill militia under Lacey, Hill, and Williams. The tired troops were speedily engaged in skinning beeves for their supper, roasting them by the blazing camp-fires; and fifty acres of corn, belonging to the rich tory who owned the Cowpens, materially helped the meal. Meanwhile a council was held, in which all the leading officers, save Williams, took part. Campbell was confirmed as commander-in-chief, and it was decided to once more choose the freshest soldiers, and fall on Ferguson before he could either retreat or be reinforced. The officers went round, picking out the best men, the best rifles, and the best horses. Shortly after nine o'clock the choice had been made, and nine hundred and ten<sup>1</sup> picked riflemen, well mounted, rode out of the circle of

<sup>1</sup> The official report says 900; Shelby, in all his earlier narratives, 910; Hill, 933. The last authority is important because he was one of the 400 men who joined the mountaineers at the Cowpens, and his testimony confirms the explicit declaration of the official report that the 900 men who fought in the battle were chosen after the junction with Williams, Lacey, and Hill. A few late narratives, including that of Shelby in his old age, make the choice take place before the junction, and the total number then amount to 1300; evi-

flickering firelight, and began their night journey. A few determined footmen followed, going almost as fast as the horse, and actually reached the battle-field in season to do their share of the fighting.

All this time Ferguson had not been idle. He first heard of the advance of the backwoodsmen on September 30th from the two Tories who deserted Sevier on Yellow Mountain. He had furloughed many of his loyalists, as all formidable resistance seemed at an end; and he now sent out messengers in every direction to recall them to his standard. Meanwhile, he fell slowly back from the foothills, so that he might not have to face the mountaineers until he had time to gather his own troops. He instantly wrote for reinforcements to Cruger, at Ninety-Six. Cruger had just returned from routing the Georgian Colonel Clarke, who was besieging Augusta. In the chase a number of Americans were captured, and thirteen were hung. The British and Tories interpreted the already sufficiently severe instructions of their commander-in-chief with the utmost liberality, even the officers chronicling the hanging with exultant pleasure, dently the choice at the Cowpens is by these authors confused with the choice at Green River. Shelby's memory when he was old was certainly very treacherous; in similar fashion he, as has been seen, exaggerated greatly his numbers at the Enoree. On the other hand, Robert Campbell puts the number at only 700, and Lenoir between 600 and 700. Both of these thus err in the opposite direction.



as pointing out the true way by which to end the war.<sup>1</sup>

Cruger, in his answer to Ferguson, explained that he did not have the number of militia regiments with which he was credited; and he did not seem to quite take in the gravity of the situation,<sup>2</sup> expressing his pleasure at hearing how strongly the loyalists of North Carolina had rallied to Ferguson's support, and speaking of the hope he had felt that the North Carolina tories would by themselves have proved "equal to the mountain lads." However, he promptly set about forwarding the reinforcements that were demanded; but before they could reach the scene of action the fate of the campaign had been decided.

Ferguson had not waited for outside help. He threw himself into the work of rallying the people of the plains, who were largely loyalists,<sup>3</sup> against the over-mountain men, appealing not only to their royalist sentiments, but to their strong local prejudices, and to the dread many of them felt for the wild border fighters. On the 1st of October he sent out a proclamation, of which copies were scattered broadcast among the loyalists. It was

<sup>1</sup> Draper, p. 201, quotes a printed letter from a British officer to this effect.

<sup>2</sup> Probably Ferguson himself failed to do so at this time.

<sup>3</sup> Gates MSS. Letter of Davidson, September 14th, speaks of the large number of tories in the counties where Ferguson was operating.

instinct with the fiery energy of the writer, and well suited to goad into action the rough tories and the doubtful men to whom it was addressed. He told them that the backwater men had crossed the mountains, with chieftains at their head who would surely grant mercy to none who had been loyal to the king. He called on them to grasp their arms on the moment and run to his standard, if they desired to live and bear the name of men; to rally without delay, unless they wished to be eaten up by the incoming horde of cruel barbarians, to be themselves robbed and murdered, and to see their daughters and wives abused by the dregs of mankind. In ending, he told them scornfully that if they chose to be spat <sup>1</sup> upon and degraded forever by a set of mongrels, to say so at once, that their women might turn their backs on them and look out for real men to protect them.

Hoping to be joined by Cruger's regiments, as well as by his own furloughed men and the neighboring tories, he gradually drew off from the mountains, doubling and turning, so as to hide his route and puzzle his pursuers. Exaggerated reports of the increase in the number of his foes were brought to him, and, as he saw how slowly they marched, he sent repeated messages to Cornwallis, asking for reinforcements; promising

<sup>1</sup> The word actually used was still stronger.

speedily to "finish the business," if three or four hundred soldiers, part dragoons, were given him, for the Americans were certainly making their "last push in this quarter." <sup>1</sup> He was not willing to leave the many loyal inhabitants of the district to the vengeance of the whigs <sup>2</sup>; and his hopes of reinforcements were well founded. Every day furloughed men rejoined him, and bands of loyalists came into camp; and he was in momentary expectation of help from Cornwallis or Cruger. It will be remembered that the mountaineers on their last march passed several tory bands. One of these alone, near the Cowpens, was said to have contained six hundred men; and in a day or two they would all have joined Ferguson. If the whigs had come on in a body, as there was every reason to expect, Ferguson would have been given the one thing he needed—time; and he would certainly have been too strong for his opponents. His defeat was due to the sudden push of the mountain chieftains; to their long, swift ride from the ford of Green River, at the head of their picked horse-riflemen.

The British were still in the dark as to the exact neighborhood from which their foes—the "swarm of backwoodsmen," as Tarleton called them <sup>3</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> See letter quoted by Tarleton.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson's *Memoir*, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Tarleton's *Campaigns*, p. 169.

really came. It was generally supposed that they were in part from Kentucky, and that Boon himself was among the number.<sup>1</sup> However, Ferguson probably cared very little who they were; and keeping, as he supposed, a safe distance away from them, he halted at King's Mountain in South Carolina on the evening of October 6th, pitching his camp on a steep, narrow hill just south of the North Carolina boundary. The King's Mountain range itself is about sixteen miles in length, extending in a southwesterly course from one State into the other. The stony, half-isolated ridge on which Ferguson camped was some six or seven hundred yards long and half as broad from base to base, or two thirds that distance on top. The steep sides were clad with a growth of open woods, including both saplings and big timber. Ferguson parked his baggage-wagons along the northeastern part of the mountain. The next day he did not move;

<sup>1</sup> British historians to the present day repeat this. Even Lecky, in his *History of England*, speaks of the backwoodsmen as in part from Kentucky. Having pointed out this trivial fault in Lecky's work, it would be ungracious not to allude to the general justice and impartiality of its accounts of these Revolutionary campaigns; they are very much more trustworthy than Bancroft's, for instance. Lecky scarcely gives the right color to the struggle in the South; but when Bancroft treats of it, it is not too much to say that he puts the contest between the whigs and the British and Tories in a decidedly false light. Lecky fails to do justice to Washington's military ability, however; and overrates the French assistance.

he was as near to the army of Cornwallis at Charlotte as to the mountaineers, and he thought it safe to remain where he was. He deemed the position one of great strength,—as indeed it would have been, if assailed in the ordinary European fashion,—and he was confident that even if the rebels attacked him he could readily beat them back. But, as General Lee, “Light-Horse Harry,” afterwards remarked, the hill was much easier assaulted with the rifle than defended with the bayonet.

The backwoodsmen, on leaving the camp at the Cowpens, marched slowly through the night, which was dark and drizzly; many of the men got scattered in the woods, but joined their commands in the morning—the morning of October 7th. The troops bore down to the southward, a little out of the straight route, to avoid any patrol parties; and at sunrise they splashed across the Cherokee ford.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the forenoon the rain continued, but the troops pushed steadily onwards without halting,<sup>2</sup> wrapping their blankets

<sup>1</sup> *American Pioneer*, ii., 67. An account of one of the soldiers, Benjamin Sharp, written in his old age; full of contradictions of every kind (he, for instance, forgets they joined Williams at the Cowpens); it cannot be taken as an authority, but supplies some interesting details.

<sup>2</sup> Late in life Shelby asserted that this steadiness in pushing on was due to his own influence. The other accounts do not bear him out.

and the skirts of their hunting-shirts round their gun-locks, to keep them dry. Some horses gave out, but their riders, like the thirty or forty footmen who had followed from the Cowpens, struggled onwards and were in time for the battle. When near King's Mountain they captured two tories, and from them learned Ferguson's exact position; that "he was on a ridge between two branches,"<sup>1</sup> where some deer-hunters had camped the previous fall. These deer-hunters were now with the oncoming backwoodsmen, and declared that they knew the ground well. Without halting, Campbell and the other colonels rode forward together, and agreed to surround the hill so that their men might fire upwards without risk of hurting one another. It was a bold plan; for they knew their foes probably outnumbered them; but they were very confident of their own prowess and were anxious to strike a crippling blow. From one or two other captured tories, and from a staunch whig friend, they learned the exact disposition of the British and loyalist force, and were told that their noted leader wore a light parti-colored hunting-shirt; and he was forthwith doomed to be a special target for the backwoods rifles. When within a mile of the hill a halt was called, and after a hasty council of the different colonels—in which Williams did not take part,—

<sup>1</sup> *I. e.*, brooks.

the final arrangements were made, and the men, who had been marching in loose order, were formed in line of battle. They then rode forward in absolute silence and, when close to the west slope of the battle-hill, beyond King's Creek, drew rein and dismounted. They tied their horses to trees, and fastened their great coats and blankets to the saddles, for the rain had cleared away. A few of the officers remained mounted. The countersign of the day was "Buford," the name of the colonel whose troops Tarleton had defeated and butchered. The final order was for each man to look carefully at the priming of his rifle, and then to go into battle and fight till he died.

The foes were now face to face. On the one side were the American backwoodsmen, under their own leaders, armed in their own manner, and fighting after their own fashion, for the freedom and the future of America; on the opposite side were other Americans—the loyalists, led by British officers, armed and trained in the British fashion, and fighting on behalf of the empire of Britain and the majesty of the monarchy. The Americans numbered, all told, about nine hundred and fifty men.<sup>1</sup> The British forces were composed,

<sup>1</sup> Nine hundred and ten horsemen (possibly 900, or perhaps 933) started out; and the footmen who kept up were certainly less than 50 in number. There is really no question as to the American numbers; yet a variety of reasons have conspired to cause them to be generally greatly overstated, even by Ameri-

in bulk, of the Carolina loyalists—troops similar to the Americans who joined the mountaineers at Quaker Meadows and the Cowpens<sup>1</sup>; the differ-

can historians. Even Phelan gives them 1500 men, following the ordinary accounts. At the time, many outsiders supposed that all the militia who were at the Cowpens fought in the battle; but this is not asserted by any one who knew the facts. General J. Watts De Peyster, in the *Magazine of American History* for 1880,—“The Affair at King’s Mountain,”—gives the extreme tory view. He puts the number of the Americans at from 1300 to 1900. His account, however, is only based on Shelby’s later narratives, told thirty years after the event, and these are all that need be considered. When Shelby grew old he greatly exaggerated the numbers on both sides in all the fights in which he had taken part. In his account of King’s Mountain, he speaks of Williams and the 400 Flint Hill men joining the attacking body *after*, not *before*, the 910 picked men started. But his earlier accounts, including the official report which he signed, explicitly contradict this. The question is thus purely as to the time of the junction: as to whether it was after or before this that the body of 900 actual fighters was picked out. Shelby’s later report contains the grossest self-contradictions. Thus it enumerates the companies which fought the battle in detail, the result running up several hundred more than the total he gives. The early and official accounts are in every way more worthy of credence; but the point is settled beyond dispute by Hill’s “Narrative.” Hill was one of the 400 men with Williams, and he expressly states that after the junction at the Cowpens the force, from both commands, that started out numbered 933. The question is thus definitely settled. Most of the later accounts simply follow the statements Shelby made in his old age.

<sup>1</sup> There were many instances of brothers and cousins in the opposing ranks at King’s Mountain; a proof of the similarity in the character of the forces.



ence being that besides these lowland militia, there were arrayed on one side the men from the Holston, Watauga, and Nolichucky, and on the other the loyalist regulars. Ferguson had, all told, between nine hundred and a thousand troops, a hundred and twenty or thirty of them being the regulars or "American Volunteers," the remainder tory militia.<sup>1</sup> The forces were very nearly equal in number. What difference there was, was probably in favor of the British and tories. There was

<sup>1</sup> The American official account says that they captured the British provision returns, according to which their force amounted to 1125 men. It further reports, of the regulars, 19 killed, 35 wounded and left on the ground as unable to march, and 78 captured; of the tories, 206 killed, 128 wounded and left on the ground, unable to march, and 648 captured. The number of tories killed must be greatly exaggerated. Allaire, in his "Diary," says Ferguson had only 800 men, but almost in the same sentence enumerates 906, giving of the regulars 19 killed, 33 wounded, and 64 captured (116 in all, instead of 132, as in the American account), and of the tories 100 killed, 90 wounded, and "about" 600 captured. This does not take account of those who escaped. From Ramsey and De Peyster down most writers assert that every single individual on the defeated side was killed or taken; but in Colonel Chesney's admirable *Military Biography* there is given the autobiography or memoir of a South Carolina loyalist who was in the battle. His account of the battle is meagre and unimportant, but he expressly states that at the close he and a number of others escaped through the American lines by putting sprigs of white paper in their caps, as some of the whig militia did—for the militia had no uniforms, and were dressed alike on both sides. A certain number of men who escaped must thus be added.

not a bayonet in the American army, whereas Ferguson trusted much to this weapon. All his volunteers and regulars were expert in its use, and with his usual ingenuity he had trained several of his loyalist companies in a similar manner, improvising bayonets out of their hunting-knives. The loyalists whom he had had with him for some time were well drilled. The North Carolina regiment was weaker on this point, as it was composed of recruits who had joined him but recently.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There were undoubtedly very many horse-thieves, murderers, and rogues of every kind with Ferguson, but equally undoubtedly the bulk of his troops were loyalists from principle and men of good standing, especially those from the seaboard. Many of the worst tory bandits did not rally to him, preferring to plunder on their own account. The American army itself was by no means free from scoundrels. Most American writers belittle the character of Ferguson's force and sneer at the courage of the tories, although entirely unable to adduce any proof of their statements, the evidence being the other way. Apparently they are unconscious of the fact that they thus wofully diminish the credit to be given to the victors. It may be questioned if there ever was a braver or finer body of riflemen than the nine hundred who surrounded and killed or captured a superior body of well-posted, well-led, and courageous men, in part also well-drilled, on King's Mountain. The whole world now recognizes how completely the patriots were in the right; but it is especially incumbent on American historians to fairly portray the acts and character of the tories, doing justice to them as well as to the whigs, and condemning them only when they deserve it. In studying the Revolutionary War in the Southern States, I have been struck by the way in which the American historians alter the facts by relying purely on partisan accounts, sup-

The Americans were discovered by their foes when only a quarter of a mile away. They had formed their forces as they marched. The right centre was composed of Campbell's troops; the left centre of Shelby's. These two bodies separated slightly so as to come up opposite sides of the narrow southwestern spur of the mountain. The right wing was led by Sevier, with his own and McDowell's troops. On the extreme right Major Winston, splitting off from the main body a few minutes before, had led a portion of Cleavland's men by a roundabout route to take the mountain in the rear, and cut off all retreat. He and his

pressing the innumerable whig excesses and outrages, or else palliating them. They thus really destroy the force of the many grave accusations which may be truthfully brought against the British and tories. I regret to say that Bancroft is among the offenders. Hildreth is an honorable exception. Most of the British historians of the same events are even more rancorous and less trustworthy than the American writers; and while fully admitting the many indefensible outrages committed by the whigs, a long-continued and impartial examination of accessible records has given me the belief that in the districts where the Civil War was most ferocious, much the largest number of the criminal class joined the tories, and the misdeeds of the latter were more numerous than those of the whigs. But the frequency with which both whigs and tories hung men for changing sides, shows that quite a number of the people shifted from one party to the other; and so there must have been many men of exactly the same stamp in both armies. Much of the nominal changing of sides, however, was due to the needless and excessive severity of Cornwallis and his lieutenants.

followers "rode like fox-hunters," as was afterwards reported by one of their number who was accustomed to following the buck and the gray fox with horn and hound. They did not dismount until they reached the foot of the mountain, galloping at full speed through the rock-strewn woods; and they struck exactly the right place, closing up the only gap by which the enemy could have retreated. The left wing was led by Cleavland. It contained not only the bulk of his own Wilkes and Surrey men, but also the North and South Carolinians who had joined the army at the Cowpens under the command of Williams, Lacey, Hambright, Chronicle, and others.<sup>1</sup> The different leaders cheered on their troops by a few last words as they went into the fight; being especially careful to warn them how to deal with the British bayonet charges. Campbell had visited each separate band, again requesting every man who felt like flinching not to go into the battle. He bade them hold on to every inch of ground as long as possible, and when forced back to rally and return at once to the fight. Cleavland gave much the same advice; telling his men that when once engaged they were not to wait for

<sup>1</sup> Draper gives a good plan of the battle. He also gives some pictures of the fighting, in which the backwoodsmen are depicted in full Continental uniform, which probably not a man—certainly very few of them—wore.

the word of command, but to do as he did, for he would show them by his example how to fight, and they must then act as their own officers. The men were to fire quickly, and stand their ground as long as possible, if necessary sheltering themselves behind trees. If they could do no better they were to retreat, but not to run quite off; but to return and renew the struggle, for they might have better luck at the next attempt.<sup>1</sup>

So rapid were the movements of the Americans, and so unexpected the attack, that a loyalist officer, who had been out reconnoitring, had just brought word to the British commander that there was no sign of danger, when the first shots were heard; and by the time the officer had paraded and posted his men, the assault had begun, his horse had been killed, and he himself wounded.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey (*Revolution in South Carolina*), writing in 1785, gives the speech verbatim, apparently from Cleavland himself. It is very improbable that it is verbally correct, but doubtless it represents the spirit of his remarks.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays in Military Biography*, Colonel Charles Cornwallis Chesney, London, 1874. On p. 323 begins a memoir of "A Carolina Loyalist in the Revolutionary War." It is written by the loyalist himself, who was presumably a relation of Colonel Chesney's. It was evidently written after the event, and there are some lapses. Thus he makes the war with the Cherokees take place in 1777, instead of '76. His explanation of Tarleton's defeat at the Cowpens must be accepted with much reserve. At King's Mountain he says the Americans had fifteen hundred men, instead of twenty-five hundred, of

When Ferguson learned that his foes were on him, he sprang on his horse, his drums beat to arms, and he instantly made ready for the fight. Though surprised by the unexpected approach of the Americans, he exerted himself with such energy that his troops were in battle array when the attack began. The outcrops of slaty rock on the hillsides made ledges which, together with the boulders strewn on top, served as breastworks for the less disciplined Tories; while he in person led his regulars and such of the loyalist companies as were furnished with the hunting-knife bayonets. He hoped to be able to repulse his enemies by himself taking the offensive, with a succession of bayonet charges—a form of attack in which his experience with Pulaski and Huger had given him great confidence.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the firing began, as the Americans drove in the British pickets. The brunt of the battle fell on the American centre, composed of Campbell's and Shelby's men, who sustained the whole fight for nearly ten minutes<sup>1</sup> until the two wings had time to get into place and surround the enemy. Campbell began the assault, riding on horseback along the line of his which Allaire speaks. Allaire probably consciously exaggerated the number.

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. Letter of Colonel William Campbell, October 10, 1780, says ten minutes: the official report (Gates MSS.) says five minutes.

riflemen. He ordered them to raise the Indian war-whoop, which they did with a will, and made the woods ring.<sup>1</sup> They then rushed upwards and began to fire, each on his own account; while their war-cries echoed along the hillside. Ferguson's men on the summit responded with heavy volley firing, and then charged, cheering lustily. The mountain was covered with smoke and flame, and seemed to thunder.<sup>2</sup> Ferguson's troops advanced steadily, their officers riding at their head, with their swords flashing; and the mountaineers, who had no bayonets, could not withstand the shock. They fled down the hillside and being sinewy, nimble men, swift of foot, they were not overtaken, save a few of sullen temper, who would not retreat and were bayoneted. One of their officers, a tall backwoodsman, six feet in height, was cut down by Lieutenant Allaire, a New York loyalist, as the latter rode at the head of his platoon. No sooner had the British charge spent itself than Campbell, who was riding midway between the

<sup>1</sup> *Richmond Enquirer* (November 12, 1822 and May 9, 1823), certificates of King's Mountain survivors—of James Crow, May 6, 1813; David Beattie, May 4, 1813, etc. All the different commanders in after-life claimed the honor of beginning the battle; the official report decides it in favor of Campbell and Shelby, the former being the first actually engaged, as is acknowledged by Shelby in his letter to Arthur Campbell on October 12, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> Haywood, 71; doubtless he uses the language of one of the actors.

enemy and his own men, called out to the latter in a voice of thunder to rally and return to the fight, and in a minute or two they were all climbing the hill again, going from tree to tree, and shooting at the soldiers on the summit. Campbell's horse, exhausted by the breakneck galloping hither and thither over the slope, gave out; he then led the men on foot, his voice hoarse with shouting, his face blackened with powder; for he was always in the front of the battle and nearest the enemy.

No sooner had Ferguson returned from his charge on Campbell than he found Shelby's men swarming up to the attack on the other side. Shelby himself was at their head. He had refused to let his people return the dropping fire of the tory skirmishers until they were close up. Ferguson promptly charged his new foes and drove them down the hillside; but the instant he stopped, Shelby, who had been in the thick of the fight, closest to the British, brought his marksmen back, and they came up nearer than ever, and with a deadlier fire.<sup>1</sup> While Ferguson's bayonetmen—both regulars and militia—charged to and fro, the rest of the loyalists kept up a heavy fire from behind the rocks on the hill-top. The battle raged in every part, for the Americans had by this time surrounded their foes, and they advanced rapidly under cover of the woods. They

<sup>1</sup> Shelby, MS.



inflicted much more damage than they suffered, for they were scattered out while the royalist troops were close together, and, moreover, were continually taken in flank. Ferguson, conspicuous from his hunting-shirt,<sup>1</sup> rode hither and thither with reckless bravery, his sword in his left hand—for he had never entirely regained the use of his wounded right—while he made his presence known by the shrill, ear-piercing notes of a silver whistle which he always carried. Whenever the British and tories charged with the bayonet, under Ferguson, De Peyster, or some of their lieutenants, the mountaineers were forced back down the hill; but the instant the red lines halted and returned to the summit, the stubborn riflemen followed close behind, and from every tree and boulder continued their irregular and destructive fire. The peculiar feature of the battle was the success with which, after every retreat, Campbell, Shelby, Sevier, and Cleavland rallied their followers on the instant; the great point was to prevent the men from becoming panic-stricken when forced to flee. The pealing volleys of musketry at short intervals drowned the incessant clatter of the less noisy but more deadly backwoods rifles. The wild whoops of the mountain men, the cheering of

<sup>1</sup> The *South Carolina Loyalist* speaks as if the hunting-shirt were put on for disguise; it says Ferguson was recognized, "although wearing a hunting-shirt."

the loyalists, the shouts of the officers, and the cries of the wounded mingled with the reports of the firearms, and shrill above the din rose the calling of the silver whistle. Wherever its notes were heard the wavering British line came on, and the Americans were forced back. Ferguson dashed from point to point, to repel the attacks of his foes, which were made with ever-increasing fury. Two horses were killed under him<sup>1</sup>; but he continued to lead the charging parties, slashing and hewing with his sword until it was broken off at the hilt. At last, as he rode full speed against a part of Sevier's men, who had almost gained the hill crest, he became a fair mark for the vengeful backwoods riflemen. Several of them fired together and he fell suddenly from his horse, pierced by half a dozen bullets almost at the same instant. The gallant British leader was dead, while his foot yet hung in the stirrup.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ferguson's *Memoir*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> The *South Carolina Loyalist* says he was killed just as he had slain Colonel Williams "with his left hand." Ramsey, on the other side, represents Colonel Williams as being shot while dashing forward to kill Ferguson. Williams certainly was not killed by Ferguson himself, and in all probability the latter was slain earlier in the action and in an entirely different part of the line. The *Loyalist* is also in error as to Cleavland's regiment being the first that was charged. There is no ground whatever for the statement that Ferguson was trying to escape when shot; nor was there any attempt at a charge of horsemen, made in due form. The battle was

The silver whistle was now silent, but the disheartened loyalists were rallied by De Peyster, who bravely continued the fight.<sup>1</sup> It is said that he himself led one of the charges which were at this time made on Cleavland's line; the "South Fork" men from the Catawba, under Hambright and Chronicle, being forced back, Chronicle being killed and Hambright wounded. When the Americans fled, they were scarcely a gun's length ahead of their foes; and the instant the latter faced about the former were rallied by their officers, and again went up the hill. One of the backwoodsmen was in the act of cocking his rifle when a loyalist, dashing at him with the bayonet, pinned his hand to his thigh; the rifle went off, the ball going through the loyalist's body, and the two men fell together. Hambright, though wounded, was able to sit in the saddle, and continued in the battle. Cleavland had his horse shot under him, and then led his men on foot. As the lines came close together, many of the whigs recognized in the tory ranks their former neighbors, friends, or relatives; and the men taunted and jeered one another with

purely one of footmen and the attempt to show an effort at a cavalry charge at the end is a simple absurdity.

<sup>1</sup> In his *Historical Magazine* article, General Watts De Peyster clears his namesake's reputation from all charge of cowardice; but his account of how De Peyster counselled and planned all sorts of expedients that might have saved the loyalists is decidedly mythical.

bitter hatred. In more than one instance brother was slain by brother or cousin by cousin. The lowland tories felt an especial dread of the mountaineers; looking with awe and hatred on their tall, gaunt, rawboned figures, their long, matted hair and wild faces. One wounded tory, as he lay watching them, noticed their deadly accuracy of aim, and saw also that the loyalists, firing from the summit, continually overshot their foes.

The British regulars had lost half their number; the remainder had been scattered and exhausted in their successive charges. The bayonet companies of the loyalist militia were in the same plight; and the North Carolina tories, the least disciplined, could no longer be held to their work. Sevier's men gained the summit at the same time with Campbell's and part of Shelby's. The three colonels were heading their troops; and as Sevier saw Shelby, he swore, by God, the British had burned off part of his hair; for it was singed on one side of his head.

When the Holston and Watauga men gained the crest the loyalists broke and fled to the east end of the mountain, among the tents and baggage-wagons, where they again formed. But they were huddled together, while their foes surrounded them on every hand. The fighting had lasted an hour; all hope was gone; and De Peyster hoisted a white flag.

In the confusion the firing continued in parts of the lines on both sides. Some of the backwoodsmen did not know what a white flag meant; others disregarded it, savagely calling out, "Give them Buford's play," in allusion to Tarleton's having refused quarter to Buford's troops.<sup>1</sup> Others of the men as they came up began shooting before they learned what had happened; and some tories who had been out foraging returned at this moment, and also opened fire. A number of the loyalists escaped in the turmoil, putting badges in their hats like those worn by certain of the American militia and thus passing in safety through the whig lines.<sup>2</sup> It was at this time, after the white flag had been displayed, that Colonel Williams was shot, as he charged a few of the tories who were still firing. The flag was hoisted again, and white handkerchiefs were also waved from guns and ramrods. Shelby, spurring up to part of their line, ordered the tories to lay down their arms, which they did.<sup>3</sup> Campbell, at the same moment, running among his men with his sword pointed to the ground, called on them for God's sake to cease firing; and turning to the prisoners he bade the officers rank by themselves, and the men to take off their hats and sit down. He then ordered De Peyster to dismount; which the latter did, and handed his sword

<sup>1</sup> Deposition of John Long, in *Enquirer*, as quoted.

<sup>2</sup> Chesney, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> Shelby MS.

to Campbell.<sup>1</sup> The various British officers likewise surrendered their swords to different Americans, many of the militia commanders who had hitherto only possessed a tomahawk or scalping-knife thus for the first time getting possession of one of the coveted weapons.

Almost the entire British and tory force was killed or captured; the only men who escaped were the few who got through the American lines by adopting the whig badges. About three hundred of the loyalists were killed or disabled; the slightly wounded do not seem to have been counted.<sup>2</sup> The colonel-commandant was among the slain; of the four militia colonels present, two were killed, one wounded,<sup>3</sup> and the other captured—a sufficient proof of the obstinacy of the resistance. The American loss in killed and wounded amounted to less than half, perhaps only a third, that of

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. Letter of General George Rutledge (who was in the battle, an eye-witness of what he describes), May 27, 1813. But there is an irreconcilable conflict of testimony as to whether Campbell or Evan Shelby received De Peyster's sword.

<sup>2</sup> For the loyalist losses, see *ante*, note discussing their numbers. The *South Carolina Loyalist* says they lost about a third of their number. It is worthy of note that the actual fighting at King's Mountain bore much resemblance to that at Majuba Hill a century later; a backwoods levy was much like a Boer commando.

<sup>3</sup> In some accounts, this officer is represented as a major, in some, as a colonel; at any rate he was in command of a small regiment, or fragment of a regiment.

their foes.<sup>1</sup> Campbell's command suffered more than any other, the loss among the officers being especially great, for it bore the chief part in

<sup>1</sup> The official report as published gave the American loss as twenty-eight killed and sixty wounded. The original document (in the Gates MSS., New York Historical Society) gives the loss in tabulated form in an appendix, which has not heretofore been published. It is as follows:

## RETURN OF KILLED AND WOUNDED.

REGIMENTS.	KILLED.							WOUNDED.									
	Col.	Major.	Capt.	Lieut.	Ensign.	Sergt.	Private.	Total.	Col.	Major.	Capt.	Lieut.	Ensign.	Sergt.	Private.	Total.	Grand Total.
Campbell's			1	2	4		5	12			1	3			17	21	33
McDowell's							4	4							4	4	8
Thomas's															8	8	
Cleavland's							8	8	1	2					10	13	21
Shelby's																	
Sevier's							2	2						10	10	12	
Hayes's								1						3	3	4	
Brannon's			1											3	3	3	
Col. Williams's	1							1						3	3	1	
	1	1	1	2	4		19	28	1	3	3			55	62	90	

It will be seen that these returns are imperfect. They do not include Shelby's loss; yet his regiment was alongside of Campbell's, did its full share of the work, and probably suffered as much as Sevier's, for instance. But it is certain that in the hurry not all the killed and wounded were enumerated (compare Draper, pp. 302-304). Hayes's, Thomas's, and "Brannon's" (Brandon's) commands were some of those joining at the Cowpens. Winston's loss is doubtless included under Cleavland's. It will be seen that Williams's troops could have taken very little part in the action.

withstanding the successive bayonet charges of the regulars, and the officers had been forced to expose themselves with the utmost freedom in order to rally their men when beaten back.<sup>1</sup>

The mountain men had done a most notable deed. They had shown in perfection the best qualities of horse-riflemen. Their hardihood and perseverance had enabled them to bear up well under fatigue, exposure, and scanty food. Their long, swift ride, and the suddenness of the attack took their foes completely by surprise. Then leaving their horses, they had shown in the actual battle such courage, marksmanship, and skill in woodland fighting, that they had not only defeated but captured an equal number of well-armed, well-led, resolute men, in a strong position. The victory was of far-reaching importance and ranks among the decisive battles of the Revolution. It was the first great success of the

<sup>1</sup> It would be quite impossible to take notice of the countless wild absurdities of the various writers who have given "histories," so-called, of the battle. One of the most recent of them, Mr. Kirke, having accepted as the number of the British dead two hundred and twenty-five, and the wounded one hundred and eighty-five, says that the disproportion shows "the wonderful accuracy of the backwoods rifle"—the beauty of the argument being that it necessarily implies that the backwoodsmen only fired some 410 shots. Mr. Kirke's account of the battle having been "won" owing to a remarkable ride taken by Sevier to rally the men at the critical moment is, of course, without any historic basis whatever.



Americans in the South, the turning-point in the southern campaign, and it brought cheer to the patriots throughout the Union. The loyalists of the Carolinas were utterly cast down, and never recovered from the blow; and its immediate effect was to cause Cornwallis to retreat from North Carolina, abandoning his first invasion of that State.<sup>1</sup>

The expedition offered a striking example of the individual initiative so characteristic of the backwoodsmen. It was not ordered by any one authority; it was not even sanctioned by the central or State governments. Shelby and Sevier were the two prime movers in getting it up, Campbell exercised the chief command, and the various other leaders, with their men, simply joined the mountaineers, as they happened to hear of them and come across their path. The ties of discipline were of the slightest. The commanders elected their own chief without regard to rank or seniority; in fact the officer <sup>2</sup> who was by rank entitled to the place was hardly given any share in the conduct of the campaign. The authority of the commandant over the other officers, and of the various colonels over their troops, resembled rather the control exercised by Indian chiefs over their warriors than the discipline obtained in the regular army. But the men were splendid individual fighters, who

<sup>1</sup> Tarleton's *Campaigns*, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> Williams.

liked and trusted their leaders; and the latter were bold, resolute, energetic, and intelligent.

Cornwallis feared that the mountain men would push on and attack his flank; but there was no such danger. By themselves they were as little likely to assail him in force in the open as Andreas Hofer's Tyrolese—with whom they had many points in common—were to threaten Napoleon on the Danubian plains. Had they been Continental troops, the British would have had to deal with a permanent army. But they were only militia<sup>1</sup> after all, however formidable from their patriotic purpose and personal prowess. The backwoods armies were not unlike the armies of the Scotch Highlanders; tumultuous gatherings of hardy and warlike men, greatly to be dreaded under certain

<sup>1</sup> The striking nature of the victory and its important consequences must not blind us to the manifold shortcomings of the Revolutionary militia. The mountaineers did well in spite of being militia; but they would have done far better under another system. The numerous failures of the militia as a whole must be balanced against the few successes of a portion of them. If the States had possessed wisdom enough to back Washington with Continentals, or with volunteers such as those who fought in the Civil War, the Revolutionary contest would have been over in three years. The trust in militia was a perfect curse. Many of the backwoods leaders knew this. The old Indian fighter, Andrew Lewis, about this time wrote to Gates (see Gates MSS., September 30, 1780), speaking of the "dastardly conduct of the militia," calling them "a set of poltroons," and longing for Continentals.

circumstances, but incapable of a long campaign and almost as much demoralized by a victory as by a defeat. Individually, or in small groups, they were perhaps even more formidable than the Highlanders; but in one important respect they were inferior, for they totally lacked the regimental organization which the clan system gave the Scotch Celts.

The mountaineers had come out to do a certain thing—to kill Ferguson and scatter his troops. They had done it, and now they wished to go home. The little log-huts in which their families lived were in daily danger of Indian attack; and it was absolutely necessary that they should be on hand to protect them. They were, for the most part, very poor men, whose sole sources of livelihood were the stock they kept beyond the mountains. They loved their country greatly, and had shown the sincerity of their patriotism by the spontaneous way in which they risked their lives on this expedition. They had no hope of reward; for they neither expected nor received any pay except in liquidated certificates, worth two cents on the dollar. Shelby's share of these, for his services as colonel throughout '80 and '81, was sold by him for "six yards of middling broad-cloth"<sup>1</sup>; so it can be readily imagined how little

<sup>1</sup> Shelby's MS. Autobiography.

each private got for the King's Mountain expedition.<sup>1</sup>

The day after the battle the Americans fell back towards the mountains, fearing lest, while cumbered by prisoners and wounded, they should be struck by Tarleton or perhaps Cruger. The prisoners were marched along on foot, each carrying one or two muskets, for twelve hundred stands of arms had been captured. The Americans had little to eat, and were very tired; but the plight of the prisoners was pitiable. Hungry, footsore, and heartbroken, they were hurried along by the fierce and boastful victors, who gloried in the vengeance they had taken, and recked little of such a virtue as magnanimity to the fallen. The only surgeon in either force was Ferguson's. He did what he could for the wounded; but that was little enough, for, of course, there were no medical stores whatever. The Americans buried their dead in graves, and carried their wounded along on horse-litters. The wounded loyalists were left on the field, to be cared for by the neighboring people. The conquerors showed neither respect nor sympathy for the leader who had so gallantly fought them.<sup>2</sup> His body and the bodies of his slain followers were cast

<sup>1</sup> Among these privates was the father of Davy Crockett.

<sup>2</sup> But the accounts of indignity being shown him are not corroborated by Allaire and Ryerson, the two contemporary British authorities, and are probably untrue.

into two shallow trenches, and loosely covered with stones and earth. The wolves, coming to the carnage, speedily dug up the carcasses, and grew so bold from feasting at will on the dead that they no longer feared the living. For months afterwards King's Mountain was a favorite resort for wolf-hunters.

The victory once gained, the bonds of discipline over the troops were forthwith loosened; they had been lax at the best, and only the strain of the imminent battle with the British had kept them tense for the fortnight the mountaineers had been away from their homes. All the men of the different commands were bragging as to their respective merits in the battle, and the feats performed by the different commanders.<sup>1</sup> The general break-up of authority, of course, allowed full play to the vicious and criminal characters. Even before the mountaineers came down, the unfortunate Carolinas had suffered from the misdeeds of different bodies of ill-disciplined patriot troops,<sup>2</sup> almost as much as from the British and tories. The case was worse now. Many men deserted from the returning army for the especial purpose of plundering the people of the neighborhood, paying small heed

<sup>1</sup> Certificate of Matthew Willoughby, in *Richmond Enquirer*, as quoted.

<sup>2</sup> Gates MSS., deposition of John Satty and others, September 7, 1780; of William Hamilton, September 12th, etc.

which cause the victims had espoused; and parties continually left camp avowedly with this object. Campbell's control was of the slightest; he was forced to entreat rather than command the troops, complaining that they left their friends in "almost a worse situation than the enemy would have done," and expressing what was certainly a moderate "wish," that the soldiers would commit no "unnecessary injury" on the inhabitants of the country.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, such very mild measures produced little effect in stopping the plundering.

However, Campbell spoke in stronger terms of an even worse set of outrages. The backwoodsmen had little notion of mercy to beaten enemies, and many of them treated the captured loyalists with great brutality, even on the march,<sup>2</sup> Colonel Cleavland himself being one of the offenders.<sup>3</sup> Those of their friends and relatives who had fallen into the hands of the tories, or of Cornwallis's regulars, had fared even worse; yet this cannot palliate their conduct. Campbell himself, when in a fit of gusty anger, often did things he must have regretted afterwards; but he was essentially manly, and his soul revolted at the continued persecution of helpless enemies. He issued a

<sup>1</sup> Campbell's General Orders, October 14th and October 26th.

<sup>2</sup> "Our captors . . . cutting and striking us in a most savage manner."—*South Carolina Loyalist*.

<sup>3</sup> Allaire's "Dairy," entry of November 1st.

sharp manifesto in reference to the way the prisoners were "slaughtered and disturbed," assuring the troops that if it could not be prevented by moderate measures, he would put a stop to it by taking summary vengeance on the offenders.<sup>1</sup> After this, the prisoners were, on the whole, well treated. When they met a couple of Continental officers, the latter were very polite, expressing their sympathy for their fate in falling into such hands; for from Washington and Greene down, the Continental troops disliked and distrusted the militia almost as much as the British regulars did the Tories.

There was one dark deed of vengeance. It had come to be common for the victors on both sides to hang those whom they regarded as the chief offenders among their conquered opponents. As the different districts were alternately overrun, the unfortunate inhabitants were compelled to swear allegiance in succession to Congress and to king; and then, on whichever side they bore arms, they were branded as traitors. Moreover, the different leaders, both British and American, from Tarleton and Ferguson to Sumter and Marion, often embodied in their own ranks some of their prisoners, and these were of course regarded as deserters by their former comrades. Cornwallis, seconded by Rawdon, had set the example of ordering all men found in the rebel ranks after

<sup>1</sup> Campbell's General Orders, October 11th.

having sworn allegiance to the king to be hung; his under-officers executed the command with zeal, and the Americans, of course, retaliated. Ferguson's troops themselves had hung some of their prisoners.<sup>1</sup>

All this was fresh in the minds of the Americans who had just won so decisive a victory. They were accustomed to give full vent to the unbridled fury of their passions; they with difficulty brooked control; they brooded long over their own wrongs, which were many and real, and they were but little impressed by the misdeeds committed in return by their friends. Inflamed by hatred and the thirst for vengeance, they would probably have put to death some of their prisoners in any event; but all doubt was at an end when on their return march they were joined by an officer who had escaped from before Augusta and who brought word that Cruger's victorious loyalists had hung a dozen of the captured patriots.<sup>2</sup> This news settled the doom of some of the tory prisoners. A week after the battle a number of them were tried, and thirty were condemned to death. Nine, including the only tory colonel who had survived the battle, were hung; then Sevier

<sup>1</sup> Allaire's "Diary," entry for August 20th; also see August 2d. He chronicles these hangings with much complacency, but is, of course, shocked at the "infamous" conduct of the Americans when they do likewise.

<sup>2</sup> Shelby MSS.



and Shelby, men of bold, frank nature, could no longer stand the butchery, and peremptorily interfered, saving the remainder.<sup>1</sup> Of the men who were hung, doubtless some were murderers and marauders, who deserved their fate; others, including the unfortunate colonel, were honorable men, executed only because they had taken arms for the cause they deemed right.

Leaving the prisoners in the hands of the lowland militia, the mountaineers returned to their secure fastnesses in the high hill-valleys of the Holston, the Watauga, and the Nolichucky. They had marched well and fought valiantly, and they had gained a great victory; all the little stockaded forts, all the rough log cabins on the scattered clearings, were jubilant over the triumph. From that moment their three leaders were men of renown.<sup>2</sup> The Legislatures of their respective States

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Thirty years after the battle, when Campbell had long been dead, Shelby and Sevier started a most unfortunate controversy as to his conduct in the battle. They insisted that he had flinched, and that victory was mainly due to them. Doubtless they firmly believed what they said; for, as already stated, the jealousies and rivalries among the backwoods leaders were very strong; but the burden of proof, after thirty years' silence, rested on them, and they failed to make their statements good;—nor was their act a very gracious one. Shelby bore the chief part in the quarrel, Campbell's surviving relatives, of course, defending the dead chieftain. I have carefully examined all the papers in the case, in the Tennessee Historical Society, the Shelby MSS.,

thanked them publicly and voted them swords for their services. Campbell, next year, went down to join Greene's army, did gallant work at Guil-

and the Campbell MSS., besides the files of the *Richmond Enquirer*, etc.; and it is evident that the accusation was wholly groundless.

Shelby and Sevier rest their case:

1st, on their memory, thirty years after the event, of some remarks of Campbell to them in private after the close of the battle, which they construed as acknowledgments of bad conduct. Against these memories of old men it is safe to set Shelby's explicit testimony, in a letter written six days after the battle (see *Virginia Argus*, October 26, 1810), to the good conduct of the "gallant commander" (Campbell).

2d, on the fact that Campbell was seen on a black horse in the rear during the fighting; but a number of men of his regiment swore that he had given his black horse to a servant who sat in the rear, while he himself rode a bay horse in the battle. See their affidavits in the *Enquirer*.

3d, on the testimony of one of Shelby's brothers, who said he saw him in the rear. This is the only piece of positive testimony in the case. Some of Campbell's witnesses (as Matthew Willoughby) swore that this brother of Shelby was a man of bad character, engaged at the time in stealing cattle from both whigs and tories.

4th, on the testimony of a number of soldiers who swore they did not see Campbell in the latter part of the battle, nor until some moments after the surrender. Of course, this negative testimony is simply valueless; in such a hurly-burly it would be impossible for the men in each part of the line to see all the commanders, and Campbell very likely did not reach the places where these men were until some time after the surrender. On the other hand, forty officers and soldiers of Campbell's, Sevier's, and Shelby's regiments, headed by General Rutledge, swore that they had seen Campbell valiantly leading throughout the whole battle, and foremost

ford Court-house, and then died of camp-fever. Sevier and Shelby had long lives before them.

at the surrender. This positive testimony conclusively settles the matter; it outweighs that of Shelby's brother, the only affirmative witness on the other side. But it is a fair question as to whether Campbell or another of Shelby's brothers received De Peyster's sword.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HOLSTON SETTLEMENTS TO THE END OF THE REVOLUTION, 1781-83

JOHN SEVIER had no sooner returned from doing his share in defeating foes who were of his own race than he was called on to face another set of enemies, quite as formidable and much more cruel. These were the red warriors, the ancient owners of the soil, who were ever ready to take advantage of any momentary disaster that befell their hereditary and victorious opponents, the invading settlers.

For many years Sevier was the best Indian fighter on the border. He was far more successful than Clark, for instance, inflicting greater loss on his foes and suffering much less himself, though he never had anything like Clark's number of soldiers. His mere name was a word of dread to the Cherokees, the Chickamaugas, and the upper Creeks. His success was due to several causes. He wielded great influence over his own followers, whose love for and trust in "Chucky Jack" were absolutely unbounded; for he possessed in the highest degree the virtues most prized on the frontier. He was

open-hearted and hospitable, with winning ways towards all, and combined a cool head with a dauntless heart; he loved a battle for its own sake, and was never so much at his ease as when under fire; he was a first-class marksman, and as good a horseman as was to be found on the border. In his campaigns against the Indians he adopted the tactics of his foes, and grafted on them some important improvements of his own. Much of his success was due to his adroit use of scouts or spies. He always chose for these the best woodsmen of the district, men who could endure as much, see as much, and pass through the woods as silently as the red men themselves. By keeping these scouts well ahead of him, he learned accurately where the war-parties were. In the attack itself he invariably used mounted riflemen, men skilled in forest warfare, who rode tough little horses, on which they galloped at speed through the forest. Once in position, they did the actual fighting on foot, sheltering themselves carefully behind the tree-trunks. He moved with extreme rapidity and attacked with instantaneous suddenness, using ambushes and surprises wherever practicable.<sup>1</sup> His knowledge of the whereabouts and size of the hostile parties, and the speed of his own movements,

<sup>1</sup> The old Tennessee historians, headed by Haywood, base their accounts of the actions on statements made by the pioneers, or some of the pioneers, forty or fifty years after

generally enabled him to attack with the advantage of numbers greatly on his side. He could then out-flank or partially surround the Indians, while his sudden rush demoralized them; so that, in striking contrast to most other Indian fighters, he inflicted a far greater loss than he received. He never fought a big pitched battle, but, by in-

the event; and they do a great deal of bragging about the prowess of the old Indian fighters. The latter did most certainly perform mighty deeds; but often in an entirely different way from that generally recorded; for they faced a foe who on his own ground was infinitely more to be dreaded than the best trained European regulars. Thus Haywood says that after the battle of the Island Flats the whites were so encouraged that thenceforward they never asked concerning their enemies, "How many are they?" but, "Where are they?" Of course, this is a mere piece of barbaric boasting. If the whites had really acted on any such theory there would have been a constant succession of disasters like that at the Blue Licks. Sevier's latest biographer, Mr. Kirke, in the *Rear-guard of the Revolution*, goes far beyond even the old writers. For instance, on p. 141, he speaks of Sevier's victories being "often" gained over "twenty times his own number" of Indians. As a matter of fact, one of the proofs of Sevier's skill as a commander is that he almost always fought with the advantage of numbers on his side. Not a single instance can be produced where either he or any one else during his lifetime gained a victory over twenty times his number of Indians unless the sieges are counted. It is necessary to keep in mind the limitations under which Haywood did his work, in order to write truthfully; but a debt of gratitude will always be due him for the history he wrote. Like Marshall's, it is the book of one who himself knew the pioneers, and it has preserved very much of value which would otherwise have been lost. The same holds true of Ramsey.

cessantly harrying and scattering the different war bands, he struck such terror to the hearts of the Indians that he again and again, in a succession of wars, forced them into truces, and for the moment freed the settlements from their ravages. He was almost the only commander on the frontier who ever brought an Indian war, of whatever length, to an end, doing a good deal of damage to his foes and suffering very little himself. Still, he never struck a crushing blow, nor conquered a permanent peace. He never did anything to equal Clark's campaigns in the Illinois and against Vincennes, and, of course, he cannot for a moment be compared to his rival and successor, grim Old Hickory, the destroyer of the Creeks and the hero of New Orleans.

When the men of the Holston or upper Tennessee valley settlements reached their homes after the King's Mountain expedition, they found them menaced by the Cherokees. Congress had endeavored in vain to persuade the chiefs of this tribe to make a treaty of peace, or at least to remain neutral. The efforts of the British agents to embroil them with the whites were completely successful; and in November the Otari or Overhill warriors began making inroads along the frontier. They did not attack in large bands. A constant succession of small parties moved swiftly through the country, burning cabins, taking scalps, and,

above all, stealing horses. As the most effectual way of stopping such inroads, the alarmed and angered settlers resolved to send a formidable retaliatory expedition against the Overhill towns.<sup>1</sup> All the Holston settlements both north and south of the Virginia line joined in sending troops. By the first week in December, 1780, seven hundred mounted riflemen were ready to march, under the joint leadership of Colonel Arthur Campbell and of Sevier, the former being the senior officer. They were to meet at an appointed place on the French Broad.

Sevier started first, with between two and three hundred of his Watauga and Nolichucky followers. He marched down to the French Broad, but could hear nothing of Campbell. He was on the great war trace of the southern Indians, and his scouts speedily brought him word that they had exchanged shots with a Cherokee war-party, on its way to the settlements, and not far distant on the other side of the river. He instantly crossed and made a swift march towards the would-be marauders, camping on Boyd's Creek. The scouts were out by sunrise next morning—December 16th—and speedily found the Indian encampment, which the warriors had just left. On receipt of the news, Sevier ordered the scouts to run on,

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. Letter of Governor Thomas Jefferson, February 17, 1781.



attack the Indians, and then instantly retreat, so as to draw them into an ambushade. Meanwhile, the main body followed cautiously after, the men spread out in a long line, with the wings advanced, the left wing under Major Jesse Walton, the right under Major Jonathan Tipton, while Sevier himself commanded the centre, which advanced along the trail by which the scouts were to retreat. When the Indians were drawn into the middle the two wings were to close in, when the whole party would be killed or captured.

The plan worked well. The scouts soon came up with the warriors, and, after a moment's firing, ran back, with the Indians in hot pursuit. Sevier's men lay hid, and when the leading warriors were close up they rose and fired. Walton's wing closed in promptly; but Tipton was too slow, and the startled Cherokees ran off through the opening he had left, rushed into a swamp impassable for horsemen, and scattered out, each man for himself, being soon beyond pursuit. Nevertheless, Sevier took thirteen scalps, many weapons, and all their plunder. In some of their bundles there were proclamations from Sir Henry Clinton and other British commanders.<sup>1</sup> The Indians were too

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. Copy of the official report of Colonel Arthur Campbell, January 15, 1781. The accounts of this battle of Boyd's Creek illustrate well the growth of such an affair under the hands of writers who place confidence in all kinds of tradition, especially if they care more for picturesque-

surprised and panic-struck to offer any serious resistance, and not a man of Sevier's force was even wounded.

Having thus made a very pretty stroke, Sevier returned to the French Broad, where Campbell joined him on the 22d, with four hundred troops. Among them were a large number of Shelby's

ness than for accuracy. The contemporary official report is explicit. There were three hundred whites and seventy Indians. Of the latter thirteen were slain. Campbell's whole report shows a jealousy of Sevier, whom he probably knew well enough was a man of superior ability to himself; but this jealousy appears mainly in the coloring. He does not change any material fact, and there is no reason for questioning the substantial truth of his statements.

Forty years afterward Haywood writes of the affair, trying to tell simply the truth, but obliged to rely mainly on oral tradition. He speaks of Sevier's troops as only two hundred in number; and says twenty-eight Indians were killed. He does not speak of the number of the Indians, but from the way he describes Sevier's troops as encircling them he evidently knew that the white men were more numerous than their foes. His mistake as to the number of Indian dead is easily explicable. The official report gives twenty-nine as the number killed in the entire campaign, and Haywood, as in the Island Flats battle, simply puts the total of several skirmishes into one.

Thirty years later comes Ramsey. He relies on traditions that have grown more circumstantial and less accurate. He gives two accounts of what he calls "one of the best fought battles in the border war of Tennessee"; one of these accounts is mainly true; the other entirely false; he does not try to reconcile them. He says three whites were wounded, although the official report says that in the whole campaign but one man was killed and two wounded. He reduces

men, under the command of Major Joseph Martin. The next day the seven hundred horsemen made a forced march to the Little Tennessee; and, on the 24th, crossed it unopposed, making a feint at one ford, while the main body passed rapidly over another. The Indians did not have the numbers to oppose so formidable a body of good fighters, and only ventured on a little very long-range and harmless skirmishing with the vanguard. Dividing into two bodies, the troops destroyed Chota and the other towns up and down the stream, finding in them a welcome supply of provisions.

Sevier's force to 170 men, and calls the Indians "a large body."

Thirty-four years later comes Mr. Kirke, with the *Rear-Guard of the Revolution*. Out of his inner consciousness he evolves the fact that there were "not less than a thousand" Indians, whom Sevier, at the head of one hundred and seventy men, vanquishes, after a heroic combat, in which Sevier and some others perform a variety of purely imaginary feats. By diminishing the number of the whites, and increasing that of the Indians, he thus makes the relative force of the latter about *twenty-five times as great as it really was*, and converts a clever ambushade, whereby the whites gave a smart drubbing to a body of Indians one fourth their own number, into a Homeric victory over a host six times as numerous as the conquerors.

This is not a solitary instance; on the contrary, it is typical of almost all that is gravely set forth as history by a number of writers on these western border wars, whose books are filled from cover to cover with just such matter. Almost all their statements are partly, and very many are wholly, without foundation.

The next day Martin, with a detachment, fell on a party of flying Indians, killed one, and captured seventeen horses loaded with clothing, skins, and the scanty household furniture of the cabins; while another detachment destroyed the part of Chilhowee that was on the nearer side of the river. On the 26th the rest of Chilhowee was burned, three Indians killed, and nine captured. Tipton, with one hundred and fifty men, was sent to attack another town beyond the river; but, owing to the fault of their commander,<sup>1</sup> this body failed to get across. The Indian woman, Nancy Ward, who in '76 had given the settlers timely warning of the intended attack by her tribesmen here came into camp. She brought overtures of peace from the chiefs, but to these Campbell and Sevier would not listen, as they wished first to demolish the Hiawassee towns, where the warriors had been especially hostile. Accordingly, they marched thither. On their way there were a couple of skirmishes, in which several Indians were killed and one white man. The latter, whose name was Elliot, was buried in the Tellico town, a cabin being burned down over his grave that the Indians might not know where it was. The

<sup>1</sup> His "unmilitary behavior," says Campbell. Ramsey makes him one of the (imaginary) wounded at Boyd's Creek Kirke improves on this by describing him as falling "badly wounded" just as he was about to move his wing forward, and ascribes his fall to the failure of the wing to advance.

Indians watched the army from the hills. At one point a warrior was seen stationed on a ridge to beat a drum and give signals to the rest; but the spies of the whites stole on him unawares, and shot him. The Hiawassee towns and all the stores of provisions they contained were destroyed, the work being finished on the last day of the year.

On January 1, 1781, the army broke up into detachments which went home by different routes, some additional towns being destroyed. The Indians never ventured to offer the invaders a pitched battle. Many of the war-parties were absent on the frontier, and, at the very time their own country was being invaded, they committed ravages in Powell's Valley, along the upper Holston, and on the Kentucky road, near Cumberland Gap. The remaining warriors were cowed by Sevier's first success, and were puzzled by the rapidity with which the troops moved; for the mounted riflemen went at speed wherever they wished, and were not encumbered by baggage, each man taking only his blanket and a wallet of parched corn.

All the country of the Overhill Cherokees was laid waste, a thousand cabins were burned and fifty thousand bushels of corn destroyed. Twenty-nine warriors in all were killed, and seventeen women and children captured, not including the family of Nancy Ward, who were treated as

friends, not prisoners. But one white man was killed and two wounded.<sup>1</sup>

In the burnt towns and on the dead warriors were found many letters and proclamations from the British agents and commanders, showing that almost every chief in the nation had been carrying

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. Arthur Campbell's official report. The figures of the cabins and corn destroyed are probably exaggerated. All the Tennessee historians, down to Phelan, are hopelessly in the dark over this campaign. Haywood actually duplicates it (pp. 63 and 99) recounting it first as occurring in '79, and then with widely changed incidents, as happening in '81—making two expeditions. When he falls into such a tremendous initial error, it is not to be wondered at that the details he gives are very untrustworthy. Ramsey corrects Haywood as far as the two separate expeditions are concerned, but he makes a number of reckless statements apparently on no better authority than the traditions current among the border people, sixty or seventy years after the event. These stand on the same foundation with the baseless tale that makes Isaac Shelby take part in the battle of Island Flats. The Tennessee historians treat Sevier as being the chief commander; but he was certainly under Campbell; the address they sent out to the Indians is signed by Campbell first, Sevier second, and Martin third. Haywood, followed by Ramsey, says that Sevier marched to the Chickamauga towns, which he destroyed, and then marched down the Coosa to the region of the Cypress Swamps. But Campbell's official report says that the towns "in the neighborhood of Chickamauga and the Town of Cologn, situated on the sources of the Mobile" were *not* destroyed, nor visited, and he carefully enumerates all the towns that the troops burned and the regions they went through. They did not go near Chickamauga nor the Coosa. Unless there is some documentary evidence in favor of the assertions of Haywood and

on a double game; for the letters covered the periods at which they had been treating with the Americans and earnestly professing their friendship for the latter and their determination to be neutral in the contest then waging. As Campbell wrote in his report to the Virginian governor, no people had ever acted with more foolish duplicity.

Before returning, the three commanders, Campbell, Sevier, and Martin, issued an address to the Otari chiefs and warriors, and sent it by one of their captured braves, who was to deliver it to the headmen.<sup>1</sup> The address set forth what the white troops had done, telling the Indians it was a just punishment for their folly and perfidy in consenting to carry out the wishes of the British agents; it warned them shortly to come in and treat for peace lest their country should again be visited, and not only laid waste, but conquered and held Ramsey, they cannot for a moment be taken against the explicit declaration of the official report.

Mr. Kirke merely follows Ramsey, and adds a few flourishes of his own, such as that at the Chickamauga towns "the blood of the slaughtered cattle dyed red the Tennessee" for some twenty miles, and that "the homes of over forty thousand people were laid in ashes." This last estimate is just about ten times too strong, for the only country visited was that of the Overhill Cherokees, and the outside limit for the population of the devastated territory would be some four thousand souls, or a third of the Cherokee tribe, which all told numbered perhaps twelve thousand people.

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS. Issued at Kai-a-tee, January 4, 1781; the copy sent to Governor Jefferson is dated February 28th.

for all time. Some chiefs came in to talk, and were met at Chota <sup>1</sup>; but though they were anxious for peace they could not restrain the vindictive spirit of the young braves, nor prevent them from harassing the settlements. Nor could the white commanders keep the frontiersmen from themselves settling within the acknowledged boundaries of the Indian territory. They were constantly pressing against the lines, and eagerly burst through at every opening. When the army marched back from burning the Overhill towns, they found that adventurous settlers had followed in its wake, and had already made clearings and built cabins near all the best springs down to the French Broad. People of every rank showed keen desire to encroach on the Indian lands.<sup>2</sup>

The success of this expedition gave much relief to the border, and was hailed with pleasure throughout Virginia <sup>3</sup> and North Carolina. Nevertheless, the war continued without a break, bands of warriors from the middle towns coming to the help of their disheartened Overhill brethren. Sevier determined to try one of his swift, sudden

<sup>1</sup> The Tennessee historians all speak of this as a treaty; and probably a meeting did take place, as described; but it led to nothing, and no actual treaty was made until some months later.

<sup>2</sup> Calendar of *Virginia State Papers*, ii. Letter of Colonel William Christian to Governor of Virginia, April 10, 1781.

<sup>3</sup> State Department MSS., No. 15, February 25, 1781.



strokes against these new foes. Early in March he rode off at the head of a hundred and fifty picked horsemen, resolute to penetrate the hitherto untrodden wilds that shielded the far-off fastnesses where dwelt the Erati. Nothing shows his daring, adventurous nature more clearly than his starting on such an expedition; and only a man of strong will and much power could have carried it to a successful conclusion. For a hundred and fifty miles he led his horsemen through a mountainous wilderness where there was not so much as a hunter's trail. They wound their way through the deep defiles and among the towering peaks of the Great Smoky Mountains, descending by passes so precipitous that it was with difficulty the men led down them even such surefooted beasts as their hardy hill-horses. At last they burst out of the woods and fell like a thunderbolt on the towns of the Erati, nestling in their high gorges. The Indians were completely taken by surprise; they had never dreamed that they could be attacked in their innermost strongholds, cut off, as they were, from the nearest settlements by vast trackless wastes of woodland and lofty, bald-topped mountain chains. They had warriors enough to overwhelm Sevier's band by sheer force of numbers, but he gave them no time to gather. Falling on their main town he took it by surprise and stormed it, killing thirty

warriors and capturing a large number of women and children. Of these, however, he was able to bring in but twenty, who were especially valuable because they could be exchanged for white captives. He burnt two other towns and three small villages, destroying much provision and capturing two hundred horses. He himself had but one man killed and one wounded. Before the startled warriors could gather to attack him he plunged once more into the wilderness, carrying his prisoners and plunder, and driving the captured horses before him; and so swift were his motions that he got back in safety to the settlements.<sup>1</sup> The length of the journey, the absolutely untravelled nature of the country, which no white man, save perhaps an occasional wandering hunter, had ever before traversed, the extreme difficulty of the rout over the wooded, cliff-scarred mountains, and the strength of the Cherokee towns that were to be attacked, all combined to render the feat most difficult. For its successful performance there

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Letters of Colonel William Christian, April 10, 1781; of Joseph Martin, March 1st; and of Arthur Campbell, March 28th. The accounts vary slightly: for instance, Christian gives him one hundred and eighty, Campbell only one hundred and fifty men. One account says he killed thirty, another twenty Indians. Martin, by the way, speaks bitterly of the militia as men "who do duty at times as their inclination leads them." The incident, brilliant enough anyhow, of course grows a little under Ramsey and Haywood; and Mr. Kirke fairly surpasses himself when he comes to it.

was need of courage, hardihood, woodcraft, good judgment, stealth, and great rapidity of motion. It was one of the most brilliant exploits of the border war.

Even after his return, Sevier was kept busy pursuing and defeating small bands of plundering savages. In the early summer he made a quick inroad south of the French Broad. At the head of over a hundred hard riders, he fell suddenly on the camp of a war-party, took a dozen scalps, and scattered the rest of the Indians in every direction. A succession of these blows completely humbled the Cherokees, and they sued for peace; thanks to Sevier's tactics, they had suffered more loss than they had inflicted, an almost unknown thing in these wars with the forest Indians. In mid-summer peace was made by a treaty at the Great Island of the Holston.

During the latter half of the year, when danger from the Indians had temporarily ceased, Sevier and Shelby led down bands of mounted riflemen to assist the American forces in the Carolinas and Georgia. They took an honorable share under Marion in some skirmishes against the British and Hessians<sup>1</sup>; but they did not render any special

<sup>1</sup> Shelby MSS. Of course Shelby paints these skirmishes in very strong colors. Haywood and Ramsey base their accounts purely on his papers. Ramsey and his followers endeavor to prove that the mountain men did excellently in these 1781 campaigns; but the endeavor is futile. They were good for

service, and Greene found he could place no reliance on them for the actual stubborn campaigns that broke the strength of the king's armies. They enlisted for very short periods, and when their time was up promptly returned to their mountains, for they were sure to get homesick and uneasy about their families; and neither the officers nor the soldiers had any proper idea of the value of obedience. Among their own hills and forests, and for their own work, they were literally unqualified; and they were ready enough to swoop down from their strongholds, strike some definite blow, or do some single piece of valiant fighting in the low country, and then fall back as quickly as they had come. But they were not particularly suited for pitched battles in the open, and were quite unfitted to carry on a long campaign.

In one respect, the mountain men deserve great some one definite stroke, but their shortcomings were manifest the instant a long campaign was attempted; and the comments of the South Carolina historians upon their willingness to leave at unfortunate moments are on the whole just. They behaved somewhat as Stark and the victors at Bennington did when they left the American army before Saratoga; although their conduct was on the whole better than that of Stark's men. They were a brave, hardy, warlike band of irregulars, probably better fighters than any similar force on this continent or elsewhere; but occasional brilliant exceptions must not blind us to the general inefficiency of the Revolutionary militia, and their great inferiority to the Continentals of Washington, Greene, and Wayne. See Appendix C.

credit for their conduct in the Carolinas. As a general thing, they held aloof from the plundering. The frightful character of the civil war between the whigs and tories, and the excesses of the British armies, had utterly demoralized the Southern States; they were cast into a condition of anarchic disorder and the conflicts between the patriots and loyalists degenerated into a bloody scramble for murder and plunder wherein the whigs behaved as badly as ever the tories had done.<sup>1</sup> Men were shot, houses burned, horses stolen, and negroes kidnapped; even the unfortunate freedmen of color were hurried off and sold

<sup>1</sup> In the Clay MSS. there is a letter from Jesse Benton (the father of the great Missouri Senator) to Colonel Thomas Hart, of March 23d, 1783, which gives a glimpse of the way in which the tories were treated even after the British had been driven out; it also shows how soon maltreatment of royalists was turned into general misrule and rioting. The letter runs, in part, as follows:

"I cannot help mentioning to You an Evil which seems intailed upon the upper part of this State, to wit, Mobbs and commotions amongst the People. I shall give you the particulars of the last Work of this kind which lately happened, & which is not yet settled; Plunder being the first cause. The Scoundrels, under the cloak of great Whigs cannot bear the thought of paying the unfortunate Wretches whom Fame and ill will call Tories (though many of them perhaps honest, industrious and useful men) for plundered property; but on the other Hand think they together with their Wives and Children (who are now begging for Mercy) ought to be punished to the utmost extremity. I am sorry that Col. O Neal and his brother Pete, who have been useful men and whom

into slavery. It was with the utmost difficulty that a few wise and good commanders, earnest lovers of their country, like the gallant General Pickens, were able to put a partial stop to these outrages, and gather a few brave men to help in overcoming the foreign foe. To the honor of

I am in hopes are pretty clear of plundering, should have a hand in Arbitrary measures at this Day when the Civil Laws might take place.

"One Jacob Graves son of John of old Stinking Quarter, went off & was taken with the British Army, escaped from the Guards, came & surrendered himself to Gen'l Butler, about the middle of Last month & went to his Family upon Parole. Col. O Neal being informed of this, armed himself with gun and sword, went to Graves's in a passion, Graves shut the Door, O Neal broke it down, Graves I believe thinking his own Life at stake, took his Brothers Gun which happened to be in the house & shot O Neal through the Breast.

"O Neal has suffered much but is now recovering. This accident has inflamed and set to work those who were afraid of suffering for their unjust and unwarrantable Deeds, the Ignorant honest men are also willing to take part against their Rulers & I don't know when nor where it is to end, but I wish it was over. At the Guilford Feb'y Court Peter O Neal & others armed with clubs in the Face of the Court then sitting and in the Court house too, beat some men called Tories so much that their Lives were despaired of, broke up the Court and finally have stopd the civil Laws in that County. Your old Friend Col. Dunn got out at Window, fled in a Fright, took cold and died immediately. Rowan County Court I am told was also broke up.

"If O Neal should die I fear that a number of the unhappy wretches called Tories will be Murdered, and that a man disposed to do justice dare not interfere, indeed the times seem to imitate the commencement of the Regulators."

the troops under Sevier and Shelby, be it said that they took little part in these misdeeds. There were doubtless some men among them who shared in all the evil of that turbulent time; but most of these frontier riflemen, though poor and ignorant, were sincerely patriotic; they marched to fight the oppressor, to drive out the stranger, not to ill-treat their own friends and countrymen.

Towards the end of these campaigns, which marked the close of the Revolutionary struggle, Shelby was sent to the North Carolina Legislature, where he served for a couple of terms. Then, when peace was formally declared, he removed to Kentucky, where he lived ever afterwards. Sevier stayed in his home on the Nolichucky, to be thenceforth, while his life lasted, the leader in peace and war of his beloved mountaineers.

Early in 1782, fresh difficulties arose with the Indians. In the war just ended the Cherokees themselves had been chiefly to blame. The whites were now in their turn the aggressors, the trouble being, as usual, that they encroached on lands secured to the red men by solemn treaty. The Watauga settlements had been kept compact by the presence of the neighboring Indians. They had grown steadily but slowly. They extended their domain slightly after every treaty, such treaty being usually though not always the sequel to a successful war; but they never gained any

large stretch of territory at once. Had it not been for the presence of the hostile tribes they would have scattered far and wide over the country, and could not have formed any government.

The preceding spring (1781) the land office had been closed, not to be opened until after peace with Great Britain was definitely declared, the utter demoralization of the government bringing the work to a standstill. The rage for land speculation, however, which had continued even in the stormiest days of the Revolution, grew tenfold in strength after Yorktown, when peace at no distant day was assured. The wealthy land speculators of the seaboard counties made agreements of various sorts with the more prominent frontier leaders in the effort to secure large tracts of good country. The system of surveying was much better than in Kentucky, but it was still by no means perfect, as each man placed his plot wherever he chose, first describing the boundary marks rather vaguely, and leaving an illiterate old hunter to run the lines. Moreover, the intending settler frequently absented himself for several months, or was temporarily chased away by the Indians, while the official record books were most imperfect. In consequence, many conflicts ensued. The frontiersmen settled on any spot of good land they saw fit, and clung to it with defiant tenacity,



whether or not it afterwards proved to be on a tract previously granted to some land company or rich private individual who had never been a hundred miles from the seacoast. Public officials went into these speculations. Thus Major Joseph Martin, while an Indian agent, tried to speculate in Cherokee lands.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the officer's public influence was speedily destroyed when he once undertook such operations; he could no longer do justice to outsiders. Occasionally, the falseness of his position made him unjust to the Indians; more often it forced him into league with the latter, and made him hostile to the borderers.<sup>2</sup>

Before the end of the Revolution, the trouble between the actual settlers and the land speculators became so great that a small subsidiary civil war was threatened. The rough riflemen resolutely declined to leave their clearings, while the titular owners appealed to the authority of the loose land laws, and wished them to be backed up by the armed force of the State.<sup>3</sup>

The government of North Carolina was far too weak to turn out the frontiersmen in favor of the speculators to whom the land had been granted,—often by fraudulent means, or at least for a

<sup>1</sup> See *Virginia State Papers*, iii., 560.

<sup>2</sup> This is a chief reason why the reports of the Indian agents are so often bitterly hostile towards those of their own color.

<sup>3</sup> See in Durrett MSS. "Papers relating to Isaac Shelby"; letter of John Taylor to Isaac Shelby, June 8, 1782.

ridiculously small sum of money. Still less could it prevent its unruly subjects from trespassing on the Indian country, or protect them if they were themselves threatened by the savages. It could not do justice as between its own citizens, and it was quite incompetent to preserve the peace between them and outsiders.<sup>1</sup> The borderers were left to work out their own salvation.

By the beginning of 1782, settlements were being made south of the French Broad. This alarmed and irritated the Indians, and they sent repeated remonstrances to Major Martin, who was Indian agent, and also to the governor of North Carolina. The latter wrote Sevier, directing him to drive off the intruding settlers, and pull down their cabins. Sevier did not obey. He took purely the frontier view of the question, and he had no intention of harassing his own staunch adherents for the sake of the savages whom he had so often fought. Nevertheless, the Cherokees always liked him personally, for he was as open-handed and free-hearted to them as to every one else, and treated them to the best he had whenever they came to his house. He had much justification for his refusal, too, in the fact that the Indians themselves were always committing outrages. When the Americans reconquered the Southern States many Tories fled to the Cherokee towns, and incited the

<sup>1</sup> Calendar of *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., p. 213.

savages to hostility; and the outlying settlements of the borderers were being burned and plundered by members of the very tribes whose chiefs were at the same time writing to the governor to complain of the white encroachments.<sup>1</sup>

When, in April, the Cherokees held a friendly talk with Evan Shelby they admitted that the tories among them and their own evil-disposed young men committed ravages on the whites, but asserted that most of them greatly desired peace, for they were weak and distressed, and had shrunk much in numbers.<sup>2</sup> The trouble was that when they were so absolutely unable to control their own bad characters, it was inevitable that they should become embroiled with the whites.

The worst members of each race committed crimes against the other, and not only did the retaliation often fall on the innocent, but, unfortunately, even the good men were apt to make common cause with the criminals of their own color. Thus in July the Chickamaugas sent in a talk for peace; but at that very time a band of their young braves made a foray into Powell's Valley, killing two settlers and driving off some stock. They were pursued, one of their number killed, and most of the stock retaken. In the same month, on the other hand, two friendly Indians, who had a canoe laden with peltry, were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.  
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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171, April 29, 1782.

murdered on the Holston by a couple of white ruffians, who then attempted to sell the furs. They were discovered, and the furs taken from them; but to their disgrace be it said, the people round about would not suffer the criminals to be brought to justice.<sup>1</sup>

The mutual outrages continued throughout the summer, and in September they came to a head. The great majority of the Otari of the Overhill towns were still desirous of peace, and after a council of their headmen the chief Old Tassel, of the town of Chota, sent on their behalf a strong appeal to the governors of both Virginia and North Carolina. The document is written with such dignity, and yet in a tone of such curious pathos, that it is worth giving in full, as putting in strongest possible form the Indian side of the case, and as a sample of the best of these Indian "talks."

"A talk to Colonel Joseph Martin, by the Old Tassell, in Chota, the 25th of September, 1782, in favour of the whole nation. For His Excellency, the Governor of North Carolina. Present, all the chiefs of the friendly towns and a number of young men.

"Brother: I am now going to speak to you. I hope you will listen to me. A string. I intended to come this fall and see you, but there was such

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 248.

confusion in our country, I thought it best for me to stay at home and send my Talks by our friend Colonel Martin, who promised to deliver them safe to you. We are a poor distressed people, that is in great trouble, and we hope our elder brother will take pity on us and do us justice. Your people from Nolichucky are daily pushing us out of our lands. We have no place to hunt on. Your people have built houses within one day's walk of our towns. We don't want to quarrel with our elder brother; we, therefore, hope our elder brother will not take our lands from us, that the Great Man above gave us. He made you and he made us; we are all his children, and we hope our elder brother will take pity on us, and not take our lands from us that our father gave us, because he is stronger than we are. We are the first people that ever lived on this land; it is ours, and why will our elder brother take it from us? It is true, some time past, the people over the great water persuaded some of our young men to do some mischief to our elder brother, which our principal men were sorry for. But you our elder brothers come to our towns and took satisfaction, and then sent for us to come and treat with you, which we did. Then our elder brother promised to have the line run between us agreeable to the first treaty, and all that should be found over the line should be moved off. But it is not done yet. We have

done nothing to offend our elder brother since the last treaty, and why should our elder brother want to quarrel with us? We have sent to the Governor of Virginia on the same subject. We hope that between you both, you will take pity on your younger brother, and send Col. Sevier, who is a good man, to have all your people moved off our land. I should say a great deal more, but our friend, Colonel Martin, knows all our grievances, and he can inform you. A string.”<sup>1</sup>

The speech is interesting, because it shows that the Indians both liked and respected Sevier, their most redoubtable foe; and because it acknowledges that in the previous war the Cherokees themselves had been the wrong-doers. Even Old Tassel had been implicated in the treacherous conduct of the chiefs at that period; but he generally acted very well, and belonged with the large number of his tribesmen who, for no fault of their own, were shamefully misused by the whites.

The white intruders were not removed. No immediate collision followed on this account; but when Old Tassel's talk was forwarded to the governor, small parties of Chickamaugas, assisted by young braves from among the Creeks and Erati, had already begun to commit ravages on the out-

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey, 271. The “strings” of wampum were used to mark periods and to indicate, and act as reminders of, special points in the speech.

lying settlements. Two weeks before Old Tassel spoke, on the 11th of September, a family of whites was butchered on Moccasin Creek. The neighbors gathered, pursued the Indians, and recaptured the survivors.<sup>1</sup> Other outrages followed throughout the month. Sevier as usual came to the rescue of the angered settlers. He gathered a couple of hundred mounted riflemen, and made one of his swift retaliatory inroads. His men were simply volunteers, for there was no money in the country treasury with which to pay them or provide them with food and provisions; it was their own quarrel, and they furnished their own services free, each bringing his horse, rifle, ammunition, blanket, and wallet of parched corn. Naturally, such troops made war purely according to their own ideas, and cared nothing whatever for the commands of those governmental bodies who were theoretically their superiors. They were poor men, staunch patriots, who had suffered much and done all they could during the Revolution<sup>2</sup>; now, when threatened by the savages, they were left to protect themselves, and they did it in their own way. Sevier led his force down through the Overhill towns, doing their people no injury and holding a peace-talk with them. They gave him a half-breed, John Watts, afterwards one of their chiefs, as guide; and he marched quickly against some of the

<sup>1</sup> Calendar of *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., p. 317. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Chickamauga towns, where he destroyed the cabins and provision hoards. Afterwards, he penetrated to the Coosa, where he burned one or two Creek villages. The inhabitants fled from the towns before he could reach them; and his own motions were so rapid that they could never gather in force strong enough to assail him.<sup>1</sup> Very few In-

<sup>1</sup> The authority for this expedition is Haywood (p. 106); Ramsey simply alters one or two unimportant details. Haywood commits so many blunders concerning the early Indian wars that it is only safe to regard his accounts as true in outline; and even for this outline it is to be wished we had additional authority. Mr. Kirke, in the *Rear-Guard*, p. 313, puts in an account of a battle on Lookout Mountain, wherein Sevier and his two hundred men defeat "five hundred Tories and savages." He does not even hint at his authority for this, unless in a sentence of the preface where he says: "A large part of my material I have derived from what may be termed 'original sources'—old settlers." Of course the statement of an old settler is worthless when it relates to an alleged important event which took place 105 years before, and yet escaped the notice of all contemporary and subsequent historians. In plain truth, unless Mr. Kirke can produce something like contemporary—or approximately contemporary—documentary evidence for this mythical battle, it must be set down as pure invention. It is with real reluctance that I speak thus of Mr. Kirke's books. He has done good service in popularizing the study of early western history, and especially in calling attention to the wonderful careers of Sevier and Robertson. Had he laid no claim to historic accuracy I should have been tempted to let his books pass unnoticed; but in the preface to his *John Sevier* he especially asserts that his writings "may be safely accepted as authentic history." On first reading his book I was surprised and pleased at the information it contained; when I



dians were killed, and apparently none of Sevier's people; a tory, an ex-British sergeant, then living with an Indian squaw, was among the slain.

This foray brought but a short relief to the settlements. On Christmas day three men were killed on the Clinch; and it was so unusual a season for the war-parties to be abroad that the attack caused widespread alarm.<sup>1</sup> Early in the spring of 1783 the ravages began again.<sup>2</sup> Some time before, General Wayne had addressed the Creeks and Choctaws, reproaching them with the aid they had given the British, and threatening them with a bloody chastisement if they would not keep the peace.<sup>3</sup> A threat from Mad Anthony meant something, and the Indians paid at least momentary heed. Georgia enjoyed a short respite, which, as usual, the more reckless borderers strove to bring to an end by encroaching on the Indian lands, while the State authorities, on the other hand, did their best to stop not only such encroachments, but also all travelling and hunting in the Indian country, and especially the

came to study the subject I was still more surprised and much less pleased at discovering such wholesale inaccuracy—to be perfectly just, I should be obliged to use a stronger term. Even a popular history ought to pay at least some little regard to truth.

<sup>1</sup> Calendar of *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., p. 424.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 479.

<sup>3</sup> State Department MSS. Letters of Washington, No. 152, vol. xi., February 1, 1782.

marking of trees. This last operation, as Governor Lyman Hall remarked in his proclamation, gave "Great Offence to the Indians,"<sup>1</sup> who thoroughly understood that the surveys indicated the approaching confiscation of their territory.

Towards the end of 1783 a definite peace was concluded with the Chickasaws, who ever afterwards remained friendly,<sup>2</sup> but the Creeks, while amusing the Georgians by pretending to treat, let their parties of young braves find an outlet for their energies by assailing the Holston and Cumberland settlements.<sup>3</sup> The North Carolina Legislature, becoming impatient, passed a law summarily appropriating certain lands that were claimed by the unfortunate Cherokees. The troubled peace was continually threatened by the actions either of ungovernable frontiersmen or of bloodthirsty and vindictive Indians.<sup>4</sup> Small parties of scouts were incessantly employed in patrolling the southern border.

Nevertheless, all pressing danger from the Indians was over. The Holston settlements thrived lustily. Wagon-roads were made, leading into both Virginia and North Carolina. Settlers thronged into the country, the roads were well travelled, and the clearings became very numer-

<sup>1</sup> *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, July 10, 1783.

<sup>2</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., p. 548.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 532.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 560.

ous. The villages began to feel safe without stockades, save those on the extreme border, which were still built in the usual frontier style. The scattering log school-houses and meeting-houses increased steadily in numbers, and in 1783, Methodism, destined to become the leading and typical creed of the West, first gained a foothold along the Holston, with a congregation of seventy-six members.<sup>1</sup>

These people of the upper Tennessee valleys long continued one in interest as in blood. Whether they lived north or south of the Virginia or North Carolina boundary, they were more closely united to one another than they were to the seaboard governments of which they formed part. Their history is not generally studied as a whole, because one portion of their territory continued part of Virginia, while the remainder was cut off from North Carolina as the nucleus of a separate State. But in the time of their importance, in the first formative period of the young West, all these Holston settlements must be treated together, or else their real place in our history will be totally misunderstood.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *History of Methodism in Tennessee*, John B. M'Ferrin (Nashville, 1873), i., 26.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing gives a more fragmentary and twisted view of our history than to treat it purely by States; this is the reason that a State history is generally of so little importance when taken by itself. On the other hand, it is of course true

The two towns of Abingdon and Jonesboro, respectively north and south of the line, were the centres of activity. In Jonesboro the log courthouse, with its clapboard roof, was abandoned, and in its place a twenty-four-foot-square building of hewn logs was put up; it had a shingled roof and plank floors, and contained a justice's bench, a lawyers' and clerk's bar, and a sheriff's box to sit in. The county of Washington was now further subdivided, its southwest portion being erected into the county of Greene, so that there were three counties of North Carolina west of the mountains. The court of the new county consisted of several justices, who appointed their own clerk, sheriff, attorney for the State, entry-taker, surveyor, and registrar. They appropriated money to pay for the use of the log-house where they held sessions, laid a tax of a shilling specie on every hundred pounds for the purpose of erecting public buildings, laid out roads, issued licenses to build mills, and bench warrants to take suspected persons.<sup>1</sup>

Abingdon was a typical little frontier town of

that the fundamental features in our history can only be shown by giving proper prominence to the individual State life.

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey, 277. The North Carolina Legislature, in 1783, passed an act giving Henderson two hundred thousand acres, and appointed Joseph Martin Indian agent, arranged for a treaty with the Cherokees, and provided that any good men should be allowed to trade with the Indians.

the class that immediately succeeded the stock-aded hamlets. A public square had been laid out, round which, and down the straggling main street, the few buildings were scattered; all were of logs, from the court-house and small jail down. There were three or four taverns. The two best were respectively houses of entertainment for those who were fond of their brandy, and for the temperate. There were a blacksmith shop and a couple of stores.<sup>1</sup> The traders brought their goods from Alexandria, Baltimore, or even Philadelphia, and made a handsome profit. The lower taverns were scenes of drunken frolic, often ending in free fights. There was no constable, and the sheriff, when called to quell a disturbance, summoned as a posse those of the bystanders whom he deemed friendly to the cause of law and order. There were many strangers passing through; and the better class of these were welcome at the rambling log-houses of the neighboring backwoods gentry, who often themselves rode into the taverns to learn from the travellers what was happening in the great world beyond the mountains. Court-day was a great occasion; all the neighborhood flocked in to gossip, lounge, race horses, and fight. Of course, in such gatherings there were always

<sup>1</sup> One was "kept by two Irishmen named Daniel and Manasses Freil" (*sic*; the names look very much more German than Irish).

certain privileged characters. At Abingdon, these were to be found in the persons of a hunter named Edward Callahan, and his wife Sukey. As regularly as court-day came round they appeared, Sukey driving a cart laden with pies, cakes, and drinkables, while Edward, whose rolls of furs and deer-hides were also in the cart, stalked at its tail on foot, in full hunter's dress, with rifle, powder-horn, and bullet-bag, while his fine, well-taught hunting-dog followed at his heels. Sukey would halt in the middle of the street, make an awning for herself and begin business, while Edward strolled off to see about selling his peltries. Sukey never would take out a license, and so was often in trouble for selling liquor. The judges were strict in proceeding against offenders—and even stricter against the unfortunate tories—but they had a humorous liking for Sukey, which was shared by the various grand juries. By means of some excuse or other she was always let off, and in return showed great gratitude to such of her benefactors as came near her mountain cabin.<sup>1</sup>

Court-day was apt to close with much hard drinking; for the backwoodsmen of every degree dearly loved whisky.

<sup>1</sup> Campbell MSS.; an account of the "Town of Abingdon," by David Campbell, who "first saw it in 1782."

## CHAPTER VII

### ROBERTSON FOUNDS THE CUMBERLAND SETTLEMENT, 1779-1780

ROBERTSON had no share in the glory of King's Mountain, and no part in the subsequent career of the men who won it; for at the time he was doing his allotted work, a work of at least equal importance, in a different field. The year before the mountaineers faced Ferguson, the man who had done more than any one in founding the settlements from which the victors came, had once more gone into the wilderness to build a new and even more typical frontier commonwealth, the westernmost of any yet founded by the backwoodsmen.

Robertson had been for ten years a leader among the Holston and Watauga people. He had at different times played the foremost part in organizing the civil government and in repelling outside attack. He had been particularly successful in his dealings with the Indians, and by his missions to them had managed to keep the peace unbroken on more than one occasion when a war would have been disastrous to the whites.

He was prosperous and successful in his private affairs; nevertheless, in 1779, the restless craving for change and adventure surged so strongly in his breast that it once more drove him forth to wander in the forest. In the true border temper, he determined to abandon the home he had made, and to seek out a new one hundreds of miles farther in the heart of the hunting-grounds of the red warriors.

The point pitched upon was the beautiful country lying along the great bend of the Cumberland. Many adventurous settlers were anxious to accompany Robertson, and, like him, to take their wives and children with them into the new land. It was agreed that a small party of explorers should go first in the early spring to plant corn, that the families might have it to eat when they followed in the fall.

The spot was already well known to hunters. Who had first visited it, cannot be said; though tradition has kept the names of several among the many who at times halted there while on their wanderings.<sup>1</sup> Old Kasper Mansker and others

<sup>1</sup> One Stone or Stoner, perhaps Boon's old associate, is the first whose name is given in the books. But in both Kentucky and Tennessee it is idle to try to find out exactly who the first explorers were. They were unlettered woodsmen; it is only by chance that some of their names have been kept and others lost; the point to be remembered is that many hunters were wandering over the land at the same time, that they



had made hunting trips thither for ten years past; and they had sometimes met the creole trappers from the Illinois. When Mansker first went to the Bluffs,<sup>1</sup> in 1769, the buffaloes were more numerous than he had ever seen them before; the ground literally shook under the gallop of the mighty herds, they crowded in dense throngs round the licks, and the forest resounded with their grunting bellows. He and other woodsmen came back there off and on, hunting and trapping, and living in huts made of buffalo-hides; just such huts as the hunters dwelt in on the Little Missouri and Powder rivers as late as 1883, except that the plainsmen generally made dug-outs in the sides of the buttes and used the hides only for the roofs and fronts. So the place was well known, and the reports of the hunters had made many settlers eager to visit it, though as yet no regular path led thither. In 1778, the first permanent settler arrived, in the person of a hunter named Spencer, who spent the following winter entirely alone in this remote wilderness, living in a hollow sycamore-tree. Spencer was a giant in his day, a man huge in body and limb, all whose life had been drifted to many different places, and that now and then an accident preserved the name of some hunter and of some place he visited.

<sup>1</sup> The locality where Nashborough was built, was sometimes spoken of as the Bluffs, and sometimes as the French Lick.

spent in the wilderness. He came to the bend of the Cumberland from Kentucky in the early spring, being in search of good land on which to settle. Other hunters were with him, and they stayed some time. A creole trapper from the Wabash was then living in a cabin on the south side of the river. He did not meet the new-comers; but one day he saw the huge moccasin tracks of Spencer, and on the following morning the party passed close by his cabin in chase of a wounded buffalo, halloing and shouting as they dashed through the underwood. Whether he thought them Indians, or whether, as is more likely, he shared the fear and dislike felt by most of the creoles for the American backwoodsmen, cannot be said; but certainly he left his cabin, swam the river, and, plunging into the forest, straightway fled to his kinsfolk on the banks of the Wabash. Spencer was soon left by his companions; though one of them stayed with him a short time, helping him to plant a field of corn. Then this man, too, wished to return. He had lost his hunting-knife; so Spencer went with him to the barrens of Kentucky, put him on the right path, and, breaking his own knife, gave his departing friend a piece of the metal. The undaunted old hunter himself returned to the banks of the Cumberland, and sojourned throughout the fall and winter in the neighborhood of the little clearing on which he

had raised the corn crop; a strange, huge, solitary man, self-reliant, unflinching, cut off from all his fellows by endless leagues of shadowy forest. Thus he dwelt alone in the vast dim wastes, wandering whithersoever he listed through the depths of the melancholy and wintry woods, sleeping by his camp-fire or in the hollow tree-trunk, ever ready to do battle against brute or human foe—a stark and sombre harbinger of the oncoming civilization.

Spencer's figure, seen through the mists that shrouds early western history, is striking and picturesque in itself; yet its chief interest lies in the fact that he was but a type of many other men whose lives were no less lonely and dangerous. He had no qualities to make him a leader when settlements sprang up around him. To the end of his days he remained a solitary hunter and Indian fighter, spurning restraint and comfort, and seeking the strong excitement of danger to give zest to his life. Even in the time of the greatest peril from the savages he would not stay shut up in the forts, but continued his roving, wandering life, trusting to his own quick senses, wonderful strength, and iron nerves. He even continued to lie out at night, kindling a fire, and then lying down to sleep far from it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Southwestern Monthly*, Nashville, 1852, vol. ii. General Hall's "Narrative."

Early in the year 1779, a leader of men came to the place where the old hunter had roamed and killed game; and with the new-comer came those who were to possess the land. Robertson left the Watauga settlements soon after the spring opened,<sup>1</sup> with eight companions, one of a them negro. He followed Boon's trace,—the Wilderness Road,—through Cumberland Gap, and across the Cumberland River. Then he struck off southwest through the wilderness, lightening his labor by taking the broad, well-beaten buffalo trails whenever they led in his direction; they were very distinct near the pools and springs, and especially going to and from the licks. The adventurers reached the bend of the Cumberland without mishap, and fixed on the neighborhood of the Bluffs, the ground near the French Lick, as that best suited for their purpose; and they planted a field of corn on the site of the future fortified village of

<sup>1</sup> It is very difficult to reconcile the dates of these early movements; even the contemporary documents are often a little vague, while Haywood, Ramsey, and Putnam are frequently months out of the way. Apparently, Robertson stayed as commissioner in Chota until February or March, 1779, when he gave warning of the intended raid of the Chickamaugas, and immediately afterwards came back to the settlements and started out for the Cumberland, before Shelby left on his Chickamauga expedition. But it is possible that he had left Chota before, and that another man was there as commissioner at the time of the Chickamauga raid which was followed by Shelby's counter-stroke,

Nashborough. A few days after their arrival they were joined by another batch of hunter-settlers, who had come out under the leadership of Kasper Mansker.

As soon as the corn was planted and cabins put up, most of the intending settlers returned to their old homes to bring out their families, leaving three of their number "to keep the buffaloes out of the corn."<sup>1</sup> Robertson himself first went north through the wilderness to see George Rogers Clark in Illinois, to purchase cabin-rights from him. This act gives an insight into at least some of the motives that influenced the adventurers. Doubtless, they were impelled largely by sheer restlessness and love of change and excitement,<sup>2</sup> and these motives would probably have induced them to act as they did, even had there been no others. But another and most powerful spring of action was the desire to gain land—not merely land for settlement, but land for speculative purposes. Wild land was then so abundant that the quantity literally seemed inexhaustible; and it was absolutely valueless until settled. Our forefathers may well be pardoned for failing to see that it was of more importance to have it owned

<sup>1</sup> Haywood, 83.

<sup>2</sup> Phelan, p. 111, fails to do justice to these motives, while very properly insisting on what earlier historians ignored, the intense desire for land speculation.

in small lots by actual settlers than to have it filled up quickly under a system of huge grants to individuals or corporations. Many wise and good men honestly believed that they would benefit the country at the same time that they enriched themselves by acquiring vast tracts of virgin wilderness, and then proceeding to people them. There was a rage for land speculation and land companies of every kind. The private correspondence of almost all the public men of the period, from Washington, Madison, and Gouverneur Morris down, is full of the subject. Innumerable people of position and influence dreamed of acquiring untold wealth in this manner. Almost every man of note was actually or potentially a land speculator; and in turn almost every prominent pioneer, from Clark and Boon to Shelby and Robertson, was either himself one of the speculators or an agent for those who were. Many people did not understand the laws on the subject, or hoped to evade them; and the hope was as strong in the breast of the hunter who made a "tomahawk claim," by blazing a few trees, and sold it for a small sum, to a new-comer, as in that of the well-to-do schemer, who bought an Indian title for a song, and then got what he could from all outsiders who came in to dwell on the land.

This speculative spirit was a powerful stimulus to the settlement not only of Kentucky, but of

middle Tennessee. Henderson's claim included the Cumberland country, and when North Carolina annulled his rights, she promised him a large but indefinitely located piece of land in their place. He tried to undersell the State in the land market, and undoubtedly his offers had been among the main causes that induced Robertson and his associates to go to the Cumberland when they did. But at the time it was uncertain whether Cumberland lay in Virginia or North Carolina, as the line was not run by the surveyors until the following spring; and Robertson went up to see Clark, because it was rumored that the latter had the disposal of Virginia "cabin-rights," under which each man could, for a small sum, purchase a thousand acres, on condition of building a cabin and raising a crop. However, as it turned out, he might have spared himself the journey, for the settlement proved to be well within the Carolina boundary.

In the fall very many men came out to the new settlement, guided thither by Robertson and Mansker; the former persuading a number who were bound to Kentucky to go to the Cumberland instead. Among them were two or three of the Long Hunters, whose wanderings had done so much to make the country known. Robertson's special partner was a man named John Donelson. The latter went by water and took a large party

of immigrants, including all the women and children, down the Tennessee, and thence up the Ohio and Cumberland to the Bluffs or French Lick.<sup>1</sup> Among them were Robertson's entire family, and Donelson's daughter Rachel, the future wife of Andrew Jackson, who missed by so narrow a margin being mistress of the White House. Robertson, meanwhile, was to lead the rest of the men by land, so that they should get there first and make ready for the coming of their families.

Robertson's party started in the fall, being both preceded and followed by other companies of settlers, some of whom were accompanied by their wives and children. Cold weather of extraordinary severity set in during November; for this was the famous "hard winter" of '79-80, during which the Kentucky settlers suffered so much. They were not molested by Indians, and reached the Bluffs about Christmas. The river was frozen solid, and they all crossed the ice in a body; when in mid-stream the ice jarred, and—judging from the report—the jar or crack must have gone miles up and down the stream; but the ice only settled a little and did not break. By January 1st, there were over two hundred people scattered on both

<sup>1</sup> The plan was that Robertson should meet this party at the Muscle Shoals, and that they should go from thence overland; but, owing to the severity of the winter, Robertson could not get to the Shoals.



sides of the river. In Robertson's company was a man named John Rains, who brought with him twenty-one horned cattle and seventeen horses; the only cattle and horses which any of the immigrants succeeded in bringing to the Cumberland. But he was not the only man who had made the attempt. One of the immigrants who went in Donelson's flotilla, Daniel Dunham by name, offered his brother John, who went by land, £100 to drive along his horses and cattle. John accepted, and tried his best to fulfil his share of the bargain; but he was seemingly neither a very expert woodsman nor yet a good stock hand. There is no form of labor more arduous and dispiriting than driving unruly and unbroken stock along a faint forest or mountain trail, especially in bad weather; and this the would-be drover speedily found out. The animals would not follow the trail; they incessantly broke away from it, got lost, scattered in the brush, and stampeded at night. Finally, the unfortunate John, being, as he expressed it, nearly driven "mad by the drove," abandoned them all in the wilderness.<sup>1</sup>

The settlers who came by water passed through much greater peril and hardship. By a stroke of good fortune the journal kept by Donelson, the

<sup>1</sup> MSS. on "Dunham Pioneers," in Nashville Historical Society. Daniel, a veteran stockman, was very angry when he heard what had happened.

leader of the expedition, has been preserved.<sup>1</sup> As with all the other recorded wanderings and explorations of these backwoods adventurers, it must be remembered that while this trip was remarkable in itself, it is especially noteworthy because, out of many such, it is the only one of which we have a full account. The adventures that befell Donelson's company differed in degree, but not in kind, from those that befell the many similar flotillas that followed or preceded him. From the time that settlers first came to the upper Tennessee valley occasional hardy hunters had floated down the stream in pirogues, or hollowed out tree-trunks. Before the Revolution a few restless emigrants had adopted this method of reaching Natchez; some of them made the long and perilous trip in safety, others were killed by the Chickamaugas or else foundered in the whirlpools or on the shoals. The spring before Donelson started, a party of men, women, and children, in forty canoes or pirogues, went down the Tennessee to settle in the newly conquered Illinois country,

<sup>1</sup> Original MS. "Journal of Voyage Intended by God's Permission in the Good Boat *Adventure* from Fort Patrick Henry of Holston River to the French Salt Springs on Cumberland River, Kept by John Donelson." An abstract, with some traditional statements interwoven, is given by Haywood; the journal itself, with some inaccuracies, and the name of the writer misspelt by Ramsey; and in much better and fuller shape by A. N. Putnam in his *History of Middle Tennessee*. I follow the original, in the Nashville Historical Society.

and skirmished with the Cherokees on their way.<sup>1</sup>

Donelson's flotilla, after being joined by a number of other boats, especially at the mouth of the Clinch, consisted of some thirty craft, all told—flat-boats, dug-outs, and canoes. There were probably two or three hundred people, perhaps many more, in the company; among them, as the

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 51, vol. ii., p. 45

"JAMES COLBERT TO CHAS. STUART.

"CHICKASAW NATION, May 25, 1779.

"SIR,—I was this day informed that there is forty large Cannoes loaded with men women and children passed by here down the Cherokee River who on their way down they took a Dellaway Indian prisoner & kept him till they found out what Nation he was of—they told him they had come from Long Island and were on their way to Illinois with an intent to settle—Sir I have some reason to think they are a party of Rebels My reason is this after they let the Dellaway Indian at liberty they met with some Cherokees whom they endeavoured to decoy, but finding they would not be decoyed they fired on them but they all made their escape with the Loss of their arms and ammuniton and one fellow wounded, who arrived yesterday. The Dellaway informs me that Lieut. Governor Hamilton is defeated and himself taken prisoner," etc.

It is curious that none of the Tennessee annalists have noticed the departure of this expedition; very, very few of the deeds and wanderings of the old frontiersmen have been recorded; and in consequence historians are apt to regard these few as being exceptional, instead of typical. Donelson was merely one of a hundred leaders of flotillas that went down the western rivers at this time.

journal records, "James Robertson's lady and children," the latter to the number of five. The chief boat, the flag-ship of the flotilla, was the *Adventure*, a great scow, in which there were over thirty men, besides the families of some of them.

They embarked at Holston, Long Island, on December 22d, but falling water and heavy frosts detained them two months, and the voyage did not really begin until they left Cloud Creek on February 27, 1780. The first ten days were uneventful. The *Adventure* spent an afternoon and night on a shoal, until the water fortunately rose and, all the men getting out, the clumsy scow was floated off. Another boat was driven on the point of an island and sunk, her crew being nearly drowned; whereupon the rest of the flotilla put to shore, the sunken boat was raised and bailed out, and most of her cargo recovered. At one landing-place a man went out to hunt, and got lost, not being taken up again for three days, though "many guns were fired to fetch him in," and the four-pounder on the *Adventure* was discharged for the same purpose. A negro became "much frosted in his feet and legs, of which he died." Where the river was wide a strong wind and high sea forced the whole flotilla to lay to, for the sake of the smaller craft. This happened on March 7th, just before coming to the uppermost Chickamauga town; and that night the wife of one

Ephraim Peyton, who had himself gone with Robertson overland, was delivered of a child. She was in a boat whose owner was named Jonathan Jennings.

The next morning they soon came to an Indian village on the south shore. The Indians made signs of friendliness, and two men started toward them in a canoe which the *Adventure* had in tow, while the flotilla drew up on the opposite side of the river. But a half-breed and some Indians jumping into a pirogue, paddled out to meet the two messengers and advised them to return to their comrades, which they did. Several canoes then came off from the shore to the flotilla. The Indians who were in them seemed friendly and were pleased with the presents they received; but while these were being distributed the whites saw a number of other canoes putting off, loaded with armed warriors, painted black and red. The half-breed instantly told the Indians round about to paddle to the shore, and warned the whites to push off at once, at the same time giving them some instructions about the river. The armed Indians went down along the shore for some time as if to intercept them; but at last they were seemingly left behind.

In a short time another Indian village was reached, where the warriors tried in vain to lure the whites ashore; and as the boats were hugging

the opposite bank, they were suddenly fired at by a party in ambush, and one man slain. Immediately afterwards a much more serious tragedy occurred. There was with the flotilla a boat containing twenty-eight men, women, and children, among whom the small-pox had broken out. To guard against infection, it was agreed that it should keep well in the rear; being warned each night by the sound of a horn when it was time to go into camp.

As this forlorn boat-load of unfortunates came along, far behind the others, the Indians, seeing their defenceless position, sallied out in their canoes and butchered or captured all who were aboard. Their cries were distinctly heard by the rearmost of the other craft, who could not stem the current and come to their rescue. But a dreadful retribution fell on the Indians; for they were infected with the disease of their victims, and for some months virulent small-pox raged among many of the bands of Creeks and Cherokees. When stricken by the disease, the savages first went into the sweat-houses, and when heated to madness, plunged into the cool streams, and so perished in multitudes.

When the boats entered the Narrows they had lost sight of the Indians on shore, and thought they had left them behind. A man, who was in a canoe, had gone aboard one of the larger boats

with his family, for the sake of safety while passing through the rough water. His canoe was towed alongside, and in the rapids it was overturned, and the cargo lost. The rest of the company, pitying his distress over the loss of all his worldly goods, landed, to see if they could not help him recover some of his property. Just as they got out on the shore to walk back, the Indians suddenly appeared almost over them, on the high cliffs opposite, and began to fire, causing a hurried retreat to the boats. For some distance the Indians lined the bluffs, firing from the heights into the boats below. Yet only four people were wounded, and they not dangerously. One of them was a girl named Nancy Gower. When, by the sudden onslaught of the Indians, the crew of the boat in which she was, were thrown into dismay, she took the helm and steered, exposed to the fire of the savages. A ball went through the upper part of one of her thighs, but she neither flinched nor uttered any cry; and it was not known that she was wounded until, after the danger was past, her mother saw the blood soaking through her clothes. She recovered, married one of the frontiersmen, and lived for fifty years afterwards, long enough to see all the wilderness filled with flourishing and populous States.

One of the clumsy craft, however, did not share the good fortune that befell the rest, in escaping

with so little loss and damage. Jonathan Jennings's boat, in which was Mrs. Peyton, with her new-born baby, struck on a rock at the upper end of the whirl, the swift current rendering it impossible for the others to go to his assistance; and they drifted by, leaving him to his fate. The Indians soon turned their whole attention to him, and from the bluffs opened a most galling fire upon the disabled boat. He returned it as well as he could, keeping them somewhat in check, for he was a most excellent marksman. At the same time he directed his two negroes, a man and woman, his nearly grown son, and a young man who was with him, to lighten the boat by throwing his goods into the river. Before this was done, the negro men, the son, and the other young man most basely jumped into the river, and swam ashore. It is satisfactory to record that at least two of the three dastards met the fate they deserved. The negro was killed in the water, and the other two captured, one of them being afterwards burned at the stake, while the other, it is said, was ultimately released. Meanwhile, Mrs. Jennings, assisted by the negro woman and Mrs. Peyton, actually succeeded in shoving the lightened boat off the rock, though their clothes were cut in many places by the bullets; and they rapidly drifted out of danger. The poor little baby was killed in the hurry and confusion; but its mother, not eighteen hours from



child-bed, in spite of the cold, wet, and exertion, kept in good health. Sailing by night as well as day, they caught up with the rest of the flotilla before dawn on the second morning afterwards, the men being roused from their watch-fires by the cries of "help poor Jennings," as the wretched and worn-out survivors in the disabled boat caught the first glimpse of the lights on shore.

Having successfully run the gauntlet of the Chickamauga banditti, the flotilla was not again molested by the Indians, save once when the boats that drifted near shore were fired on by a roving war-party, and five men wounded. They ran over the great Muscle Shoals in about three hours without accident, though the boats scraped on the bottom here and there. The swift, broken water surged into high waves, and roared through the piles of driftwood that covered the points of the small islands, round which the current ran in every direction; and those among the men who were unused to river-work were much relieved when they found themselves in safety. One night, after the fires had been kindled, the tired travellers were alarmed by the barking of the dogs. Fearing that Indians were nearby, they hastily got into the boats and crossed to camp on the opposite shore. In the morning two of them returned to pick up some things that had been left; they found that the alarm had been false, for the utensils that had

been overlooked in the confusion were undisturbed, and a negro who had been left behind in the hurry was still sleeping quietly by the camp-fires.

On the 20th of the month they reached the Ohio. Some of the boats then left for Natchez, and others for the Illinois country; while the remainder turned their prows up-stream, to stem the rapid current—a task for which they were but ill suited. The work was very hard, the provisions were nearly gone, and the crews were almost worn out by hunger and fatigue. On the 24th, they entered the mouth of the Cumberland. The *Adventure*, the heaviest of all the craft, got much help from a small square-sail that was set in the bow.

Two days afterward, the hungry party killed some buffalo, and feasted on the lean meat, and the next day they shot a swan “which was very delicious,” as Donelson recorded. Their meal was exhausted and they could make no more bread; but buffalo were plenty, and they hunted them steadily for their meat; and they also made what some of them called “Shawnee salad” from a kind of green herb that grew in the bottoms.

On the last day of the month they met Colonel Richard Henderson, who had just come out and was running the line between Virginia and North Carolina. The crews were so exhausted that the progress of the boats became very slow, and it was not until April 24th that they reached the

Big Salt Lick, and found Robertson awaiting them. The long, toilsome, and perilous voyage had been brought to a safe end.

There were then probably nearly five hundred settlers on the Cumberland, one half of them being able-bodied men in the prime of life.<sup>1</sup> The central station, the capital of the little community, was that at the Bluffs, where Robertson built a little stockaded hamlet and called it Nashborough<sup>2</sup>; it was of the usual type of small frontier fortified town. Other stations were scattered along both sides of the river; some were stockades, others merely blockhouses, with the yard and garden enclosed by stout palings. As with all similar border forts or stations, these were sometimes called by the name of the founder; more rarely, they were named with reference to some natural object, such as the river, ford, or hill by which they were, or commemorated some deed, or the name of a man the frontiersmen held in honor; and, occasionally, they afforded true instances of clan settlement and clan nomenclature, several kindred families of the same name building a village which grew to be called

<sup>1</sup> Two hundred and fifty-six names are subscribed to the compact of government; and in addition there were the women, children, the few slaves, and such men as did not sign.

<sup>2</sup> After A. Nash; he was the Governor of North Carolina; where he did all he could on the patriot side. See Gates MSS., September 7, 1780.

after them. Among these Cumberland stations was Mansker's (usually called Kasper's or Gasper's—he was not particular how his name was spelled), Stone River, Bledsoe's, Freeland's, Eaton's, Clover-Bottom, and Fort Union.

As the country where they had settled belonged to no tribe of Indians, some of the people thought they would not be molested, and, being eager to take up the best lands, scattered out to live on separate claims. Robertson warned them that they would soon suffer from the savages; and his words speedily came true—whereupon the outlying cabins were deserted and all gathered within the stockades. In April, roving parties of Delawares, Chickasaws, and Choctaws began to harass the settlement. As in Kentucky, so on the banks of the Cumberland, the Indians were the first to begin the conflict. The lands on which the whites settled were uninhabited, and were claimed as hunting-grounds by many hostile tribes; so that it is certain that no one tribe had any real title to them.

True to their customs and traditions, and to their race-capacity for self-rule, the settlers determined forthwith to organize some kind of government under which justice might be done among themselves, and protection afforded against outside attack. Not only had the Indians begun their ravages, but turbulent and disorderly whites

were also causing trouble. Robertson, who had been so largely instrumental in founding the Watauga settlement, and giving it laws, naturally took the lead in organizing this, the second community which he had caused to spring up in the wilderness. He summoned a meeting of delegates from the various stations, to be held at Nashborough<sup>1</sup>; Henderson being foremost in advocating the adoption of the plan.

In fact, Henderson, the treaty-maker and land-speculator, whose purchase first gave the whites clear color of title to the valleys of the Kentucky and Cumberland, played somewhat the same part, though on a smaller scale, in the settlement made by Robertson as in that made by Boon. He and the Virginian commissioner Walker, had surveyed the boundary line and found that the Cumberland settlements were well to the south of it. He then claimed the soil as his under the Cherokee deed and disposed of it to the settlers who contracted to pay ten dollars a thousand acres. This was but a fraction of the State price, so the settlers were all eager to hold under Henderson's deed; one of the causes of their coming out had been the chance of getting land so cheap. But Henderson's claim

<sup>1</sup> It is to Putnam that we owe the publication of the compact of government, and the full details of the methods and proceedings by which it was organized and carried on. See *History of Middle Tennessee*, pp. 84-103.

was annulled by the legislature, and the satisfaction-piece of two hundred thousand acres allotted him was laid off elsewhere; so his contracts with the settlers came to nothing, and they eventually got title in the usual way from North Carolina. They suffered no loss in the matter, for they had merely given Henderson promises to pay when his title was made good.

The settlers, by their representatives, met together at Nashborough, and on May 1, 1780, entered into articles of agreement or a compact of government. It was doubtless drawn up by Robertson, with perhaps the help of Henderson, and was modelled upon what may be called the "constitution" of Watauga, with some hints from that of Transylvania.<sup>1</sup> The settlers ratified the deeds of their delegates on May 13th, when they signed the articles, binding themselves to obey them to the number of 256 men. The signers practically guaranteed one another their rights in the land, and their personal security against wrong-doers;

<sup>1</sup> Phelan, the first historian who really grasped what this movement meant, and to what it was due, gives rather too much weight to the part Henderson played. Henderson certainly at this time did not aspire to form a new State on the Cumberland; the compact especially provided for the speedy admission of Cumberland as a county of North Carolina. The marked difference between the Transylvania and the Cumberland "constitutions," and the close agreement of the latter with the Watauga articles, assuredly point to Robertson as the chief author.

those who did not sign were treated as having no rights whatever—a proper and necessary measure as it was essential that the naturally lawless elements should be forced to acknowledge some kind of authority.

The compact provided that the affairs of the community should be administered by a Court or Committee of twelve Judges, Triers, or General Arbitrators, to be elected in the different stations by vote of all the freemen in them who were over twenty-one years of age. Three of the Triers were to come from Nashborough, two from Mansker's, two from Bledsoe's, and one from each of five other named stations.<sup>1</sup> Whenever the freemen of any station were dissatisfied with their Triers, they could at once call a new election, at which others might be chosen in their stead. The Triers had no salaries, but the Clerk of the Court was allowed some very small fees, just enough to pay for the pens, ink, and paper, all of them scarce commodities.<sup>2</sup> The Court had jurisdiction in all cases of conflict over land titles, a land office being

<sup>1</sup> Putnam speaks of these men as "notables"; apparently they called themselves as above. Putnam's book contains much very valuable information; but it is written in most curious style and he interlards it with outside matter; much that he puts in quotation marks is apparently his own material. It is difficult to make out whether his "tribunal of notables" is his own expression or a quotation, but apparently it is the former.

<sup>2</sup> Haywood, 126.

established and an entry-taker appointed. Over half of the compact was devoted to the rules of the land office. The Court, acting by a majority of its members, was to have jurisdiction for the recovery of debt or damages, and to be allowed to tax costs. Three Triers were competent to make a Court to decide a case where the debt or damage was a hundred dollars or less, and there was no appeal from their decision. For a larger sum an appeal lay to the whole Court. The Court appointed whomsoever it pleased to see decisions executed. It had power to punish all offences against the peace of the community, all misdemeanors and criminal acts, provided only that its decisions did not go so far as to affect the life of the criminal. If the misdeed of the accused was such as to be dangerous to the State, or one "for which the benefit of clergy was taken away by law," he was to be bound and sent under guard to some place where he could be legally dealt with. The Court levied fines, payable in money or provisions, entered up judgments and awarded executions, and granted letters of administration upon estates of deceased persons, and took bonds "payable to the chairman of the Committee." The expenses were to be paid proportionately by the various settlers. It was provided, in view of the Indian incursions, that the militia officers elected at the various stations should have power to call out the militia when



they deemed it necessary to repel or pursue the enemy. They were also given power to fine such men as disobeyed them, and to impress horses, if need be; if damaged, the horses were to be paid for by the people of the station in the proportion the Court might direct. It was expressly declared that the compact was designed as a "temporary method of restraining the licentious," that the settlement did not desire to be exempt from the ratable share of the expense for the Revolutionary War, and earnestly asked that North Carolina would immediately make it part of the State, erecting it into a county. Robertson was elected chairman of the Court and colonel of the militia, being thus made both civil and military commandant of the settlement. In common with other Triers, he undertook the solemnization of marriages; and these were always held legal, which was fortunate, as it was a young and vigorous community, of which the members were much given to early wedlock.

Thus a little commonwealth, a self-governing state, was created. It was an absolute democracy, the majority of freemen of full age in each stockade having power in every respect, and being able not only to elect, but to dismiss their delegates at any moment. Their own good sense and a feeling of fair play could be depended upon to protect the rights of the minority, especially as a

minority of such men would certainly not tolerate anything even remotely resembling tyranny. They had formed a representative government in which the legislative and judicial functions were not separated, and were even to a large extent combined with the executive. They had proceeded in an eminently practical manner, having modelled their system on what was to them the familiar governmental unit of the county with its county court and county militia officers. They made the changes that their peculiar position required, grafting the elective and representative systems on the one they adopted, and, of course, enlarging the scope of the Court's action. Their compact was thus in some sort an unconscious reproduction of the laws and customs of the old-time court-leet, profoundly modified to suit the peculiar needs of backwoods life, the intensely democratic temper of the pioneers, and, above all, the military necessities of their existence. They had certain theories of liberty and justice; but they were too shrewd and hard-headed to try to build up a government on an entirely new foundation when they had, ready to hand, materials with which they were familiar. They knew by experience the workings of the county system; all they did was to alter the immediate channel from which the Court drew its powers, and to adapt the representation to the needs of a community where

constant warfare obliged the settlers to gather in little groups, which served as natural units.

When the settlers first came to the country they found no Indians living in it, no signs of cultivation or cleared lands, and nothing to show that for ages past it had been inhabited. It was a vast plain, covered with woods and canebrakes, through which the wild herds had beaten out broad trails. The only open places were the licks, sometimes as large as corn-fields, where the hoofs of the game had trodden the ground bare of vegetation, and channelled its surface with winding seams and gullies. It is even doubtful if the spot of bare ground which Mansker called an "old field" or sometimes a "Chickasaw old field" was not merely one of these licks. Buffalo, deer, and bear abounded; elk, wolves, and panthers were plentiful.

Yet there were many signs that in long by-gone times a numerous population had dwelt in the land. Round every spring were many graves, built in a peculiar way, and covered eight or ten inches deep by mould. In some places there were earth-covered foundations of ancient walls and embankments that enclosed spaces of eight or ten acres. The Indians knew as little as the whites<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haywood. At present it is believed that the mound-builders were Indians. Haywood is the authority for the early Indian wars of the Cumberland settlement, Putnam supplying some information.

about these long-vanished mound-builders, and were utterly ignorant of the race to which they had belonged.

For some months the whites who first arrived dwelt in peace. But in the spring, hunting- and war-parties from various tribes began to harass the settlers. Unquestionably, the savages felt jealous of the white hunters, who were killing and driving away the game, precisely as they all felt jealous of one another, and for the same reason. The Chickasaws, in particular, were much irritated by the fort Clark had built at Iron Bank, on the Mississippi. But the most powerful motive for the attacks was doubtless simply the desire for scalps and plunder. They gathered from different quarters to assail the colonists, just as the wild beasts gathered to prey on the tame herds.

The Indians began to commit murders, kill the stock, and drive off the horses in April, and their ravages continued unceasingly throughout the year. Among the slain was a son of Robertson, and also the unfortunate Jonathan Jennings, the man who had suffered such loss when his boat was passing the whirl of the Tennessee River. The settlers were shot as they worked on their clearings, gathered the corn crops, or ventured outside the walls of the stockades. Hunters were killed as they stooped to drink at the springs, or lay in wait at the licks. They were lured up to the

Indians by imitations of the gobbling of a turkey or the cries of wild beasts. They were regularly stalked as they still-hunted the game, or were ambushed as they returned with their horses laden with meat. The inhabitants of one station were all either killed or captured. Robertson led pursuing parties after one or two of the bands, and recovered some plunder; and once or twice small marauding parties were met and scattered, with some loss, by the hunters. But, on the whole, very little could be done at first to parry or revenge the strokes of the Indians.<sup>1</sup>

Horses and cattle had been brought into the new settlement in some number during the year; but the savages killed or drove off most of them, shooting the hogs and horned stock, and stealing the riding animals. The loss of the milch cows in particular, was severely felt by the women.

<sup>1</sup> Putnam, p. 107, talks as if the settlers were utterly unused to Indian warfare, saying that until the first murder occurred, in this spring, "few, if any" of them had ever gazed on the victim of scalping-knife and tomahawk. This is a curiously absurd statement. Many of the settlers were veteran Indian fighters. Almost all of them had been born and brought up on the frontier, amid a succession of Indian wars. It is, unfortunately, exceedingly difficult in Putnam's book to distinguish the really valuable authentic information it contains from the interwoven tissue of matter written solely to suit his theory of dramatic effect. He puts in, with equal gravity, the "Articles of Agreement" and purely fictitious conversations, jokes, and the like. (See pp. 126, 144, and *passim*.)

Moreover, there were heavy freshets, flooding the low bottoms on which the corn had been planted, and destroying most of the crop.

These accumulated disasters wrought the greatest discouragement among the settlers. Many left the country, and most of the remainder, when midsummer was past, began to urge that they should all go back in a body to the old settlements. The panic became very great. One by one the stockades were deserted, until finally all the settlers who remained were gathered in Nashborough and Freeland's.<sup>1</sup> The Cumberland country would have been abandoned to the Indians, had Robertson not shown himself to be exactly the man for whom the crisis called.

Robertson was not a dashing, brilliant Indian fighter and popular frontier leader, like Sevier. He had rather the qualities of Boon, with the difference that he was less a wandering hunter and explorer, and better fitted to be head of a settled community. He was far-seeing, tranquil, resolute, unshaken by misfortune and disaster; a most trustworthy man, with a certain severe fortitude of temper. All people naturally turned to him in time of panic, when the ordinarily bold and daring became cowed and confused. The straits

<sup>1</sup> By some accounts, there were also a few settlers left in Eaton's Station; and Mansker's was rarely entirely deserted for any length of time.

to which the settlers were reduced, and their wild clamor for immediate flight, the danger from the Indians, the death of his own son, all combined failed to make him waver one instant in his purpose. He strongly urged on the settlers the danger of flight through the wilderness. He did not attempt to make light of the perils that confronted them if they remained, but he asked them to ponder well if the beauty and fertility of the land did not warrant some risk being run to hold it, now that it was won. They were at last in a fair country, fitted for the homes of their children. Now was the time to keep it. If they abandoned it they would lose all the advantages they had gained, and would be forced to suffer the like losses and privations if they ever wished to retake possession of it or of any similar tract of land. He, at least, would not turn back, but would stay to the bitter end.

His words and his steadfast bearing gave heart to the settlers, and they no longer thought of flight. As their corn had failed them they got their food from the woods. Some gathered quantities of walnuts, hickory-nuts, and shellbarks, and the hunters wrought havoc among the vast herds of game. During the early winter one party of twenty men that went up Caney Fork on a short trip killed one hundred and five bears, seventy-five buffaloes, and eighty-seven deer, and brought

the flesh and hides back to the stockades in canoes; so that through the winter there was no lack of jerked and smoke-dried meat. •

The hunters were very accurate marksmen; game was plenty, and not shy, and so they got up close and rarely wasted a shot. Moreover, their small-bore rifles took very little powder—in fact, the need of excessive economy in the use of ammunition when on their long hunting trips was one of the chief reasons for the use of small bores. They therefore used comparatively little ammunition. Nevertheless, by the beginning of winter both powder and bullets began to fail. In this emergency Robertson again came to the front to rescue the settlement he had founded and preserved. He was accustomed to making long, solitary journeys through the forest, unmindful of the Indians; he had been one of the first to come from North Carolina to Watauga; he had repeatedly been on perilous missions to the Cherokees; he had the previous year gone north to the Illinois country to meet Clark. He now announced that he would himself go to Kentucky and bring back the needed ammunition; and at once set forth on his journey, across the long stretches of snow-powdered barrens, and desolate, Indian-haunted woodland.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CUMBERLAND SETTLEMENTS TO THE CLOSE OF THE REVOLUTION, 1781-1783

ROBERTSON passed unharmed through the wilderness to Kentucky. There he procured plenty of powder, and without delay set out on his return journey to the Cumberland. As before, he travelled alone through the frozen woods, trusting solely to his own sharp senses for his safety.

In the evening of January 15, 1781, he reached Freeland's station, and was joyfully received by the inmates. They supped late, and then sat up for some time, talking over many matters. When they went to bed all were tired, and neglected to take the usual precautions against surprise; moreover, at that season they did not fear molestation. They slept heavily, none keeping watch. Robertson alone was wakeful and suspicious; and even during his light slumbers his keen and long-trained senses were on the alert.

At midnight all was still. The moon shone brightly down on the square blockhouses and stockaded yard of the lonely little frontier fort; its

rays lit up the clearing, and by contrast darkened the black shadow of the surrounding forest. None of the sleepers within the log-walls dreamed of danger. Yet their peril was imminent. An Indian war band was lurking near by, and was on the point of making an effort to carry Freeland's station by an attack in the darkness. In the dead of the night the attempt was made. One by one the warriors left the protection of the tangled wood-growth, slipped silently across the open space, and crouched under the heavy timber pickets of the palisades, until all had gathered together. Though the gate was fastened with a strong bar and chain, the dextrous savages finally contrived to open it.

In so doing they made a slight noise, which caught Robertson's quick ear, as he lay on his buffalo-hide pallet. Jumping up, he saw the gate open, and dusky figures gliding into the yard with stealthy swiftness. At his cry of "Indians," and the report of his piece, the settlers sprang up, every man grasping the loaded arm by which he slept. From each log cabin the rifles cracked and flashed; and, though the Indians were actually in the yard, they had no cover, and the sudden and unexpected resistance caused them to hurry out much faster than they had come in. Robertson shot one of their number, and they in return killed a white man who sprang out-of-doors at the first

alarm. When they were driven out, the gate was closed after them; but they fired through the loopholes, especially into one of the blockhouses where the chinks had not been filled with mud, as in the others. They thus killed a negro, and wounded one or two other men; yet they were soon driven off. Robertson's return had been at a most opportune moment. As so often before and afterwards, he had saved the settlement from destruction.

Other bands of Indians joined the war-party, and they continued to hover about the stations, daily inflicting loss and damage on the settlers. They burned down the cabins and fences, drove off the stock, and killed the hunters, the women, and children who ventured outside the walls, and the men who had gone back to their deserted stockades.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haywood says they burned "immense quantities of corn"; as Putnam points out, the settlers could have had very little corn to burn. Haywood is the best authority for the Indian fighting in the Cumberland district during '80, '81, and '82. Putnam supplies some details learned from Mrs. Robertson in her old age. The accounts are derived mainly from the statements of old settlers; but the Robertsons seem always to have kept papers, which served to check off the oral statements. For all the important facts there is good authority. The annals are filled with name after name of men who were killed by the Indians. The dates, and even the names, may be misplaced in many of these instances; but this is really a matter of no consequence, for their only interest is to show the nature of the harassing Indian warfare, and the kind of adventure then common.

On the second day of April another effort was made by a formidable war-party to get possession of one of the two remaining stations—Freeland's and Nashborough—and thus, at a stroke, drive the whites from the Cumberland district. This time Nashborough was the point aimed at.

A large body<sup>1</sup> of Cherokees approached the fort in the night, lying hid in the bushes, divided into two parties. In the morning three of them came near, fired at the fort, and ran off toward where the smaller party lay ambushed, in a thicket through which ran a little "branch." Instantly twenty men mounted their horses and galloped after the decoys. As they overtook the fugitives they saw the Indians hid in the creek-bottom, and dismounted to fight, turning their horses loose. A smart interchange of shots followed, the whites having, if anything, rather the best of it, when the other and larger body of Indians rose from their hiding-place, in a clump of cedars, and running down, formed between the combatants and the fort, intending to run into the latter, mixed with the fleeing riflemen. The only chance of the hemmed-in whites was to turn and try to force their way back through their far more numerous foes. This was a desperate ven-

<sup>1</sup> How large, it is impossible to say. One or two recent accounts make wild guesses, calling it 1000; but this is sheer nonsense; it is more likely to have been 100.

ture, for their pieces were all discharged, and there was no time to reload them; but they were helped by two unexpected circumstances. Their horses had taken flight at the firing, and ran off towards the fort, passing to one side of the intervening line of Indians; and many of the latter, eager for such booty, ran off to catch them. Meanwhile, the remaining men in the fort saw what had happened, and made ready for defence, while all the women likewise snatched up guns or axes, and stood by loopholes and gate. The dogs in the fort were also taking a keen interest in what was going on. They were stout, powerful animals, some being hounds and others watchdogs, but all accustomed to contests with wild beasts; and by instinct and training they mortally hated Indians. Seeing the line of savages drawn up between the fort and their masters, they promptly sallied out and made a most furious onset upon their astonished foes. Taking advantage of this most opportune diversion, the whites ran through the lines and got into the fort, the Indians being completely occupied in defending themselves from the dogs. Five of the whites were killed, and they carried two wounded men into the fort. Another man, when almost in safety, was shot, and fell with a broken thigh; but he had reloaded his gun as he ran, and he killed his assailant as the latter ran up to scalp him. The people from the

fort then, by firing their rifles, kept his foes at bay until he could be rescued; and he soon recovered from his hurt. Yet another man was overtaken almost under the walls, the Indian punching him in the shoulder with the gun as he pulled the trigger; but the gun snapped, and a hunter ran out of the fort and shot the Indian. The gates were closed, and the whites all ready; so the Indians abandoned their effort and drew off. They had taken five scalps and a number of horses; but they had failed in their main object, and the whites had taken two scalps, besides killing and wounding others of the red men, who were carried off by their comrades.

After the failure of this attempt, the Indians did not, for some years, make any formidable attack on any of the larger stations. Though the most dangerous of all foes on their own ground, their extreme caution, and dislike of suffering punishment prevented them from ever making really determined efforts to carry a fort openly by storm; moreover, these stockades were really very defensible against men unprovided with artillery, and there is no reason for supposing that any troops could have carried them by fair charging, without suffering altogether disproportionate loss. The red tribes acted in relation to the Cumberland settlements exactly as they had previously done towards those on the Kentucky and Watauga.

They harassed the settlers from the outset; but they did not wake up to the necessity for a formidable and combined campaign against them until it was too late for such a campaign to succeed. If, at the first, any one of these communities had been forced to withstand the shock of such Indian armies as were afterwards brought against it, it would, of necessity, have been abandoned.

Throughout '81 and '82 the Cumberland settlers were worried beyond description by a succession of small war-parties. In the first of these years they raised no corn; in the second, they made a few crops on fields they had cleared in 1780. No man's life was safe for an hour, whether he hunted, looked up strayed stock, went to the spring for water, or tilled the fields. If two men were together, one always watched while the other worked, ate, or drank; and they sat down back to back, or, if there were several, in a ring, facing outwards, like a covey of quail. The Indians were especially fond of stealing the horses; the whites pursued them in bands, and occasionally pitched battles were fought, with loss on both sides, and apparently as often resulting in the favor of one party as of the other. The most expert Indian fighters naturally became the leaders, being made colonels and captains of the local militia. The position and influence of the officers depended

largely on their individual prowess; they were the actual, not titular, leaders of their men. Old Kasper Mansker, one of the most successful, may be taken as a type of the rest. He was ultimately made a colonel, and shared in many expeditions; but he always acted as his own scout, and never would let any of his men ride ahead or abreast of him, preferring to trust to his own eyes and ears and knowledge of forest warfare. The hunters, who were especially exposed to danger, were also the men who inflicted the most loss on the Indians, and, though many more of the settlers than of their foes were slain, yet the tables were often turned on the latter, even by those who seemed their helpless victims. Thus, once, two lads were watching at a deer-lick, when some Indians came to it; each of the boys chose his man, fired, and then fled homewards; coming back with some men, they found they had killed two Indians, whose scalps they took.

The eagerness of the Indians to get scalps caused them frequently to scalp their victims before life was extinct; and, as a result, there were numerous instances in which the scalped unfortunate, whether man, woman, or child, was rescued and recovered, living many years. One of these instances is worth giving in the quaint language of the old Tennessee historian, Haywood:

“In the spring of the year 1782 a party of In-



dians fired upon three persons at French Lick, and broke the arms of John Tucker and Joseph Hendricks, and shot down David Hood, whom they scalped and stamped, as he said, and followed the others towards the fort; the people of the fort came out and repulsed them and saved the wounded men. Supposing the Indians gone, Hood got up softly, wounded and scalped as he was, and began to walk towards the fort on the bluff, when, to his mortification, he saw, standing upon the bank of the creek, a number of Indians, the same who had wounded him before, making sport of his misfortune and mistake. They then fell upon him again, and having given him, in several places, new wounds that were apparently mortal, then left him. He fell into a brush heap in the mow, and next morning was tracked and found by his blood, and was placed as a dead man in one of the out-houses, and was left alone; after some time he recovered, and lived many years."

Many of the settlers were killed, many others left for Kentucky, Illinois, or Natchez, or returned to their old homes among the Alleghanies; and in 1782 the inhabitants, who had steadily dwindled in numbers, became so discouraged that they again mooted the question of abandoning the Cumberland district in a body. Only Robertson's great influence prevented this being done; but by word and example he finally persuaded them to remain.

The following spring brought the news of peace with Great Britain. A large inflow of new settlers began with the new year, and though the Indian hostilities still continued, the Cumberland country thrived apace, and by the end of 1783 the old stations had been rebuilt and many new ones founded. Some of the settlers began to live out on their clearings. Rude little corn-mills and "hominy pounders" were built beside some of the streams. The piles of furs and hides that had accumulated in the stockades were sent back to the coast country on pack-horses. After this year there was never any danger that the settlements would be abandoned.

During the two years of petty but disastrous Indian warfare that followed the attack on Freeland's, the harassed and diminishing settlers had been so absorbed in the contest with the outside foe that they had done little towards keeping up their own internal government. When 1783 opened, new settlers began to flock in, the Indian hostilities abated, and commissioners arrived from North Carolina under a strong guard, with the purpose of settling the claim of the various settlers<sup>1</sup> and laying off the bounty lands promised

<sup>1</sup> Haywood. Six hundred and forty acres were allowed by pre-emption claim to each family settled before June 1, 1780; after that date they had to make proper entries in the courts. The salt-licks were to be held as public property.

to the Continental troops.<sup>1</sup> It therefore became necessary that the Committee or Court of Triers should again be convened, to see that justice was done as between man and man.

The ten men elected from the different stations met at Nashborough on January 7th, Robertson being again made chairman, as well as colonel of the militia, while a proper clerk and sheriff were chosen. Each member took a solemn oath to do equal justice according to the best of his skill and ability. The number of suits between the settlers themselves were disposed of. These related to a variety of subjects. A kettle had been "detained" from Humphrey Hogan; he brought suit, and it was awarded him, the defendant "and his mother-in-law" being made to pay the cost of the suit. A hog case, a horse used in hunting, a piece of cleared ground, a bed which had not been made according to contract, the ownership of a canoe, and of a heifer, a "clevis lent and delayed to be returned"—such were some of the cases on which the judges had to decide. There were occasional slander suits; for in a small backwoods community there is always much jealousy and bitter gossip. When suit was brought for "cattle won at cards," the committee promptly dismissed the claim as illegal; they evidently had clear ideas as to what was good public policy. A man making

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Shelby was one of these commissioners.

oath that another had threatened his life, the latter was taken and put under bonds. Another produced a note-of-hand for the payment of two good cows, "against John Sadler"; he "proved his accompt," and procured an attachment against the estate of "Sd. Sadler." When possible, the Committee compromised the cases, or advised the parties to adjust matters between themselves. The sheriff executed the various decrees in due form; he arrested the men who refused to pay heed to the judgments of the Court, and when necessary took out of their "goods and chattles, lands and tenements," the damages awarded, and also the costs and fees. The government was in the hands of men who were not only law-abiding themselves, but also resolute to see that the law was respected by others.

The Committee took cognizance of all affairs concerning the general welfare of the community. They ordered roads to be built between the different stations, appointing overseers who had power to "call out hands to work on the same." Besides the embodiment of all the full-grown men as militia,—those of each station under their own captain, lieutenant, and ensign,—a diminutive force of paid regulars was organized; that is, six spies were "kept out to discover the motions of the enemy so long as we shall be able to pay them; each to receive seventy-five bushels of Indian corn

per month." They were under the direction of Colonel Robertson, who was head of all the branches of the government. One of the Committee's regulations followed an economic principle of doubtful value. Some enterprising individuals, taking advantage of the armed escort accompanying the Carolina commissioners, brought out casks of liquors. The settlers had drunk nothing but water for many months, and they eagerly purchased the liquor, the merchants naturally charging all that the traffic would bear. This struck the committee as a grievance, and they forthwith passed a decree that any person bringing in liquor "from foreign ports," before selling the same, must give bond that they would charge no more than one silver dollar, or its value in merchandise, per quart.

Some of the settlers would not enter the association, preferring a condition of absolute freedom from law. The Committee, however, after waiting a proper time, forced these men in by simply serving notice that thereafter they would be treated as beyond the pale of the law—not entitled to its protection, but amenable to its penalties. A petition was sent to the North Carolina Legislature, asking that the protection of government should be extended to the Cumberland people, and showing that the latter were loyal and orderly, prompt to suppress sedition and

lawlessness, faithful to the United States, and hostile to its enemies.<sup>1</sup> To show their good feeling, the Committee made every member of the community, who had not already done so, take the oath of abjuration and fidelity.

Until full governmental protection could be secured the commonwealth was forced to act as a little sovereign state, bent on keeping the peace, and yet on protecting itself against aggression from the surrounding powers, both red and white. It was forced to restrain its own citizens, and to enter into quasi-diplomatic relations with its neighbors. Thus early this year fifteen men, under one Colbert, left the settlements and went down the river in boats, ostensibly to trade with the Indians, but really to plunder the Spaniards on the Mississippi. They were joined by some Chickasaws, and at first met with some success in their piratical attacks, not only on the Spanish trading-boats, but on those of the French creoles, and even the Americans, as well. Finally, they were repulsed in an attempt against the Spaniards at Ozark; some were killed, and the rest scattered.<sup>2</sup> Immediately upon learning of these deeds, the Committee of Triers passed stringent resolutions forbidding all persons trading with the Indians

<sup>1</sup> This whole account is taken from Putnam, who has rendered such inestimable service by preserving these records.

<sup>2</sup> Calendar of *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iii., pp. 469, 527.

until granted a license by the Committee, and until they had furnished ample security for their good behavior. The Committee also wrote a letter to the Spanish Governor at New Orleans, disclaiming all responsibility for the piratical misdeeds of Colbert and his gang, and announcing the measures they had taken to prevent any repetition of the same in the future. They laid aside the sum of twenty pounds to pay the expenses of the messengers who carried this letter to the Virginian "agent" at the Illinois, whence it was forwarded to the Spanish Governor.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most difficult questions with which the Committee had to deal was that of holding a treaty with the Indians. Commissioners came out from Virginia and North Carolina especially to hold such a treaty<sup>2</sup>; but the settlers declined to allow it until they had themselves decided on its advisability. They feared to bring so many savages together, lest they might commit some outrage, or be themselves subjected to such at the hands of one of the many wronged and reckless whites; and they knew that the Indians would expect many presents, while there was very

<sup>1</sup> Putnam, pp. 185, 189, 191.

<sup>2</sup> Donelson, who was one of the men who became discouraged and went to Kentucky, was the Virginian commissioner. Martin was the commissioner from North Carolina. He is sometimes spoken of as if he likewise represented Virginia.

little indeed to give them. Finally, the Committee decided to put the question of treaty or no treaty to the vote of the freemen in the several stations; and by a rather narrow majority it was decided in the affirmative. The Committee then made arrangements for holding the treaty in June some four miles from Nashborough, and strictly prohibited the selling of liquor to the savages. At the appointed time, many chiefs and warriors of the Chickasaws, Cherokees, and even Creeks appeared. There were various sports, such as ball-games and foot-races; and the treaty was brought to a satisfactory conclusion.<sup>1</sup> It did not put a complete stop to the Indian outrages, but it greatly diminished them. The Chickasaws thereafter remained friendly; but, as usual, the Cherokee and Creek chiefs who chose to attend were unable to bind those of their fellows who did not. The whole treaty was, in fact, on both sides, of a merely preliminary nature. The boundaries it arranged were not considered final until confirmed by the treaty of Hopewell a couple of years later.

Robertson meanwhile was delegated by the unanimous vote of the settlers to go to the Assembly of North Carolina, and there petition for the establishment of a regular land office at Nashborough, and in other ways advance the interests

<sup>1</sup> Putnam, 196.



of the settlers. He was completely successful in his mission. The Cumberland settlements were included in a new county, called Davidson<sup>1</sup>; and an Inferior Court of Pleas and Common Sessions, vested by the act with extraordinary powers, was established at Nashborough. The four justices of the new court had all been Triers of the old Committee, and the scheme of government was practically not very greatly changed, although now resting on an indisputably legal basis. The Cumberland settlers had for years acted as an independent, law-abiding, and orderly commonwealth, and the Court of Triers had shown great firmness and wisdom. It spoke well for the people that they had been able to establish such a government, in which the majority ruled, while the rights of each individual were secured. Robertson deserves the chief credit as both civil and military leader. The Committee of which he was a member, had seen that justice was done between man and man, had provided for defence against the outside foe, and had striven to prevent any wrongs being done to neutral or allied powers. When they became magistrates of a county of North Carolina they continued to act on the lines they had already

<sup>1</sup> In honor of General William Davidson, a very gallant and patriotic soldier of North Carolina during the Revolutionary War. The county government was established in October, 1783.

marked out. The increase of population had brought an increase of wealth. The settlers were still frontiersmen, clad in buckskin or homespun, with rawhide moccasins, living in log cabins, and sleeping under bearskins on beds made of buffalo-hides; but as soon as they ventured to live on their clearings the ground was better tilled, corn became abundant, and cattle and hogs increased as the game diminished. Nashborough began to look more like an ordinary little border town.<sup>1</sup>

During this year Robertson carried on some correspondence with the Spanish Governor at New Orleans, Don Estevan Miro. This was the beginning of intercourse between the western settlers and the Spanish officers, an intercourse which was absolutely necessary, though it afterwards led to many intrigues and complications. Robertson was obliged to write to Miro not only to disclaim responsibility for the piratical deeds of men like Colbert, but also to protest against the conduct of certain of the Spanish agents among the Creeks and Chickamaugas. No sooner had hostilities ceased with the British than the Spaniards began to incite the savages to take up once more the hatchet they had just dropped,<sup>2</sup> for

<sup>1</sup> The justices built a court-house and jail of hewed logs, the former eighteen feet square, with a lean-to or shed of twelve feet on one side. The contracts for building were let out at vendue to the lowest bidder.

<sup>2</sup> Calendar of *Virginia State Papers*, iii., 358, 608, etc.

Spain already recognized in the restless borderers possible and formidable foes.

Miro, in answering Robertson, assured him that the Spaniards were very friendly to the western settlers, and denied that the Spanish agents were stirring up trouble. He also told him that the harassed Cherokees, weary of ceaseless warfare, had asked permission to settle west of the Mississippi, although they did not carry out their intention. He ended by pressing Robertson and his friends to come down and settle in Spanish territory, guaranteeing them good treatment.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of Miro's fair words, the Spanish agents continued to intrigue against the Americans, and especially against the Cumberland people. Yet there was no open break. The Spanish Governor was felt to be powerful for both good and evil, and at least a possible friend of the settlers. To many of their leaders he showed much favor, and the people as a whole were well impressed by him; and as a compliment to him they ultimately, when the Cumberland counties were separated from those lying to the eastward, united the former under the name of Mero<sup>2</sup> District.

<sup>1</sup> Robertson MSS. As the letter is important, I give it in full in Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup> So spelt; but apparently his true name was Miro.

## CHAPTER IX

### WHAT THE WESTERNERS HAD DONE DURING THE REVOLUTION, 1783

WHEN the first Continental Congress began its sittings, the only frontiersmen west of the mountains, and beyond the limits of continuous settlement within the old Thirteen Colonies,<sup>1</sup> were the two or three hundred citizens of the little Watauga commonwealth. When peace was declared with Great Britain, the backwoodsmen had spread westward, in groups, almost to the Mississippi, and they had increased in number to some twenty-five thousand souls,<sup>2</sup> of whom a few hundred dwelt in the bend of the Cumberland, while the rest were about equally divided between Kentucky and Holston.

This great westward movement of armed settlers was essentially one of conquest, no less than of

<sup>1</sup> This qualification is put in because there were already a few families on the Monongahela, the head of the Kanawha, and the upper Holston; but they were in close touch with the people behind them.

<sup>2</sup> These figures are simply estimates; but they are based on careful study and comparison, and though they must be some hundreds, and maybe some thousands, out of the way, are quite near enough for practical purposes.

colonization. Thronging in with their wives and children, their cattle, and their few household goods they won and held the land in the teeth of fierce resistance, both from the Indian claimants of the soil and from the representatives of a mighty and arrogant European power. The chain of events by which the winning was achieved is perfect; had any link therein snapped, it is likely that the final result would have been failure. The wide wanderings of Boon and his fellow-hunters made the country known, and awakened in the minds of the frontiersmen a keen desire to possess it. The building of the Watauga commonwealth by Robertson and Sevier gave a base of operations, and furnished a model for similar communities to follow. Lord Dunmore's war made the actual settlement possible, for it cowed the northern Indians, and restrained them from seriously molesting Kentucky during its first and most feeble years. Henderson and Boon made their great treaty with the Cherokees in 1775, and then established a permanent colony far beyond all previous settlements, entering into final possession of the new country. The victory over the Cherokees in 1776 made safe the line of communication along the Wilderness Road, and secured the chance for further expansion. Clark's campaigns gained the Illinois, or northwestern regions. The growth of Kentucky then became very rapid; and in its

turn this, and the steady progress of the Watauga settlements, rendered possible Robertson's successful effort to plant a new community still farther west, on the Cumberland.

The backwoodsmen pressed in on the line of least resistance, first taking possession of the debatable hunting-grounds lying between the Algonquins of the North and the Appalachian confederacies of the South. Then they began to encroach on the actual tribal territories. Every step was accompanied by stubborn and bloody fighting with the Indians. The forest tribes were exceedingly formidable opponents; it is not too much to say that they formed a far more serious obstacle to the American advance than would have been offered by an equal number of the best European troops. Their victories over Braddock, Grant, and St. Clair, gained in each case with a smaller force, conclusively proved their superiority, on their own ground, over the best regulars, disciplined and commanded in the ordinary manner. Almost all of the victories, even of the backwoodsmen, were won against inferior numbers of Indians.<sup>1</sup> The red men were fickle of

<sup>1</sup> That the contrary impression prevails is due to the boastful vanity which the backwoodsmen often shared with the Indians, and to the gross ignorance of the average writer concerning these border wars. Many of the accounts in the popular histories are sheer inventions. Thus, in the *Chronicles of Border Warfare*, by Alex. S. Withers (Clarksburg, Va.,

temper, and large bodies could not be kept together for a long campaign, nor, indeed, for more than one special stroke; the only piece of strategy any of their chiefs showed was Cornstalk's march past Dunmore to attack Lewis; but their tactics and discipline in the battle itself were admirably adapted to the very peculiar conditions of forest warfare. Writers who speak of them as undisciplined, or as any but most redoubtable antagonists, fall into an absurd error. An old Indian fighter, who, at the close of the last century, wrote, from experience, a good book on the subject, summed up the case very justly when he said: "I apprehend that the Indian discipline is as well calculated to answer the purpose in the woods of America as the British discipline is in

1831, p. 301), there is an absolutely fictitious account of a feat of the Kentucky Colonel Scott, who is alleged to have avenged St. Clair's defeat by falling on the victorious Indians while they were drunk, and killing two hundred of them. This story has not even a foundation in fact; there was not so much as a skirmish of the sort described. As Mann Butler—a most painstaking and truthful writer—points out, it is made up out of the whole cloth, thirty years after the event; it is a mere invention to soothe the mortified pride of the whites. Gross exaggeration of the Indian numbers and losses prevails even to this day. Mr. Edmund Kirke, for instance, usually makes the absolute or relative numbers of the Indians from five to twenty-five times as great as they really were. Still, it is hard to blame backwoods writers for such slips in the face of the worse misdeeds of the average historian of the Greek and Roman wars with barbarians.

Flanders; and British discipline in the woods is the way to have men slaughtered, with scarcely any chance of defending themselves." <sup>1</sup> A comparison of the two victories gained by the backwoodsmen—at the Great Kanawha, over the Indians, and at King's Mountain over Ferguson's British and tories—brings out clearly the formidable fighting capacity of the red men. At the Kanawha the Americans outnumbered their foes, at King's Mountain they were no more than equal; yet in the former battle they suffered twice the loss they did in the latter, inflicted much less damage in return, and did not gain nearly so decisive a victory.

The Indians were urged on by the British, who furnished them with arms, ammunition, and provisions, and sometimes also with leaders and with bands of auxiliary white troops, French, British, and tories. It was this that gave to the Revolutionary contest its twofold character, making it on the part of the Americans a struggle for independence in the East, and in the West a war of conquest, or rather a war to establish, on behalf of all our people, the right of entry into the fertile and vacant regions beyond the Alleghanies. The grievances of the backwoodsmen were not the same as the grievances of the men of the seacoast.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel James Smith, *An Account*, etc., Lexington, Ky., 1799.



The Ohio valley and the other western lands of the French had been conquered by the British, not the Americans. Great Britain had succeeded to the policy as well as the possessions of her predecessor, and, strange to say, had become almost equally hostile to the colonists of her own stock. As France had striven for half a century, so England now in her turn strove, to bar out the settlers of English race from the country beyond the Alleghanies. The British Crown, Parliament, and people were a unit in wishing to keep woodland and prairie for the sole use of their own merchants, as regions tenanted only by Indian hunters and French trappers and traders. They became the guardians and allies of all the Indian tribes. On the other hand, the American backwoodsmen were resolute in their determination to go in and possess the land. The aims of the two sides thus clashed hopelessly. Under all temporary and apparent grounds of quarrel lay this deep-rooted jealousy and incompatibility of interests. Beyond the Alleghanies the Revolution was fundamentally a struggle between England, bent on restricting the growth of the English race, and the Americans, triumphantly determined to acquire the right to conquer the continent.

Had not the backwoodsmen been successful in the various phases of the struggle, we would certainly have been cooped up between the sea and

the mountains. If in 1774 and '76 they had been beaten by the Ohio tribes and the Cherokees, the border ravaged, and the settlements stopped or forced back as during what the colonists called Braddock's War,<sup>1</sup> there is every reason to believe that the Alleghanies would have become our western frontier. Similarly, if Clark had failed in his efforts to conquer and hold the Illinois and Vincennes, it is overwhelmingly probable that the Ohio would have been the boundary between the Americans and the British. Before the Revolution began, in 1774, the British Parliament had, by the Quebec Act, declared the country between the Great Lakes and the Ohio to be part of Canada; and under the provisions of this act the British officers continued to do as they had already done—that is, to hold adverse possession of the land, scornfully heedless of the claims of the different colonies. The country was *de facto* part of Canada; the Americans tried to conquer it exactly as they tried to conquer the rest of Canada; the only difference was that Clark succeeded, whereas Arnold and Montgomery failed.

Of course, the conquest by the backwoodsmen was by no means the sole cause of our acquisition

<sup>1</sup> During this Indian war, covering the period from Braddock's to Grant's defeats, Smith, a good authority, estimates that the frontiers were laid waste, and population driven back, over an area nearly three hundred miles long by thirty broad.

of the West. The sufferings and victories of the Westerners would have counted for nothing had it not been for the success of the American arms in the East, and for the skill of our three treaty-makers at Paris—Jay, Adams, and Franklin, but above all the two former, and especially Jay. On the other hand, it was the actual occupation and holding of the country that gave our diplomats their vantage-ground. When the treaty was made, in 1782, the commissioners of the United States represented a people already holding the whole Ohio valley, as well as the Illinois. The circumstances of the treaty were peculiar; but here they need to be touched but briefly, and only so far as they affected the western boundaries. The United States, acting together with France and Spain, had just closed a successful war with England; but when the peace negotiations were begun, they speedily found that their allies were, if anything, more anxious than their enemy to hamper their growth. England, having conceded the grand point of independence, was disposed to be generous, and not to haggle about lesser matters. Spain, on the contrary, was quite as hostile to the new nation as to England. Through her representative, Count Aranda, she predicted the future enormous expansion of the Federal Republic at the expense of Florida, Louisiana, and Mexico, unless it was effectually curbed in its

youth. The prophecy has been strikingly fulfilled, and the event has thoroughly justified Spain's fear; for the major part of the present territory of the United States was under Spanish dominion at the close of the Revolutionary War. Spain, therefore, proposed to hem in our growth by giving us the Alleghanies for our western boundary.<sup>1</sup> France was the ally of America; but as between America and Spain, she favored the latter. Moreover, she wished us to remain weak enough to be dependent upon her further good graces. The French court, therefore, proposed that the United States should content themselves with so much of the trans-Alleghany territory as lay round the headwaters of the Tennessee and between the Cumberland and Ohio. This area contained the bulk of the land that was already settled<sup>2</sup>; and the proposal showed how important the French court deemed the fact of actual settlement.

Thus the two allies of America were hostile to her interests. The open foe, England, on the contrary, was anxious to conclude a separate treaty, so that she might herself be in better condition to carry on negotiations with France

<sup>1</sup> At the north this boundary was to follow the upper Ohio, and end towards the foot of Lake Erie.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding only so much of Robertson's settlement as lay south of the Cumberland, and Clark's conquest.

and Spain; she cared much less to keep the West than she did to keep Gibraltar, and an agreement with the United States about the former left her free to insist on the retention of the latter. Congress, in a spirit of slavish subserviency, had instructed the American commissioners to take no steps without the knowledge and advice of France. Franklin was inclined to obey these instructions; but Jay, supported by Adams, boldly insisted on disregarding them; and, accordingly, a separate treaty was negotiated with England. In settling the claims to the western territory, much stress was laid on the old colonial charters; but underneath all the verbiage it was practically admitted that these charters conferred merely inchoate rights, which became complete only after conquest and settlement. The States themselves had already by their actions shown that they admitted this to be the case. Thus North Carolina, when by the creation of Washington County—now the State of Tennessee—she rounded out her boundaries, specified them as running to the Mississippi. As a matter of fact, the royal grant, under which alone she could claim the land in question, extended to the Pacific; and the only difference between her rights to the regions east and west of the river was that her people were settling in one, and could not settle in the other. The same was true of Kentucky, and of the West

generally; if the States could rightfully claim to run to the Mississippi, they could also rightfully claim to run to the Pacific. The colonial charters were all very well as furnishing color of title; but at bottom the American claim rested on the peculiar kind of colonizing conquest so successfully carried on by the backwoodsmen. When the English took New Amsterdam they claimed it under old charters; but they very well knew that their real right was only that of the strong hand. It was precisely so with the Americans and the Ohio valley. They produced old charters to support their title; but in reality it rested on Clark's conquests and above all on the advance of the backwoods settlements.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. R. A. Hinsdale, in his excellent work on the *Old Northwest* (New York, 1888), seems to me to lay too much stress on the weight which our charter-claims gave us, and too little on the right we had acquired by actual possession. The charter-claims were elaborated with the most wearisome prolixity at the time; but so were the English claims to New Amsterdam a century earlier. Conquest gave the true title in each case; the importance of a claim is often in inverse order to the length at which it is set forth in a diplomatic document. The West was gained by: (1) the westward movement of the backwoodsmen during the Revolution; (2) the final success of the Continental armies in the East; (3) the skill of our diplomats at Paris; failure on any one of these three points would have lost us the West.

Mr. Hinsdale seems to think that Clark's conquest prevented the Illinois from being conquered from the British by the Spaniards; but this is very doubtful. The British at Detroit would have been far more likely to have conquered

This view of the case is amply confirmed by a consideration of what was actually acquired under the treaty of peace which closed the Revolutionary struggle. Map-makers down to the present day have almost invariably misrepresented the territorial limits we gained by this treaty. They represent our limits in the West in 1783 as being the Great Lakes, the Mississippi, and the thirty-first parallel of latitude from the Mississippi to the Chattahoochee<sup>1</sup>; but in reality we did not acquire these limits until a dozen years later, by the treaties of Jay and Pinckney. Two points must be kept in mind: first, that during the war our ally, Spain, had conquered from England that portion of the Gulf coast known as West Florida; and, second, that when the treaty was made the United States and Great Britain mutually covenanted to do certain things, some of which were never done. Great Britain agreed to recognize the Lakes as our northern boundary, but, on the

the Spaniards at St. Louis; at any rate, there is small probability that they would have been seriously troubled by the latter. The so-called Spanish conquest of St. Joseph was not a conquest at all, but an unimportant plundering raid.

The peace negotiations are best discussed in John Jay's chapter thereon, in the seventh volume of Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of North America*. Sparks's account is fundamentally wrong on several points. Bancroft largely follows him, and therefore repeats and shares his errors.

<sup>1</sup> The map in Mr. Hinsdale's book may be given as a late instance.

alleged ground that we did not fulfil certain of our promises, she declined to fulfil this agreement, and the lake posts remained in her hands until the Jay treaty was ratified. She likewise consented to recognize the 31st parallel as our southern boundary, but, by a secret article, it was agreed that if by the negotiations she recovered West Florida, then the boundary should run about a hundred miles farther north, ending at the mouth of the Yazoo. The discovery of this secret article aroused great indignation in Spain. As a matter of fact, the disputed territory, the land drained by the Gulf rivers, was not England's to grant, for it had been conquered and was then held by Spain. Nor was it given up to us until we acquired it by Pinckney's masterly diplomacy. The treaty represented a mere promise, which in part was not, and in part could not be, fulfilled. All that it really did was to guarantee us what we already possessed — that is, the Ohio valley and the Illinois, which we had settled and conquered during the years of warfare. Our boundary lines were in reality left very vague. On the north, the basin of the Great Lakes remained British; on the south, the lands draining into the Gulf remained Spanish, or under Spanish influence. The actual boundaries we acquired can be roughly stated, in the North, to have followed the divide between the waters of the lake and the



waters of the Ohio, and, in the South, to have run across the heads of the Gulf rivers. Had we remained a loose confederation, these boundaries would more probably have shrunk than advanced; we did not overleap them until some years after Washington had become the head of a real, not merely a titular, nation. The peace of 1783, as far as our western limits were affected, did nothing more than secure us undisturbed possession of lands from which it had proved impossible to oust us. We were in reality given nothing more than we had by our own prowess gained; the inference is strong that we got what we did get only because we had won and held it.

The first duty of the backwoodsmen who thus conquered the West was to institute civil government. Their efforts to overcome and beat back the Indians went hand-in-hand with their efforts to introduce law and order in the primitive communities they founded; and as exactly as they relied purely on themselves in withstanding outside foes, so they likewise built up their social life and their first systems of government with reference simply to their special needs, and without any outside help or direction. The whole character of the westward movement, the methods of warfare, of settlement and government, were determined by the extreme and defiant individualism of the backwoodsmen, their inborn

independence and self-reliance, and their intensely democratic spirit. The West was won and settled by a number of groups of men, all acting independently of one another, but with a common object, and at about the same time. There was no one controlling spirit ; it was essentially the movement of a whole free people, not of a single master-mind. There were strong and able leaders, who showed themselves fearless soldiers and just law-givers, undaunted by danger, resolute to persevere in the teeth of disaster ; but even these leaders are most deeply interesting because they stand foremost among a host of others like them. There were hundreds of hunters and Indian fighters like Mansker, Wetzel, Kenton, and Brady ; there were scores of commonwealth founders like Logan, Todd, Floyd, and Harrod ; there were many adventurous land-speculators like Henderson ; there were even plenty of commanders like Shelby and Campbell. These were all men of mark ; some of them exercised a powerful and honorable influence on the course of events in the West. Above them rise four greater figures, fit to be called not merely State or local, but national heroes. Clark, Sevier, Robertson, and Boon are emphatically American worthies. They were men of might in their day, born to sway the minds of others, helpful in shaping the destiny of the continent. Yet of Clark alone can it be said that he did a particular piece

of work which without him would have remained undone. Sevier, Robertson, and Boon only hastened, and did more perfectly, a work which would have been done by others had they themselves fallen by the wayside.<sup>1</sup> Important though they are for their own sakes, they are still more important as types of the men who surrounded them.

The individualism of the backwoodsmen, however, was tempered by a sound common sense, and capacity for combination. The first hunters might come alone or in couples, but the actual colonization was done not by individuals, but by groups of individuals. The settlers brought their families and belongings, either on pack-horses along the forest trails, or in scows down the streams; they settled in palisaded villages, and immediately took steps to provide both a civil and military organization. They were men of

<sup>1</sup> Sevier's place would certainly have been taken by some such man as his chief rival, Tipton. Robertson led his colony to the Cumberland but a few days before old Mansker led another; and though without Robertson the settlements would have been temporarily abandoned, they would surely have been reoccupied. If Henderson had not helped Boon found Kentucky, then Hart or some other of Henderson's associates would doubtless have done so; and if Boon had been lacking, his place would probably have been taken by some such man as Logan. The loss of these men would have been very serious, but of no one of them can it be said, as of Clark, that he alone could have done the work he actually did.

facts, not theories; and they showed their usual hard common sense in making a government. They did not try to invent a new system; they simply took that under which they had grown up, and applied it to their altered conditions. They were most familiar with the government of the county; and therefore they adopted this for the framework of their little independent, self-governing commonwealths of Watauga, Cumberland, and Transylvania.<sup>1</sup>

They were also familiar with the representative system; and accordingly they introduced it into the new communities, the little fortified villages serving as natural units of representation. They were already thoroughly democratic, in instinct and principle, and, as a matter of course, they made the offices elective and gave full play to the majority. In organizing the militia they kept the old system of county lieutenants, making them elective, not appointive; and they organized the men on the basis of a regiment, the companies representing territorial divisions, each commanded by its own officers, who were thus chosen by the fighting men of the fort or forts in their respective districts. Thus each of the backwoods commonwealths, dur-

<sup>1</sup> The last of these was the most pretentious and short-lived and least characteristic of the three, as Henderson made an abortive effort to graft on it the utterly foreign idea of a proprietary colony,

ing its short-lived term of absolute freedom, reproduced as its governmental system that of the old colonial county, increasing the powers of the court, and changing the justices into the elective representatives of an absolute democracy. The civil head, the chairman of the court or committee, was also usually the military head, the colonel-commandant. In fact, the military side of the organization rapidly became the most conspicuous and, at least, in certain crises, the most important. There were always some years of desperate warfare during which the entire strength of the little commonwealth was drawn on to resist outside aggression, and during these years the chief function of government was to provide for the gripping military needs of the community, and the one pressing duty of its chief was to lead his followers with valor and wisdom in the struggle with the stranger.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My friend, Professor Alexander Johnston, of Princeton, is inclined to regard these frontier county organizations as reproductions of a very primitive type of government indeed, deeming that they were formed primarily for war against outsiders, that their military organization was the essential feature, the real reason for their existence. I can hardly accept this view in its entirety; though fully recognizing the extreme importance of the military side of the little governments, it seems to me that the preservation of order, and especially the necessity for regulating the disposition of the land, were quite as powerful factors in impelling the settlers to act together. It is important to keep in mind the terri-

These little communities were extremely independent in feeling, not only of the Federal Government, but of their parent States, and even of one another. They had won their positions by their own courage and hardihood; very few State troops and hardly a Continental soldier had appeared west of the Alleghanies. They had heartily sympathized with their several mother colonies when they became the United States, and had manfully played their part in the Revolutionary War. Moreover, they were united among themselves by ties of good-will and of services mutually rendered. Kentucky, for instance, had been succored more than once by troops raised among the Watauga Carolinians or the Holston Virginians, and in her turn she had sent needed supplies to the Cumberland. But when the strain of the war was over the separatist spirit asserted itself very strongly. The groups of western settlements not only looked on the Union itself very coldly, but they were also more or less actively hostile to their parent States, and regarded even one another as foreign communities<sup>1</sup>; they considered the

torial organization of the militia companies and regiments: a county and a regiment, a fortified village and a company, were usually coextensive.

<sup>1</sup> See in Gardoqui MSS. the letters of George Rogers Clark to Gardoqui, March 15, 1788; and of John Sevier to Gardoqui, September 12, 1788; and in the Robertson MS. the letter of Robertson to McGillivray, August 3, 1788. It is necessary

Confederation as being literally only a lax league of friendship.

Up to the close of the Revolutionary contest the settlers who were building homes and States beyond the Alleghanies formed a homogeneous backwoods population. The woodchoppers, game-hunters, and Indian fighters, who dressed and lived alike, were the typical pioneers. They were a shifting people. In every settlement the tide ebbed and flowed. Some of the new-comers would be beaten in the hard struggle for existence, and would drift back to whence they had come. Of those who succeeded some would take root in the land, and others would move still farther into the wilderness. Thus each generation rolled westward, leaving its children at the point where the wave stopped no less than at that where it started. The descendants of the victors of King's Mountain are as likely to be found in the Rockies as in the Alleghanies.

With the close of the war came an enormous increase in the tide of immigration; and many of the new-comers were of a very different stamp from their predecessors. The main current flowed towards Kentucky, and gave an entirely different

to allude to the feeling here; but the separatist and disunion movements did not gather full force until later, and are properly to be considered in connection with post-Revolutionary events.

character to its population. The two typical figures in Kentucky so far had been Clark and Boon, but after the close of the Revolution both of them sank into unimportance, whereas the careers of Sevier and Robertson had only begun. The disappearance of the two former from active life was partly accidental and partly a resultant of the forces that assimilated Kentucky so much more rapidly than Tennessee to the conditions prevailing in the old States. Kentucky was the best known and the most accessible of the western regions; within her own borders she was now comparatively safe from serious Indian invasion, and the tide of immigration naturally flowed thither. So strong was the current that, within a dozen years, it had completely swamped the original settlers, and had changed Kentucky from a peculiar pioneer and backwoods commonwealth into a State differing no more from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina than these differed from one another.

The men who gave the tone to this great flood of new-comers were the gentry from the seacoast country, the planters, the young lawyers, the men of means who had been impoverished by the long-continued and harassing civil war. Straitened in circumstances, desirous of winning back wealth and position, they cast longing eyes towards the beautiful and fertile country beyond the moun-



tains, deeming it a place that afforded unusual opportunities to the man with capital, no less than to him whose sole trust was in his own adventurous energy.

Most of the gentle folks in Virginia and the Carolinas, the men who lived in great roomy houses on their well-stocked and slave-tilled plantations, had been forced to struggle hard to keep their heads above water during the Revolution. They loyally supported the government, with blood and money; and at the same time they endeavored to save some of their property from the general wreck, and to fittingly educate their girls, and those of their boys who were too young to be in the army. The men of this stamp who now prepared to cast in their lot with the new communities formed an exceptionally valuable class of immigrants; they contributed the very qualities of which the raw settlements stood most in need. They had suffered for no fault of their own; fate had gone hard with them. The fathers had been in the Federal or Provincial congresses; the older sons had served in the Continental line or in the militia. The plantations were occasionally overrun by the enemy; and the general disorder had completed their ruin. Nevertheless, the heads of the families had striven to send the younger sons to school or college. For their daughters they did even more; and throughout

the contest, even in its darkest hours, they sent them down to receive the final touches of a lady-like education at some one of the State capitals not at the moment in the hands of the enemy—such as Charleston or Philadelphia. There the young ladies were taught dancing and music, for which, as well as for their frocks and “pink calamanco shoes,” their fathers paid enormous sums in depreciated Continental currency.<sup>1</sup>

Even the close of active hostilities, when the British were driven from the Southern States, brought at first but a slight betterment of condition to the struggling people. There was no cash in the land, the paper currency was nearly worthless, every one was heavily in debt, and no one was able to collect what was owing to him. There was much mob violence, and a general relaxation of the bonds of law and order. Even nature turned hostile; a terrible drought shrunk up all the streams until they could not turn the grist-mills, while from the same cause the crops failed almost completely. A hard winter followed, and many cattle and hogs died; so that the well-to-do were brought to the verge of bankruptcy and the poor suffered extreme privations, being forced to go fifty or sixty miles to purchase

<sup>1</sup> Clay MSS. Account of Robert Morris with Miss Elizabeth Hart, during her residence in Philadelphia in 1780-81. The account is so curious that I give it in full in Appendix E.

small quantities of meal and grain at exorbitant prices.<sup>1</sup>

This distress at home inclined many people of means and ambition to try their fortunes in the West: while another and equally powerful motive was the desire to secure great tracts of virgin lands, for possession or speculation. Many distinguished soldiers had been rewarded by successive warrants for unoccupied land, which they entered wherever they chose, until they could claim thousands upon thousands of acres.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes they sold these warrants to outsiders; but whether they remained in the hands of the original holders or not, they served as a great stimulus to the westward movement, and drew many of the representatives of the wealthiest and most influential families in the parent States to the lands on the farther side of the mountains.

At the close of the Revolution, however, the men from the seacoast region formed but an insignificant portion of the western pioneers. The country beyond the Alleghanies was first won and settled by the backwoodsmen themselves, acting

<sup>1</sup> Clay MSS. Letters of Jesse Benton, 1782 and '83. See Appendix F.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Colonel William Christian, for his services in Braddock's and Dunmore's wars and against the Cherokees, received many warrants; he visited Kentucky to enter them, nine thousand acres in all. See *Life of Caleb Wallace*, by William H. Whitsitt. Louisville, 1888.

under their own leaders, obeying their own desires, and following their own methods. They were a marked and peculiar people. The good and evil traits in their character were such as naturally belonged to a strong, harsh, and homely race, which, with all its shortcomings, was nevertheless bringing a tremendous work to a triumphant conclusion. The backwoodsmen were above all things characteristically American; and it is fitting that the two greatest and most typical of all Americans should have been respectively a sharer and an outcome of their work. Washington himself passed the most important years of his youth heading the westward movement of his people; clad in the traditional dress of the backwoodsmen, in tasselled hunting-shirt and fringed leggings, he led them to battle against the French and Indians, and helped to clear the way for the American advance. The only other man who, in the American roll of honor, stands by the side of Washington was born when the distinctive work of the pioneers had ended; and yet he was bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh; for from the loins of this gaunt frontier folk sprang mighty Abraham Lincoln.

## A P P E N D I X A

### TO CHAPTER III

(Haldimand MSS., Series B, vol. cxxiii., p. 302.)

SIR,

My Letter of the 22nd & 23rd of July informed you of the reports brought us of the Enemy's motions at that time which was delivered by the Chiefs of the standing Stone Village & confirmed by Belts & Strings of Wampum in so earnest a manner that could not but gain Credit with us. We had upon this occasion the greatest Body of Indians collected to an advantageous peice of ground near the Picawee Village that have been assembled in this Quarter since the commencement of the War & perhaps may never be in higher spirits to engage the Enemy, when the return of Scouts from the Ohio informed us that the account we had received was false; this disappointment notwithstanding all our endeavours to keep them together occasioned them to disperse in disgust with each other, the inhabitants of this Country who were the most immediately interested in keeping in a Body ware the first that broke off & though we advanced towards the Ohio with

upwards of three hundred Hurons & Lake Indians few of the Delawares, Shawanese, or Mingoës followed us. On our arrival at the Ohio we remain'd still in uncertainty with respect to the Enemy's motions, & it was thought best from hence to send Scouts to the Falls & that the main Body should advance into the Enemy's Country and endeavour to lead out a party from some of their Forts by which we might be able to gain some certain Intelligence accordingly we crossed the Ohio and arrived the 18th Inst. at one of the Enemy's settlements—call'd Bryans Station, but the Indians discovering their numbers prevented their coming out and the Lake Indians finding this rush'd up to the Fort and set several out Houses on fire but at too great a distance to touch the Fort the Wind blowing the Contrary way. the firing continued this day during which time a Party of about twenty of the Enemy approached a part that happened not to be Guarded & about one half of them reached it the rest being drove back by a few Indians who ware near the place, the next morning finding it to no purpose to keep up a fire longer upon the Fort as we were getting men killed, & had already several men wounded which ware to be carried, the Indians determind to retreat & the 20th reached the Blue Licks where we encamp'd near an advantageous Hill and expecting the enemy would pursue determind to wait for

them keeping spies at the Lick who in the morning of the 21st discovered them & at half past 7 o'clock we engaged them & in a short time totally defeated them, we were not much superior to them in Numbers they being about two hundred picked men from the settlement of Kentucky. Commanded by the Colonels Todd, Trigg, Boon & Todd, with the Majors Harlin, and McGary most of whom fell in the action, from the best inquiry I could make upon the spot there was upwards of one hundred & forty killed & taken with near an hundred rifles several being thrown into a deep River that were not recovered. It was said by the Prisoners that a Colonel Logan was expected to join them with one hundred men more we waited upon the ground to-day for him, but seeing there was not much probability of his coming we set off & crossed the Ohio the second day after the action. Captain Caldwell & I arrived at this place last night with a design of sending some assistance to those who are bring on the wounded people who are fourteen in number, we had Ten Indians kill'd with Mr. La Bute of the Indian Department who by sparing the life of one of the Enemy & endeavouring to take him Prisoner loss'd his own, to our disappointment we find no Provisions brought forward to this place or likely hood of any for some time, and we have entirely subsisted since we left this on what we got in the Woods,

and took from the Enemy. The Prisoners all agree in their account that there is no talk of an Expedition from that Quarter, nor indeed are they able without assistance from the Colonies, & that the Militia of the Country have been employed during the summer in Building the Fort at the Falls, & what they call a Row Galley which has made one trip up the River to the Mouth of the big Miamis & occasioned that alarm that created us so much trouble, she carries one six pounder, six four pounders, & two two pounders & Row's eighty oars, she had at the big Bone Lick one hundred men but being chiefly draughts from the Militia many of them left her on different parts of the River. One of the Prisoners mentions the arrival of Boats lately from Fort Pitt & that Letters has pass'd between the Commanding officer of that place & Mr. Clark intimating that preparation is making there for another Expedition into the Indian Country, we have since our arrival heard some thing of this matter and that the particulars has been forwarded to you, a Detachment of Rangers with a large party of Delawares, & Shawanese are gone that way who will be able to discover the truth of this matter.

I am this day favoured with yours of the 6th Augt. containing the report of Isaac Gians concerning the Cruelties of the Indians. It is true they have made sacrifices to their revenge after the



massacre of their women & children some being known to them to be perpetrators of it, but it was done in my absence or before I could reach any of the places to interfere. And I can assure you Sir that there is not a white person here wanting in their duty to represent to the Indians in the strongest terms the highest abhorrence of such conduct as well as the bad consequences that may attend it to both them & us being contrary to the rule of carrying on war by Civilized nations, however it is not improbable that Gians may have exaggerated matters greatly being notoriously known for a disaffected person and concerned in sending Prisoners away with Intelligence to the Enemy at the time Captain Bird came out as we ware then informed. I flatter myself that I may by this time have an answer to the Letter I had the honor of writing to the Commandr. in Chief on leaving Detroit. Mr. Elliot is to be the Bearer of this who will be able to give you any farther information necessary respecting matters here.

I am with respect Sir your most obedient & Very Humble Servant

A. MCKEE.

SHAWANESE COUNTRY, }  
August 28th, 1782. }

Major DE PEYSTER.

## APPENDIX B

## TO CHAPTER III

(Haldimand MSS., Series B, vol. cxxiii., p. 297.)

Extract of a letter from Captain Caldwell, dated at Wakitamiki, August 26, 1782:

“When I last had the pleasure of writing you, I expected to have struck at Wheeling as I was on my march for that place, but was overtaken by a Messenger from the Shawnese, who informed me that the Enemy was on their march for their Country, which obliged me to turn their way, and to my great mortification found the alarm false & that it was owing to a Gondals coming up to the mouth of Licking Creek, and landing some men upon the South side of the Ohio which when the Indians saw supposed it must be Clark. It would have been a lucky circumstance if they had come on, as I had eleven hundred Indians on the ground, and three hundred within a day’s march of me. When the Report was contradicted They mostly left us, many of them had left their Towns no way equipped for War, as they expected as well as myself to fight in a few days, notwithstanding I was determined to pay the Enemy a visit with as many Indians as would follow me: accordingly I crossed the Ohio with three hundred Indians & Rangers, and Marched for Bryants Station on Kentuck, and

surrounded the Fort the 15th in the morning, & tried to draw 'em out by sending up a small party to try to take a Prisoner and shew themselves, but the Indians were in too great a hurry and the whole shewed too soon—I then saw it was in vain to wait any longer and so drew nigh the Fort, burnt 3 Houses which are part of the Fort but the wind being contrary prevented it having the desired effect. Killed upwards of 300 Hogs, 150 Head of Cattle, and a number of Sheep, took a number of Horses, pull'd up and destroy'd their Potatoes, cut down a great deal of their Corn, burn't their Hemp and did other considerable damage—by the Indians exposing themselves too much we had 5 Killed & 2 Wounded.

“We retreated the 16th and came as far as Biddle's former Station, when nigh 100 Indians left me, as they went after their things they left at the Forks of Licking, and I took the Road by the blue Licks as it was nigher and the ground more advantageous in case the Enemy should pursue us—got to the Licks on the 17th and encamped.

“On the 18th in the morning, one of my party that was watching the Road came in and told me the Enemy was within a mile of us, upon which I drew up to fight them—at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past seven they advanced in three Divisions in good order, they had spied some of us and it was the very place they expected to overtake us.—We had but fired one

Gun till they gave us a Volley and stood to it very well for some time, 'till we rushed in upon them when they broke immediately.—We pursued for about two miles, and as the enemy was mostly on horseback, it was in vain to follow further.

“We killed and took one hundred and Forty six. Amongst the killed is Col. Todd the Commandr Col. Boon, Lt. Col. Trigg, Major Harlin who commanded their Infantry, Major Magara and a number more of their officers. Our loss is Monsr. La Bute killed, he died like a warrior fighting Arm to Arm, six Indians Killed and ten wounded—The Indians behaved extremely well, and no people could behave better than both Officers & men in general—The Indians I had with me were the Wyandots and Lake Indians—The Wyandots furnished me with what provisions I wanted, and behaved extremely well.”

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## A P P E N D I X C

### TO CHAPTER VI

It has been so habitual among American writers to praise all the deeds, good, bad, and indifferent, of our Revolutionary ancestors, and to belittle and make light of what we have recently done, that most men seem not to know that the Union

and Confederate troops in the Civil War fought far more stubbornly and skilfully than did their forefathers at the time of the Revolution. It is impossible to estimate too highly the devoted patriotism and statesmanship of the founders of our national life; and however high we rank Washington, I am confident that we err, if anything, in not ranking him high enough, for on the whole the world has never seen a man deserving to be placed above him; but we certainly have overestimated the actual fighting qualities of the Revolutionary troops, and have never laid enough stress on the folly and jealousy with which the States behaved during the contest. In 1776, the Americans were still in the gristle; and the feats of arms they then performed do not bear comparison with what they did in the prime of their lusty youth, eighty or ninety years later. The Continentals who had been long drilled by Washington and Greene were most excellent troops; but they never had a chance to show at their best, because they were always mixed in with a mass of poor soldiers, either militia or just-enlisted regulars.

The resolute determination of the Americans to win, their trust in the justice of their cause, their refusal to be cast down by defeat, the success with which they overran and conquered the West at the very time they were struggling for life or

death in the East, the heroic grandeur of their great leader—for all this they deserve full credit. But the militia who formed the bulk of the Revolutionary armies did not generally fight well. Sometimes, as at Bunker's Hill and King's Mountain, they did excellently, and they did better, as a rule, than similar European bodies—than the Spanish and Portuguese peasants in 1807-12, for instance. At that time it was believed that the American militia could not fight at all; this was a mistake, and the British paid dearly for making it; but the opposite belief, that militia could be generally depended upon, led to quite as bad blunders, and the politicians of the Jeffersonian school who encouraged the idea made us in our turn pay dearly for our folly in after years, as at Bladensburg and along the Niagara frontier in 1812. The Revolutionary War proved that hastily gathered militia, justly angered and strung to high purpose, could sometimes whip regulars, a feat then deemed impossible; but it lacked very much of proving that they would usually do this. Moreover, even the stalwart fighters who followed Clark and Sevier, and who did most important and valorous service, cannot point to any one such desperate deed of fierce courage as that of the doomed Texans under Bowie and Davy Crockett in the Alamo.

A very slight comparison of the losses suffered in

the battles of the Revolution with those suffered in the battles of the Civil War is sufficient to show the superiority of the soldiers who fought in the latter (and a comparison of the tactics and other features of the conflicts will make the fact even clearer). No Revolutionary regiment or brigade suffered such a loss as befell the 1st Minnesota at Gettysburg, where it lost 215 out of 263 men, 82 per cent.; the 9th Illinois at Shiloh, where it lost 366 out of 578 men, 63 per cent.; the 1st Maine at Petersburg, which lost 632 out of 950 men, 67 per cent.; or Caldwell's brigade of New York, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania troops, which, in Hancock's attack at Fredericksburg, lost 949 out of 1947 men, 48 per cent.; or, turning to the Southern soldiers, such a loss as that of the 1st Texans at Antietam, when 186 out of 226 men fell, 82 per cent.; or of the 26th North Carolina, which, at Gettysburg, lost 588 out of 820 men, 72 per cent.; or the 8th Tennessee, at Murfreesboro, which lost 306 out of 444 men, or 68 per cent.; or Garnett's brigade of Virginians, which, in Pickett's charge, lost 941 men out of 1427, or 65 per cent.

There were over a hundred regiments, and not a few brigades, in the Union and Confederate armies, each of which in some one action suffered losses averaging as heavy as the above. The Revolutionary armies cannot show such a roll of honor as this. Still, it is hardly fair to judge

them by this comparison, for the Civil War saw the most bloody and desperate fighting that has occurred of late years. None of the European contests since the close of the Napoleonic struggles can be compared to it. Thus, the Light Brigade at Balaclava lost only 37 per cent., or 247 men out of 673, while the Guards at Inkermann lost but 45 per cent., or 594 out of 1331; and the heaviest German losses in the Franco-Prussian war were but 49 and 46 per cent., occurring, respectively, to the Third Westphalian Regiment at Mars-le-Tours, and the Garde-Schutzen battalion at Metz.

These figures are taken from *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War*, by Colonel William F. Fox, Albany, 1881; the loss in each instance includes few or no prisoners save in the cases of Garnett's brigade and of the Third Westphalian Regiment.

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## A P P E N D I X D

### TO CHAPTER VIII

(From the Robertson MSS., vol. i., letter of Don Miro.)

NEW ORLEANS, the 20th April, 1783.

SIR,

I received yours of 29th January last, & am highly pleased in seeing the good intentions of the People of that District, & knowing the false-



hood of the report we have heard they are willing to attack their Province. You ought to make the same account of the news you had that the Indians have been excited in their Province against you, since I wrote quite the contrary at different times to Alexander McGillevray to induce him to make peace, & lastly he answered me that he gave his word to the Governor of North Carolina that the Creeks would not trouble again those settlements: notwithstanding after the letter received from you, and other from Brigadier general Daniel Smith Esqr I will write to him engaging him to be not more troublesome to you.

I have not any connection with Cheroquis & Marcuten, but as they go now & then to Illinois I will give advice to that Commander to induce them to be quiet: in respect to the former in the month of May of last year they asked the permission of settling them selves on the west side of the Mississippi River which is granted & they act accordingly, you plainly see you are quite free from their incursions

I will give the Passeport you ask for your son-in-law, & I will be highly pleased with his coming down to setle in this Province & much more if you, & your family should come along with him, since I can assure you that you will find here your welfare, without being either molested on religious matters or paying any duty & under the

circumstances of finding allwais market for your crops which makes every one of the planters settled at Natchez or elsewhere to improve every day, much more so than if they were to purchase the Lands, as they are granted gratis

I wish to be usefull to you being with regard sir

Your most obt. hl. servant

(Dupte.)

ESTEVAN MIRO.

Colonel JAMES ROBERTSON, Esqr.

The duplicity of the Spaniards is well illustrated by the fact that the Gardoqui MSS. give clear proof that they were assisting the Creeks with arms and ammunition at the very time Miro was writing these letters. See the Gardoqui MSS., *passim*, especially Miro's letter of June 28, 1786.

APPENDIX E

TO CHAPTER IX

## The Winning of the West

Account of Robert Morris with Miss Betsey Hart,

Dr.

MISS HARTE

IN ACCOUNT

[Oldest daughter of Colonel Thomas Hart.

			Con- tinental			Ex- change	Specie			
			£	s	d		£	s	d	
1780										
Aug.	29	To cash paid for a Pair of Shoes for you.....	£64	2	6	at 60 for 1	£	1	1	4½
		To a Chest of Sugar delivered Mrs. Brodeau & Portorage.....	1107	15		Do	18	9	3	
		To two ps Sheeting Delivered Ditto.....	1116	10		Do	18	12	0	
		To Cash paid Wm. McDugall's Bill for one & a half Quarters Tuition at Dancing.....	223	10		Do	3	12	6	
		Paid E. Denagheys Bill for washing Done for you.....	95	12	6	Do	1	11	10½	
Dec.	6	To Ditto paid Hannah Estys Bill for making Frocks for you..... £257 10/ Paid D Denagheys Bill for Washg... £125.12.6	383	2	6	at 75 for 1	5	2	2	
	29	To Ditto paid for pair of Pink Calemancoi Shoes for you.....	78	15	0	Do	1	1	0	
1781										
Feb.	3	To Ditto paid B. Victor your music master for one Quarter Tuition of Music.....	506	5	0	75 for 1	6	15	0	
		To the following Articles delivered Mrs. Brodeau on your Accot. One Firkin of Butter one Box of Candles & a Box of Soap Amounting p Account to.....	629	1	2	Do	8	7	9	
		To cash paid Mrs. Brodeau in full of her Accot. to October last against you.....	3856	17	6	Do	51	8	6	
		Allowed for Depreciation.....					£115	3	5	
							57	13	7	
							£172	17	0	

# Appendix E

315

Philadelphia, 1780-81. From the Clay MSS.

CURRENT WITH

ROBERT MORRIS

Cr.

She married Dr. Richard Pendell.]

	Con- tinent- al	Exchg	Specie

Received Philad. April 7th 1781 the One hundred and Seventy two Pounds 17/ State Specie being in full the amount of the annexed account for Robt. Morris  
 £172. 17. State Specie J. SWANNICK

## APPENDIX F

## TO CHAPTER IX

In the Clay MSS. the letters of Jesse Benton to Colonel Hart, of December 4, 1782, and March 22, 1783, paint vividly the general distress in the Carolinas. They are taken up mostly with accounts of bad debts and of endeavors to proceed against various debtors; they also touch on other subjects.

In the first, of December 4, 1782, Benton writes: "It seems the powers above are combined against us this year. Such a Drouth was never known here [in the upper Carolinas] before; Corn sells from the stack at 4 & 5/ p. Bushel, Wheat 6 & 8/, Rye the same, Oats 3/6 &c &c . . . I have not had Water to keep the Grist Mill Fuling Mill and Oyl Mill at Work before this Week . . . Johny Rice has gone to Kentucky with his goods to buy Furs, but before he went we talked of your debts and he did not like to be concerned, saying he should gain ill will for no profit; However I will immediately enforce the Law to recover your Debts . . . the Lands which You had of me would sell as soon as any but this hard year makes many settlers and few buyers. I have heard nothing more of Major Haywoods desire of purchasing & all I ever heard upon the subject was from his son-in-law who now appears very sick of his late purchase of Elegant Buildings.

. . . Your Brother Capt. Nat Hart, our worthy and respectable Friend, I doubt is cut off by the Savages at the time and in the manner as first represented, to wit, that he went out to hunt his horses in the month of July or August it is supposed the Indians in Ambuscade between Boonsboro and Knockbuckle, intended to take him Prisoner, but killd his horse and at the same time broke his Thigh, that the savages finding their Prisoner with his Thigh broken was under the necessity of putting him to Death by shooting him through the Heart at so small a Distance as to Powder burn his Flesh. He was Tomahawkd, scalped & lay two Days before he was found and buried. This Account has come by difrent hands & confirmd to Col. Henderson by a Letter from an intimate Friend of his at Kentuck."

This last bit of information is sandwiched in between lamentations over bad debts, concerning which the writer manifested considerably more emotion than over the rather startling fate of Captain Hart.

The second letter contains an account of the "trafficking off" of a wagon and fine pair of Pennsylvania horses, the news that a debt had been partially liquidated by the payment of sixty pound's worth of rum and sugar, which in turn went to pay workmen, and continues: "The common people are and will be much distressed for

want of Bread. I have often heard talk of Famine, but never thought of seeing any thing so much like it as the present times in this part of the Country. Three fourths of the Inhabitants of this country are obliged to purchase their Bread at 50 & 60 miles distance at the common price of 16/ and upwards per barrel. The winter has been very hard upon the live stock & I am convinced that abundance of Hogs and Cattle will die this Spring for want of Food. . . . Cash is now scarcer here than it ever was before. . . . I have been industrious to get the Mills in good repair and have succeeded well, but have recd. very little benefit from them yet owing entirely to the general failure of a Crop. We have done no Merchant work in the Grist Mill, & she only supplies my Family and workmen with Bread. Rye, the people are glad to eat. Flaxseed the cattle have chiefly eaten though I have got as much of that article as made 180 Gallons of Oyl at 4/ per bushel. The Oyl is in great demand; I expect two dollars p. Gallon for it at Halifax or Edenton, & perhaps a better price. We were very late in beginning with the Fulling Business; for want of water. . . . [there are many] Mobbs and commotions among the People.”







**“Fort Rock” at Three Forks of the Missouri, Montana. Looking South, the Gallatin River at the Left.**

(From an oil painting by De Camp.)

NEW LIBRARY EDITION

THE  
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AN ACCOUNT OF THE EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT  
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GHANIES TO THE PACIFIC.

BY  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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# THE WINNING OF THE WEST

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## CHAPTER I

### THE INRUSH OF SETTLERS, 1784-1787

**A**T the beginning of 1784, peace was a definite fact, and the United States had become one among the nations of the earth; a nation young and lusty in her youth, but as yet loosely knit, and formidable in promise rather than in actual capacity for performance.

On the western frontier lay vast and fertile vacant spaces; for the Americans had barely passed the threshold of the continent predestined to be the inheritance of their children and their children's children. For generations the great feature in the nation's history, next only to the preservation of its national life, was to be its westward growth; and its distinguishing work was to be the settlement of the immense wilderness which stretched across to the Pacific. But before the land could be settled it had to be won.

The valley of the Ohio already belonged to the Americans by right of conquest and of armed possession; it was held by rifle-bearing backwoods farmers, hard and tenacious men, who never lightly yielded what once they had grasped. North and south of the valley lay warlike and powerful Indian confederacies, now at last thoroughly alarmed and angered by the white advance; while behind these warrior tribes, urging them to hostility, and furnishing them the weapons and means wherewith to fight, stood the representatives of two great European nations, both bitterly hostile to the new America, and both anxious to help in every way the red savages who strove to stem the tide of settlement. The close alliance between the soldiers and diplomatic agents of polished Old-World powers and the wild and squalid warriors of the wilderness was an alliance against which the American settlers had always to make head in the course of their long march westward. The kings and the peoples of the Old World ever showed themselves the inveterate enemies of their blood-kin in the new; they always strove to delay the time when their own race should rise to well-nigh universal supremacy. In mere blind selfishness, or in a spirit of jealousy still blinder, the Europeans refused to regard their kinsmen who had crossed the ocean to found new realms in new continents as entitled to what they had won by

their own toil and hardihood. They persisted in treating the bold adventurers who went abroad as having done so simply for the benefit of the men who stayed at home; and they shaped their transatlantic policy in accordance with this idea. The Briton and the Spaniard opposed the American settler precisely as the Frenchman had done before them, in the interest of their own merchants and fur traders. They endeavored in vain to bar him from the solitudes through which only the Indians roved.

All the ports around the Great Lakes were held by the British<sup>1</sup>; their officers, military and civil, still kept possession, administering the government of the scattered French hamlets, and preserving their old-time relations with the Indian tribes, whom they continued to treat as allies or feudatories. To the south and west the Spaniards played the same part. They scornfully refused to heed the boundary established to the southward by the treaty between England and the United States, alleging that the former had ceded what it did not possess. They claimed the land as theirs by right of conquest. The territory which they controlled stretched from Florida, along a vaguely defined boundary to the Mississippi, up the east bank of the latter at least to the Chickasaw Bluffs, and thence up the west bank; while the Creeks

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. ii., March, 1788. Report of Secretary Knox.

and Choctaws were under their influence. The Spaniards dreaded and hated the Americans even more than did the British, and they were right; for three fourths of the present territory of the United States then lay within the limits of the Spanish possessions.<sup>1</sup>

Thus there were foes, both white and red, to be overcome, either by force of arms or by diplomacy, before the northernmost and the southernmost portions of the wilderness lying on our western border could be thrown open to settlement. The lands lying between had already been conquered, and yet were so sparsely settled as to seem almost vacant. While they offered every advantage of soil and climate to the farmer and cultivator, they also held out peculiar attractions to ambitious men of hardy and adventurous temper.

With the ending of the Revolutionary War, the rush of settlers to these western lands assumed striking proportions. The peace relieved the pressure which had hitherto restrained this movement, on the one hand, while on the other it tended to divert into the new channel of pioneer work those bold spirits whose spare energies had thus far found an outlet on stricken fields. To push the frontier westward in the teeth of the forces of the wilderness, was fighting work, such as suited well

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 81, vol. ii., pp. 189, 217; No. 120, vol. ii., June 30, 1786.

enough many a stout soldier who had worn the blue and buff of the Continental line, or who, with his fellow rough-riders, had followed in the train of some grim partisan leader.

The people of the New England States and of New York, for the most part, spread northward and westward within their own boundaries, and Georgia likewise had room for all her growth within her borders; but in the States between there was a stir of eager unrest over the tales told of the beautiful and fertile lands lying along the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee. The days of the early pioneers, of the men who did the hardest and roughest work, were over; farms were being laid out and towns were growing up among the felled forests from which the game and the Indians had alike been driven. There was still plenty of room for the rude cabin and stump-dotted clearing of the ordinary frontier settler, the woodchopper and game-hunter. Folk of the common backwoods type were as yet more numerous than any others among the settlers. In addition, there were planters from among the gentry of the seacoast; there were men of means, who had bought great tracts of wild land; there were traders with more energy than capital; there were young lawyers; there were gentlemen with a taste for an unfettered life of great opportunity; in short, there were adventurers of every kind.

All men who deemed that they could swim in troubled waters were drawn towards the new country. The more turbulent and ambitious spirits saw roads to distinction in frontier warfare, politics, and diplomacy. Merchants dreamed of many fortunate ventures, in connection with the river trade or the overland commerce by pack-train. Lawyers not only expected to make their living by their proper calling, but also to rise to the first places in the commonwealths, for in these new communities, as in the older States, the law was then the most honored of the professions, and that which most surely led to high social and political standing. But the one great attraction for all classes was the chance of procuring large quantities of fertile land at low prices.

To the average settler the land was the prime source of livelihood. A man of hardihood, thrift, perseverance, and bodily strength could surely make a comfortable living for himself and his family, if only he could settle on a good tract of rich soil; and this he could do if he went to the new country. As a matter of course, therefore, vigorous young frontiersmen swarmed into the region so recently won.

These men merely wanted so much land as they could till. Others, however, looked at it from a different standpoint. The land was the real treasure-chest of the country. It was the one com-

modity which appealed to the ambitious and adventurous side of the industrial character at that time and in that place. It was the one commodity the management of which opened chances of procuring vast wealth, and especially vast speculative wealth. To the American of the end of the eighteenth century the roads leading to great riches were as few as those leading to a competency were many. He could not prospect for mines of gold and of silver, of iron, copper, and coal; he could not discover and work wells of petroleum and natural gas; he could not build up, sell, and speculate in railroad systems and steamship companies; he could not gamble in the stock market; he could not build huge manufactories of steel, of cottons, of woollens; he could not be a banker or a merchant on a scale which is dwarfed when called princely; he could not sit still and see an already great income double and quadruple because of the mere growth in the value of real estate in some teeming city. The chances offered him by the fur trade were very uncertain. If he lived in a sea-coast town, he might do something with the clipper ships that ran to Europe and China. If he lived elsewhere, his one chance of acquiring great wealth, and his best chance to acquire even moderate wealth without long and plodding labor, was to speculate in wild land.

Accordingly, the audacious and enterprising

business men who would nowadays go into speculation in stocks, were then forced into speculation in land. Sometimes as individuals, sometimes as large companies, they sought to procure wild lands on the Wabash, the Ohio, the Cumberland, the Yazoo. In addition to the ordinary methods of settlement by, or purchase from, private persons, they endeavored to procure grants on favorable terms from the national and State legislatures, or even from the Spanish government. They often made a regular practice of buying the land rights which had accrued in lieu of arrears of pay to different bodies of Continental troops. They even at times purchased a vague and clouded title from some Indian tribe. As with most other speculative business investments, the great land companies rarely realized for the originators and investors anything like what was expected; and the majority were absolute failures in every sense. Nevertheless, a number of men made money out of them, often on quite a large scale; and in many instances, where the people who planned and carried out the scheme made nothing for themselves, they yet left their mark in the shape of settlers who had come in to purchase their lands, or even in the shape of a town built under their auspices.

Land speculation was by no means confined to those who went into it on a large scale. The



settler without money might content himself with staking out an ordinary-sized farm; but the newcomer of any means was sure not only to try to get a large estate for his own use, but also to procure land beyond any immediate need, so that he might hold on to it until it rose in value. He was apt to hold commissions to purchase land for his friends who remained east of the mountains. The land was turned to use by private individuals and by corporations; it was held for speculative purposes; it was used for the liquidation of debts of every kind. The official surveyors, when created, did most of their work by deputy; Boon was deputy-surveyor of Fayette County, in Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> Some men surveyed and staked out their own claims; the others employed professional surveyors, or else hired old hunters like Boon and Kenton, whose knowledge of woodcraft and acquaintance with the most fertile grounds enabled them not only to survey the land, but to choose the portions best fit for settlement. The lack of proper government surveys, and the looseness with which the records were kept in the land office, put a premium on fraud and encouraged carelessness. People could make and record entries in secret, and have the land surveyed in secret, if they feared a dispute over a title; no

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS.; Boon MSS. Entry of August court for 1783.

one save the particular deputy-surveyor employed needed to know.<sup>1</sup> The litigation over these confused titles dragged on with interminable tediousness. Titles were often several deep on one "location," as it was called; and whoever purchased land too often purchased also an expensive and uncertain lawsuit.

The two chief topics of thought and conversation, the two subjects which beyond all others engrossed and absorbed the minds of the settlers, were the land and the Indians. We have already seen how on one occasion Clark could raise no men for an expedition against the Indians until he closed the land offices round which the settlers were thronging. Every hunter kept a sharp lookout for some fertile bottom on which to build a cabin. The volunteers who rode against the Indian towns also spied out the land and chose the best spots whereon to build their blockhouses and palisaded villages as soon as a truce might be made, or the foe driven for the moment farther from the border. Sometimes settlers squatted on land already held but not occupied under a good title; sometimes a man who claimed the land

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. in Wisconsin State Historical Association. Clark "Papers." Walter Darrell to Colonel William Fleming, St. Asaphs, April 14, 1783. These valuable Draper MSS. have been opened to me by Mr. Reuben Gold Thwaites, the State Librarian; I take this opportunity of thanking him for his generous courtesy, to which I am so greatly indebted.

under a defective title, or under pretence of original occupation, attempted to oust or to blackmail him who had cleared and tilled the soil in good faith; and these were both fruitful causes not only of lawsuits, but of bloody affrays. Among themselves, the settlers' talk ran ever on land titles and land litigation, and schemes for securing vast tracts of rich and well-watered country. These were the subjects with which they filled their letters to one another and to their friends at home, and the subjects upon which these same friends chiefly dwelt when they sent letters in return.<sup>1</sup> Often well-to-do men visited the new country by themselves first, chose good sites for their farms and plantations, surveyed and purchased them, and then returned to their old homes, whence they sent out their field hands to break the soil and put up buildings, before bringing out their families.

The westward movement of settlers took place along several different lines. The dwellers in what is now Eastern Tennessee were in close touch with the old settled country; their farms and little towns formed part of the chain of forest clearings which stretched, unbroken, from the border of

<sup>1</sup> Clay MSS. and Draper MSS., *passim*: e. g., in former, J. Mercer to George Nicholas, November 28, 1789; J. Ware to George Nicholas, November 29, 1789; letter to Mrs. Byrd, January 16, 1786, etc.

Virginia down the valleys of the Watauga and the Holston. Though they were sundered by mountain ranges from the peopled regions in the State to which they belonged, North Carolina, yet these ranges were pierced by many trails, and were no longer haunted by Indians. There were no great obstacles to be overcome in moving into this valley of the upper Tennessee. On the other hand, by this time it held no very great prizes in the shape of vast tracts of rich and unclaimed land. In consequence, there was less temptation to speculation among those who went to this part of the western country. It grew rapidly, the population being composed chiefly of actual settlers who had taken holdings with the purpose of cultivating them, and of building homes thereon. The entire frontier of this region was continually harassed by Indians; and it was steadily extended by the home-planting of the rifle-bearing backwoodsmen.

The danger from Indian invasion and outrage was, however, far greater in the distant communities which were growing up in the great bend of the Cumberland, cut off, as they were, by immense reaches of forest from the sea-board States. The settlers who went to this region for the most part followed two routes, either descending the Tennessee and ascending the Cumberland in flotillas of flat-boats and canoes, or else striking out in large

bodies through the wilderness, following the trails that led westward from the settlements on the Holston. The population on the Cumberland did not increase very fast for some years after the close of the Revolutionary War; and the settlers were, as a rule, harsh, sturdy backwoodsmen, who lived lives of toil and poverty. Nevertheless, there was a good deal of speculation in Cumberland lands; great tracts of tens of thousands of acres were purchased by men of means in the old districts of North Carolina, who sometimes came out to live on their estates. The looseness of the system of surveying in vogue is shown by the fact that, where possible, these lands were entered and paid for under a law which allowed a warrant to be shifted to new soil, if it was discovered that the first entry was made on what was already claimed by some one else.<sup>1</sup>

Hamlets and homesteads were springing up on the left bank of the upper Ohio, in what is now West Virginia, and along the streams flowing into it from the east. A few reckless adventurers were building cabins on the right bank of this great river. Others, almost as adventurous, were pushing into the neighborhood of the French villages on the Wabash and in the Illinois. At Louisville men were already planning to colonize the country just opposite, on the Ohio, under the law of the

<sup>1</sup> Clay MSS., Jesse Benton to Thos. Hart, April 3, 1786.

State of Virginia, which rewarded the victorious soldiers of Clark's famous campaign with grants in the region they had conquered.

The great growth of the West took place in Kentucky. The Kentucky country was by far the most widely renowned for its fertility; it was much more accessible and more firmly held, and its government was on a more permanent footing than was the case in the Wabash, Illinois, and Cumberland regions. In consequence, the majority of the men who went west to build homes fixed their eyes on the vigorous young community which lay north of the Ohio, and which already aspired to the honors of statehood.

The immigrants came into Kentucky in two streams, following two different routes—the Ohio River, and Boon's old Wilderness Trail. Those who came overland, along the latter road, were much fewer in number than those who came by water; and yet they were so numerous that the trail at times was almost thronged, and much care had to be taken in order to find camping places where there was enough feed for the horses. The people who travelled this Wilderness Road went in the usual backwoods manner, on horseback, with laden pack-trains, and often with their herds and flocks. Young men went out alone or in parties, and groups of families from the same neighborhood often journeyed together. They struggled over

the narrow, ill-made roads which led from the different back settlements, until they came to the last outposts of civilization east of the Cumberland Mountains: scattered blockhouses, whose owners were by turns farmers, tavern-keepers, hunters, and Indian fighters. Here they usually waited until a sufficient number had gathered together to furnish a band of riflemen large enough to beat off any prowling party of red marauders; and then set off to traverse by slow stages the mountains and vast forests which lay between them and the nearest Kentucky station. The time of the journey depended, of course, upon the composition of the travelling party, and upon the mishaps encountered; a party of young men on good horses might do it in three days, while a large band of immigrants, who were hampered by women, children, and cattle, and dogged by ill-luck, might take three weeks. Ordinarily, six or eight days were sufficient. Before starting, each man laid in a store of provisions for himself and his horse—perhaps thirty pounds of flour, half a bushel of corn-meal, and three bushels of oats. There was no meat, unless game was shot. Occasionally, several travellers clubbed together and carried a tent; otherwise, they slept in the open. The trail was very bad, especially at first, where it climbed between the gloomy and forbidding cliffs that walled in Cumberland Gap. Even when undisturbed by

Indians, the trip was accompanied by much fatigue and exposure; and, as always in frontier travelling, one of the perpetual annoyances was the necessity for hunting up strayed horses.<sup>1</sup>

The chief highway was the Ohio River; for to drift down-stream in a scow was easier and quicker, and no more dangerous, than to plod through thick mountain forests. Moreover, it was much easier for the settler who went by water to carry with him his household goods and implements of husbandry; and even such cumbrous articles as wagons, or, if he was rich and ambitious, the lumber wherewith to build a frame house. All kinds of craft were used, even bark canoes and pirogues, or dugouts; but the keel-boat, and especially the flat-bottomed scow, with square ends, were the ordinary means of conveyance. They were of all sizes. The passengers and their live stock were, of course, huddled together so as to take up as little room as possible. Sometimes the immigrants built or bought their own boat, navigated it themselves, and sold it or broke it up on reaching their destination. At other times they merely hired a passage. A few of the more enterprising boat-owners speedily introduced a regular emigrant service, making trips at stated times from Pittsburg, or perhaps Limestone, and advertising the carriage capacity of their boats and the

<sup>1</sup> Durrett MSS. "Journal" of Rev. James Smith, 1785.



times of starting. The trip from Pittsburg to Louisville took a week or ten days; but in low water it might last a month.

The number of boats passing down the Ohio, laden with would-be settlers and their belongings, speedily became very great. An eye-witness stated that between November 13 and December 22, of 1785, thirty-nine boats, with an average of ten souls in each, went down the Ohio to the Falls; and there were others which stopped at some of the settlements farther up the river.<sup>1</sup> As time went on the number of immigrants who adopted this method of travel increased; larger boats were used, and the immigrants took more property with them. In the last half of the year 1787 there passed by Fort Harmar, 146 boats, with 3196 souls, 1371 horses, 165 wagons, 191 cattle, 245 sheep, and 24 hogs.<sup>2</sup> In the year ending in November, 1788, 967 boats, carrying 18,370 souls, with 7986 horses, 2372 cows, 1110 sheep, and 646 wagons,<sup>3</sup> went down the Ohio. For many years this great river was the main artery through which the fresh blood of the pioneers was pumped into the West.

There are no means of procuring similar figures

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS., *Massachusetts Gazette*, March 13, 1786; letter from Kentucky, December 22, 1785.

<sup>2</sup> Harmar Papers, December 9, 1787.

<sup>3</sup> *Columbian Magazine*, January, 1789. Letter from Fort Harmar, November 26, 1788. By what is evidently a clerical error, the time is put down as one month instead of one year.

for the number of immigrants who went over the Wilderness Road; but probably there were not half as many as went down the Ohio. Perhaps from ten to twenty thousand people a year came into Kentucky during the period immediately succeeding the close of the revolution; but the net gain to the population was much less, because there was always a smaller, but almost equally steady, counter-flow of men, who, having failed as pioneers, were struggling wearily back toward their deserted eastern homes.

The inrush being so great, Kentucky grew apace. In 1785, the population was estimated at from twenty<sup>1</sup> to thirty thousand; and the leading towns, Louisville, Lexington, Harrodsburg, Boonsborough, St. Asaphs, were thriving little hamlets, with stores and horse grist-mills, and no longer mere clusters of stockaded cabins. At Louisville, for instance, there were already a number of two-story frame houses, neatly painted, with verandas running the full length of each house, and fenced vegetable gardens alongside<sup>2</sup>; while at the same time Nashville was a town of logs, with but two houses that deserved the name, the others being mere huts.<sup>3</sup> The population of Louisville

<sup>1</sup> *Journey in the West in 1785*, by Lewis Brantz.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain*, St. John de Crève Cœur. Summer of 1784.

<sup>3</sup> Brantz.

amounted to about three hundred souls, of whom 116 were fighting men<sup>1</sup>; between it and Lexington the whole country was well settled; but fear of the Indians kept settlers back from the Ohio.

The new-comers were mainly Americans from all the States of the Union; but there were also a few people from nearly every country in Europe, and even from Asia.<sup>2</sup> The industrious and the adventurous, the homestead winners and the land speculators, the criminal fleeing from justice and the honest man seeking a livelihood or a fortune, all alike prized the wild freedom and absence of restraint so essentially characteristic of their new life—a life in many ways very pleasant, but one which on the border of the Indian country sank into mere savagery.

Kentucky was “a good poor man’s country,”<sup>3</sup> provided the poor man was hardy and vigorous. The settlers were no longer in danger of starvation, for they already raised more flour than they could consume. Neither was there as yet anything approaching to luxury. But between these two extremes there was almost every grade of misery and well-being, according to the varying capacity

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Papers Continental Congress, No. 150, vol. ii., p. 21. Letter from Major W. North, August 23, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> Letter in *Massachusetts Gazette*, above quoted.

<sup>3</sup> State Department MSS. Madison Papers. Caleb Wallace to Madison, July 12, 1785.

shown by the different settlers in grappling with the conditions of their new life. Among the foreign-born immigrants success depended in part upon race; a contemporary Kentucky observer estimated that, of twelve families of each nationality, nine German, seven Scotch, and four Irish prospered, while the others failed.<sup>1</sup> The German women worked just as hard as the men, even in the fields, and both sexes were equally saving. Naturally, such thrifty immigrants did well materially; but they never took any position of leadership or influence in the community until they had assimilated themselves in speech and customs to their American neighbors. The Scotch were frugal and industrious; for good or for bad they speedily became indistinguishable from the native-born. The greater proportion of failures among the Irish, brave and vigorous though they were, was due to their quarrelsomeness, and their fondness for drink and litigation; besides, remarks this Kentucky critic, "they soon take to the gun, which is the ruin of everything." None of these foreign-born elements were of any very great importance in the development of Kentucky; its destiny was shaped and controlled by its men of native stock.

In such a population there was, of course, much

<sup>1</sup> *Description of Kentucky*, 1792, by Harry Toulmin, Secretary of State.

loosening of the bands, social, political, moral, and religious, which knit a society together. A great many of the restraints of their old life were thrown off, and there was much social adjustment and re-adjustment before their relations to one another under the new conditions became definitely settled. But there came early into the land many men of high purpose and pure life whose influence upon their fellows, though quiet, was very great. Moreover, the clergyman and the school-teacher, the two beings who had done so much for colonial civilization on the seaboard, were already becoming important factors in the life of the frontier communities. Austere Presbyterian ministers were people of mark in many of the towns. The Baptist preachers lived and worked exactly as did their flocks; their dwellings were little cabins with dirt floors and, instead of bedsteads, skin-covered pole-bunks; they cleared the ground, split rails, planted corn, and raised hogs on equal terms with their parishioners.<sup>1</sup> After Methodism cut loose from its British connections in 1785, the time of its great advance began, and the circuit-riders were speedily eating bear-meat and buffalo-tongues on the frontier.<sup>2</sup>

Rough log schools were springing up everywhere beside the rough log meeting-houses, the same

<sup>1</sup> *History of Kentucky Baptists*, by J. H. Spencer.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Methodism in Kentucky*, by John B. McFerrin.

building often serving for both purposes. The school-teacher might be a young surveyor out of work for the moment, a New Englander, fresh from some academy in the northeast, an Irishman with a smattering of learning, or perhaps an English immigrant of the upper class, unfit for and broken down by the work of a new country.<sup>1</sup> The boys and girls were taught together, and at recess played together—tag, pawns, and various kissing games. The rod was used unsparingly, for the elder boys proved boisterous pupils. A favorite mutinous frolic was to “bar out” the teacher, taking possession of the schoolhouse and holding it against the master with sticks and stones until he had either forced an entrance or agreed to the terms of the defenders. Sometimes this barring out represented a revolt against tyranny; often it was a conventional, and half-acquiesced-in, method of showing exuberance of spirit, just before the Christmas holidays. In most of the schools the teaching was necessarily of the simplest, for the only books might be a Testament, a primer, a spelling-book, and a small arithmetic.

In such a society, simple, strong, and rude, both the good features and the bad were nakedly prominent; and the views of observers in reference thereto varied accordingly as they were struck by

<sup>1</sup> Durrett MSS. *Autobiography of Robert McAfee*

one set of characteristics or another. One traveller would paint the frontiersmen as little better than the Indians against whom they warred, and their life as wild, squalid, and lawless; while the next would lay especial and admiring stress on their enterprise, audacity, and hospitable openhandedness. Though much alike, different portions of the frontier stock were beginning to develop along different lines. The Holston people, both in Virginia and North Carolina, were by this time comparatively little affected by immigration from without those States, and were, on the whole, homogeneous; but the Virginians and Carolinians of the seaboard considered them rough, unlettered, and not of very good character. One travelling clergyman spoke of them with particular disfavor; he was probably prejudiced by their indifference to his preaching, for he mentions with much dissatisfaction that the congregations he addressed "though small, behaved extremely bad."<sup>1</sup> The Kentuckians showed a mental breadth that was due largely to the many different sources from which even the predominating American elements in the population sprang. The Cumberland people seemed to travellers the wildest and rudest of all, as was but natural, for these fierce and stal-

<sup>1</sup> Durrett MSS. Rev. James Smith, "Tour in Western Country." 1785.

wart settlers were still in the midst of a warfare as savage as any ever waged among the cave-dwellers of the Stone Age.

The opinion of any mere passer-through a country is always less valuable than that of an intelligent man who dwells and works among the people, and who possesses both insight and sympathy. At this time one of the recently created Kentucky judges, an educated Virginian, in writing to his friend Madison, said: "We are as harmonious amongst ourselves as can be expected of a mixture of people from various States and of various Sentiments and Manners not yet assimilated. In point of Morals the bulk of the inhabitants are far superior to what I expected to find in any new settled country. We have not had a single instance of Murder, and but one Criminal for Felony of any kind has yet been before the Supreme Court. I wish I could say as much to vindicate the character of our Land-jobbers. This Business has been attended with much villainy in other parts. Here it is reduced to a system, and to take the advantage of the ignorance or of the poverty of a neighbor is almost grown into reputation."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, when the fever for land speculation raged so violently, many who had embarked too

<sup>1</sup> Wallace's letter, above quoted.



eagerly in the purchase of large tracts became land poor; Clark being among those who found that though they owned great reaches of fertile wild land they had no means whatever of getting money.<sup>1</sup> In Kentucky, while much land was taken up under Treasury warrants, much was also allotted to the officers of the Continental army; and the retired officers of the Continental line were the best of all possible immigrants. A class of gentle-folks soon sprang up in the land, whose members were not so separated from other citizens as to be in any way alien to them, and who yet stood sufficiently above the mass to be recognized as the natural leaders, social and political, of their sturdy fellow-freemen. These men by degrees built themselves comfortable, roomy houses, and their lives were very pleasant; at a little later period Clark, having abandoned war and politics, describes himself as living a retired life with, as his chief amusements, reading, hunting, fishing, fowling, and corresponding with a few chosen friends.<sup>2</sup> Game was still very plentiful: buffalo and elk abounded north of the Ohio, while bear and deer, turkey, swans, and geese,<sup>3</sup> not to speak of ducks

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. G. R. Clark to Jonathan Clark, April 20, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, letter of September 2, 1791.

<sup>3</sup> *Magazine of American History*, i. Letters of Laurence Butler from Kentucky, November 20, 1786, etc.

and prairie fowl, swarmed in the immediate neighborhood of the settlements.

The gentry offered to strangers the usual open-handed hospitality characteristic of the frontier, with much more than the average frontier refinement; a hospitality, moreover, which was never marred or interfered with by the frontier suspiciousness of strangers which sometimes made the humbler people of the border seem churlish to travellers. When Federal garrisons were established along the Ohio the officers were largely dependent for their social pleasures on the gentlefolks of the neighborhood. One of them, in his journal, gives several rather curious glimpses of the life of the time.<sup>1</sup> He mentions being entertained by Clark at "a very elegant dinner,"<sup>2</sup> a number of gentlemen being present. After dinner the guests adjourned to the dancing-school, "where there were twelve or fifteen young misses, some of whom had made considerable improvement in that polite accomplishment, and indeed were middling neatly dressed, considering the distance from where luxuries are to be bought and the expense attending the purchase of them here"—for though beef and flour were cheap, all imported goods sold for at least five times as much as they cost in

<sup>1</sup> Major Erkuries Beattie. In the *Magazine of American History*, vol. i., p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> August 25, 1786.

Philadelphia or New York. The officers sometimes gave dances in the forts, the ladies and their escorts coming in to spend the night; and they attended the great barbecues, to which the people rode from far and near, many of the men carrying their wives or sweethearts behind them on the saddle. At such a barbecue an ox or a sheep, a bear, an elk, or a deer, was split in two and roasted over the coals; dinner was eaten under the trees; and there was every kind of amusement, from horse-racing to dancing.

Though the relations of the officers of the regular troops with the gentry were so pleasant, there was always much friction between them and the ordinary frontiersmen—a friction which continued to exist as long as the frontier itself, and which survives to this day in the wilder parts of the country. The regular army officer and the frontiersman are trained in fashions so diametrically opposite that, though the two men be brothers, they must yet necessarily in all their thoughts and instincts and ways of looking at life, be as alien as if they belonged to two different races of mankind. The borderer—rude, suspicious, and impatient of discipline—looks with distrust and with a mixture of sneering envy and of hostility upon the officer; while the latter, with his rigid training and his fixed ideals, feels little sympathy for the other's good points, and is contemptuously aware of his

numerous failings. The only link between the two is the scout, the man who, though one of the frontiersmen, is accustomed to act and fight in company with the soldiers. In Kentucky, at the close of the Revolution, this link was generally lacking, and there was no tie of habitual, even though half-hostile, intercourse to unite the two parties. In consequence, the ill-will often showed itself by acts of violence. The backwoods bullies were prone to browbeat and insult the officers if they found them alone, trying to provoke them to rough-and-tumble fighting; and in such a combat, carried on with the revolting brutality necessarily attendant upon a contest where gouging and biting were considered legitimate, the officers, who were accustomed only to use their fists, generally had the worst of it; so that at last they made a practice of carrying their side-arms—which secured them from molestation.

Besides raising more than enough flour and beef to keep themselves in plenty, the settlers turned their attention to many other forms of produce. Indian corn was still the leading crop; but melons, pumpkins, and the like were grown, and there were many thriving orchards; while tobacco cultivation was becoming of much importance. Great droves of hogs and flocks of sheep flourished in every locality whence the bears and wolves had been driven; the hogs running free in the woods

with the branded cattle and horses. Except in the most densely settled parts much of the beef was still obtained from buffaloes, and much of the bacon from bears. Venison was a staple commodity. The fur trade, largely carried on by French trappers, was still of great importance in Kentucky and Tennessee. North of the Ohio it was the attraction which tempted white men into the wilderness. Its profitable nature was the chief reason why the British persistently clung to the posts on the Lakes, and stirred up the Indians to keep the American settlers out of all lands that were tributary to the British fur merchants. From Kentucky and the Cumberland country the peltries were sometimes sent east by pack-train, and sometimes up the Ohio in bateaux or canoes.

In addition to furs, quantities of ginseng were often carried to the eastern settlements at this period when the commerce of the West was in its first infancy, and was as yet only struggling for an outlet down the Mississippi. One of those who went into this trade was Boon. Although no longer a real leader in Kentucky life, he still occupied quite a prominent position, and served as a Representative in the Virginia Legislature,<sup>1</sup> while his fame as a hunter and explorer was now spread abroad in the United States, and even Europe. To

<sup>1</sup> Draper's MSS., Boon MSS., from Bourbon County. The papers cover the years from 1784 on to '95.

travellers and new-comers generally, he was always pointed out as the first discoverer of Kentucky; and, being modest, self-contained, and self-reliant, he always impressed them favorably. He spent most of his time in hunting, trapping, and surveying land warrants for men of means, being paid, for instance, two shillings current money per acre for all the good land he could enter on a ten-thousand acre Treasury warrant.<sup>1</sup> He also traded up and down the Ohio River at various places, such as Point Pleasant and Limestone; and at times combined keeping a tavern with keeping a store. His accounts contain much quaint information. Evidently his guests drank as generously as they ate; he charges one four pounds, sixteen shillings for two months' board, and two pounds, four shillings for liquor. He takes the note of another for ninety-three gallons of cheap corn whisky. Whisky cost sixpence a pint, and rum one shilling; while corn was three shillings a bushel, and salt twenty-four shillings, flour thirty-six shillings a barrel, bacon sixpence, and fresh pork and buffalo-beef threepence a pound. Boon procured for his customers or for himself such articles as linen, cloth, flannel, corduroy, chintz, calico, broadcloth, and velvet at prices, varying according to the quality, from three to thirty

<sup>1</sup> Draper's MSS., certificate of G. Imlay, 1784.

shillings a yard; and there was also evidently a ready market for "tea ware," knives and forks, scissors, buttons, nails, and all kinds of hardware. Furs and skins usually appear on the debit sides of the various accounts, ranging in value from the skin of a beaver, worth eighteen shillings, or that of a bear worth ten, to those of deer, wolves, coons, wildcats, and foxes, costing two to four shillings apiece. Boon procured his goods from merchants in Hagerstown and Williamsport, in Maryland, whither he and his sons guided their own pack-trains, laden with peltries and with kegs of ginseng, and accompanied by droves of loose horses. He either followed some well-beaten mountain trail or opened a new road through the wilderness as seemed to him best at the moment.<sup>1</sup>

Boon's creed in matters of morality and religion was as simple and straightforward as his own character. Late in life he wrote to one of his kinsfolk: "All the religion I have is to love and fear God, believe in Jesus Christ, do all the good to my neighbors and myself that I can, and do as little harm as I can help, and trust on God's mercy for the rest." The old pioneer always kept the respect of red men and white, of friend and foe, for he acted according to his belief. Yet there was one evil to which he was no more sensitive than the other men of his time.

<sup>1</sup> Draper's MSS., *passim*.

Among his accounts there is an entry recording his purchase, for another man, of a negro woman for the sum of ninety pounds.<sup>1</sup> There was already a strong feeling in the western settlements against negro slavery,<sup>2</sup> because of its moral evil, and of its inconsistency with all true standards of humanity and Christianity, a feeling which continued to exist and which later led to resolute efforts to forbid or abolish slave-holding. But the consciences of the majority were too dull, and, from the standpoint of the white race, they were too shortsighted, to take action in the right direction. The selfishness and mental obliquity which imperil the future of a race for the sake of the lazy pleasure of two or three generations prevailed; and in consequence the white people of the Middle West, and therefore eventually of the Southwest, clutched the one burden under which they ever staggered, the one evil which has ever warped their development, the one danger which has ever seriously threatened their very existence. Slavery must of necessity exercise the most baleful influence upon any slave-holding people, and especially upon those members of the dominant caste who do not themselves own slaves. Moreover, the negro, unlike so many of the inferior races, does not dwindle

<sup>1</sup> Draper's MSS., March 7, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> See "Journals" of Rev. James Smith.



away in the presence of the white man. He holds his own; indeed, under the conditions of American slavery he increased faster than the white, threatening to supplant him. He actually has supplanted him in certain of the West Indian Islands, where the sin of the white in enslaving the black has been visited upon the head of the wrong-doer by his victim with a dramatically terrible completeness of revenge.

What has occurred in Hayti is what would eventually have occurred in our own semi-tropical States if the slave-trade and slavery had continued to flourish as their short-sighted advocates wished. Slavery is ethically abhorrent to all right-minded men; and it is to be condemned without stint on this ground alone. From the standpoint of the master caste it is to be condemned even more strongly, because it invariably in the end threatens the very existence of that master caste. From this point of view, the presence of the negro is the real problem; slavery is merely the worst possible method of solving the problem. In their earlier stages, the problem and its solution, in America, were one. There may be differences of opinion as to how to solve the problem; but there can be none whatever as to the evil wrought by those who brought about that problem; and it was only the slave-holders and the slave-traders who were guilty on this last count. The worst foes, not only

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of humanity and civilization, but especially of the white race in America, were those white men who brought slaves from Africa, and who fostered the spread of slavery in the States and Territories of the American Republic.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INDIAN WARS, 1784-1787

**A**FTER the close of the Revolution there was a short, uneasy lull in the eternal border warfare between the white men and the red. The Indians were, for the moment, daunted by a peace which left them without allies; and the feeble Federal Government attempted for the first time to aid and control the West by making treaties with the most powerful frontier tribes. Congress raised a tiny regular army, and several companies were sent to the upper Ohio to garrison two or three small forts which were built upon its banks. Commissioners (one of whom was Clark himself) were appointed to treat with both the northern and southern Indians. Councils were held in various places. In 1785, and early in 1786, utterly fruitless treaties were concluded with Shawnees, Wyandots, and Delawares, at one or other of the little forts.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time, in the late fall of 1785,

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56, p. 333, letter of G. Clark, November 10, 1785; p. 337, letter of G. Clark to R. Butler, etc.; No. 16, p. 293; No. 32, p. 39.

another treaty, somewhat more noteworthy, but equally fruitless, was concluded with the Cherokees at Hopewell, on Keowee, in South Carolina. In this treaty, the commissioners promised altogether too much. They paid little heed to the rights and needs of the settlers. Neither did they keep in mind the powerlessness of the Federal Government to enforce against these settlers what their treaty promised the Indians. The pioneers along the upper Tennessee and the Cumberland had made various arrangements with bands of the Cherokees, sometimes acting on their own initiative, and sometimes on behalf of the State of North Carolina. Many of these different agreements were entered into by the whites with honesty and good faith, but were violated at will by the Indians. Others were violated by the whites, or were repudiated by the Indians as well, because of some real or fancied unfairness in the making. Under them large quantities of land had been sold or allotted, and hundreds of homes had been built on the lands thus won by the whites or ceded by the Indians. As with all Indian treaties, it was next to impossible to say exactly how far these agreements were binding, because no persons, not even the Indians themselves, could tell exactly who had authority to represent the tribes.<sup>1</sup> The commissioners paid little heed to these treaties,

<sup>1</sup> *American State Papers*, Public Lands, vol. i., p. 40, vi.

and drew the boundary so that quantities of land which had been entered under regular grants, and were covered by the homesteads of the frontiersmen, were declared to fall within the Cherokee line. Moreover, they even undertook to drive all settlers off these lands.

Of course, such a treaty excited the bitter anger of the frontiersmen, and they scornfully refused to obey its provisions. They hated the Indians, and, as a rule, were brutally indifferent to their rights, while they looked down on the Federal Government as impotent. Nor was the ill-will to the treaty confined to the rough borderers. Many men of means found that land grants which they had obtained in good faith and for good money were declared void. Not only did they denounce the treaty, and decline to abide by it, but they denounced the motives of the commissioners, declaring, seemingly without justification, that they had ingratiated themselves with the Indians to further land speculations of their own.<sup>1</sup>

As the settlers declined to pay any heed to the treaty, the Indians naturally became as discontented with it as the whites. In the following summer the Cherokee chiefs made solemn complaint that, instead of retiring from the disputed ground, the settlers had encroached yet farther upon it, and had come to within five miles of the

<sup>1</sup> Clay MSS. Jesse Benton to Thos. Hart, April, 3, 1786.

beloved town of Chota. The chiefs added that they had now made several such treaties, each of which established boundaries that were immediately broken, and that indeed it had been their experience that after a treaty the whites settled even faster on their lands than before.<sup>1</sup> Just before this complaint was sent to Congress the same chiefs had been engaged in negotiations with the settlers themselves who advanced radically different claims. The fact was that in this unsettled time the bond of governmental authority was almost as lax among the whites as among the Indians, and the leaders on each side who wished for peace were hopelessly unable to restrain their fellows who did not. Under such circumstances, the sword, or rather the tomahawk, was ultimately the only possible arbiter.

The treaties entered into with the northwestern Indians failed for precisely the opposite reason. The treaty at Hopewell promised so much to the Indians that the whites refused to abide by its terms. In the councils on the Ohio the Americans promised no more than they could and did perform; but the Indians themselves broke the treaties at once, and in all probability never for a moment intended to keep them, merely signing from a greedy desire to get the goods they were

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56. Address of Corn Tassel and Hanging Maw, September 5, 1786.

given as an earnest. They were especially anxious for spirits, for they far surpassed even the white borderers in their crazy thirst for strong drink. "We have smelled your liquor and it is very good; we hope you will give us some little kegs to carry home," said the spokesmen of a party of Chippewas, who had come from the upper Great Lakes.<sup>1</sup> These frank savages, speaking thus in behalf of their far northern brethren, uttered what was in the minds of most of the Indians who attended the councils held by the United States commissioners. They came to see what they could get by begging, or by promising what they had neither the will nor the power to perform. Many of them, as in the case of the Chippewas, were from lands so remote that they felt no anxiety about white encroachments, and were lured into hostile encounter with the Americans chiefly by their own overmastering love of plunder and bloodshed.

Nevertheless, there were a few chiefs and men of note in the tribes who sincerely wished peace. One of these was Cornplanter, the Iroquois. The power of the Six Nations had steadily dwindled; moreover, they did not, like the more western tribes, lie directly athwart the path which the white advance was at the moment taking. Thus they were not drawn into open warfare, but their

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., letters of H. Knox, No. 150, vol. i., p. 445.

continual uneasiness, and the influence they still possessed with the other Indians, made it an object to keep on friendly terms with them. Cornplanter, a valiant and able warrior, who had both taken and given hard blows in warring against the Americans, was among the chiefs and ambassadors who visited Fort Pitt during the troubled lull in frontier war which succeeded the news of the peace of 1783. His speeches showed, as his deeds had already shown, in a high degree, that loftiness of courage, and stern, uncomplaining acceptance of the decrees of a hostile fate, which so often ennobled the otherwise gloomy and repellent traits of the Indian character. He raised no plaint over what had befallen his race; "the Great Spirit above directs us so that whatever hath been said or done must be good and right," he said in a spirit of strange fatalism well known to certain creeds, both Christian and heathen. He was careful to dwell on the fact that in addressing the representatives of "the Great Council who watch the Thirteen Fires and keep them bright," he was anxious only to ward off woe from the women and little ones of his people and was defiantly indifferent to what might personally be before him. "As for me my life is short, 't is already sold to the Great King over the water," he said. But it soon appeared that the British agents had deceived him, telling him that the peace was a mere temporary truce,



and keeping concealed the fact that under the treaty the British had ceded to the Americans all rights over the Iroquois and western Indians, and over their land. Great was his indignation when the actual text of the treaty was read him, and he discovered the double-dealing of his far-off royal paymaster. In commenting on it he showed that, like the rest of his race, he had been much impressed by the striking uniforms of the British officers. He evidently took it for granted that the head of these officers must own a yet more striking uniform; and treachery seemed doubly odious in one who possessed so much. "I assisted the Great King," he said; "I fought his battles, while he sat quietly in his forts; nor did I ever suspect that so great a person, one too who wore a red coat sufficient of itself to tempt one, could be guilty of such glaring falsehood."<sup>1</sup> After this, Cornplanter remained on good terms with the Americans and helped to keep the Iroquois from joining openly in the war. The western tribes taunted them because of this attitude. They sent them word in the fall of 1785 that once the Six Nations were a great people, but that now they had let the Long Knife throw them; but that the western Indians would set them on their feet again if they would join them; for "the western Indians were de-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56, March 7, 1786, p. 345; also p. 395.

terminated to wrestle with Long Knife in the spring."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the Algonquin chiefs, notably Molunthee the Shawnee, likewise sincerely endeavored to bring about a peace. But the western tribes, as a whole, were bent on war. They were constantly excited and urged on by the British partisan leaders, such as Simon Girty, Elliot, and Caldwell. These leaders took part in the great Indian councils, at which even tribes west of the Mississippi were represented; and though they spoke without direct authority from the British commanders at the lake posts, yet their words carried weight when they told the young red warriors that it was better to run the risk of dying like men than of starving like dogs. Many of the old men among the Wyandots and Delawares spoke against strife; but the young men were for war, and among the Shawnees, the Wabash Indians, and the Miamis, the hostile party was still stronger. A few Indians would come to one of the forts and make a treaty on behalf of their tribe, at the very moment that the other members of the same tribe were murdering and ravaging among the exposed settlements or were harrying the boats that went down the Ohio. All the tribes that entered into the treaties of peace were represented among the different parties

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. i., Major Finley's "Statement," December 6, 1785.

of marauders. Over the outlaw bands there was no pretence of control; and their successes, and the numerous scalps and quantities of plunder they obtained, made them very dangerous examples to the hot-blooded young warriors everywhere. Perhaps the most serious of all obstacles to peace was the fact that the British still kept the lake posts.<sup>1</sup>

The Indians who did come in to treat were sullen, and at first always insisted on impossible terms. They would finally agree to mutual concessions, would promise to keep their young men from marauding, and to allow surveys to be made, provided the settlers were driven off all lands which the Indians had not yielded; and after receiving many gifts, would depart. The representatives of the Federal Government would then at once set about performing their share of the agreement, the most important part of which was the removal of the settlers who had built cabins on the Indian lands west of the Ohio. The Federal authorities, both military and civil, disliked the intruders as much as they did the Indians, stigmatizing them as "a banditti who were a disgrace to human nature." There was no unnecessary harshness exercised by the troops in removing the trespassers; but the cabins were torn down and the sullen settlers

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., letters of H. Knox, No. 150, vol. i., pp. 107, 112, 115, 123, 149, 243, 269, etc.

themselves were driven back across the river, though they protested and threatened resistance. Again and again this was done; not alone in the interest of the Indians, but in part also because Congress wished to reserve the lands for sale, with the purpose of paying off the public debt. At the same time surveying parties were sent out. But in each case, no sooner had the Federal commissioners and their subordinates begun to perform their part of the agreement, than they were stopped by tidings of fresh outrages on the part of the very Indians with whom they had made the treaty; while the surveying parties were driven in and forced to abandon their work.<sup>1</sup>

The truth was, that while the Federal Government sincerely desired peace, and strove to bring it about, the northwestern tribes were resolutely bent on war; and the frontiersmen themselves showed nearly as much inclination for hostilities as the Indians.<sup>2</sup> They were equally anxious to intrude on the Government and on the Indian lands; for they were adventurous, the lands were valuable, and they hated the Indians, and looked down on the weak Federal authority.<sup>3</sup> They often made, what were legally worthless, "tomahawk claims,"

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 30, p. 265; No. 56, p. 327; No. 163, pp. 416, 418, 422, 426.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Indian Affairs. Letter of P. Muhlenberg, July 5, 1784.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Report of H. Knox, April, 1787.

and objected almost as much as the Indians to the work of the regular government surveyors.<sup>1</sup> Even the men of note, men like George Rogers Clark, were often engaged in schemes to encroach on the land north of the Ohio; drawing on themselves the bitter reproaches not only of the Federal authorities, but also of the Virginia Government, for their cruel readiness to jeopardize the country by incurring the wrath of the Indians.<sup>2</sup> The more lawless whites were as little amenable to authority as the Indians themselves; and at the very moment when a peace was being negotiated one side or the other would commit some brutal murder. While the chiefs and old Indians were delivering long-winded speeches to the Peace Commissioners, bands of young braves committed horrible ravages among the lonely settlements.<sup>3</sup> Now a drunken Indian at Fort Pitt murdered an innocent white man, the local garrison of regular troops saving him with difficulty from being lynched<sup>4</sup>; now a band of white ruffians gathered to attack some peaceable Indians who had come in to treat<sup>5</sup>; again a white man murdered an unoffending In-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. ii., p. 548.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. Benj. Harrison to G. R. Clark, August 19, 1784.

<sup>3</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56, pp. 279 and 333; No. 60, p. 297, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Denny's "Journal," p. 259.

<sup>5</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56, p. 255.

dian, and was seized by a Federal officer, and thrown into chains, to the great indignation of his brutal companions <sup>1</sup>; and yet again another white man murdered an Indian, and escaped to the woods before he could be arrested. <sup>2</sup>

Under such conditions the peace negotiations were doomed from the outset. The truce on the border was of the most imperfect description; murders and robberies by the Indians, and acts of vindictive retaliation or aggression by the whites, occurred continually and steadily increased in number. In 1784, a Cherokee of note, when sent to warn the intruding settlers on the French Broad that they must move out of the land, was shot and slain in a fight with a local militia captain. Cherokee war-bands had already begun to harry the frontier and infest the Kentucky Wilderness Road.<sup>3</sup> At the same time the northwestern Indians likewise committed depredations, and were only prevented from making a general league against the whites by their own internal dissensions—the Chickasaws and Kickapoos being engaged in a desperate war.<sup>4</sup> The Wabash Indians were always threatening hostilities. The Shaw-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. ii., p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. Clark, Croghan, and others to Delawares, August 28, 1785.

<sup>3</sup> State Department MSS., No. 48, p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Muhlenberg's letter.

nees for some time observed a precarious peace, and even, in accordance with their agreement, brought in and surrendered a few white prisoners; and among the Delawares and Wyandots there was also a strong friendly party; but in all three tribes the turbulent element was never under real control, and it gradually got the upper hand. Meanwhile the Georgians and Creeks in the south were having experiences of precisely the same kind—treaties fraudulently procured by the whites, or fraudulently entered into and violated by the Indians; encroachments by white settlers on Indian lands, and bloody Indian forays among the peaceful settlements.<sup>1</sup>

The more far-sighted and resolute among all the Indians, northern and southern, began to strive for a general union against the Americans.<sup>2</sup> In 1786, the northwestern Indians almost formed such a union. Two thousand warriors gathered at the Shawnee towns and agreed to take up the hatchet against the Americans; British agents were present at the council; and even before the council was held, war-parties were bringing into the Shawnee towns the scalps of American settlers, and

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 73, pp. 7, 343. *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, August 5, 1784; May 25, June 1, November 2, November 30, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 20, pp. 321 and 459; No. 18, p. 140; No. 12, vol. ii., June 30, 1786.

prisoners, both men and women, who were burned at the stake.<sup>1</sup> But the jealousy and irresolution of the tribes prevented the actual formation of a league.

The Federal Government still feebly hoped for peace; and in the vain endeavors to avoid irritating the Indians forbade all hostile expeditions into the Indian country—though these expeditions offered the one hope of subduing the savages and preventing their inroads. By 1786, the settlers generally, including all their leaders, such as Clark,<sup>2</sup> had become convinced that the treaties were utterly futile, and that the only right policy was one of resolute war.

In truth the war was unavoidable. The claim and desires of the two parties were irreconcilable. Treaties and truces were palliatives which did not touch the real underlying trouble. The white settlers were unflinchingly bent on seizing the land over which the Indians roamed, but which they did not in any true sense own or occupy. In return, the Indians were determined at all costs and hazards to keep the men of chain and compass, and of axe and rifle, and the forest-felling settlers who followed them, out of their vast and lonely hunting-grounds. Nothing but the actual shock of battle could decide the quarrel. The display of

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 60, p. 277, Sept. 13, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 50, p. 279. Clark to R. H. Lee.



overmastering, overwhelming force might have cowed the Indians; but it was not possible for the United States, or for any European power, ever to exert or display such force far beyond the limits of the settled country. In consequence, the warlike tribes were not then, and never have been since, quelled, save by actual hard fighting, until they were overawed by the settlement of all the neighboring lands.

Nor was there any alternative to these Indian wars. It is idle folly to speak of them as being the fault of the United States Government; and it is even more idle to say that they could have been averted by treaty. Here and there, under exceptional circumstances or when a given tribe was feeble and unwarlike, the whites might gain the ground by a treaty entered into of their own free will by the Indians, without the least duress; but this was not possible with warlike and powerful tribes when once they realized that they were threatened with serious encroachment on their hunting-grounds. Moreover, looked at from the standpoint of the ultimate result, there was little real difference to the Indian whether the land was taken by treaty or by war. In the end the Delaware fared no better at the hands of the Quaker than the Wampanoag at the hands of the Puritan; the methods were far more humane in the one case than in the other, but the outcome was the same

in both. No treaty could be satisfactory to the whites, no treaty served the needs of humanity and civilization, unless it gave the land to the Americans as unreservedly as any successful war.

As a matter of fact, the lands we have won from the Indians have been won as much by treaty as by war; but it was almost always war, or else the menace and possibility of war, that secured the treaty. In these treaties we have been more than just to the Indians; we have been abundantly generous, for we have paid them many times what they were entitled to; many times what we would have paid any civilized people whose claim was as vague and shadowy as theirs. By war or threat of war, or purchase, we have won from great civilized nations, from France, Spain, Russia, and Mexico, immense tracts of country already peopled by many tens of thousands of families; we have paid many millions of dollars to these nations for the land we took; but for every dollar thus paid to these great and powerful civilized commonwealths, we have paid ten, for lands less valuable, to the chiefs and warriors of the red tribes. No other conquering and colonizing nation has ever treated the original savage owners of the soil with such generosity as has the United States. Nor is the charge that the treaties with the Indians have been broken, of weight itself; it depends always on the individual case. Many of the

treaties were kept by the whites and broken by the Indians; others were broken by the whites themselves; and sometimes those who broke them did very wrong indeed, and sometimes they did right. No treaties, whether between civilized nations or not, can ever be regarded as binding in perpetuity; with changing conditions, circumstances may arise which render it not only expedient, but imperative and honorable, to abrogate them.

Whether the whites won the land by treaty, by armed conquest, or, as was actually the case, by a mixture of both, mattered comparatively little so long as the land was won. It was all-important that it should be won, for the benefit of civilization and in the interests of mankind. It is, indeed, a warped, perverse, and silly morality which would forbid a course of conquest that has turned whole continents into the seats of mighty and flourishing civilized nations. All men of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that these continents should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they held joint ownership. It is as idle to apply to savages the rules of international morality which obtain between stable and cultured communities, as it would be to judge the fifth-century English conquest of Britain by the standards of

to-day. Most fortunately, the hard, energetic, practical men who do the rough pioneer work of civilization in barbarous lands, are not prone to false sentimentality. The people who are, are the people who stay at home. Often these stay-at-homes are too selfish and indolent, too lacking in imagination, to understand the race-importance of the work which is done by their pioneer brethren in wild and distant lands; and they judge them by standards which would only be applicable to quarrels in their own townships and parishes. Moreover, as each new land grows old, it misjudges the yet newer lands, as once it was itself misjudged. The home-staying Englishman of Britain grudges to the Africander his conquest of Matabeleland; and so the home-staying American of the Atlantic States dislikes to see the western miners and cattlemen win for the use of their people the Sioux hunting-grounds. Nevertheless, it is the men actually on the borders of the longed-for ground, the men actually in contact with the savages, who in the end shape their own destinies.

The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him. American and Indian, Boer and Zulu, Cossack and Tartar, New Zealander and Maori,—in each case the

victor, horrible though many of his deeds are, has laid deep the foundations for the future greatness of a mighty people. The consequences of struggles for territory between civilized nations seem small by comparison. Looked at from the standpoint of the ages, it is of little moment whether Lorraine is part of Germany or of France, whether the northern Adriatic cities pay homage to Austrian Kaiser or Italian King; but it is of incalculable importance that America, Australia, and Siberia should pass out of the hands of their red, black, and yellow aboriginal owners, and become the heritage of the dominant world races.

Yet the very causes which render this struggle between savagery and the rough front rank of civilization so vast and elemental in its consequence to the future of the world, also tend to render it in certain ways peculiarly revolting and barbarous. It is primeval warfare, and it is waged as war was waged in the ages of bronze and of iron. All the merciful humanity that even war has gained during the last two thousand years is lost. It is a warfare where no pity is shown to non-combatants, where the weak are harried without ruth, and the vanquished maltreated with merciless ferocity. A sad and evil feature of such warfare is that the whites, the representatives of civilization, speedily sink almost to the level of their barbarous foes, in point of hideous brutality. The armies

are neither led by trained officers nor made up of regular troops—they are composed of armed settlers, fierce and wayward men, whose ungovernable passions are unrestrained by discipline, who have many grievous wrongs to redress, and who look on their enemies with a mixture of contempt and loathing, of dread and intense hatred. When the clash comes between these men and their sombre foes, too often there follow deeds of enormous, of incredible, of indescribable horror. It is impossible to dwell without a shudder on the monstrous woe and misery of such a contest.

The men of Kentucky and of the infant Northwest would have found their struggle with the Indians dangerous enough in itself; but there was an added element of menace in the fact that back of the Indians stood the British. It was for this reason that the frontiersmen grew to regard as essential to their well-being the possession of the lake posts; so that it became with them a prime object to wrest from the British, whether by force of arms or by diplomacy, the forts they held at Niagara, Detroit, and Michilimackinac. Detroit was the most important, for it served as the headquarters of the western Indians, who formed, for the time being, the chief bar to American advance. The British held the posts with a strong grip, in the interest of their traders and merchants. To them the land derived its chief importance from

the fur trade. This was extremely valuable, and, as it steadily increased in extent and importance, the consequence of Detroit, the fitting-out town for the fur traders, grew in like measure. It was the centre of a population of several thousand Canadians, who lived by the chase and by the rude cultivation of their long, narrow farms; and it was held by a garrison of three or four hundred British regulars, with auxiliary bands of American loyalists and French Canadian rangers, and, above all, with a formidable but fluctuating reserve force of Indian allies.<sup>1</sup>

It was to the interest of the British to keep the American settlers out of the land; and therefore their aims were at one with those of the Indians. All the tribes between the Ohio and the Missouri were subsidized by them, and paid them a precarious allegiance. Fickle, treacherous, and ferocious, the Indians at times committed acts of outrage even on their allies, so that these allies had to be ever on their guard; and the tribes were often at war with one another. War interrupted trade and cut down profits, and the British endeavored to keep the different tribes at peace among themselves, and even with the Americans. Moreover, they always discouraged barbarities, and showed what kindness was in their power to any unfortunate prisoners whom the Indians hap-

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand Papers, 1784, 5, 6.

pened to bring to their posts. But they helped the Indians in all ways save by open military aid to keep back the American settlers. They wished a monopoly of the fur trade; and they endeavored to prevent the Americans from coming into their settlements.<sup>1</sup> English officers and agents attended the Indian councils, endeavored to attach the tribes to the British interests, and encouraged them to stand firm against the Americans and to insist upon the Ohio as the boundary between the white man and the red.<sup>2</sup> The Indians received counsel and advice from the British, and drew from them both arms and munitions of war, and while the higher British officers were usually careful to avoid committing any overt breach of neutrality, the reckless partisan leaders sought to inflame the Indians against the Americans, and even at times accompanied their war-parties.

The life led at a frontier post like Detroit was marked by sharp contrasts. The forest round about was cleared away, though blackened stumps still dotted the pastures, orchards, and tilled fields. The town itself was composed mainly of the dwellings of the French *habitans*; some of them were

<sup>1</sup> Haldimand Papers, John Hay to Haldimand, August 13, 1784; James McNeil, August 1, 1785.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Letter of A. McKee, December 24, 1786; McKee to Sir John Johnson, February 25, 1786; Major Ancrum, May 8, 1786.



mere hovels, others pretty log cottages, all swarming with black-eyed children; while the stoutly made, swarthy men, at once lazy and excitable, strolled about the streets in their picturesque and bright-colored blanket suits. There were also a few houses of loyalist refugees—implacable tories, stalwart men, revengeful, and goaded by the memory of many wrongs done and many suffered, who proved the worst enemies of their American kinsfolk. The few big roomy buildings, which served as storehouses and residences for the merchants, were built not only for the storage of goods and peltries, but also as strongholds in case of attack. The heads of the mercantile houses were generally Englishmen; but the hardy men who traversed the woods for months and for seasons, to procure furs from the Indians, were for the most part French. The sailors, both English and French, who manned the vessels on the lakes, formed another class. The rough earthworks and stockades of the fort were guarded by a few light guns. Within, the red-coated regulars held sway, their bright uniforms varied here and there by the dingy hunting-shirt, leggings, and fur cap of some tory ranger or French partisan leader. Indians lounged about the fort, the stores, and the houses, begging, or gazing stolidly at the troops as they drilled, at the creaking carts from the outlying farms as they plied through the streets, at the

driving to and fro from pasture of the horses and milch cows, or at the arrival of a vessel from Niagara or a brigade of fur-laden bateaux from the upper lakes.

In their paint, and their cheap, dirty finery, these savages did not look very important; yet it was because of them that the British kept up their posts in these far-off forests, beside these great lonely waters; it was for their sakes that they tried to stem the inrush of the settlers of their own blood and tongue; for it was their presence alone which served to keep the wilderness as a game preserve for the fur merchants; it was their prowess in war which prevented French village and British garrison from being lapped up like drops of water before the fiery rush of the American advance. The British themselves, though fighting with and for them, loved them but little; like all frontiersmen, they soon grew to look down on their mean and trivial lives,—lives which, nevertheless, strongly attracted white men of evil and shiftless, but adventurous, natures, and to which white children, torn from their homes and brought up in the wigwams, became passionately attached. Yet back of the lazy and drunken squalor lay an element of the terrible, all the more terrible because it could not be reckoned with. Dangerous and treacherous allies, upon whom no real dependence could ever be placed, the Indians were

nevertheless the most redoubtable of all foes when the war was waged in their own gloomy woodlands.

At such a post, those standing high in authority were partly civil officials, partly army officers. Of the former, some represented the provincial government, and others acted for the fur companies. They had much to do, both in governing the French townsmen and countrymen, in keeping the Indians friendly, and in furthering the peculiar commerce on which the settlements subsisted. But the important people were the army officers. These were imperious, able, resolute men, well drilled, and with a high military standard of honor. They upheld with jealous pride the reputation of an army which, in that century, proved again and again that on stricken fields no soldiery of continental Europe could stand against it. They wore a uniform which, for the last two hundred years, has been better known than any other wherever the pioneers of civilization tread the world's waste spaces or fight their way to the overlordship of barbarous empires; a uniform known to the southern and the northern hemispheres, the eastern and the western continents, and all the islands of the sea. Subalterns wearing this uniform have fronted dangers and responsibilities such as in most other services only grayheaded generals are called upon to face; and at the head of handfuls of troops have won for the British crown realms

as large, and often as populous, as European kingdoms. The scarlet-clad officers who serve the monarchy of Great Britain have conquered many a barbarous people in all the ends of the earth, and hold for their sovereign the lands of Moslem and Hindoo, of Tartar and Arab and Pathan, of Malay, Negro, and Polynesian. In many a war they have overcome every European rival against whom they have been pitted. Again and again they have marched to victory against the Frenchman and Spaniard through the sweltering heat of the tropics; and now, from the stupendous mountain masses of mid-Asia, they look northward through the wintry air, ready to bar the advance of the legions of the Czar. Hitherto they have never gone back save once; they have failed only when they sought to stop the westward march of a mighty nation, a nation kin to theirs, a nation of their own tongue and law, and mainly of their own blood.

The British officers and the American border leaders found themselves face to face in the wilderness as rivals of one another. Sundered by interest and ambition, by education and habits of thought, trained to widely different ways of looking at life, and with the memories of the hostile past fresh in their minds, they were in no humor to do justice to one another. Each side regarded the other with jealousy and dislike, and often with

bitter hatred. Each often unwisely scorned the other. Each kept green in mind the wrongs suffered at the other's hands, and remembered every discreditable fact in the other's recent history—every failure, every act of cruelty or stupidity, every deed that could be held as the consequence of the worst moral and mental shortcomings. Neither could appreciate the other's many and real virtues. The policies for which they warred were hostile and irreconcilable; the interests of the nations they represented were, as regards the northwestern wilderness, not only incompatible, but diametrically opposed. The commanders of the British posts, and the men who served under them, were moved by a spirit of stern loyalty to the empire, the honor of whose flag they upheld, and endeavored faithfully to carry out the behests of those who shaped that empire's destinies; in obedience to the will of their leaders at home they warred to keep the Northwest a wilderness, tenanted only by the Indian hunter and the white fur trader. The American frontiersmen warred to make this wilderness the heart of the greatest of all republics; they obeyed the will of no superior, they were not urged onward by any action of the supreme authorities of the land; they were moved only by the stirring ambition of a masterful people, who saw before them a continent which they claimed as their heritage. The Americans

succeeded, the British failed; for the British fought against the stars in their courses, while the Americans battled on behalf of the destiny of the race.

Between the two sets of rivals lay leagues on leagues of forest, in which the active enemies of the Americans lived and hunted and marched to war. The British held the posts on the lakes; the frontiersmen held the land south of the Ohio. In the wilderness between dwelt the Shawnees, Wyandots, and Delawares, the Wabash Indians, the Miamis, and many others; and they had as allies all the fiercest and most adventurous of the tribes farther off, the Chippewas, the Winnebagos, the Sacs, and Foxes. On the side of the whites the war was still urged by irregular levies of armed frontiersmen. The Federal garrisons on the Ohio were as yet too few and feeble to be of much account; and in the South, where the conflict was against Creek and Cherokee, there were no regular troops whatever.

The struggle was at first one of aggression on the part of the northwestern Indians. They were angered and alarmed at the surveyors and the few reckless would-be settlers who had penetrated their country; but there was no serious encroachment on their lands, and Congress for some time forbade any expedition being carried on against them in their home. They themselves made no one formidable attack, sent no one overmastering

force against the whites. But bands of young braves from all the tribes began to cross the Ohio, and ravage the settlements, from the Pennsylvania frontier to Kentucky. They stole horses, burned houses, and killed or carried into a dreadful captivity men, women, and children. The inroads were as usual marked by stealth, rapine, and horrible cruelty. It is hard for those accustomed only to treat of civilized warfare to realize the intolerable nature of these ravages, the fact that the loss and damage to the whites was out of all proportion to the strength of the Indian war-parties, and the extreme difficulty in dealing an effective counter-stroke.

The immense tangled forests increased beyond measure the difficulties of the problem. Under their shelter the Indians were able to attack at will and without warning, and though they would fight to the death against any odds when cornered, they invariably strove to make their attacks on the most helpless, on those who were powerless to resist. It was not the armed frontier levies, it was the immigrants coming in by pack-train or by flat-boat,—it was the unsuspecting settlers with their wives and little ones who had most to fear from an Indian fray; while, when once the blow was delivered, the savages vanished as smoke vanishes in the open. A small war-party could thus work untold harm in a district precisely as a couple of

man-eating jaguars may depopulate a forest village in tropical America; and many men and much time had to be spent before they could be beaten into submission, exactly as it needs a great hunting-party to drive from their fastness and slay the big man-eating cats, though, if they came to bay in the open, they could readily be killed by a single skilful and resolute hunter.

Each settlement or group of settlements had to rely on the prowess of its own hunter-soldiers for safety. The real war, the war in which by far the greatest loss was suffered by both sides, was that thus waged man against man. These innumerable and infinitely varied skirmishes, as petty as they were bloody, were not so decisive at the moment as the campaigns against the gathered tribes, but were often more important in their ultimate results. Under the incessant strain of the incessant warfare there arose here and there Indian fighters of special note, men who warred alone, or at the head of small parties of rangers, and who not only defended the settlements, but kept the Indian villages and the Indian war-parties in constant dread by their vengeful retaliatory inroads. These men became the peculiar heroes of the frontier, and their names were household words in the log cabins of the children, and children's children, of their contemporaries. They were warriors of the type of the rude champions who, in the ages



long past, hunted the mammoth and the aurochs, and smote one another with stone-headed axes; their feats of ferocious personal prowess were of the kind that gave honor and glory to the mighty men of time primeval. Their deeds were not put into books while the men themselves lived; they were handed down by tradition, and grew dim and vague in the recital. What one fierce partisan leader had done might dwindle or might grow in the telling or might finally be ascribed to some other; or else the same feat was twisted into such varying shapes that it became impossible to recognize which was nearest the truth, or what man had performed it.

Often in dealing with the adventures of one of these old-time border warriors—Kenton, Wetzell, Brady, Mansker, Castleman—all we can say is that some given feat was commonly attributed to him, but may have been performed by somebody else, or indeed may only have been the kind of feat which might at any time have been performed by men of his stamp. Thus, one set of traditions ascribe to Brady an adventure in which, when bound to a stake, he escaped by suddenly throwing an Indian child into the fire, and dashing off unhurt in the confusion; but other traditions ascribe the feat not to Brady, but to some other wild hunter of the day. Again, one of the favorite tales of Brady is his escape from a band of pursuing

Indians, by an extra ordinary leap across a deep ravine, at the bottom of which flowed a rapid stream; but in some traditions this leap appears as made by another frontier hero, or even by an Indian whom Brady himself was pursuing. It is, therefore, a satisfaction to come across, now and then, some feat which is attested by contemporaneous testimony. There is such contemporary record for one of Brady's deeds, which took place towards the close of the Revolutionary War.

Brady had been on a raid in the Indian country and was returning. His party had used all their powder and had scattered, each man going towards his own home, as they had nearly reached the settlements. Only three men were left with Brady, the four had but one charge of powder apiece, and even this had been wet in crossing a stream, though it had been carefully dried afterwards. They had with them a squaw, whom they had captured. When not far from home they ran into a party of seven Indians, likewise returning from a raid, and carrying with them as prisoners a woman and her child. Brady spied the Indians first and instantly resolved to attack them, trusting that they would be panic-struck and flee; though after a single discharge of their rifles he and his men would be left helpless. Slipping ahead, he lay in ambush until the Indians were close up. He then fired, killing the leader, whereat the others fled in

terror, leaving the woman and child. In the confusion, however, the captive squaw also escaped and succeeded in joining the fleeing savages, to whom she told the small number and woful plight of their assailants; and they at once turned to pursue them. Brady, however, had made good use of the time gained, and was in full flight with his two rescued prisoners; and before he was overtaken he encountered a party of whites who were themselves following the trail of the marauders. He at once turned and, in company with them, hurried after the Indians; but the latter were wary and, seeing the danger, scattered and vanished in the gloomy woodland. The mother and child, thus rescued from a fearful fate, reached home in safety. The letter containing the account of this deed continues: "This young officer, Captain Brady, has great merit as a partizan in the woods. He has had the address to surprise and beat the Indians three different times since I came to the Department—he is brave, vigilant, and successful."<sup>1</sup>

For a dozen years after the close of the Revolution, Brady continued to be a tower of strength to the frontier settlers of Pennsylvania and Virginia. At the head of his rangers he harassed the Indians greatly, interfering with and assailing their war-

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. Alex. Fowler to Edward Hand, Pittsburg, July 22, 1780.

parties, and raiding on their villages and home camps. Like his foes, he warred by ambush and surprise. Among the many daring backwoodsmen who were his followers and companions the traditions pay particular heed to one Phouts, "a stout, thick Dutchman of uncommon strength and activity."

In spite of the counter-strokes of the wild wood-rangers, the Indian ravages speedily wrapped the frontier in fire and blood. In such a war the small parties were really the most dangerous, and, in the aggregate, caused most damage. It is less of a paradox than it seems, to say that one reason why the Indians were so formidable in warfare was because they were so few in numbers. Had they been more numerous they would perforce have been tillers of the soil, and it would have been far easier for the whites to get at them. They were able to wage a war so protracted and murderous, only because of their extreme elusiveness. There was little chance to deliver a telling blow at enemies who had hardly anything of value to destroy, who were so comparatively few in number that they could subsist year in and year out on game, and whose mode of life rendered them as active, stealthy, cautious, and ferocious as so many beasts of prey.

Though the frontiers of Pennsylvania and of Virginia proper suffered much, Kentucky suffered more. The murderous inroads of the Indians at

about the close of the Revolutionary War caused a mortality such as could not be paralleled save in a community struck down by some awful pestilence; and though from thence on our affairs mended, yet for many years the most common form of death was death at the hands of the Indians. A resident in Kentucky, writing to a friend, dwelt on the need of a system of vestries to take care of the orphans, who, as things were, were left solely to private charity; though, continues the writer, "of all countries I am acquainted with this abounds most with these unhappy objects."<sup>1</sup>

The roving war-bands infested the two routes by which the immigrants came into the country; for the companies of immigrants could usually be taken at a disadvantage, and yielded valuable plunder. The parties who travelled the Wilderness Road were in danger of ambush by day and of onslaught by night. But there was often some protection for them, for whenever the savages became very bold, bodies of Kentucky militia were sent to patrol the trail, and these not only guarded the trains of incomers, but kept a sharp look-out for Indian signs, and, if any were found, always followed and, if possible, fought and scattered the marauders.

The Indians who watched the river-route down

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS.; Clark MSS. Darrell to Fleming, April 14, 1783.

the Ohio had much less to fear in the way of pursuit by, or interference from, the frontier militia; although they, too, were now and then followed, overtaken, and vanquished. While in midstream the boats were generally safe, though occasionally the savages grew so bold that they manned flotillas of canoes and attacked the laden flat-boats in open day. But when any party landed, or wherever the current swept a boat inshore, within rifle-range of the tangled forest on the banks, there was always danger. The white riflemen, huddled together with their women, children, and animals on the scows, were utterly unable to oppose successful resistance to foes who shot them down at leisure, while themselves crouching in the security of their hiding-places. The Indians practised all kinds of tricks and stratagems to lure their victims within reach. A favorite device was to force some miserable wretch whom they had already captured to appear alone on the bank when a boat came in sight, signal to it, and implore those on board to come to his rescue and take him off; the decoy inventing some tale of wreck or of escape from Indians to account for his presence. If the men in the boat suffered themselves to be overcome by compassion and drew inshore, they were sure to fall victims to their sympathy.

The boat once assailed and captured, the first action of the Indians was to butcher all the

wounded. If there was any rum or whisky on board they drank it, feasted on the provisions, and took whatever goods they could carry off. They then set off through the woods with their prisoners for distant Indian villages near the lakes. They travelled fast, and mercilessly tomahawked the old people, the young children, and the women with child, as soon as their strength failed under the strain of the toil and hardship and terror. When they had reached their villages they usually burned some of their captives and made slaves of the others, the women being treated as the concubines of their captors, and the children adopted by the families who wished them. Of the captives a few might fall into the hands of friendly traders, or of the British officers at Detroit; a few might escape, or be ransomed by their kinsfolk, or be surrendered in consequence of some treaty. The others succumbed to the perils of their new life, or gradually sank into a state of stolid savagery.

Naturally, the ordinary Indian foray was directed against the settlements themselves; and of course the settlements of the frontier, as it continually shifted westward, were those which bore the brunt of the attack and served as a shield for the more thickly peopled and peaceful region behind. Occasionally a big war-party of a hundred warriors or over would come prepared for a stroke against some good-sized village or fort; but, as a rule, the

Indians came in small bands, numbering from a couple to a dozen or score of individuals. Entirely unencumbered by baggage or by impediments of any kind, such a band lurked through the woods, leaving no trail, camping wherever night happened to overtake it, and travelling whithersoever it wished. The ravages committed by these skulking parties of murderous braves were monotonous in their horror. All along the frontier the people on the outlying farms were ever in danger, and there was risk for the small hamlets and blockhouses. In their essentials, the attacks were alike: the stealthy approach, the sudden rush, with its accompaniment of yelling war-whoops, the butchery of men, women, and children, and the hasty flight with whatever prisoners were for the moment spared, before the armed neighbors could gather for rescue and revenge.

In most cases there was no record of the outrage; it was not put into any book; and, save among the survivors, all remembrance of it vanished as the logs of the forsaken cabin rotted and crumbled.

Yet tradition, or some chance written record, kept alive the memory of some of these incidents, and a few such are worth reciting, if only to show what this warfare of savage and settler really was. Most of the tales deal merely with some piece of unavenged butchery.



In 1785, on June 29th, the house of a settler named Scott, in Washington County, Virginia, was attacked. The Indians, thirteen in number, burst in the door just as the family were going to bed. Scott was shot; his wife was seized and held motionless, while all her four children were tomahawked, and their throats cut, the blood spouting over her clothes. The Indians loaded themselves with plunder, and, taking with them the wretched woman, moved off, and travelled all night. Next morning each man took his share and nine of the party went down to steal horses on the Clinch. The remaining four roamed off through the woods, and ten days later the woman succeeded in making her escape. For a month she wandered alone in the forest, living on the young cane and sassafras, until, spent and haggard with the horror and the hardship, she at last reached a small frontier settlement.

At about the same time three girls, sisters, walking together near Wheeling Creek, were pounced upon by a small party of Indians. After going a short distance, the Indians halted, talking together for a few moments, and then without any warning a warrior turned and tomahawked one of the girls. The second instantly shared the same fate; the third jerked away from the Indian who held her, darted up a bank, and, extraordinary to relate, eluded her pursuer, and reached her

home in safety. Another family, named Doolin, suffered in the same year; and there was one singular circumstance connected with their fate. The Indians came to the door of the cabin in the early morning; as the man rose from bed the Indians fired through the door and shot him in the thigh. They then burst in, and tomahawked him and two children; yet for reasons unknown they did not harm the woman, nor the child in her arms.

No such mercy was shown by a band of six Indians who attacked the log-houses of two settlers, brothers, named Edward and Thomas Cunningham. The two cabins stood side by side, the chinks between the logs allowing those in one to see what was happening in the other. One June evening, in 1785, both families were at supper. Thomas was away. His wife and four children were sitting at the table when a huge savage slipped in through the open door. Edward, in the adjoining cabin, saw him enter, and seized his rifle. The Indian fired at him through a chink in the wall, but missed him, and, being afraid to retreat through the door, which would have brought him within range of Edward's rifle, he seized an axe and began to chop out an opening in the rear wall. Another Indian made a dash for the door, but was shot down by Edward; however, he managed to get over the fence and out of range. Meanwhile, the mother and her four children remained para-

lyzed with fear until the Indian inside the room had cut a hole through the wall. He then turned, brained one of the children with his tomahawk, threw the body out into the yard through the opening, and motioned to the mother to follow it. In mortal fear she obeyed, stepping out over the body of one of her children, with two others screaming beside her, and her baby in her arms. Once outside he scalped the murdered boy and set fire to the house, and then drove the woman and the remaining children to a knoll where the wounded Indian lay with the others around him. The Indians hoped the flames would destroy both cabins; but Edward Cunningham and his son went into their loft, and threw off the boards of the roof, as they kindled, escaping unharmed from the shots fired at them; and so, though scorched by the flame and choked by the smoke, they saved their house and their lives. Seeing the failure of their efforts, the savages then left, first tomahawking and scalping the two elder children. The shuddering mother, with her baby, was taken along with them to a cave, in which they hid her and the wounded Indian; and then, with untold fatigue, hardship, and suffering, for her brutal captors gave her for food only a few papaw nuts and the head of a wild turkey, she was taken to the Indian towns. Some months afterwards Simon Girty ransomed her and sent her home.

Edward Cunningham raised a body of men and tried to follow the trail; but the crafty forest warriors had concealed it with such care that no effective pursuit could be made.

In none of the above-mentioned raids did the Indians suffer any loss of life, and in none was there any successful pursuit. But in one instance in this same year and same neighborhood the assailed settlers retaliated with effect. It was near Wheeling. A lad named John Wetzel, one of a noted border family of coarse, powerful, illiterate Indian fighters, had gone out from the fortified village in which his kinsfolk were living, to hunt horses. Another boy went with him. There were several stray horses, one being a mare which belonged to Wetzel's sister, with a colt, and the girl had promised him the colt if he would bring the mare back. The two boys were vigorous young fellows, accustomed to life in the forest, and they hunted high and low, and finally heard the sound of horse-bells in a thicket. Running joyfully forward they fell into the hands of four Indians, who had caught the horses and tied them in the thicket, so that by the tinkling of their bells they might lure into the ambush any man who came out to hunt them up. Young Wetzel made a dash for liberty, but received a shot which broke his arm, and then surrendered and cheerfully accompanied his captors; while his companion, totally un-

nerved, hung back crying, and was promptly tomahawked. Early next morning the party struck the Ohio, at a point where there was a clearing. The cabins on this clearing were deserted, the settlers having taken refuge in a fort because of the Indian ravages; but the stock had been left running in the woods. One of the Indians shot a hog and tossed it into a canoe they had hidden under the bank. The captive was told to enter the canoe and lie down; three Indians then got in, while the fourth started to swim the stolen horses across the river.

Fortunately for the captured boy, three of the settlers had chosen this day to return to the abandoned clearing and look after the loose stock. They reached the place shortly after the Indians, and just in time to hear the report of the rifle when the hog was shot. The owner of the hogs, instead of suspecting that there were Indians near by, jumped to the conclusion that a Kentucky boat had landed, and that the immigrants were shooting his hogs—for the people who drifted down the Ohio in boats were not, when hungry, over-scrupulous concerning the right to stray live stock. Running forward, the three men had almost reached the river, when they heard the loud snorting of one of the horses as it was forced into the water. As they came out on the bank they saw the canoe, with three Indians in it, and in the bot-

tom four rifles, the dead hog, and young Wetzel stretched at full length; the Indian in the stern was just pushing off from the shore with his paddle; the fourth Indian was swimming the horses a few yards from shore. Immediately the foremost white man threw up his rifle and shot the paddler dead; and a second later, one of his companions coming up, killed in like fashion the Indian in the bow of the canoe. The third Indian, stunned by the sudden onslaught, sat as if numb, never so much as lifting one of the rifles that lay at his feet, and in a minute he too was shot and fell over the side of the canoe, but grasped the gunwale with one hand, keeping himself afloat. Young Wetzel, in the bottom of the canoe, would have shared the same fate, had he not cried out that he was white and a prisoner; whereupon they bade him knock loose the Indian's hand from the side of the canoe. This he did, and the Indian sank. The current carried the canoe on a rocky spit of land, and Wetzel jumped out and waded ashore, while the little craft spun off and again drifted towards midstream. One of the men on shore now fired at the only remaining Indian, who was still swimming his horse for the opposite bank. The bullet splashed the water on his naked skin, whereat he slipped off his horse, swam to the empty canoe, and got into it. Unhurt, he reached the farther shore, where he leaped out and caught the

horse as it swam to land, mounted it, rifle in hand, turned to yell defiance at his foes, and then vanished in the forest-shrouded wilderness. He left behind him the dead bodies of his three friends, to be washed on the shallows by the turbid flood of the great river.<sup>1</sup>

These are merely some of the recorded incidents which occurred in the single year 1785, in one comparatively small portion of the vast stretch of territory which then formed the Indian frontier. Many such occurred on all parts of this frontier in each of the terrible years of Indian warfare. They varied infinitely in detail, but they were monotonously alike in their characteristics of stealthy approach, of sudden onfall, and of butcherly cruelty; and there was also a terrible sameness in the brutality and ruthlessness with which the whites, as occasion offered, wreaked their revenge. Generally, the Indian war-parties were successful, and suffered comparatively little, making their attacks by surprise, and by preference on unarmed men, cumbered with women and children. Occasionally, they were beaten back;

<sup>1</sup> De Haas, pp. 283-292. De Haas gathered the facts of these and numerous similar incidents from the pioneers themselves in their old age; doubtless they are often inaccurate in detail, but on the whole De Haas has more judgment and may be better trusted than the other compilers. In the Draper MSS. are volumes of such traditional stories, gathered with no discrimination whatever.

occasionally, parties of settlers or hunters stumbled across and scattered the prowling bands; occasionally, the Indian villages suffered from retaliatory inroads.

One attack, simple enough in its incidents, deserves notice for other reasons. In 1784, a family of "poor white" immigrants who had just settled in Kentucky were attacked in the daytime, while in the immediate neighborhood of their squalid cabin. The father was shot, and one Indian was in the act of tomahawking the six-year-old son, when an elder brother, from the doorway of the cabin, shot the savage. The Indians then fled. The boy thus rescued grew up to become the father of Abraham Lincoln. <sup>1</sup>

Now and then the monstrous uniformity of horror in assault and reprisal was broken by some deed out of the common; some instance where despair nerved the frame of woman or of half-grown boy; some strange incident in the career of a backwoods hunter, whose profession perpetually exposed him to Indian attack, but also trained him as naught else could to evade and repel it. The wild turkey was always much hunted by the settlers; and one of the common Indian tricks was to imitate the turkey call and shoot the hunter when thus tolled to his foe's ambush; but it was only less common for a skilled

<sup>1</sup> Hay and Nicolay.



Indian fighter to detect the ruse and himself creep up and slay the would-be-slayer. More than once, when a cabin was attacked in the absence or after the death of the men, some brawny frontierswoman, accustomed to danger and violent physical exertion, and favored by peculiar circumstances, herself beat off the assailants.

In one such case, two or three families were living together in a blockhouse. One spring day, when there were in the house but two men and one woman, a Mrs. Bozarth, the children, who had been playing in the yard, suddenly screamed that Indians were coming. One of the men sprang to the door, only to fall back with a bullet in his breast, and in another moment an Indian leaped over the threshold and attacked the remaining man before he could grasp a weapon. Holding his antagonist, the latter called out to Mrs. Bozarth to hand him a knife; instead, she snatched up an axe and killed the savage on the spot. But that instant another leaped into the doorway, and firing, killed the white man who had been struggling with his companion; the woman instantly turned on him, as he stood with his smoking gun, and ripped open his body with a stroke of her axe. Yelling for help, he sank on the threshold, and his comrades rushed to his rescue; the woman, with her bloody weapon, cleft open the skull of the first, and the others fell back, so that she was able to

shut and bar the door. Then the savages moved off, but they had already killed the children in the yard.

A similar incident took place in Kentucky, where the cabin of a man named John Merrill was attacked at night. He was shot in several places, and one arm and one thigh broken, as he stood by the open door, and fell, calling out to his wife to close it. This she did; but the Indians chopped a hole in the stout planks with their tomahawks, and tried to crawl through. The woman, however, stood to one side and struck at the head of each as it appeared, maiming or killing the first two or three. Enraged at being thus baffled by a woman, two of the Indians clambered on the roof of the cabin, and prepared to drop down the wide chimney; for at night the fire in such a cabin was allowed to smoulder, the coals being kept alive in the ashes. But Mrs. Merrill seized a feather-bed and, tearing it open, threw it on the embers; the flame and stifling smoke leaped up the chimney, and in a moment both Indians came down, blinded and half smothered, and were killed by the big resolute woman before they could recover themselves. No further attempt was made to molest the cabin or its inmates.

One of the incidents which became most widely noised along the borders was the escape of the two Johnson boys, in the fall of 1788. Their father

was one of the restless pioneers along the upper Ohio, who were always striving to take up claims across the river heedless of the Indian treaties. The two boys, John and Henry, were at the time thirteen and eleven years old, respectively. One Sunday, about noon, they went to find a hat which they had lost the day before at the spot where they had been working, three quarters of a mile from the house. Having found the hat, they sat down by the roadside to crack nuts, and were surprised by two Indians; they were not harmed, but were forced to go with their captors, who kept traveling slowly through the woods on the outskirts of the settlements, looking for horses. The elder boy soon made friends with the Indians, telling them that he and his brother were ill-treated at home, and would be glad to get a chance to try Indian life. By degrees they grew to believe he was in earnest, and plied him with all kinds of questions concerning the neighbors, their live stock, their guns, the number of men in the different families, to all of which he replied with seeming eagerness and frankness. At night they stopped to camp, one Indian scouting through the woods, while the other kindled a fire by flashing powder in the pan of his rifle. For supper they had parched corn and pork roasted over the coals; there was then some further talk, and the Indians lay down to sleep, one on each side of the boys. After a while,

supposing that their captives were asleep, and anticipating no trouble from two unarmed boys, one Indian got up and lay down on the other side of the fire, where he was soon snoring heavily. Then the lads, who had been wide awake, biding their time, whispered to one another, and noiselessly rose. The elder took one of the guns, silently cocked it, and, pointing it at the head of one Indian, directed the younger boy to take it and pull trigger, while, he himself stood over the head of the other Indian with drawn tomahawk. The one boy then fired, his Indian never moving after receiving the shot, while the other boy struck at the same moment; but the tomahawk went too far back on the neck, and the savage tried to spring to his feet, yelling loudly. However, the boy struck him again and again as he strove to rise, and he fell back and was soon dead. Then the two boys hurried off through the darkness, fearing lest other Indians might be in the neighborhood. Not very far away they struck a path which they recognized, and the elder hung up his hat, that they might find the scene of their feat when they came back. Continuing their course, they reached a blockhouse shortly before daybreak. On the following day a party of men went out with the elder boy and found the two dead Indians.<sup>1</sup>

After any Indian stroke the men of the neigh-

<sup>1</sup> De Haas.

borhood would gather under their local militia officers, and, unless the Indians had too long a start, would endeavor to overtake them, and either avenge the slain or rescue the prisoners. In the more exposed settlements bands of rangers were kept continually patrolling the woods. Every man of note in the Cumberland country took part in this duty. In Kentucky the county lieutenants and their subordinates were always on the lookout. Logan paid especial heed to the protection of the immigrants who came in over the Wilderness Road. Kenton's spy company watched the Ohio, and continually crossed it on the track of marauding parties, and, though very often baffled, yet Kenton and his men succeeded again and again in rescuing hapless women and children, or in scattering—although usually with small loss—war-parties bound against the settlements.

One of the best-known Indian fighters in Kentucky was William Whitley, who lived at Walnut Flat, some five miles from Crab Orchard. He had come to Kentucky soon after its settlement, and by his energy and ability had acquired property and leadership, though of unknown ancestry and without education. He was a stalwart man, skilled in the use of arms, jovial and fearless; the backwoods fighters followed him readily, and he loved battle; he took part in innumerable Indian expeditions, and in his old age was killed fighting

against Tecumseh at the battle of the Thames. In 1786 or '87 he built the first brick house ever constructed in Kentucky. It was a very handsome house for those days, every step in the hall stairway having carved upon it the head of an eagle bearing in its beak an olive branch. Each story was high, and the windows were placed very high from the ground, to prevent the Indians from shooting through them at the occupants. The glass was brought from Virginia by pack-train. He feasted royally the hands who put up the house; and to pay for the whisky they drank he had to sell one of his farms.

In 1785 (the year of the above-recited ravages on the upper Ohio in the neighborhood of Wheeling), Colonel Whitley led his rangers, once and again, against marauding Indians. In January, he followed a war-party, rescued a captive white man, and took prisoner an Indian who was afterwards killed by one of the militia—"a cowardly fellow," says Whitley. In October, a party of immigrants, led by a man named McClure, who had just come over the Wilderness trace, were set upon at dawn by Indians, not far from Whitley's house; two of the men were killed. Mrs. McClure got away at first and ran two hundred yards, taking her four children with her; in the gloom they would all have escaped had not the smallest child kept crying. This led the Indians to them. Three of the

children were tomahawked at once; next morning the fourth shared the same fate. The mother was forced to cook breakfast for her captors at the fire before which the scalps were drying. She was then placed on a half-broken horse and led off with them. When word of the disaster was brought to Whitley's, he was not at home, but his wife, a worthy helpmeet, immediately sent for him, and meanwhile sent word to his company. On his return he was able to take the trail at once with twenty-one riflemen, as true as steel. Following hard, but with stealth equal to their own, he overtook the Indians at sundown on the second day, and fell on them in their camp. Most of them escaped through the thick forest, but he killed two, rescued six prisoners, and captured sixteen horses and much plunder.

Ten days after this another party of immigrants, led by a man named Moore, were attacked on the Wilderness Road and nine persons killed. Whitley raised thirty of his horse-riflemen, and, guessing from the movements of the Indians that they were following the war trace northward, he marched with all speed to reach it at some point ahead of them, and succeeded. Finding they had not passed he turned and went south, and in a thick canebrake met his foes face to face. The whites were spread out in line, while the Indians, twenty in number, came on in single file, all on

horseback. The cane was so dense that the two parties were not ten steps apart when they saw one another. At the first fire the Indians, taken utterly unaware, broke and fled, leaving eight of their number dead; and the victors also took twenty-eight horses.<sup>1</sup>

In the following spring another noted Indian fighter, less lucky than Whitley, was killed while leading one of these scouting parties. Early in 1786, the Indians began to commit numerous depredations in Kentucky, and the alarm and anger of the inhabitants became great.<sup>2</sup> In April, a large party of savages, under a chief named Black Wolf, made a raid along Beargrass. Colonel William Christian, a very gallant and honorable man, was in command of the neighboring militia. At once, as was his wont, he raised a band of twenty men, and followed the plunderers across the Ohio. Riding well in advance of his followers, with but three men in company with him, he overtook the three rearmost Indians, among whom was Black Wolf. The struggle was momentary but bloody. All three Indians were killed, but

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. Whitley's MSS. "Narrative," apparently dictated some time after the events described. It differs somewhat from the printed account in Collins.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Clark Papers, *passim*, for 1786. Wm. Finney to G. R. Clark, March 24 and 26, 1786. Also, Wm. Croghan to G. R. Clark, November 3, and November 16, 1785.



Colonel Christian and one of his captains were also slain.<sup>1</sup>

The Kentuckians were by this time thoroughly roused, and were bent on making a retaliatory expedition in force. They felt that the efforts made by Congress to preserve peace by treaties, at which the Indians were loaded with presents, merely resulted in making them think that the whites were afraid of them, and that if they wished gifts all they had to do was to go to war.<sup>2</sup> The only effective way to deal with the Indians was to strike them in their own country, not to try to parry the strokes they themselves dealt. Clark who knew the savages well, scoffed at the idea that a vigorous blow, driven well home, would rouse them to desperation; he realized that, formidable though they were in actual battle, and still more in plundering raid, they were not of the temper to hazard all on the fate of war, or to stand heavy punishment, and that they would yield very quickly, when once they were convinced that unless they did so they and their families would

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Papers Continental Congress. Sam McDowell to Governor of Virginia, April 18, 1786. John May to *ibid.*, April, 19, 1786. Clark MSS. Bradford's "Notes on Kentucky." John Clarke to Jonathan Clark, April 21, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. Jon. Clark Papers. John Clarke to Jonathan Clark, March 29, 1786. Also, G. R. Clark to J. Clark, April 20, 1788.

perish by famine or the sword.<sup>1</sup> At this time he estimated that some fifteen hundred warriors were on the war-path and that they were likely to be joined by many others.

The condition of affairs at the French towns of the Illinois and Wabash afforded another strong reason for war, or at least for decided measures of some kind. Almost absolute anarchy reigned in these towns. The French inhabitants had become profoundly discontented with the United States Government. This was natural, for they were neither kept in order nor protected, in spite of their petitions to Congress that some stable government might be established.<sup>2</sup> The quarrels between the French and the intruding American settlers had very nearly reached the point of a race war; and the Americans were further menaced by the Indians. These latter were on fairly good terms with the French, many of whom had intermarried with them, and lived as they did; although the French families of the better class were numerous, and had attained to what was for the frontier a high standard of comfort and refinement.

The French complained, with reason, of the law-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56, p. 282. G. R. Clark to R. H. Lee.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., No. 30, p. 453, December 8, 1784. Also p. 443, November 10, 1784. Draper MSS. J. Edgar to G. R. Clark. October 23, 1786.

less and violent character of many of the American new-comers, and also of the fact that already speculators were trying by fraud and foul means to purchase large tracts of land, not for settlement, but to hold until it should rise in value. On the other hand, the Americans complained no less bitterly of the French, as a fickle, treacherous, undisciplined race, in close alliance with the Indians, and needing to be ruled with a rod of iron.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to reconcile the accounts the two parties gave of one another's deeds; doubtless neither side was guiltless of grave wrong-doing. So great was Clark's reputation for probity and leadership that both sides wrote him urgently, requesting that he would come to them and relieve their distress.<sup>2</sup> One of the most fruitful sources of broils and quarrels was the liquor trade with the Indians. The rougher among the new-comers embarked eagerly in this harmful and disreputable business, and the low-class French followed their example. The commandant, Monsieur J. M. P. Legrace, and the creole court forbade this trade; a decision which was just and righteous, but excited much indignation, as the other inhabitants believed that

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56. J. Edgar to G. R. Clark, November 7, 1785. Draper MSS. Petition of Americans of Vincennes to Congress, June 1, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. Petition to G. R. Clark from Inhabitants of Vincennes, March 16, 1786.

the members of the court themselves followed it in secret.<sup>1</sup>

In 1786, the ravages of the Indians grew so serious, and the losses of the Americans near Vincennes became so great, that they abandoned their outlying farms, and came into the town.<sup>2</sup> Vincennes then consisted of upwards of three hundred houses. The Americans numbered some sixty families, and had built an American quarter, with a strong blockhouse. They only ventured out to till their corn-fields in bodies of armed men, while the French worked their lands singly and unarmed.

The Indians came freely into the French quarter of the town, and even sold to the inhabitants plunder taken from the Americans; and when complaint of this was made to the creole magistrates, they paid no heed. One of the men who suffered at the hands of the savages was a wandering schoolmaster, named John Filson,<sup>3</sup> the first historian of Kentucky, and the man who took down, and put into his own quaint and absurdly stilted English, Boon's so-called "autobiography." Filson, having drifted west, had travelled up and down the Ohio and Wabash by canoe and boat. He was much struck by the abundance of game

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS., John Filson; MS. "Journey of Two Voyages."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Moses Henry to G. R. Clark, June 7, 1786.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, John Small to G. R. Clark, June 23, 1786.

of all kinds which he saw on the northwestern side of the Ohio, and especially by the herds of buffaloes which lay on the sand-bars; his party lived on the flesh of bears, deer, wild turkeys, coons, and water-turtles. In 1785, the Indians whom he met seemed friendly; but on June 2, 1786, while on the Wabash, his canoe was attacked by the savages, and two of his men were slain. He himself escaped with difficulty, and reached Vincennes after an exhausting journey, but having kept possession of his "two small trunks."<sup>1</sup>

Two or three weeks after this misadventure of the unlucky historian, a party of twenty-five Americans, under a captain named Daniel Sullivan,<sup>2</sup> were attacked while working in their corn-fields at Vincennes.<sup>3</sup> They rallied and drove back the Indians, but two of their number were wounded. One of the wounded fell for a moment into the hands of the Indians and was scalped; and though he afterwards recovered, his companions at the time expected him to die. They marched back to Vincennes in furious anger, and finding an Indian in the house of a Frenchman, they seized

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS., Filson's "Journal."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Daniel Sullivan to G. R. Clark, June 23, 1786. Small's letter says June 21st.

<sup>3</sup> State Department MSS. Papers Continental Congress, No. 150, vol. ii., letter of J. M. P. Legrace. "*Au Général George Rogé Clarck—a la Châte*" (at the Falls—Louisville), July 22, 1786.

and dragged him to their blockhouse, where the wife of the scalped man, whose name was Donnelly, shot and scalped him.

This greatly exasperated the French, who kept a guard over the other Indians who were in town, and next day sent them to the woods. Then their head men, magistrates, and officers of the militia summoned the Americans before a council, and ordered all who had not regular passports from the local court to leave at once, "bag and baggage." This created the utmost consternation among the Americans, whom the French outnumbered five to one, while the savages certainly would have destroyed them had they tried to go back to Kentucky. Their leaders again wrote urgent appeals for help to Clark, asking that a general guard might be sent them if only to take them out of the country. Filson had already gone overland to Louisville and told the authorities of the straits of their brethren at Vincennes, and immediately an expedition was sent to their relief, under Captains Hardin and Patton.

Meanwhile, on July 15th, a large band of several hundred Indians, bearing red and white flags, came down the river in forty-seven canoes, to attack the Americans at Vincennes, sending word to the French that if they remained neutral they would not be molested. The French sent envoys to dissuade them from their purpose, but the war

chiefs and sachems answered that the red people were at last united in opposition to "the men wearing hats," and gave a belt of black wampum to the wavering Piankeshaws, warning them that all Indians who refused to join against the whites would thenceforth be treated as foes. However, their deeds by no means corresponded with their threats. Next day they assailed the American blockhouse or stockaded fort, but found they could make no impression and drew off. They burned a few outlying cabins and slaughtered many head of cattle, belonging both to the Americans and the French; and then, seeing the French under arms, held further parley with them, and retreated, to the relief of all the inhabitants.

At the same time, the Kentuckians, under Hardin and Patton, stumbled by accident on a party of Indians, some of whom were friendly Piankeshaws, and some hostile Miamis. They attacked them without making any discrimination between friend and foe, killed six, wounded seven, and drove off the remainder. But they themselves lost one man killed and four wounded, including Hardin, and fell back to Louisville without doing anything more.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Legrace and Filson's "Journal." The two contradict one another as to which side was to blame. Legrace blames the Americans heavily for wronging both the French and the Indians; and condemns in the strongest terms, and

These troubles on the Wabash merely hardened the determination of the Kentuckians no longer to wait until the Federal Government acted. With the approval of Governor Patrick Henry, they took the initiative themselves. Early in August, the field officers of the district of Kentucky met at Harrodsburg, Benjamin Logan presiding, and resolved on an expedition, to be commanded by Clark, against the hostile Indians on the Wabash. Half of the militia of the district were to go; the men were to assemble, on foot or on horseback, as they pleased, at Clarksville, on September 10th.<sup>1</sup> Besides pack-horses, salt, flour, powder, and lead were impressed,<sup>2</sup> not always in strict compliance with law, for some of the officers impressed quantities of spirituous liquors also.<sup>3</sup> The troops them-

probably with justice, many of their number, and especially Sullivan. He speaks, however, in high terms of Henry and Small; and both of these, in their letters referred to above, paint the conduct of the French and Indians in very dark colors, throwing the blame on them. Legrace is certainly disingenuous in suppressing all mention of the wrongs done to the Americans. For Filson's career and death in the woods, see the excellent *Life of Filson*, by Durrett, in the Filson Club Publications.

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. Minutes of meetings of the officers of the district of Kentucky, August 2, 1786. State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. ii. Letter of P. Henry, May 16, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. J. Cox to George Rogers Clark, August 8, 1786.

<sup>3</sup> State Department MSS. Madison Papers. Letter of Caleb Wallace, November 20, 1786.



selves, however, came in slowly.<sup>1</sup> Late in September, when twelve hundred men had been gathered, Clark moved forward. But he was no longer the man he had been. He failed to get any hold on his army. His followers, on their side, displayed all that unruly fickleness which made the militia of the Revolutionary period a weapon which might at times be put to good use in the absence of any other, but which was really trusted only by men whose military judgment was as fatuous as Jefferson's.

After reaching Vincennes the troops became mutinous, and at last flatly refused longer to obey orders, and marched home as a disorderly mob, to the disgrace of themselves and their leader. Nevertheless, the expedition had really accomplished something, for it overawed the Wabash and Illinois Indians, and effectively put a stop to any active expressions of disloyalty or disaffection on the part of the French. Clark sent officers to the Illinois towns, and established a garrison of one hundred and fifty men at Vincennes,<sup>2</sup> besides seizing the goods of a Spanish merchant in retaliation for wrongs committed on American merchants by the Spaniards.

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Papers Continental Congress. No. 150, vol. ii. Letter of Major Wm. North, September 15, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* *Virginia State Papers.* G. R. Clark to Patrick Henry. Draper MSS., "Proceedings of Committee of Kentucky Convention," December 19, 1786.

This failure was in small part offset by a successful expedition led by Logan at the same time against the Shawnee towns.<sup>1</sup> On October 5th, he attacked them with 790 men. There was little or no resistance, most of the warriors having gone to oppose Clark. Logan took ten scalps and thirty-two prisoners, burned two hundred cabins, and quantities of corn, and returned in triumph after a fortnight's absence. One deed of infamy sullied his success. Among his colonels was the scoundrel McGarry, who, in cold blood, murdered the old Shawnee chief, Molunthee, several hours after he had been captured, the shame of the barbarous deed being aggravated by the fact that the old chief had always been friendly to the Americans.<sup>2</sup> Other murders would probably have followed, had it not been for the prompt and honorable action of Colonels Robert Patterson and Robert Trotter, who ordered their men to shoot down any one who molested another prisoner. McGarry then threatened them, and they, in return, demanded that he be court-martialled for murder.<sup>3</sup> Logan, to his discredit, refused the court-martial, for fear of creating further trouble. The bane of the frontier

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. *Virginia State Papers*. Logan to Patrick Henry, December 17, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS., Caleb Wallace to Wm. Fleming, October 23, 1786. State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. ii., Harmar's letter, November 15, 1786.

<sup>3</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iv., p. 212.

military organization was the helplessness of the elected commanders, their dependence on their followers, and the inability of the decent men to punish the atrocious misdeeds of their associates.

These expeditions were followed by others on a smaller scale, but of like character. They did enough damage to provoke, but not to overawe, the Indians. With the spring of 1787, the ravages began on an enlarged scale, with all their dreadful accompaniments of rapine, murder, and torture. All along the Ohio frontier, from Pennsylvania to Kentucky, the settlers were harried; and in some places they abandoned their clearings and hamlets, so that the frontier shrank back.<sup>1</sup> Logan, Kenton, and many other leaders headed counter expeditions, and now and then broke up a war-party or destroyed an Indian town<sup>2</sup>; but nothing decisive was accomplished, and Virginia paralyzed the efforts of the Kentuckians and waked them to anger, by forbidding them to follow the Indian parties beyond the frontier.<sup>3</sup>

The most important stroke given to the hostile Indians in 1787 was dealt by the Cumberland people. During the preceding three or four years, some scores of the settlers on the Cumberland had

<sup>1</sup> Durrett MSS., Daniel Dawson to John Campbell, Pittsburg, June 17, 1787. *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iv., p. 419.

<sup>2</sup> Draper, MSS., T. Brown to T. Preston, Danville, June 13 1787. *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iv., pp. 254, 287, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, vol. iv., p. 344.

been slain by small predatory parties of Indians, mostly Cherokees and Creeks. No large war-band attacked the settlements; but no hunter, surveyor, or traveller, no woodchopper or farmer, no woman alone in the cabin with her children, could ever feel safe from attack. Now and then a savage was killed in such an attack, or in a skirmish with some body of scouts; but nothing effectual could be thus accomplished.

The most dangerous marauders were some Creek and Cherokee warriors who had built a town on the Coldwater, a tributary of the Tennessee near the Muscle Shoals, within easy striking distance of the Cumberland settlements. This town was a favorite resort of French traders from the Illinois and Wabash, who came up the Tennessee in bateaux. They provided the Indians with guns and ammunition, and in return often received goods plundered from the Americans; and they at least indirectly, and in some cases directly, encouraged the savages in their warfare against the settlers.<sup>1</sup>

Early in June, Robertson gathered 130 men and marched against the Coldwater town, with two Chickasaws as guides. Another small party started at the same time by water, but fell into an

<sup>1</sup> Robertson MSS., Robertson to some Frenchman of note in Illinois, June, 1787. This is apparently a copy, probably by Robertson's wife, of the original letter. In Robertson's own original letters, the spelling and handwriting are as rough as they are vigorous.

ambush, and then came back. Robertson and his force followed the trail of a marauding party which had just visited the settlements. They marched through the woods towards the Tennessee until they heard the voice of the great river as it roared over the shoals. For a day they lurked in the cane on the north side, waiting until they were certain no spies were watching them. In the night some of the men swam over and stole a big canoe, with which they returned. At daylight the troops crossed, a few in this canoe, the others swimming with their horses. After landing, they marched seven miles and fell on the town, which was in a ravine, with corn-fields round about. Taken by surprise, the warriors, with no effective resistance, fled to their canoes. The white riflemen thronged after them. Most of the warriors escaped, but over twenty were slain; as were also four or five French traders, while half a dozen Frenchmen and one Indian squaw were captured. All the cabins were destroyed, the live stock was slain, and much plunder taken. The prisoners were well treated and released; but on the way home another party of French traders was encountered, and their goods were taken from them. The two Chickasaws were given their full share of all the plunder.

This blow gave a breathing spell to the Cumberland settlements. Robertson at once wrote to the

French in the Illinois country, and also to some Delawares, who had recently come to the neighborhood, and were preserving a dubious neutrality. He explained the necessity of their expedition, and remarked that if any innocent people, whether Frenchmen or Indians, had suffered in the attack, they had to blame themselves; they were in evil company, and the assailants could not tell the good from the bad. If any Americans had been there, they would have suffered just the same. In conclusion, he warned the French that if their traders continued to furnish the hostile Indians with powder and lead, they would "render themselves very insecure"; and to the Indians he wrote that, in the event of a war, "you will be compelled to retaliate, which will be a great prejudice to your nation."<sup>1</sup> He did not spell well; but his meaning was plain, and his hand was known to be heavy.

<sup>1</sup> Robertson MSS. His letter above referred to, and another, in his own hand, to the Delawares, of about the same date.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NAVIGATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI; SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS AND SPANISH INTRIGUES

1784-1788

IT was important for the frontiersmen to take the lake posts from the British; but it was even more important to wrest from the Spaniards the free navigation of the Mississippi. While the lake posts were held by the garrisons of a foreign power, the work of settling the North-western Territory was bound to go forward slowly and painfully; but while the navigation of the Mississippi was barred, even the settlements already founded could not attain to their proper prosperity and importance.

The lusty young commonwealths which were springing into life on the Ohio and its tributaries knew that commerce with the outside world was essential to their full and proper growth. The high, forest-clad ranges of the Appalachians restricted and hampered their mercantile relations with the older States, and, therefore, with the Europe which lay beyond; while the giant river offered itself as a huge trade artery to bring them

close to all the outer world, if only they were allowed its free use.

Navigable rivers are of great importance to a country's trade now; but a hundred years ago their importance was relatively far greater. Steam, railroads, electricity, have worked a revolution so stupendous, that we find it difficult to realize the facts of the life which our forefathers lived. The conditions of commerce have changed much more in the last hundred years than in the preceding two thousand. The Kentuckians and Tennesseans knew only the pack-train, the wagon-train, the river craft, and the deep-sea ship; that is, they knew only such means of carrying on commerce as were known to Greek and Carthaginian, Roman and Persian, and the nations of mediæval Europe. Beasts of draught and of burden, and oars and sails,—these, and these only,—were at the service of their merchants, as they had been at the service of all merchants from time immemorial. Where trade was thus limited, the advantages conferred by water carriage, compared to land carriage, were incalculable. The Westerners were right in regarding as indispensable the free navigation of the Mississippi. They were right also in their determination ultimately to acquire the control of the whole river, from the source to the mouth.

However, the Westerners wished more than the privilege of sending down-stream the products of



their woods and pastures and tilled farms. They had already begun to cast longing eyes on the fair Spanish possessions. Spain was still the greatest of colonial powers. In wealth, in extent, and in population, both native and European—her colonies surpassed even those of England; and by far the most important of her possessions were in the New World. For two centuries her European rivals—English, French, and Dutch—had warred against her in America, with the net result of taking from her a few islands in the West Indies. On the American mainland her possessions were even larger than they had been in the age of the great Conquistadores—the age of Cortes, Pizarro, De Soto, and Coronado. Yet it was evident that her grasp had grown feeble. Every bold, lawless, ambitious leader among the frontier folk dreamed of wresting from the Spaniard some portion of his rich and ill-guarded domain.

It was not alone the attitude of the frontiersmen towards Spain that was novel, and based upon a situation for which there was little precedent. Their relations with one another, with their brethren of the seaboard, and with the Federal Government, likewise had to be adjusted without much chance of profiting by antecedent experience. Many phases of these relations between the people who stayed at home and those who wandered off to make homes, between the frontiersmen, as

they formed young States, and the Central Government representing the old States, were entirely new, and were ill-understood by both parties. Truths which all citizens have now grown to accept as axiomatic were then seen clearly only by the very greatest men, and by most others were seen dimly, if at all. What is now regarded as inevitable and proper was then held as something abnormal, unnatural, and greatly to be dreaded. The men engaged in building new commonwealths did not, as yet, understand that they owed the Union as much as did the dwellers in the old States. They were apt to let liberty become mere anarchy and license, to talk extravagantly about their rights while ignoring their duties, and to rail at the weakness of the Central Government while at the same time opposing with foolish violence every effort to make it stronger. On the other hand, the people of the long-settled country found difficulty in heartily accepting the idea that the new communities, as they sprang up in the forest, were entitled to stand exactly on a level with the old, not only as regards their own rights, but as regards the right to shape the destiny of the Union itself.

The Union was as yet imperfect. The jangling colonies had been welded together, after a fashion, in the slow fire of the Revolutionary War; but the old lines of cleavage were still distinctly marked.

The great struggle had been of incalculable benefit to all Americans. Under its stress they had begun to develop a national type of thought and character. Americans now held, in common, memories which they shared with no one else; for they held ever in mind the feats of a dozen crowded years. Theirs was the history of all that had been done by the Continental Congress and the Continental armies; theirs the memory of the toil and the suffering and the splendid ultimate triumph. They cherished in common the winged words of their statesmen, the edged deeds of their soldiers; they yielded to the spell of mighty names which sounded alien to all men save themselves. But though the successful struggle had laid deep the foundations of a new nation, it had also of necessity stirred and developed many of the traits most hostile to assured national life. All civil wars loosen the bands of orderly liberty, and leave in their train disorder and evil. Hence, those who cause them must rightly be held guilty of the gravest wrong-doing; unless they are not only pure of purpose, but sound of judgment, and unless the result shows their wisdom. The Revolution had left behind it among many men love of liberty, mingled with lofty national feeling and broad patriotism; but to other men it seemed that the chief lessons taught had been successful resistance to authority, jealousy of the Central

Government, and intolerance of all restraint. According as one or the other of these mutually hostile sets of sentiments prevailed, the acts of the Revolutionary leaders were to stand justified or condemned in the light of the coming years. As yet the success had only been in tearing down; there remained the harder and all-important task of building up.

This task of building up was accomplished, and the acts of the men of the Revolution were thus justified. It was the after result of the Revolution, not the Revolution itself, which gave to the governmental experiment inaugurated by the Second Continental Congress its unique and lasting value. It was this result which marks most clearly the difference between the careers of the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking peoples on this continent. The wise statesmanship typified by such men as Washington and Marshall, Hamilton, Jay, John Adams, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, prevailed over the spirit of separatism and anarchy. Seven years after the war ended, the Constitution went into effect, and the United States became in truth a nation. Had we not thus become a nation, had the separatists won the day, and our country become the seat of various antagonistic states and confederacies, then the Revolution by which we won liberty and independence would have been scarcely

more memorable or noteworthy than the wars which culminated in the separation of the Spanish-American colonies from Spain; for we would thereby have proved that we did not deserve either liberty or independence.

The Revolutionary War itself had certain points of similarity with the struggles of which men like Bolivar were the heroes; where the parallel totally fails is in what followed. There were features in which the campaigns of the Mexican and South American insurgent leaders resembled at least the partisan warfare so often waged by American Revolutionary generals; but with the deeds of the great constructive statesmen of the United States there is nothing in the career of any Spanish-American community to compare. It was the power to build a solid and permanent Union, the power to construct a mighty nation out of the wreck of a crumbling confederacy, which drew a sharp line between the Americans of the North and the Spanish-speaking races of the South.

In their purposes and in the popular sentiment to which they have appealed, our separatist leaders of every generation have borne an ominous likeness to the horde of dictators and half-military, half-political adventurers who for three quarters of a century have wrought such harm in the lands between the Argentine and Mexico; but the men who brought into being and preserved the Union

have had no compeers in Southern America. The North American colonies wrested their independence from Great Britain as the colonies of South America wrested theirs from Spain; but whereas the United States grew with giant strides into a strong and orderly nation, Spanish America has remained split into a dozen turbulent states, and has become a by-word for anarchy and weakness.

The separatist feeling has at times been strong in almost every section of the Union, although in some regions it has been much stronger than in others. Calhoun and Pickering, Jefferson and Gouverneur Morris, Wendell Phillips and William Taney, Aaron Burr and Jefferson Davis—these and many other leaders of thought and action, east and west, north and south, at different periods of the nation's growth, and at different stages of their own careers, have, for various reasons, and with widely varying purity of motive, headed or joined in separatist movements. Many of these men were actuated by high-minded, though narrow, patriotism; and those who, in the culminating catastrophe of all the separatist agitations, appealed to the sword, proved the sincerity of their convictions by their resolute courage and self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, they warred against the right, and strove mightily to bring about the downfall and undoing of the nation.

The men who brought on and took part in the

disunion movements were moved sometimes by good and sometimes by bad motives; but even when their motives were disinterested and their purposes pure, and even when they had received much provocation, they must be adjudged as lacking the wisdom, the foresight, and the broad devotion to all the land over which the flag floats, without which no statesman can rank as really great. The enemies of the Union were the enemies of America and of mankind, whose success would have plunged their country into an abyss of shame and misery, and would have arrested for generations the upward movement of their race.

Yet, evil though the separatist movements were, they were at times imperfectly justified by the spirit of sectional distrust and bitterness rife in portions of the country which, at the moment, were themselves loyal to the Union. This was especially true of the early separatist movements in the West. Unfortunately, the attitude towards the Westerners of certain portions of the population in the older States, and especially in the northeastern States, was one of unreasoning jealousy and suspicion; and though this mental attitude rarely crystallized into hostile deeds, its very existence, and the knowledge that it did exist, embittered the men of the West. Moreover, the people among whom these feelings were strongest were, unfortunately, precisely those who, on the

questions of the Union and the Constitution, showed the broadest and most far-seeing statesmanship. New England, the towns of the middle States and Maryland, the tidewater region of South Carolina, and certain parts of Virginia, were the seats of the soundest political thought of the day. The men who did this sane, wholesome political thinking were quite right in scorning and condemning the crude unreason, often silly, often vicious, which characterized so much of the political thought of their opponents. The strength of these opponents was largely derived from the ignorance and suspicion of the raw country districts, and from the sour jealousy with which the backwoodsmen regarded the settled regions of the seaboard.

But when these sound political thinkers permitted their distrust of certain sections of the country to lead them into doing injustice to those sections, they, in their turn, deserved the same condemnation which should be meted to so many of their political foes. When they allowed their judgment to become so warped by their dissatisfaction with the traits inevitably characteristic of the earlier stages of frontier development, that they became opposed to all extension of the frontier; when they allowed their liking for the well-ordered society of their own districts to degenerate into indifference to or dislike of the growth of the United



States towards continental greatness; then they themselves sank into the position of men who in cold selfishness sought to mar the magnificent destiny of their own people.

In the northeastern States, and in New England especially, this feeling showed itself for two generations after the close of the Revolutionary War. On the whole, the New Englanders have exerted a more profound and wholesome influence upon the development of our common country than has ever been exerted by any other equally numerous body of our people. They have led the nation in the path of civil liberty and sound governmental administration. But too often they have viewed the nation's growth and greatness from a narrow and provincial standpoint, and have grudgingly acquiesced in, rather than led the march towards, continental supremacy. In shaping the nation's policy for the future, their sense of historic perspective seemed imperfect. They could not see the all-importance of the valley of the Ohio, or of the valley of the Columbia, to the republic of the years to come. The value of a county in Maine offset, in their eyes, the value of these vast, empty regions. Indeed, in the days immediately succeeding the Revolution, their attitude towards the growing West was worse than one of mere indifference; it was one of alarm and dislike. They for the moment adopted towards the West a position

not wholly unlike that which England had held towards the American colonies as a whole. They came dangerously near repeating, in their feeling towards their younger brethren on the Ohio, the very blunder committed in reference to themselves by their elder brethren in Britain. For some time they seemed, like the British, unable to grasp the grandeur of their race's imperial destiny. They hesitated to throw themselves with hearty enthusiasm into the task of building a nation with a continent as its base. They rather shrank from the idea as implying a lesser weight of their own section in the nation; not yet understanding that to an American the essential thing was the growth and well-being of America, while the relative importance of the locality where he dwelt was a matter of small moment.

The extreme representatives of this northeastern sectionalism not only objected to the growth of the West at the time now under consideration, but even avowed a desire to work it harm, by shutting the Mississippi, so as to benefit the commerce of the Atlantic States—a manifestation of cynical and selfish disregard of the rights of their fellow-countrymen quite as flagrant as any piece of tyranny committed or proposed by King George's ministers in reference to America. These intolerant extremists not only opposed the admission of the young western States into the Union, but at a

later date actually announced that the annexation by the United States of vast territories beyond the Mississippi offered just cause for the secession of the northeastern States. Even those who did not take such an advanced ground felt an unreasonable dread lest the West might grow to overtop the East in power. In their desire to prevent this (which has long since happened without a particle of damage resulting to the East), they proposed to establish in the Constitution that the representatives from the West should never exceed in number those from the East,—a proviso which would not have been merely futile, for it would quite properly have been regarded by the West as unforgivable.

A curious feature of the way many honest men looked at the West was their inability to see how essentially transient were some of the characteristics to which they objected. Thus, they were alarmed at the turbulence and the lawless shortcomings of various kinds which grew out of the conditions of frontier settlement and sparse population. They looked with anxious foreboding to the time when the turbulent and lawless people would be very numerous, and would form a dense and powerful population; failing to see that in exact proportion as the population became dense, the conditions which caused the qualities to which they objected would disappear. Even the men who had too much good sense to share these fears,

even men as broadly patriotic as Jay, could not realize the extreme rapidity of western growth. Kentucky and Tennessee grew much faster than any of the old frontier colonies had ever grown; and from sheer lack of experience, eastern statesmen could not realize that this rapidity of growth made the navigation of the Mississippi a matter of immediate and not of future interest to the West.

In short, these good people were learning with reluctance and difficulty to accept as necessary certain facts which we regard as part of the order of our political nature. We look at territorial expansion, and the admission of new States, as part of a process as natural as it is desirable. To our forefathers the process was novel, and, in some of its features, repugnant. Many of them could not divest themselves of the feeling that the old States ought to receive more consideration than the new; whereas nowadays it would never occur to any one that Pennsylvania and Georgia ought to stand either above or below California and Montana. It is an inestimable boon to all four States to be in the Union, but this is because the citizens of all of them are on a common footing. If the new commonwealths in the Rocky Mountains and on the Pacific slope were not cordially accepted by the original Thirteen States as having exactly the same rights and privileges of every kind, it would be better for them to stand alone. As a matter of

fact, we have become so accustomed to the idea of the equality of the different States, that it never enters our heads to conceive of the possibility of its being otherwise. The feeling in its favor is so genuine and universal that we are not even conscious that it exists. Nobody dreams of treating the fact that the new commonwealths are offshoots of the old as furnishing grounds for any discrimination in reference to them, one way or the other. There still exist dying jealousies between different States and sections, but this particular feeling does not enter into them in any way whatsoever.

At the time when Kentucky was struggling for statehood, this feeling, though it had been given its death-blow by the success of the Revolution, still lingered here and there on the Atlantic coast. It was manifest in the attitude of many prominent people—the leaders in their communities—towards the new commonwealths growing up beyond the Alleghanies. Had this intolérant sectional feeling ever prevailed and been adopted as the policy of the Atlantic States, the West would have revolted, and would have been right in revolting. But the manifestations of this sectionalism proved abortive; the broad patriotism of leaders like Washington prevailed. In the actual event, the East did full and free justice to the West. In consequence, we are now one nation.

While many of the people on the eastern seaboard thus took an indefensible position in reference to the trans-Alleghany settlements, in the period immediately succeeding the Revolution, there were large bodies of the population of these same settlements, including very many of their popular leaders, whose own attitude towards the Union was, if anything, even more blameworthy. They were clamorous about their rights, and were not unready to use veiled threats of disunion when they deemed these rights infringed; but they showed little appreciation of their own duties to the Union. For certain of the positions which they assumed, no excuse can be offered. They harped continually on the feebleness of the Federal authorities, and the inability of these authorities to do them justice or offer them adequate protection against the Indian and the Spaniard; yet they bitterly opposed the adoption of the very Constitution which provided a strong and stable Federal Government, and turned the weak confederacy, despised at home and abroad, into one of the great nations of the earth. They showed little self-control, little willingness to wait with patience until it was possible to remedy any of the real or fancied wrongs of which they complained. They made no allowance for the difficulties so plentifully strewn in the path of the Federal authorities. They clamored for prompt and effective action,

and yet clamored just as loudly against the men who sought to create a national executive with power to take this prompt and effective action. They demanded that the United States wrest from the British the lake posts, and from the Spaniards the navigation of the Mississippi. Yet they seemed incapable of understanding that if they separated from the Union they would thereby forfeit all chance of achieving the very purposes they had in view, because they would then certainly be at the mercy of Britain, and probably, at least for some time, at the mercy of Spain also. They opposed giving the United States the necessary civil and military power, although it was only by the possession and exercise of such power that it would be possible to secure for the Westerners what they wished. In all human probability, the whole country round the Great Lakes would still be British territory, and the mouth of the Mississippi still in the hands of some European power, had the folly of the separatists won the day, and had the West been broken up into independent States.

These shortcomings were not special or peculiar to the frontiersmen of the Ohio valley at the close of the eighteenth century. All our frontiersmen have betrayed a tendency towards them at times, though the exhibitions of this tendency have grown steadily less and less decided. In Vermont,

during the years between the close of the Revolution and the adoption of the Constitution, the state of affairs was very much what it was in Kentucky at the same time.<sup>1</sup> In each territory there was acute friction with a neighboring State. In each there was a small knot of men who wished the community to keep out of the new American nation, and to enter into some sort of alliance with a European nation, England in one case, Spain in the other. In each there was a considerable but fluctuating separatist party, desirous that the territory should become an independent nation on its own account. In each case the separatist movements failed, and the final triumph lay with the men of broadly national ideas, so that both Kentucky and Vermont became States of one indissoluble Union.

This final triumph of the Union party in these first-formed frontier States was fraught with immeasurable good for them and for the whole nation of which they became parts. It established a precedent for the action of all the other States that sprang into being as the frontier rolled westward. It decided that the interior of North America should form part of one great republic, and should not be parcelled out among a crowd of English-

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, xi., No. 2, pp. 160-165, letters of Levi Allen, Ethan Allen, and others from 1787 to 1790.



speaking Uruguays and Ecuadors, powerful only to damage one another, and helpless to exact respect from alien foes or to keep order in their own households. It vastly increased the significance of the outcome of the Revolution, for it decided that its after-effects should be felt throughout the entire continent, not merely in the way of example, but by direct impress. The creation of a nation stretching along the Atlantic seaboard was of importance in itself, but the importance was immensely increased when once it was decided that the nation should cover a region larger than all Europe.

While giving unlimited praise to the men so clear-sighted, and of such high thought, that from the beginning they foresaw the importance of the Union, and strove to include all the West therein, we must beware of blaming overmuch those whose vision was less acute. The experiment of the Union was as yet inchoate; its benefits were prospective; and loyalty to it was loyalty to a splendid idea the realization of which lay in the future rather than in the present. All honor must be awarded to the men who, under such conditions, could be loyal to so high an ideal; but we must not refuse to see the many strong and admirable qualities in some of the men who looked less keenly into the future. It would be merely folly<sup>1</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> R. T. Durrett, *Centenary of Kentucky*, 64.

judge a man, who, in 1787, was lukewarm or even hostile to the Union, by the same standard we should use in testing his son's grandson a century later. Finally, where a man's general course was one of devotion to the Union, it is easy to forgive him some momentary lapse, due to a misconception on his part of the real needs of the hour, or to passing but intense irritation at some display of narrow indifference to the rights of his section by the people of some other section. Patrick Henry himself made one slip when he opposed the adoption of the Federal Constitution; but this does not at all offset the services he rendered our common country both before and afterwards. Every statesman makes occasional errors; and the leniency of judgment needed by Patrick Henry, and needed far more by Ethan Allen, Samuel Adams, and George Clinton, must be extended to frontier leaders for whose temporary coldness to the Union there was much greater excuse.

When we deal, not with the leading statesmen of the frontier communities, but with the ordinary frontier folk themselves, there is need to apply the same tests used in dealing with the rude, strong peoples of by-gone ages. The standard by which international, and even domestic, morality is judged, must vary for different countries under widely different conditions, for exactly the same reasons that it must vary for different periods of

the world's history. We cannot expect the refined virtues of a highly artificial civilization from frontiersmen who, for generations, have been roughened and hardened by the same kind of ferocious wilderness toil that once fell to the lot of their remote barbarian ancestors.

The Kentuckian, from his clearing in the great forest, looked with bold and greedy eyes at the Spanish possessions, much as Markman, Goth, and Frank had once peered through their marshy woods at the Roman dominions. He possessed the virtues proper to a young and vigorous race; he was trammelled by few misgivings as to the rights of the men whose lands he coveted; he felt that the future was for the stout-hearted, and not for the weakling. He was continually hampered by the advancing civilization of which he was the vanguard, and of which his own sons were destined to form an important part. He rebelled against the restraints imposed by his own people behind him exactly as he felt impelled to attack the alien peoples in front of him. He did not care very much what form the attack took. On the whole, he preferred that it should be avowed war, whether waged under the stars and stripes or under some flag new-raised by himself and his fellow-adventurers of the border. In default of such a struggle, he was ready to serve under alien banners, either those of some nation at the moment

hostile to Spain, or else those of some insurgent Spanish leader. But he was also perfectly willing to obtain by diplomacy what was denied by force of arms; and if the United States could not or would not gain his ends for him in this manner, then he wished to make use of his own power. He was eager to enter in and take the land, even at the cost of becoming for the time being a more or less nominal vassal of Spain; and he was ready to promise in return for this privilege of settlement to form a barrier state against the further encroachment of his fellows. When fettered by the checks imposed by the Central Government, he not only threatened to revolt and establish an independent government of his own, but even now and then darkly hinted that he would put this government under the protection of the very Spanish power at whose cost he always firmly intended to take his own strides towards greatness. As a matter of fact, whether he first established himself in the Spanish possessions as an outright enemy, or as a nominal friend and subject, the result was sure to be the same in the end. The only difference was that it took place sooner in one event than in the other. In both cases alike the province thus acquired was certain finally to be wrested from Spain.

The Spaniards speedily recognized in the Americans the real menace to their power in Florida,

Louisiana, and Mexico. They did not, however, despair of keeping them at bay. The victories won by Galvez over both the British regulars and the tory American settlers were fresh in their minds; and they felt they had a chance of success even in a contest of arms. But the weapons upon which they relied most were craft and intrigue. If the Union could be broken up, or the jealousies between the States and sections fanned into flame, there would be little chance of a successful aggressive movement by the Americans of any one commonwealth. The Spanish authorities sought to achieve these ends by every species of bribery and corrupt diplomacy. They placed even more reliance upon the warlike confederacies of the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, thrust in between themselves and the frontier settlements; and, while protesting to the Americans with smooth treachery that they were striving to keep the Indians at peace, they secretly incited them to hostilities, and furnished them with arms and munitions of war. The British held the lake posts by open exhibition of strength, though they, too, were not above conniving at treachery, and allowing their agents covertly to urge the red tribes to resist the American advance; but the Spaniards, by preference, trusted to fraud rather than to force.

In the last resort the question of the navigation

of the Mississippi had to be decided between the Governments of Spain and the United States; and it was chiefly through the latter that the Westerners could, indirectly, but most powerfully, make their influence felt. In the long and intricate negotiations carried on towards the close of the Revolutionary War between the representatives of Spain, France, and the United States, Spain had taken high ground in reference to this and to all other western questions, and France had supported her in her desire to exclude the Americans from all rights in the vast regions beyond the Alleghanies. At that time the delegates from the Southern, no less than from the Northern, States, in the Continental Congress, showed much weakness in yielding to this attitude of France and Spain. On the motion of those from Virginia, all the delegates, with the exception of those from North Carolina, voted to instruct Jay, then Minister to Spain, to surrender outright the free navigation of the Mississippi. Later, when he was one of the commissioners to treat for peace, they practically repeated the blunder by instructing Jay and his colleagues to assent to whatever France proposed. With rare wisdom and courage, Jay repudiated these instructions. The chief credit for the resulting diplomatic triumph, almost as essential as the victory at Yorktown itself to our national well-being, belongs to him, and by his conduct he

laid the men of the West under an obligation which they never acknowledged during his lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after his return to America he was made Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and was serving as such when, in the spring of 1785, Don Diego Gardoqui arrived in Philadelphia, bearing a commission from his Catholic Majesty to Congress. At this time the brilliant and restless soldier Galvez had left Louisiana and become Viceroy of Mexico, thus removing from Louisiana the one Spaniard whose energy and military capacity would have rendered him formidable to the Americans in the event of war. He was succeeded in the government of the creole province by Don Estevan Miro, already colonel of the Louisiana regiment.

Gardoqui was not an able man, although with some capacity for a certain kind of intrigue. He was a fit representative of the Spanish court, with its fundamental weakness and its impossible pretensions. He entirely misunderstood the people with whom he had to deal, and whether he was or was not himself personally honest, he based his chief hopes of success in dealing with others upon their supposed susceptibility to the influence of corruption and dishonorable intrigue. He and

<sup>1</sup> It is not the least of Mann Butler's good points that in his *History* he does full justice to Jay. Another Kentuckian, Mr. Thomas Marshall Green, has recently done the same in his *Spanish Conspiracy*.

Jay could come to no agreement, and the negotiations were finally broken off. Before this happened, in the fall of 1786, Jay, in entire good faith, had taken a step which aroused furious anger in the West.<sup>1</sup> Like so many other statesmen of the day, he did not realize how fast Kentucky had grown, and deemed the navigation question one which would not be of real importance to the West for two decades to come. He absolutely refused to surrender our right to navigate the Mississippi; but, not regarding it as of immediate consequence, he proposed both to Congress and Gardoqui that in consideration of certain concessions by Spain we should agree to forbear to exercise this right for twenty or twenty-five years. The delegates from the Northern States assented to Jay's views; those from the Southern States strongly opposed them. In 1787, after a series of conferences between Jay and Gardoqui, which came to naught, the Spaniard definitely refused to entertain Jay's proposition. Even had he not refused, nothing could have been done, for under the confederation a treaty had to be ratified by the votes of nine States, and there were but seven which supported the policy of Jay.

Unquestionably Jay showed less than his usual far-sightedness in this matter, but it is only fair to remember that his views were shared by some

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 81, vol. ii., pp. 193, 241, 285, etc.; Reports of Secretary John Jay.



of the greatest of American statesmen, even from Virginia. "Light-horse Harry" Lee substantially agreed with them. Washington, with his customary broad vision and keen insight, realized the danger of exciting the turbulent Westerners by any actual treaty which might seem to cut off their hope of traffic down the Mississippi; but he advocated pursuing what was, except for defining the time limit, substantially the same policy under a different name, recommending that the United States should await events and for the moment neither relinquish nor push their claim to free navigation of the great river.<sup>1</sup> Even in Kentucky itself a few of the leading men were of the opinion that the right of free navigation would be of little real benefit during the lifetime of the existing generation.<sup>2</sup> It was no discredit to Jay to hold the views he did when they were shared by intelligent men of affairs who were actually in the district most concerned. He was merely somewhat slow in abandoning opinions which half a dozen years before were held generally throughout the Union. Nevertheless, it was fortunate for the country that the Southern States, headed by Virginia, were so resolute in their opposition, and that

<sup>1</sup> *The Spanish Conspiracy*, Thomas Marshall Green, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., Madison Papers, Caleb Wallace to Madison, November 21, 1787. Wallace himself shared this view.

Gardoqui, a fit representative of his government, declined to agree to a treaty which, if ratified, would have benefited Spain, and would have brought undreamed-of evil upon the United States. Jefferson, to his credit, was very hostile to the proposition. As a statesman, Jefferson stood for many ideas which, in their actual working, have proved pernicious to our country, but he deserves well of all Americans, in the first place because of his services to science, and, in the next place, what was of far more importance, because of his steadfast friendship for the great West, and his appreciation of its magnificent future.

As soon as the Revolutionary War came to an end, adventurers in Kentucky began to trade down the Mississippi. Often these men were merchants by profession, but this was not necessary, for on the frontier men shifted from one business to another very readily. A farmer of bold heart and money-making temper might, after selling his crop, build a flat-boat, load it with flour, bacon, salt, beef, and tobacco, and start for New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> He faced dangers from the waters, from the Indians, from lawless whites of his own race, and from the Spaniards themselves. The New Orleans customs officials were corrupt,<sup>2</sup> and the regulations very absurd and oppressive. The policy of the Spanish home government in reference to the trade

<sup>1</sup> McAfee MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

was unsettled and wavering, and the attitude towards it of the Governors of Louisiana changed with their varying interests, beliefs, caprices, and apprehensions. In consequence, the conditions of the trade were so uncertain that to follow it was like indulging in a lottery venture. Special privileges were allowed certain individuals who had made private treaties with, or had bribed, the Spanish officials; and others were enabled to smuggle their goods in under various pretences, and by various devices; while the traders who were without such corrupt influence or knowledge found this river commerce hazardous in the extreme. It was small wonder that the Kentuckians should chafe under such arbitrary and unequal restraints, and should threaten to break through them by force.<sup>1</sup>

The most successful traders were, of course, those who contrived to establish relations with some one in New Orleans, or perhaps in Natchez, who would act as their agent or correspondent. The profits from a successful trip made amends for much disaster, and enabled the trader to repeat his adventure on a larger scale. Thus, among the papers of George Rogers Clark there is a letter from one of his friends who was living in Kaskaskia in 1784, and was engaged in the river trade.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 630.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. Letter of John Williams, June 20, 1784.

letter was evidently to the writer's father, beginning "My dear daddy." It describes how he had started on one trip to New Orleans, but had been wrecked; how, nothing daunted, he had tried again with a cargo of forty-two beeves, which he sold in New Orleans for what he deemed the good sum of \$738; and how he was about to try his luck once more, buying a bateau and thirty bushels of salt, enough to pickle two hundred beeves.

The traders never could be certain when their boats would be seized and their goods confiscated by some Spanish officer; nor when they started could they tell whether they would or would not find when they reached New Orleans that the Spanish authorities had declared the navigation closed. In 1783, and the early part of 1784, traders were descending the Mississippi without overt resistance from the Spaniards, and were selling their goods at a profit in New Orleans. In midsummer of 1784, the navigation of the river was suddenly and rigorously closed. In 1785, it was again partially opened; so that we find traders purchasing flour in Louisville at twenty-four shillings a hundred-weight, and carrying it down-stream to sell in New Orleans at thirty dollars a barrel. By summer of the same year the Spaniards were again shutting off traffic, being in great panic over a rumored piratical advance by the frontiersmen, to

oppose which they were mustering their troops and making ready their artillery.<sup>1</sup>

Among the articles the frontier traders received for their goods horses held a high place.<sup>2</sup> The horse-trade was risky, as in driving them up to Kentucky many were drowned, or played out, or were stolen by the Indians; but as picked horses and mares cost but twenty dollars a head in Louisiana and were sold at a hundred dollars a head in the United States, the losses had to be very large to eat up the profits.

The French creoles, who carried on much of the river trade and who lived, some under the American and some under the Spanish flag, of course suffered as much as either Americans or Spaniards. Often these creoles loaded their canoes with a view to trading with the Indians, rather than at New Orleans. Whether this was so or not, those officially in the service of the two powers soon grew as zealous in oppressing one another as in oppressing men of different nationalities. Thus, in 1787 a Vincennes creole, having loaded his pirogue with goods to the value of two thousand dollars, sent it down to trade with the Indians near the Chickasaw Bluffs. Here it was seized by the Cre-

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. J. Girault to William Clark, July 22, 1784; May 23, 1785; July 2, 1785; certificate of French merchants testified to by Miro in 1785.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Girault to Clark July 9, 1784.

ole commandant of the Spanish post at the Arkansas. The goods were confiscated and the men imprisoned. The owner appealed in vain to the commandant, who told him that he was ordered by the Spanish authorities to seize all persons who trafficked on the Mississippi below the mouth of the Ohio, inasmuch as Spain claimed both banks of the river; and when he made his way to New Orleans and appealed to Miro he was summarily dismissed with a warning that a repetition of the offence would ensure his being sent to the mines of Brazil.<sup>1</sup>

Outrages of this kind, continually happening alike to Americans and to creoles under American protection, could not have been tamely borne by any self-respecting people. The fierce and hardy frontiersmen were goaded to anger by them, and were ready to take part in, or at least to connive at, any piece of lawless retaliation. Such an act of revenge was committed by Clark, at Vincennes, as one result of his ill-starred expedition against the Wabash Indians in 1786. As already said, when his men mutinied and refused to march against the Indians, most of them returned home; but he kept enough to garrison the Vincennes fort. Unpaid, and under no regular authority, these men plundered the French inhabitants and were a

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. iii., p. 519. Letter of Joseph St. Mary, Vincennes, August 23, 1788.

terror to the peaceable, as well as to the lawless, Indians. Doubtless Clark desired to hold them in readiness as much for a raid on the Spanish possessions as for a defence against the Indians. Nevertheless they did some service in preventing any actual assault on the place by the latter, while they prevented any possible uprising by the French, though the harassed creoles, under this added burden of military lawlessness, in many instances, accepted the offers made them by the Spaniards and passed over to the French villages on the west side of the Mississippi.

Before Clark left Vincennes, he summoned a court of his militia officers, and got them to sanction the seizure of a boat loaded with valuable goods, the property of a creole trader from the Spanish possessions. The avowed reason for this act was revenge for the wrongs perpetrated in like manner by the Spaniards on the American traders; and this doubtless was the controlling motive in Clark's mind; but it was also true that the goods thus confiscated were of great service to Clark in paying his mutinous and irregularly employed troops, and that this fact, too, had influence with him.

The more violent and lawless among the backwoodsmen of Kentucky were loud in exultation over this deed. They openly declared that it was not merely an act of retaliation on the Spaniards,

but also a warning that, if they did not let the Americans trade down the river, they would not be allowed to trade up it; and that the troops who garrisoned Vincennes offered an earnest of what the frontiersmen would do in the way of raising an army of conquest if the Spaniards continued to wrong them.<sup>1</sup> They defied the Continental Congress and seaboard States to interfere with them. They threatened to form an independent government, if the United States did not succor and countenance them. They taunted the eastern men with knowing as little of the West as Great Britain knew of America. They even threatened that they would, if necessary, rejoin the British dominions, and boasted that, if united to Canada, they would some day be able themselves to conquer the Atlantic commonwealths.<sup>2</sup>

Both the Federal and the Virginia authorities were much alarmed and angered, less at the insult to Spain than at the threat of establishing a separate government in the West.

From the close of the Revolution the Virginian Government had been worried by the separatist movements in Kentucky. In 1784, two "stirrers-up of sedition" had been fined and imprisoned, and

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. Minutes of Court-Martial, summoned by George Rogers Clark, at Vincennes, October 18, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS. Reports of John Jay, No. 124, vol. iii., pp. 31, 37, 44, 48, 53, 56, etc.



an adherent of the Virginian Government, writing from Kentucky, mentioned that one of the worst effects of the Indian inroads was to confine the settlers to the stations, which were hot-beds of sedition and discord, besides excuses for indolence and rags.<sup>1</sup> The people who distrusted the frontiersmen complained that among them were many knaves and outlaws from every State in the Union, who flew to the frontier as to a refuge; while even those who did not share this distrust admitted that the fact that the people in Kentucky came from many different States helped to make them discontented with Virginia.<sup>2</sup>

In Georgia, the conditions were much as they were on the Ohio. Georgia was a frontier State, with the ambitions and the lawlessness of the frontier; and the backwoodsmen felt towards her as they did towards no other member of the old Thirteen. Soon after Clark established his garrison in Vincennes, various inflammatory letters were circulated in the western country, calling for action against both the Central Government and the Spaniards, and appealing for sympathy and aid both to the Georgians and to Sevier's insurrectionary State of Franklin. Among others, a Kentuckian wrote from Louisville to Georgia,

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iii., 585, 589.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. Clark Papers, Walter Darrell to William Fleming, April 14, 1783.

bitterly complaining about the failure of the United States to open the Mississippi; denouncing the Federal Government in extravagant language, and threatening hostilities against the Spaniards, and a revolt against the Continental Congress.<sup>1</sup> This letter was intercepted, and, of course, increased still more the suspicion felt about Clark's motives, for though Clark denied that he had actually seen the letter, he was certainly cognizant of its purport, and approved the movement which lay behind it.<sup>2</sup> One of his fellow Kentuckians, writing about him at this time, remarks: "Clark is playing hell . . . eternally drunk and yet full of design. I told him he would be hanged. He laughed, and said he would take refuge among the Indians."<sup>3</sup>

The Governor of Virginia issued a proclamation disavowing all Clark's acts.<sup>4</sup> A committee of the Kentucky convention, which included the leaders of Kentucky's political thought and life, examined into the matter,<sup>5</sup> and gave Clark's version of the facts, but reprobated and disowned his course.

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS., letter of Thomas Green to the Governor of Georgia, December 23, 1786.

<sup>2</sup> Green's *Spanish Conspiracy*, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 202, condensed.

<sup>4</sup> Draper MSS. Proclamation of Edmund Randolph, March 4, 1787.

<sup>5</sup> State Department MSS., No. 71, vol. ii., p. 503. Report of December 19, 1786.

Some of the members of this convention were afterwards identified with various separatist movements, and skirted the field of perilous intrigue with a foreign power; but they recognized the impossibility of countenancing such mere buccaneering lawlessness as Clark's; and not only joined with their colleagues in denouncing it to the Virginian Government, but warned the latter that Clark's habits were such as to render him unfit longer to be trusted with work of importance.<sup>1</sup>

The rougher spirits all along the border, of course, sympathized with Clark. In this same year, 1786, the goods and boats of a trader from the Cumberland district were seized and confiscated by the Spanish commandant at Natchez.<sup>2</sup> At first the Cumberland Indian-fighters determined to retaliate in kind, at no matter what cost; but the wiser among their leaders finally "persuaded them not to imitate their friends of Kentucky, and to wait patiently until some advice could be received from Congress." One of these wise leaders, a representative from the Cumberland district in the North Carolina Legislature, in writing to the North Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress, after dwelling on the necessity of acquiring

<sup>1</sup> Green, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., No. 124, vol. iii. Papers transmitted by Blount, Hawkins, and Ashe, March 29, 1787, including deposition of Thomas Amis, November 13, 1786; letter from Fayetteville, December 29, 1786, etc.

the right to the navigation of the Mississippi, added with sound common-sense: "You may depend on our exertions to keep all things quiet, and we agree entirely with you that if our people are once let loose there will be no stopping them, and that acts of retaliation poison the mind and give a licentiousness to manners that can with great difficulty be restrained." Washington was right in his belief that in this business there was as much to be feared from the impetuous turbulence of the backwoodsmen as from the hostility of the Spaniards.

The news of Jay's attempted negotiations with Gardoqui, distorted and twisted, arrived right on top of these troubles, and threw the already excited backwoodsmen into a frenzy. There was never any real danger that Jay's proposition would be adopted; but the Westerners did not know this. In all the considerable settlements on the western waters, committees of correspondence were elected to remonstrate and petition Congress against any agreement to close the Mississippi.<sup>1</sup> Even those who had no sympathy with the separatist movement warned Congress that if any such agreement were entered into it would probably entail the loss of the western country.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Madison MSS. Letter of Caleb Wallace, November 12, 1787.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., No. 56. Symmes to the President of Congress, May 3, 1787.

There was justification for the original excitement; there was none whatever for its continuance after Jay's final report to Congress, in April, 1787,<sup>1</sup> and after the publication by Congress of its resolve never to abandon its claim to the Mississippi. Jay, in this report, took what was unquestionably the rational position. He urged that the United States was undoubtedly in the right; and that it should either insist upon a treaty with Spain, by which all conflicting claims would be reconciled, or else simply claim the right, and if Spain refused to grant it, promptly declare war.

So far he was emphatically right. His cool and steadfast insistence on our rights, and his clear-sighted recognition of the proper way to obtain them, contrasted well with the mixed turbulence and foolishness of the Westerners who denounced him. They refused to give up the Mississippi; and yet they also refused to support the party to which Jay belonged, and therefore refused to establish a government strong enough to obtain their rights by open force.

But Jay erred when he added, as he did, that there was no middle course possible; that we must either treat or make war. It was undoubtedly to our discredit, and to our temporary harm, that we refused to follow either course; it showed the exist-

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Trescott, *Diplomatic History of the Administrations of Washington and Adams*, p. 46.

ence of very undesirable national qualities, for it showed that we were loud in claiming rights which we lacked the resolution and foresight to enforce. Nevertheless, as these undesirable qualities existed, it was the part of a wise statesman to recognize their existence and do the best he could in spite of them. The best course to follow, under such circumstances, was to do nothing until the national fibre hardened, and this was the course which Washington advocated.

In this summer of 1787 there rose to public prominence in the western country a man whose influence upon it was destined to be malign in intention rather than in actual fact. James Wilkinson, by birth a Marylander, came to Kentucky in 1784. He had done his duty respectably as a soldier in the Revolutionary War, for he possessed sufficient courage and capacity to render average service in subordinate positions, though at a later date he showed abject inefficiency as commander of an army. He was a good-looking, plausible, energetic man, gifted with a taste for adventure, with much proficiency in low intrigue, and with a certain address in influencing and managing bodies of men. He also spoke and wrote well, according to the rather florid canons of the day. In character he can only be compared to Benedict Arnold, though he entirely lacked Arnold's ability and brilliant courage. He had no conscience and no

scruples; he had not the slightest idea of the meaning of the word honor: he betrayed his trust from the basest motives, and he was too inefficient to make his betrayal effective. He was treacherous to the Union while it was being formed and after it had been formed; and his crime was aggravated by the sordid meanness of his motives, for he eagerly sought opportunities to barter his own infamy for money. In all our history there is no more despicable character.

Wilkinson was a man of broken fortune when he came to the West. In three years he made a good position for himself, in matters commercial and political, and his restless, adventurous nature and thirst for excitement and intrigue prompted him to try the river trade, with its hazards and its chances of great gain. In June, 1787, he went down the Mississippi to New Orleans with a loaded flat-boat, and sold his cargo at a high profit, thanks to the understanding he immediately established with Miro.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless he started with the full intention of entering into some kind of corrupt arrangement with the Louisiana authorities, leaving the precise nature of the arrangement to be decided by events.

The relations that he so promptly established with the Spaniards were both corrupt and treacherous; that is, he undoubtedly gave and took

<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, ii., 112.

bribes, and promised to intrigue against his own country for pecuniary reward; but exactly what the different agreements were, and exactly how far he tried or intended to fulfil them, is, and must always remain, uncertain. He was so ingrainedly venal, treacherous, and mendacious that nothing he said or wrote can be accepted as true, and no sentiments which he at any time professed can be accepted as those he really felt. He and the leading Louisiana Spaniards had close mercantile relations, in which the government of neither was interested, and by which the governments of both were in all probability defrauded. He persuaded the Spaniards to give him money for using his influence to separate the West from the Union, which was one of the chief objects of Spanish diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> He was obliged to try to earn the money by leading the separatist intrigues in Kentucky, but it is doubtful if he ever had enough straightforwardness in him to be a thoroughgoing villain. All he cared for was the money; if he could not get it otherwise, he was quite willing to do any damage he could to his country, even when he was serving it in a high military position. But if it was easier, he was perfectly willing to betray the people who had bribed him.

However, he was an adept in low intrigue; and though he speedily became suspected by all honest

<sup>1</sup> *History of Louisiana*, Charles Gayarré, iii., 198.



men, he covered his tracks so well that it was not until after his death, and after the Spanish archives had been explored, that his guilt was established.

He returned to Kentucky after some months' absence. He had greatly increased his reputation, and as substantial results of his voyage he showed permits to trade, and some special and exclusive commercial privileges, such as supplying the Mexican market with tobacco, and depositing it in the King's store, at New Orleans. The Kentuckians were much excited by what he had accomplished. He bought goods himself and received goods from other merchants on commission; and a year after his first venture he sent a flotilla of heavy-laden flat-boats down the Mississippi, and disposed of their contents at a high profit in New Orleans.

The power this gave Wilkinson, the way he had obtained it, and the use he made of it, gave an impetus to the separatist party in Kentucky. He was by no means the only man, however, who was at this time engaged in the river trade to Louisiana; nor were his advantages over his commercial rivals as marked as he had alleged. They, too, had discovered that the Spanish officials could be bribed to shut their eyes to smuggling, and that citizens of Natchez could be hired to receive property shipped thither as being theirs, so that it might be admitted on payment of twenty-

five per cent. duty. Merchants gathered quantities of flour and bacon, but especially of tobacco, at Louisville, and thence shipped it in flat-boats to Natchez, where it was received by their correspondents; and keel-boats sometimes made the return journey, though the horses, cattle, and negro slaves were generally taken to Kentucky overland.<sup>1</sup> All these traders naturally felt the Spanish control of the navigation, and the intermittent but always possible hostility of the Spanish officials, to be peculiarly irksome. They were, as a rule, too shortsighted to see that the only permanent remedy for their troubles was their own absorption into a solid and powerful union. Therefore, they were always ready either to join a movement against Spain, or else to join one which seemed to promise the acquisition of special privileges from Spain.

The separatist feeling, and the desire to sunder the West from the East, and join hands with Spain or Britain, were not confined to Kentucky. In one shape or another, and with varying intensity, separatist agitations took place in all portions of the West. In Cumberland, on the Holston, among the western mountains of Virginia proper,

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. John Williams to William Clark, New Orleans, February 11, 1789; Girault to *ibid.*, July 26, 1788, from Natchez; *ibid.* to *ibid.*, December 5, 1788; receipt of D. Brashear at Louisville, May 23, 1785.

and in Georgia—which was practically a frontier community—there occurred manifestations of the separatist spirit. A curious feature of these various agitations was the slight extent to which a separatist movement in any one of these localities depended upon or sympathized with a similar movement in any other. The national feeling among the separatists was so slight that the very communities which wished to break off from the Atlantic States were also quite indifferent to the deeds and fates of one another. The only bond among them was their tendency to break loose from the Central Government. The settlers on the banks of the Cumberland felt no particular interest in the struggle of those on the headwaters of the Tennessee to establish the State of Franklin; and the Kentuckians were indifferent to the deeds of both. In a letter, written in 1788 to the Creek chief McGillivray, Robertson alludes to the Holston men and the Georgians in precisely the language he might have used in speaking of foreign nations. He evidently took as a matter of course their waging war on their own account against, and making peace with, the Cherokees and Creeks, and betrayed little concern as to the outcome, one way or the other.

In this same letter,<sup>1</sup> Robertson frankly set forth

<sup>1</sup> Robertson MSS., James Robertson to Alexander McGillivray, Nashville, August 3, 1788.

his belief that the West should separate from the Union and join some foreign power, writing: "In all probability we cannot long remain in our present state, and if the British, or any commercial nation which may be in possession of the Mississippi, would furnish us with trade and receive our produce, there cannot be a doubt but the people on the west side of the Appalachian Mountains will open their eyes to their real interests." At the same time Sevier was writing to Gardoqui, offering to put his insurrectionary State of Franklin, then at its last gasp, under the protection of Spain.<sup>1</sup>

Robertson spoke with indifference as to whether the nation with which the Southerners allied themselves should happen to be Spain or Britain. As a matter of fact, most of the intrigues carried on were with or against Spain; but in the fall of 1788 an abortive effort was made by a British agent to arouse the Kentuckians against both the Spaniards and the National Government, in the interest of Great Britain. This agent was Conolly, the unsavory hero of Lord Dunmore's war. He went to Louisville, visited two or three prominent men, and laid bare to them his plans. As he met with no encouragement whatever, he speedily abandoned his efforts, and when the people got wind of his design they threatened to mob him, while the officers of the Continental troops made ready

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Sevier to Gardoqui, September 12, 1788.

to arrest him if his plans bore fruit; so that he was glad to leave the country.<sup>1</sup>

These movements all aimed at a complete independence, but there were others which aimed merely at separation from the parent States. The efforts of Kentucky and Franklin in this direction must be treated by themselves; but those that were less important may be glanced at in passing. The people in western Virginia, as early as the spring of 1785, wished to erect themselves into a separate State, under Federal authority. Their desire was to separate from Virginia in peace and friendship, and to remain in close connection with the Union. A curious feature of the petition which they forwarded to the Continental Congress was their proposition to include in the new State the inhabitants of the Holston territory, so that it would have taken in what is now West Virginia proper,<sup>2</sup> and also eastern Tennessee and Kentucky.

The originators of this particular movement meant to be friendly with Virginia, but of course friction was bound to follow. The later stages of

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Gardoqui to Florida Blanca, January 12, 1789, enclosing a letter from Colonel George Moreau. See Green, p. 300. Also State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. iii., St. Clair to John Jay, December 15, 1788. This letter and many others of St. Clair are given in W. H. Smith's *St. Clair Papers*.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., "Memorials," etc., No. 48, Thos. Cumings, on behalf of the deputies of Washington County, to the President of Congress, April 7, 1785.

the agitation, or perhaps it would be more correct to say the agitations, that sprang out of it, were marked by bitter feelings between the leaders of the movement and the Virginia authorities. Finding no heed paid to their requests for separation, some of the more extreme separatists threatened to refuse to pay taxes to Virginia; while the Franklin people proposed to unite with them into a new State, without regard to the wishes of Virginia or of North Carolina. Restless Arthur Campbell was one of the leaders of the separatists, and went so far as to acknowledge the authorship of the "State of Franklin," and to become one of its privy councillors, casting off his allegiance to the Virginian Government.<sup>1</sup> However, the whole movement soon collapsed, the collapse being inevitable when once it became evident that the Franklin experiment was doomed to failure.

The West was thus seething with separatist agitations throughout the time of Gardoqui's residence as Spanish Envoy in America; and both Gardoqui and Miro, who was Governor of Louisiana all through these years, entered actively into intrigues with the more prominent separatist leaders.

Miro was a man of some ability, and Martin Navarro, the Spanish Intendant of Louisiana, possessed more; but they served a government

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 5, 31, 32, 75, etc.

almost imbecile in its fatuity. They both realized, that Louisiana could be kept in possession of Spain only by making it a flourishing and populous province, and they begged that the Spanish authorities would remove the absurd commercial restrictions which kept it poor. But no heed was paid to their requests, and when they ventured to relax the severity of the regulations, as regards both the trade down the Mississippi and the sea-trade to Philadelphia, they were reprimanded and forced to reverse their policy. This was done at the instance of Gardoqui, who was jealous of the Louisiana authorities, and showed a spirit of rivalry towards them. Each side believed, probably with justice, that the other was influenced by corrupt motives.

Miro and Navarro were right in urging a liberal commercial policy. They were right also in recognizing the Americans as the enemies of the Spanish power. They dwelt on the peril, not only to Louisiana but to New Mexico, certain to arise from the neighborhood of the backwoodsmen, whom they described as dangerous alike because of their poverty, their ambition, their restlessness, and their recklessness.<sup>1</sup> They were at their wit's end to know how to check these energetic foes.

<sup>1</sup> Gayarré, p. 190. He was the first author who gave a full account of the relations between Miro and Wilkinson, and of the Spanish intrigues to dis sever the West from the Union.

They urgently asked for additional regular troops to increase the strength of the Spanish garrison. They kept the creole militia organized; but they relied mainly on keeping the southern Indians hostile to the Americans, on inviting the Americans to settle in Louisiana and become subjects of Spain, and on intriguing with the western settlements for the dissolution of the Union. The Kentuckians, the settlers on the Holston and Cumberland, and the Georgians were the Americans with whom they had most friction and closest connection. The Georgians, it is true, were only indirectly interested in the navigation question; but they claimed that the boundaries of Georgia ran west to the Mississippi, and that much of the eastern bank of the great river, including the fertile Yazoo lands, was theirs.

The Indians naturally sided with the Spaniards against the Americans; for the Americans were as eager to seize the possessions of Creek and Cherokee as they were to invade the dominions of the Catholic King. Their friendship was sedulously fostered by the Spaniards. Great councils were held with them, and their chiefs were bribed and flattered. Every effort was made to prevent them from dealing with any traders who were not in the Spanish interest; New Orleans, Natchez, Mobile, and Pensacola were all centres for the Indian trade. They were liberally furnished with arms and mu-



nitions of war. Finally, the Spaniards deliberately and treacherously incited the Indians to war against the Americans, while protesting to the latter that they were striving to keep the savages at peace. In answer to protests of Robertson, setting forth that the Spaniards were inciting the Indians to harry the Cumberland settlers, both Miro and Gardoqui made him solemn denials. Miro wrote him, in 1783, that so far from assisting the Indians to war, he had been doing what he could to induce McGillivray and the Creeks to make peace, and that he would continue to urge them not to trouble the settlers.<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui, in 1788, wrote even more explicitly, saying that he was much concerned over the reported outrages of the savages, but was greatly surprised to learn that the settlers suspected the government of Spain of fomenting warfare, which, he assured Robertson, was so far from the truth that the King was really bent on treating with the United States in general, and the West in particular, with all possible benevolence and generosity.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in 1786, midway between the dates when these two letters were written, Miro, in a letter to the Captain-General of the Floridas, set forth that the Creeks, being

<sup>1</sup> Robertson MSS., Miro to Robertson, New Orleans, April 20, 1783.

<sup>2</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Gardoqui to "Col. Elisha Robeson" of Cumberland, April 18, 1788.

desirous of driving back the American frontiersmen by force of arms, and knowing that this could be done only after bloodshed, had petitioned him for fifty barrels of gunpowder, and bullets to correspond, and that he had ordered the Governor of Pensacola to furnish McGillivray, their chief, these munitions of war, with all possible secrecy and caution, so that it should not become known.<sup>1</sup> The Governor of Pensacola shortly afterwards related the satisfaction the Creeks felt at receiving the powder and lead, and added that he would have to furnish them additional supplies from time to time, as the war progressed, and that he would exercise every precaution so that the Americans might have no "just cause of complaint."<sup>2</sup> There is an unconscious and somewhat gruesome humor in this official belief that the Americans could have "no just cause" for anger so long as the Spaniards' treachery was concealed.

Throughout these years the Spaniards thus secretly supplied the Creeks with the means of waging war on the Americans, claiming all the time

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Miro to Galvez, June 28, 1786, "que suministrase estas municiones à McGillivray Jefe principal to las Talapuches con toda la reserve y cantata posible de modo que ne se transiendiese la mano de este socorro."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, "sera necessaria la mayor precaucion, y maña para contenerle ciñendose à la suministracion de polvora, balas y efectos de treta con la cantata posible para no dar a los Americanos justos motivos de gueya."

that the Creeks were their vassals and that the land occupied by the southern Indians generally belonged to Spain and not to the United States.<sup>1</sup> They also kept their envoys busy among the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and even the Cherokees.

In fact, until the conclusion of Pinckney's treaty, the Spaniards of Louisiana pursued as a settled policy this plan of inciting the Indians to war against the Americans. Generally, they confined themselves to secretly furnishing the savages with guns, powder, and lead, and endeavoring to unite the tribes in a league; but on several occasions they openly gave them arms, when they were forced to act hurriedly. As late as 1794 the Flemish Baron de Carondelet, a devoted servant of Spain, and one of the most determined enemies of the Americans, instructed his lieutenants to fit out war-parties of Chickasaws, Creeks, and Cherokees, to harass a fort the Americans had built near the mouth of the Ohio. Carondelet wrote to the Home Government that the Indians formed the best defence on which Louisiana could rely. By this time the Spaniards and English realized that, instead of showing hostility to one another, it behooved them to unite against the common foe; and their agents in Canada and Louisiana were beginning to come to an understanding. In another letter Carondelet explained that the

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS.

system adopted by Lord Dorchester and the English officials in Canada in dealing with the savages was the same as that which he had employed, both the Spaniards and the British having found them the most powerful means with which to oppose the American advance. By the expenditure of a few thousand dollars, wrote the Spanish Governor,<sup>1</sup> he could always rouse the southern tribes to harry the settlers, while at the same time covering his deeds so effectually that the Americans could not point to any specific act of which to complain.

There was much turbulence and some treachery exhibited by individual frontiersmen in their dealings with Spain, and the Americans of the Mississippi valley showed a strong tendency to win their way to the mouth of the river and to win the right to settle on its banks by sheer force of arms; but the American Government and its authorized representatives behaved with a straight-

<sup>1</sup> Draper Collection, Spanish MSS. State Documents. Baron de Carondelet to Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, Aug. 20, 1794; Carondelet to Duke Alcudia, Sept. 25, 1795; Carondelet's letter of July 9, 1795; Carondelet's letter of Sept. 27, 1793. These Spanish documents form a very important part of the manuscripts in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. I was able to get translations of them through the great courtesy of Mr. Reuben Gold Thwaites, the Secretary of the Society, to whom I must again render my acknowledgments for the generosity with which he has helped me.

forward and honorable good faith which offered a striking contrast to the systematic and deliberate duplicity and treachery of the Spanish Crown and the Spanish governors. In truth, the Spaniards were the weakest, and were driven to use the pet weapons of weakness in opposing their stalwart and masterful foes. They were fighting against their doom, and they knew it. Already they had begun to fear, not only for Louisiana and Florida, but even for sultry Mexico and far-away golden California. It was hard, wrote one of the ablest of the Spanish governors, to gather forces enough to ward off attacks from adventurers so hardy that they could go two hundred leagues at a stretch, or live six months in the wilderness, needing to carry nothing save some corn-meal, and trusting for everything solely to their own long rifles.

Next to secretly rousing the Indians, the Spaniards placed most reliance on intriguing with the Westerners, in the effort to sunder them from the seaboard Americans. They also at times thought to bar the American advance by allowing the frontiersmen to come into their territory and settle, on condition of becoming Spanish subjects. They hoped to make of these favored settlers a barrier against the rest of their kinsfolk. It was a foolish hope. A wild and hardy race of rifle-bearing freemen, so intolerant of restraint that

they fretted under the slight bands which held them to their brethren, were sure to throw off the lightest yoke the Catholic King could lay upon them, when once they gathered strength. Under no circumstances, even had they profited by Spanish aid against their own people, would the Westerners have remained allied or subject to the Spaniards longer than the immediate needs of the moment demanded. At the bottom the Spaniards knew this, and their encouragement of American immigration was fitful and faint-hearted.

Many Americans, however, were themselves eager to enter into some arrangement of the kind; whether as individual settlers, or, more often, as companies who wished to form little colonies. Their eagerness in this matter caused much concern to many of the Federalists of the eastern States, who commented with bitterness upon the light-hearted manner in which these settlers forsook their native land, and not only forswore their allegiance to it, but bound themselves to take up arms against it in event of war. These critics failed to understand that the wilderness dwellers of that day, to whom the National Government was little more than a name, and the Union but a new idea, could not be expected to pay much heed to the imaginary line dividing one waste space from another, and that, after all, their patriotism was dormant, not dead. Moreover, some

of the Easterners were as blind as the Spaniards themselves to the inevitable outcome of such settlements as those proposed, and were also alarmed at the mere natural movement of the population, fearing lest it might result in crippling the old States, and in laying the foundation of a new and possibly hostile country. They themselves had not yet grasped the national idea, and could not see that the increase in power of any one quarter of the land, or the addition to it of any new unsettled territory, really raised by so much the greatness of every American. However, there was one point on which the more far-seeing of these critics were right. They urged that it would be better for the country not to try to sell the public land speedily in large tracts, but to grant it to actual settlers in such quantity as they could use.<sup>1</sup>

The different propositions to settle large colonies in the Spanish possessions came to naught, although quite a number of backwoodsmen settled there individually or in small bands. One great obstacle to the success of any such movement was the religious intolerance of the Spaniards. Not only were they bigoted adherents of the Church of Rome, but their ecclesiastical authorities were cautioned to exercise over all laymen a supervision and control to which the few Catholics among the American backwoodsmen would have objected

<sup>1</sup> St. Clair to Jay, December 13, 1788.

quite as strenuously as the Protestants. It is true that in trying to induce immigration they often promised religious freedom, but when they came to execute this promise they explained that it merely meant that the new-comers would not be compelled to profess the Roman Catholic faith, but that they would not be allowed the free exercise of their own religion, nor permitted to build churches nor pay ministers. This was done with the express purpose of weakening their faith, and rendering it easy to turn them from it, and the Spaniards brought Irish priests into the country and placed them among the American settlers with the avowed object of converting them.<sup>1</sup> Such toleration naturally appealed very little to men who were accustomed to a liberty as complete in matters ecclesiastical as in matters civil. When the Spanish authorities, at Natchez, or elsewhere, published edicts interfering with the free exercise of the Protestant religion, many of the settlers left,<sup>2</sup> while in regions remote from the Spanish centres of government the edicts were quietly disobeyed or ignored.

One of the many proposed colonies ultimately resulted in the founding of a town which to this day bears the name of New Madrid. This particular scheme originated in the fertile brain of

<sup>1</sup> Gayarré, iii., 181, 200, 202.

<sup>2</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 30.



one Colonel George Morgan, a native of New Jersey, but long engaged in trading on the Mississippi. He originally organized a company to acquire lands under the United States, but meeting with little response to his proposition from the Continental Congress, in 1788 he turned to Spain. With Gardoqui, who was then in New York, he was soon on a footing of intimacy, as their letters show; for these included invitations to dinner, to attend commencement at Princeton, to visit one another, and the like. The Spaniard, a cultivated man, was pleased at being thrown in with an adventurer who was a college graduate and a gentleman; for many of the would-be colonizers were needy ne'er-do-wells, who were anxious either to borrow money, or else to secure a promise of freedom from arrest for debt when they should move to the new country. Morgan's plans were on a magnificent scale. He wished a tract of land as large as a principality on the west bank of the Mississippi. This he proposed to people with tens of thousands of settlers, whom he should govern under the commission of the King of Spain. Gardoqui<sup>1</sup> entered into the plan with enthusiasm, but obstacles and delays of all kinds were encountered,

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Gardoqui to Morgan, Sept. 2, 1788. Morgan to Gardoqui, Aug. 30, 1788. Letters of Sept. 9, 1788, Sept. 12, 1788; Gardoqui to Miro, Oct. 4, 1788, to Florida Blanca, June 28, 1789. Letter to Gardoqui, Jan. 22, 1788.

and the dwindling outcome was the emigration of a few families of frontiersmen, and the founding of a squalid hamlet named after the Iberian capital.

Another adventurer who at this time proposed to found a colony in Spanish territory was no less a person than George Rogers Clark. Clark had indulged in something very like piracy at the expense of Spanish subjects but eighteen months previously. He was ready at any time to lead the Westerners to the conquest of Louisiana; and a few years later he did his best to organize a free-booting expedition against New Orleans in the name of the French Revolutionary Government. But he was quite willing to do his fighting on behalf of Spain, instead of against her; for by this time he was savage with anger and chagrin at the indifference and neglect with which the Virginian and Federal governments had rewarded his really great services. He wrote to Gardoqui in the spring of 1788, boasting of his feats of arms in the past, bitterly complaining of the way he had been treated, and offering to lead a large colony to settle in the Spanish dominions; for, he said, he had become convinced that neither property nor character was safe under a government so weak as that of the United States,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Clark to Gardoqui, Falls of the Ohio, March 15, 1788.

and he therefore wished to put himself at the disposal of the King of Spain. Nothing came of this proposal.

Another proposal, which likewise came to nothing, is noteworthy because of the men who made it, and because of its peculiar nature. The proposers were all Kentuckians. Among them were Wilkinson, one Benjamin Sebastian, whom the Spaniards pensioned in the same manner they did Wilkinson, John Brown, the Kentucky delegate in Congress, and Harry Innes, the Attorney-General of Kentucky. All were more or less identified both with the obscure separatist movements in that commonwealth, and with the legitimate agitation for statehood into which some of these movements insensibly merged. In the spring of 1789 they proposed to Gardoqui to enter into an agreement somewhat similar to the one he had made with Morgan. But they named as the spot where they wished to settle the lands on the east bank of the Mississippi, in the neighborhood of the Yazoo, and they urged as a reason for granting the lands that they were part of the territory in dispute between Spain and the United States, and that the new settlers would hold them under the Spanish King, and would defend them against the Americans.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Gardoqui to Florida Blanca, June 29, 1789.

This country was claimed by, and finally awarded to, the United States, and claimed by the State of Georgia in particular. It was here that the adventurers proposed to erect a barrier state which should be vassal to Spain, one of the chief purposes of the settlement being to arrest the Americans' advance. They thus deliberately offered to do all the damage they could to their own country, if the foreign country would give them certain advantages. The apologists for these separatist leaders often advance the excuse— itself not a weighty one—that they at least deserved well of their own section; but Wilkinson and his associates proposed a plan which was not only hostile to the interests of the American nation as a whole, but which was especially hostile to the interests of Kentucky, Georgia, and the other frontier communities. The men who proposed to enter into the scheme were certainly not loyal to their country; although the adventurers were not actuated by hostile designs against it, engaging in the adventure simply from motives of private gain. The only palliation—there is no full excuse—for their offence is the fact that the Union was then so loose and weak, and its benefits so problematical, that it received the hearty and unswerving loyalty of only the most far-seeing and broadly patriotic men; and that many men of the highest standing and of the most undoubted probity

shared the views on which Brown and Innes acted.

Wilkinson was bitterly hostile to all these schemes in which he himself did not have a share, and protested again and again to Miro against their adoption. He protested no less strongly whenever the Spanish court or the Spanish authorities at New Orleans either relaxed their vigilant severity against the river smugglers, or for the time being lowered the duties; whether this was done to encourage the Westerners in their hostilities to the East,<sup>1</sup> or to placate them when their exasperation reached a pitch that threatened actual invasion. Wilkinson, in his protests, insisted that to show favors to the Westerners was merely to make them contented with the Union; and that the only way to force them to break the Union was to deny them all privileges until they broke it.<sup>1</sup> He did his best to persuade the Spaniards to adopt measures which would damage both the East and West and would increase the friction between them. He vociferously insisted that in going to such extremes of foul treachery to his country he was actuated only by his desire to see the Spanish intrigues attain their purpose; but he was

<sup>1</sup> *Gayarré*, iii., 30, 232, etc. Wilkinson's treachery dates from his first visit to New Orleans. Exactly when he was first pensioned outright is not certain; but doubtless he was the corrupt recipient of money from the beginning.

probably influenced to a much greater degree by the desire to retain as long as might be the monopoly of the trade with New Orleans.

The Intendant Navarro, writing to Spain in 1788, dwelt upon the necessity of securing the separation of the Westerners from the old thirteen States; and to this end he urged that commercial privileges be granted to the West, and pensions and honors showered on its leaders. Spain readily adopted this policy of bribery. Wilkinson and Sebastian were at different times given sums of money, small portions of which were doubtless handed over to their own agents and subordinates and to the Spanish spies; and Wilkinson asked for additional sums, nominally to bribe leading Kentuckians, but very possibly merely with the purpose of pocketing them himself. In other words, Wilkinson, Sebastian, and their intimate associates on the one hand, and the Spanish officials on the other, entered into a corrupt conspiracy to dismember the Union.

Wilkinson took a leading part in the political agitations by which Kentucky was shaken throughout these years. He devoted himself to working for separation from both Virginia and the United States, and for an alliance with Spain. Of course he did not dare to avow his schemes with entire frankness, only venturing to advocate them more or less openly accordingly as the

wind of popular opinion veered towards or away from disunion. Being a sanguine man, of bad judgment, he at first wrote glowing letters to his Spanish employers, assuring them that the Kentucky leaders enthusiastically favored his plans, and that the people at large were tending towards them. As time went on, he was obliged to change the tone of his letters, and to admit that he had been over-hopeful; he reluctantly acknowledged that Kentucky would certainly refuse to become a Spanish province, and that all that was possible to hope for was separation and an alliance with Spain. He was on intimate terms with the separatist leaders of all shades, and broached his views to them as far as he thought fit. His turgid oratory was admired in the backwoods, and he was much helped by his skill in the baser kinds of political management. He speedily showed all the familiar traits of the demagogue—he was lavish in his hospitality, and treated young and old, rich and poor, with jovial good-fellowship; so that all the men of loose habits, the idle men who were ready for any venture, and the men of weak character and fickle temper swore by him, and followed his lead; while not a few straightforward, honest citizens were blinded by his showy ability and professions of disinterestedness.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to say exactly how far his

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, i., 245.

different allies among the separatist leaders knew his real designs or sympathized with them. Their loosely knit party was at the moment united for one ostensible purpose—that of separation from Virginia. The measures they championed were in effect revolutionary, as they wished to pay no regard to the action either of Virginia herself, or of the Federal Government. They openly advocated Kentucky's entering into a treaty with Spain on her own account. Their leaders must certainly have known Wilkinson's real purposes, even though vaguely. The probability is that they did not, either to him or in their own minds, define their plans with clearness, but awaited events before deciding on a definite policy. Meantime by word and act they pursued a course which might be held to mean, as occasion demanded, either mere insistence upon Kentucky's admission to the Union as a separate State, or else a movement for complete independence with a Spanish alliance in the background.

It was impossible to pursue a course so equivocal without arousing suspicion. In after years many who had been committed to it became ashamed of their actions, and loudly proclaimed that they had really been devoted to the Union; to which it was sufficient to answer that if this had been the case, and if they had been really loyal, no such deep suspicion could have been excited. A course of



straightforward loyalty could not have been misunderstood. As it was, all kinds of rumors as to proposed disunion movements, and as to the intrigues with Spain, got afloat; and there was no satisfactory contradiction. The staunch Union men, the men who "thought continentally," as the phrase went, took the alarm and organized a counter-movement. One of those who took prominent part in this counter-movement was a man to whom Kentucky and the Union both owe much: Humphrey Marshall, afterwards a Federalist senator from Kentucky, and the author of an interesting and amusing and fundamentally sound, albeit sometimes rancorous, history of his State. This loyal counter-movement hindered and hampered the separatists greatly, and made them cautious about advocating outright disunion. It was one of the causes which combined to render abortive both the separatist agitations and the Spanish intrigues of the period.

While Miro was corresponding with Wilkinson and arranging for pensioning both him and Sebastian, Gardoqui was busy at New York. His efforts at negotiation were fruitless; for his instructions positively forbade him to yield the navigation of the Mississippi, or to allow the rectification of the boundary lines as claimed by the United States<sup>1</sup>; while the representatives of the latter refused to

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Instructions, July 25 and October 2, 1784.

treat at all unless both of these points were conceded.<sup>1</sup> Jay he found to be particularly intractable, and in one of his letters he expressed the hope that he would be replaced by Richard Henry Lee, whom Gardoqui considered to be in the Spanish interest. He was much interested in the case of Vermont,<sup>2</sup> which at that time was in doubt whether to remain an independent State, to join the Union, or even possibly to form some kind of alliance with the British; and what he saw occurring in this New England State made him for the moment hopeful about the result of the Spanish designs on Kentucky.

Gardoqui was an over-hopeful man, accustomed to that diplomacy which acts on the supposition that every one has his price. After the manner of his kind, he was prone to ascribe absurdly evil motives to all men, and to be duped himself in consequence.<sup>3</sup> He never understood the people with whom he was dealing. He was sure that they could all be reached by underhand and corrupt influences of some kind, if he could only find out where to put on the pressure. The perfect freedom with which many loyal men talked to and before him puzzled him; and their characteris-

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Gardoqui's letters, June 19, 1786, October 28, 1786, December 5, 1787, July 25, 1788, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, May 11, 1787.

<sup>3</sup> John Mason Brown, *Political Beginnings of Kentucky*, 138.

tically American habit of indulging in gloomy forebodings as to the nation's future—when they were not insisting that the said future would be one of unparalleled magnificence—gave him wild hopes that it might prove possible to corrupt them. He was confirmed in his belief by the undoubted corruption and disloyalty to their country shown by a few of the men he met, the most important of those who were in his pay being an alleged Catholic, James White, once a North Carolina delegate and afterwards Indian agent. Moreover, others who never indulged in overt-disloyalty to the Union undoubtedly consulted and questioned Gardoqui about his proposals, while reserving their own decision; being men who let their loyalty be determined by events. Finally, some men of entire purity committed grave indiscretions in dealing with him. Henry Lee, for instance, was so foolish as to borrow five thousand dollars from this representative of a foreign and unfriendly power; Gardoqui, of course, lending the money under the impression that its receipt would bind Lee to the Spanish interest.<sup>1</sup>

Madison, Knox, Clinton, and other men of position under the Continental Congress, including

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Gardoqui to Florida Blanca, December 5, 1787; August 27, 1786; October 25, 1786; October 2, 1789, etc. In these letters White is frequently alluded to as "Don Jaime."

Brown, the delegate from Kentucky, were among those who conferred freely with Gardoqui. In speaking with several of them, including Madison and Brown, he broached the subject of Kentucky's possible separation from the Union and alliance with Spain; and Madison and Brown discussed his statements between themselves. So far there was nothing out of the way in Brown's conduct; but after one of these conferences he wrote to Kentucky in terms which showed that he was willing to entertain Gardoqui's proposition if it seemed advisable to do so.

His letter, which was intended to be private, but which was soon published, was dated July 10, 1788. It advocated immediate separation from Virginia without regard to constitutional methods, and also ran in part as follows: "In private conferences which I have had with Mr. Gardoqui, the Spanish Minister, I have been assured by him in the most explicit terms that if Kentucky will declare her independence and empower some proper person to negotiate with him, that he has authority and will engage to open the navigation of the Mississippi for the exportation of their produce on terms of mutual advantage. But this privilege never can be extended to them while part of the United States. . . . I have thought proper to communicate [this] to a few confidential friends in this district, with his permission, not doubting

but that they will make a prudent use of the information."

At the outset of any movement which, whatever may be its form, is in its essence revolutionary, and only to be justified on grounds that justify a revolution, the leaders, though loud in declamation about the wrongs to be remedied, always hesitate to speak in plain terms concerning the remedies which they really have in mind. They are often reluctant to admit their purposes unequivocally, even to themselves, and may indeed blind themselves to the necessary results of their policy. They often choose their language with care, so that it may not commit them beyond all hope of explanation or retraction. Brown, Innes, and the other separatist leaders in Kentucky were not actuated by the motives of personal corruption which influenced Wilkinson, Sebastian, and White to conspire with Gardoqui and Miro for the break-up of the Union. Their position, as far as the mere separatist feeling itself was concerned, was not essentially different from that of George Clinton in New York or Sumter in South Carolina. Of course, however, their connection with a foreign power unpleasantly tainted their course, exactly as a similar connection, with Great Britain instead of with Spain, tainted the similar course of action<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, xi., No. 2, p. 165. Ethan Allen's letter to Lord Dorchester.

Ethan Allen was pursuing at this very time in Vermont. In after years they and their apologists endeavored to explain away their deeds and words, and tried to show that they were not disunionists; precisely as the authors of the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions of 1798 and of the resolutions of the Hartford Convention in 1814 tried in later years to show that these also were not disunion movements. The effort is as vain in one case as in the other. Brown's letter shows that he and the party with which he was identified were ready to bring about Kentucky's separation from the Union, if it could safely be done; the prospect of a commercial alliance with Spain being one of their chief objects, and affording one of their chief arguments.

The publication of Brown's letter and the boldness of the separatist party spurred to renewed effort the Union men, one of whom, Colonel Thomas Marshall, an uncle of Humphrey Marshall and father of the great chief-justice, sent a full account of the situation to Washington. The more timid and wavering among the disunionists drew back; and the agitation was dropped when the new National Government began to show that it was thoroughly able to keep order at home, and enforce respect abroad.<sup>1</sup>

These separatist movements were general in

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Col. T. Marshall, September 11, 1790.

the West, on the Holston and Cumberland, as well as on the Ohio, during the troubled years immediately succeeding the Revolution; and they were furthered by the intrigues of the Spaniards. But the antipathy of the backwoodsmen to the Spaniards was too deep-rooted for them ever to effect a real combination. Ultimately, the good sense and patriotism of the Westerners triumphed; and the American people continued to move forward with unbroken front towards their mighty future.

## CHAPTER IV

THE STATE OF FRANKLIN, 1784-1788

THE separatist spirit was strong throughout the West. Different causes, such as the unchecked ravages of the Indians, or the refusal of the right to navigate the Mississippi, produced or accentuated different manifestations; but the feeling itself was latent everywhere. Its most striking manifestation occurred not in Kentucky, but in what is now the State of Tennessee; and was aimed not at the United States, but at the parent State of North Carolina.

In Kentucky, the old frontiersmen were losing their grip on the governmental machinery of the district. The great flood of immigration tended to swamp the pioneers; and the leading parts in the struggle for statehood were played by men who had come to the country about the close of the Revolutionary War, and who were often related by ties of kinship to the leaders of the Virginia legislatures and conventions.

On the waters of the upper Tennessee matters were entirely different. Immigration had been slower, and the people who did come in were usu-



ally of the type of those who had first built their stockaded hamlets on the banks of the Watauga. The leaders of the early pioneers were still the leaders of the community, in legislation as in warfare. Moreover, North Carolina was a much weaker and more turbulent State than Virginia, so that a separatist movement ran less risk of interference. Chains of forest-clad mountains severed the State proper from its western outposts. Many of the pioneer leaders were from Virginia—backwoodsmen who had drifted south along the trough-like valleys. These, of course, felt little loyalty to North Carolina. The others, who were North Carolinians by birth, had cast in their lot, for good or for evil, with the frontier communities, and were inclined to side with them in any contest with the parent State.

North Carolina herself was at first quite as anxious to get rid of the frontiersmen as they were to go. Not only was the central authority much weaker than in Virginia, but the people were less proud of their State and less jealously anxious to see it grow in power and influence. The over-mountain settlers had increased in numbers so rapidly that four counties had been erected for them; one, Davidson, taking in the Cumberland district, and the other three, Washington, Sullivan, and Greene, including what is now eastern Tennessee. All these counties sent

representatives to the North Carolina Legislature, at Hillsborough; but they found that body little disposed to consider the needs of the remote western colonists.

The State was very poor, and regarded the western settlements as mere burdensome sources of expense. In the innumerable Indian wars, debts were contracted by the little pioneer communities with the faith that the State would pay them; but the payment was made grudgingly or not at all, and no measures were taken to provide for the protection of the frontier in the future. No provisions were made for the extension of the jurisdiction of the State courts over the western counties, and they became a refuge for outlaws, who could be dealt with only as the Indians were—that is, by the settlers acting on their own initiative, without the sanction of law. In short, the settlers were left to themselves, to work out their own salvation as they best might, in peace or war; and as they bore most of the burdens of independence, they began to long for the privileges.

In June, 1784, the State Legislature passed an act ceding to the Continental Congress all the western lands, that is, all of what is now Tennessee. It was provided that the sovereignty of North Carolina over the ceded lands should continue in full effect until the United States accepted the gift; and that the act should lapse and

become void unless Congress accepted within two years.<sup>1</sup>

The western members were present and voted in favor of the cession, and immediately afterwards they returned to their homes and told the frontier people what had been done. There was a general feeling that some step should be taken forthwith to prevent the whole district from lapsing into anarchy. The frontiersmen did not believe that Congress, hampered as it was and powerless to undertake new responsibilities, could accept the gift until the two years were nearly gone; and meanwhile North Carolina would in all likelihood pay them little heed, so that they would be left a prey to the Indians without and to their own wrong-doers within. It was incumbent on them to organize for their own defence and preservation. The three counties on the upper Tennessee proceeded to take measures accordingly. The Cumberland people, however, took no part in the movement, and showed hardly any interest in it; for they felt as alien to the men of the Holston valley as to those of North Carolina proper, and watched the conflict with a tepid absence of friendship for, or hostility towards, either side. They had long practically managed their own affairs, and though they suffered from the lack of a strong central

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey, 283. He is the best authority for the history of the curious State of Franklin.

authority on which to rely, they did not understand their own wants, and were inclined to be hostile to any effort for the betterment of the National Government.

The first step taken by the frontiersmen in the direction of setting up a new state was very characteristic, as showing the military structure of the frontier settlements. To guard against Indian inroad and foray, and to punish them by reprisals, all the able-bodied, rifle-bearing males were enrolled in the militia; and the divisions of this militia were territorial. The soldiers of each company represented one cluster of rough little hamlets or one group of scattered log-houses. The company, therefore, formed a natural division for purposes of representation. It was accordingly agreed that "each captain's company" in the counties of Washington, Lincoln, and Greene should choose two delegates, who should all assemble as committees in their respective counties to deliberate upon some general plan of action. The committees met and recommended the election of deputies with full powers to a convention held at Jonesboro.

This convention, of forty deputies or thereabouts, met at Jonesboro, on August 23, 1784, and appointed John Sevier president. The delegates were unanimous that the three counties represented should declare themselves independent of

North Carolina, and passed a resolution to this effect. They also resolved that the three counties should form themselves into an association, and should enforce all the laws of North Carolina not incompatible with beginning the career of a separate state, and that Congress should be petitioned to countenance them, and advise them in the matter of their constitution. In addition, they made a provision for admitting to their state the neighboring portions of Virginia, should they apply, and should the application be sanctioned by the State of Virginia, "or other power having cognizance thereof." This last reference was, of course, to Congress, and was significant. Evidently, the mountaineers ignored the doctrine of State sovereignty. The power which they regarded as paramount was that of the nation. The adhesion they gave to any government was somewhat shadowy; but such as it was, it was yielded to the United States, and not to any one State. They wished to submit their claim for independence to the judgment of Congress, not to the judgment of North Carolina; and they were ready to admit into their new state the western part of Virginia, on the assent, not of both Congress and Virginia, but of either Congress or Virginia.

So far, the convention had been unanimous; but a split came on the question whether their declaration of independence should take effect at once.

The majority held that it should, and so voted; while a strong minority, amounting to one third of the members, followed the lead of John Tipton, and voted in the negative. During the session a crowd of people, partly from the straggling little frontier village itself, but partly from the neighboring country, had assembled, and were waiting in the street to learn what the convention had decided. A member, stepping to the door of the building, announced the birth of the new state. The crowd, of course, believed in strong measures, and expressed its hearty approval. Soon afterwards the convention adjourned, after providing for the calling of a new convention, to consist of five delegates from each county, who should give a name to the state, and prepare for it a constitution. The members of this constitutional convention were to be chosen by counties, and not by captain's companies.

There was much quarrelling over the choice of members for the constitutional convention, the parties dividing on the lines indicated in the vote on the question of immediate independence. When the convention did meet in November, it broke up in confusion. At the same time North Carolina, becoming alarmed, repealed her cession act; and thereupon Sevier himself counselled his fellow-citizens to abandon the movement for a new state. However, they felt they had gone too

far to back out. The convention came together again in December, and took measures looking towards the assumption of full statehood. In the constitution they drew up they provided, among other things, for a Senate and a House of Commons, to form the legislative body, which should itself choose the governor.<sup>1</sup> By an extraordinary resolution, they further provided that the government should go into effect, and elections be held, at once; and yet that in the fall of 1785 a new convention should convene at which the very constitution under which the government had been carried on would be submitted for revision, rejection, or adoption.

Elections for the legislature were accordingly held, and in March, 1785, the two houses of the new State of Franklin met, and chose Sevier as governor. Courts were organized, and military and civil officials of every grade were provided, those holding commissions under North Carolina being continued in office in almost all cases. The friction caused by the change of government was thus minimized. Four new counties were created, taxes were levied, and a number of laws enacted.

<sup>1</sup> Haywood, 142; although Ramsey writes more in full about the Franklin government, it ought not to be forgotten that the groundwork of his history is from Haywood. Haywood is the original, and by far the most valuable, authority on Tennessee matters, and he writes in a quaint style that is very attractive.

One of the acts was "for the promotion of learning in the county of Washington." Under it the first academy west of the mountains was started; for some years it was the only high school anywhere in the neighborhood where Latin, or indeed any branch of learning beyond the simplest rudiments, was taught. It is no small credit to the backwoodsmen that in this, their first attempt at state-making, they should have done what they could to furnish their sons the opportunity of obtaining a higher education.

One of the serious problems with which they had to grapple was the money question. All through the United States the finances were in utter disorder, the medium of exchange being a jumble of almost worthless paper currency, and of foreign coin of every kind, while the standard of value varied from State to State. But in the backwoods, conditions were even worse, for there was hardly any money at all. Transactions were accomplished chiefly by the primeval method of barter. Accordingly, this backwoods legislature legalized the payment of taxes and salaries in kind, and set a standard of values. The dollar was declared equal to six shillings, and a scale of prices was established. Among the articles which were enumerated as being lawfully payable for taxes were bacon at sixpence a pound, rye whisky at two shillings and sixpence a gallon, peach or apple



brandy at three shillings per gallon, and country-made sugar at one shilling per pound. Skins, however, formed the ordinary currency; otter, beaver, and deer being worth six shillings apiece, and raccoon and fox one shilling and threepence. The governor's salary was set at two hundred pounds, and that of the highest judge at one hundred and fifty.

The new governor sent a formal communication to Governor Alexander Martin, of North Carolina, announcing that the three counties beyond the mountains had declared their independence, and erected themselves into a separate state, and setting forth their reasons for the step. Governor Martin answered Sevier in a public letter, in which he went over his arguments one by one, and sought to refute them. He announced the willingness of the parent State to accede to the separation when the proper time came; but he pointed out that North Carolina could not consent to such irregular and unauthorized separation, and that Congress would certainly not countenance it against her wishes. In answering an argument drawn from the condition of affairs in Vermont, Martin showed that the Green Mountain State should not be treated as an example in point, because she had asserted her independence as a separate commonwealth before the Revolution, and yet had joined in the war against the British.

One of the subjects on which he dwelt was the relations with the Indians. The mountain men accused North Carolina of not giving to the Cherokees a quantity of goods promised them, and asserted that this disappointment had caused the Indians to commit several murders. In his answer the Governor admitted that the goods had not been given, but explained that this was because at the time the land had been ceded to Congress, and the authorities were waiting to see what Congress would do; and after the Cession Act was repealed the goods would have been given forthwith, had it not been for the upsetting of all legal authority west of the mountains, which brought matters to a standstill. Moreover, the Governor in his turn made counter-accusations, setting forth that the mountaineers had held unauthorized treaties with the Indians, and had trespassed on their lands, and even murdered them. He closed by drawing a strong picture of the evils sure to be brought about by such lawless secession and usurpation of authority. He besought and commanded the revolted counties to return to their allegiance, and warned them that if they did not, and if peaceable measures proved of no avail, then the State of North Carolina would put down the rebellion by dint of arms.

At the same time, in the early spring of 1785, the authorities of the new State sent a memorial to the

Continental Congress.<sup>1</sup> Having found their natural civil chief and military leader in Sevier, the backwoodsmen now developed a diplomat in the person of one William Cocke. To him they entrusted the memorial, together with a certificate, testifying, in the name of the State of Franklin, that he was delegated to present the memorial to Congress and to make what further representations he might find "conducive to the interest and independence of this country." The memorial set forth the earnest desire of the people of Franklin to be admitted as a State of the Federal Union, together with the wrongs they had endured from North Carolina, dwelling with particular bitterness upon the harm which had resulted from her failure to give the Cherokees the goods which they had been promised. It further recited how North Carolina's original cession of the western lands had moved the Westerners to declare their independence, and contended that her subsequent repeal of the act making this cession was void, and that Congress should treat the cession as an accomplished fact. However, Congress took no action either for or against the insurrectionary commonwealth.

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., Papers Continental Congress, "Memorials," etc., No. 48. State of Franklin, March 12, 1785. Certificate that William Cocke is agent; and memorial of the freemen, etc.

The new State wished to stand well with Virginia, no less than with Congress. In July, 1785, Sevier wrote to Governor Patrick Henry, unsuccessfully appealing to him for sympathy. In this letter he insisted that he was doing all he could to restrain the people from encroaching on the Indian lands, though he admitted he found the task difficult. He assured Henry that he would on no account encourage the southwestern Virginians to join the new State, as some of them had proposed; and he added, what he evidently felt to be a needed explanation, "we hope to convince every one that we are not a banditti, but a people who mean to do right, as far as our knowledge will lead us."<sup>1</sup>

At the outset of its stormy career the new State had been named Franklin, in honor of Benjamin Franklin; but a large minority had wished to call it Frankland instead, and outsiders knew it as often by one title as the other. Benjamin Franklin himself did not know that it was named after him until it had been in existence eighteen months.<sup>2</sup> The State was then in straits, and Cocke wrote Franklin, in the hope of some advice or assistance. The prudent philosopher replied in conveniently

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 42, Sevier to Henry, July 19, 1785.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS., Franklin Papers, Miscellaneous, vol. vii., Benjamin Franklin to William Cocke, Philadelphia, August 12, 1786.

vague and guarded terms. He remarked that this was the first time he had been informed that the new State was named after him, he having always supposed that it was called Frankland. He then expressed his high appreciation of the honor conferred upon him, and his regret that he could not show his appreciation by anything more substantial than good wishes. He declined to commit himself as to the quarrel between Franklin and North Carolina, explaining that he could know nothing of its merits, as he had but just come home from abroad; but he warmly commended the proposition\* to submit the question to Congress, and urged that the disputants should abide by its decision. He wound up his letter by some general remarks on the benefits of having a Congress which could act as a judge in such matters.

While the memorial was being presented to Congress, Sevier was publishing his counter-manifesto to Governor Martin's in the shape of a letter to Martin's successor in the chair of the chief executive of North Carolina. In this letter Sevier justified at some length the stand the Franklin people had taken, and commented with lofty severity on Governor Martin's efforts "to stir up sedition and insurrection" in Franklin, and thus destroy the "tranquillity" of its "peaceful citizens." Sevier evidently shared to the full the

horror generally felt by the leaders of a rebellion for those who rebel against themselves.

The new Governor of North Carolina adopted a much more pacific tone than his predecessor, and he and Sevier exchanged some further letters, but without result.

One of the main reasons for discontent with the parent State was the delay in striking an advantageous treaty with the Indians, and the Franklin people hastened to make up for this delay by summoning the Cherokees to a council.<sup>1</sup> Many of the chiefs, who were already under solemn agreement with the United States and North Carolina, refused to attend; but, as usual with Indians, they could not control all their people, some of whom were present at the time appointed. With the Indians who were thus present the whites went through the form of a treaty under which they received large cessions of Cherokee lands. The ordinary results of such a treaty followed. The Indians who had not signed promptly repudiated, as unauthorized and ineffective, the action of the few who had; and the latter asserted that they had been tricked into signing, and were not aware of the true nature of the document to which they had affixed their marks.<sup>2</sup> The whites heeded these protests not at all, but kept the land they had settled.

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 25, 37, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Talk of Old Tassel, September 19, 1785, Ramsey, 319.

In fact, the attitude of the Franklin people towards the Cherokees was one of mere piracy. In the August session of their legislature they passed a law to encourage an expedition to go down the Tennessee on the west side and take possession of the country in the great bend of that river under titles derived from the State of Georgia. The eighty or ninety men composing this expedition actually descended the river, and made a settlement by the Muscle Shoals, in what the Georgians called the county of Houston. They opened a land office, organized a county government, and elected John Sevier's brother, Valentine, to represent them in the Georgia Legislature; but that body refused to allow him a seat. After a fortnight's existence the attitude of the Indians became so menacing that the settlement broke up and was abandoned.

In November, 1785, the convention to provide a permanent constitution for the State met at Greenville. There was already much discontent with the Franklin government. The differences between its adherents and those of the old North Carolina government were accentuated by bitter faction fights among the rivals for popular leadership, backed by their families and followers. Bad feeling showed itself at this convention, the rivalry between Sevier and Tipton being pronounced. Tipton was one of the mountain leaders, second in

influence only to Sevier, and his bitter personal enemy. At the convention a brand new constitution was submitted by a delegate named Samuel Houston. The adoption of the new constitution was urged by a strong minority. The most influential man of the minority party was Tipton.

This written constitution, with its bill of rights prefixed, was a curious document. It provided that the new State should be called the Commonwealth of Frankland. Full religious liberty was established, so far as rites of worship went; but no one was to hold office unless he was a Christian who believed in the Bible, in Heaven, in Hell, and in the Trinity. There were other classes prohibited from holding office,—immoral men and Sabbath breakers, for instance, and clergymen, doctors, and lawyers. The exclusion of lawyers from law-making bodies was one of the darling plans of the ordinary sincere rural demagogue of the day. At that time lawyers, as a class, furnished the most prominent and influential political leaders; and they were, on the whole, the men of most mark in the communities. A narrow, uneducated, honest countryman, especially in the backwoods, then looked upon a lawyer usually, with smothered envy and admiration, but always with jealousy, suspicion, and dislike; much as his successors to this day look upon bankers and railroad men. It seemed to him a praiseworthy thing to prevent



any man whose business it was to study the law from having a share in making the law.

The proposed constitution showed the extreme suspicion felt by the common people for even their own elected law-makers. It made various futile provisions to restrain them, such as providing that, "except on occasions of sudden necessity," laws should only become such after being enacted by two successive legislatures, and that a Council of Safety should be elected to look after the conduct of all the other public officials. Universal suffrage for all freemen was provided; the legislature was to consist of but one body; and almost all offices were made elective. Taxes were laid to provide a state university. The constitution was tediously elaborate and minute in its provisions.

However, its only interest is its showing the spirit of the local "reformers" of the day and place in the matters of constitution-making and legislation. After a hot debate and some tumultuous scenes, it was rejected by the majority of the convention, and in its stead, on Sevier's motion, the North Carolina constitution was adopted as the groundwork for the new government. This gave umbrage to Tipton and his party, who for some time had been discontented with the course of affairs in Franklin, and had been grumbling about them.

The new constitution—which was in effect simply the old constitution with unimportant alterations—went into being, and under it the Franklin Legislature convened at Greenville, which was made the permanent capital of the new State. The Commons met in the courthouse, a clapboarded building of unhewn logs, without windows, the light coming in through the door and through the chinks between the timbers. The Senate met in one of the rooms of the town tavern. The backwoods legislators lodged at this tavern or at some other, at the cost of fourpence a day, the board being a shilling for the man, and sixpence for his horse, if the horse only ate hay; a half pint of liquor or a gallon of oats cost sixpence.<sup>1</sup> Life was very rude and simple; no luxuries, and only the commonest comforts, were obtainable.

The State of Franklin had now been in existence over a year, and during this period the officers holding under it had exercised complete control in the three insurrectionary counties. They had passed laws, made treaties, levied taxes, recorded deeds, and solemnized marriages. In short, they had performed all the functions of civil government, and Franklin had assumed in all respects the position of an independent commonwealth.

But, in the spring of 1786, the discontent which

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey, 334.

had smouldered burst into a flame. Tipton and his followers openly espoused the cause of North Carolina, and were joined, as time waned, by the men who for various reasons were dissatisfied with the results of the trial of independent statehood. They held elections, at the Sycamore Shoals and elsewhere, to choose representatives to the North Carolina Legislature, John Tipton being elected senator. They organized the entire local government over again in the interest of the old State.

The two rival governments clashed in every way. County courts of both were held in the same counties;\* the militia were called out by both sets of officers; taxes were levied by both legislatures.<sup>1</sup> The Franklin courts were held at Jonesboro, the North Carolina courts at Buffalo, ten miles distant; and each court in turn was broken up by armed bands of the opposite party. Criminals thrived in the confusion, and the people refused to pay taxes to either party. Brawls, with their brutal accompaniments of gouging and biting, were common. Sevier and Tipton themselves, on one occasion when they by chance met, indulged in a rough-and-tumble fight before their friends could interfere.

Throughout the year 1786 the confusion gradually grew worse. A few days after the Greenville convention met, the Legislature of North Carolina

<sup>1</sup> Haywood, 160.

passed an act in reference to the revolt. It declared that, at the proper time, the western counties would be erected into an independent State, but that this time had not yet come; until it did, they would be well cared for, but must return to their ancient allegiance, and appoint and elect their officers under the laws of North Carolina. A free pardon and oblivion of all offences was promised. Following this act came a long and tedious series of negotiations. Franklin sent ambassadors to argue her case before the Legislature of the mother State; the governors and high officials exchanged long-winded letters and proclamations, and the rival legislatures passed laws intended to undermine each other's influence. The Franklin Assembly tried menace, and threatened to fine any one who acted under a commission from North Carolina. The Legislature of the latter State achieved more by promises, having wisely offered to remit all taxes for the two troubled years to any one who would forthwith submit to her rule.

Neither side was willing to force the issue to trial by arms if it could be helped; and there was a certain pointlessness about the struggle, inasmuch as the differences between the contending parties were really so trifling. The North Carolinians kept protesting that they would be delighted to see Franklin set up as an independent State, as soon

as her territory contained enough people; and the Franklin leaders in return were loud in their assurances of respect for North Carolina and of desire to follow her wishes. But neither would yield the points immediately at issue.

A somewhat comic incident of the affair occurred in connection with an effort made by Sevier and his friends to persuade old Evan Shelby to act as umpire. After a conference they signed a joint manifesto which aimed to preserve peace for the moment by the novel expedient of allowing the citizens of the disputed territory to determine, every man for himself, the government which he wished to own, and to pay his taxes to it accordingly. Nothing came of this manifesto.

During this time of confusion each party rallied by turns, but the general drift was all in favor of North Carolina. One by one the adherents of Franklin dropped away. The revolt was essentially a frontier revolt, and Sevier was essentially a frontier leader. The older and longer-settled counties and parts of counties were the first to fall away from him, while the settlers on the very edge of the Indian country clung to him to the last.

The neighboring States were more or less excited over the birth of the little insurgent commonwealth. Virginia looked upon it with extreme disfavor, largely because her own western counties showed signs of desiring to throw in their fortunes

with the Franklin people.<sup>1</sup> Governor Patrick Henry issued a very energetic address on the subject, and the authorities took effective means to prevent the movement from gaining head.

Georgia, on the contrary, showed the utmost friendliness towards the new State, and gladly entered into an alliance with her.<sup>2</sup> Georgia had no self-assertive communities of her own children on her western border, as Virginia and North Carolina had, in Kentucky and Franklin. She was herself a frontier commonwealth, challenging, as her own, lands that were occupied by the Indians and claimed by the Spaniards. Her interests were identical with those of Franklin. The governors of the two communities exchanged complimentary addresses, and sent their rough ambassadors one to the other. Georgia made Sevier a brigadier-general in her militia, for the district she claimed in the bend of the Tennessee; and her branch of the Society of the Cincinnati elected him to membership. In return, Sevier, hoping to tighten the loosening bonds of his authority by a successful Indian war, entered into arrangements with Georgia for a combined campaign against the Creeks. For various reasons, the proposed campaign fell through, but the mere planning of it shows the feeling that was, at the bottom, the

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 53.

<sup>2</sup> Stevens's *Georgia*, ii., 380.

strongest of those which knit together the Franklin men and the Georgians.<sup>1</sup> They both greedily coveted the Indians' land, and were bent on driving the Indians off it.<sup>2</sup>

One of the Franklin judges, in sending a plea for the independence of his State to the Governor of North Carolina, expressed with unusual frankness the attitude of the Holston backwoodsmen towards the Indians. He remarked that he supposed the Governor would be astonished to learn that there were many settlers on the land which North Carolina had by treaty guaranteed to the Cherokees; and brushed aside all remonstrances by simply saying that it was vain to talk of keeping the frontiersmen from encroaching on Indian territory. All that could be done, he said, was to extend the laws over each locality as rapidly as it was settled by the intruding pioneers; otherwise they would become utterly lawless, and dangerous to their neighbors. As for laws and proclamations to restrain the white advance, he asked if all the settlements in America had not been extended in defiance of such. And now that the Indians were cowed, the advance was certain to be faster, and the savages were certain to be pushed back more

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 125, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 256, 353. Many of the rumors of defeats and victories given in these papers were without foundation.

rapidly, and the limits of tribal territory more narrowly circumscribed.<sup>1</sup>

This letter possessed at least the merit of expressing with blunt truthfulness the real attitude of the Franklin people, and of the backwoodsmen generally, towards the Indians. They never swerved from their intention of seizing the Indian lands. They preferred to gain their ends by treaty, and with the consent of the Indians; but if this proved impossible, then they intended to gain them by force.

In its essence, and viewed from the standpoint of abstract morality, their attitude was that of the freebooter. The backwoodsmen lusted for the possessions of the Indian, as the buccaneers of the Spanish main had once lusted for the possessions of the Spaniard. There was but little more heed paid to the rights of the assailed in one case than in the other.

Yet in its results, and viewed from the standpoint of applied ethics, the conquest and settlement by the whites of the Indian lands was necessary to the greatness of the race and to the well-being of civilized mankind. It was as ultimately beneficial as it was inevitable. Huge tomes might be filled with arguments as to the morality or immorality of such conquests. But these arguments appeal chiefly to the cultivated men in

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey, 350.



highly civilized communities who have neither the wish nor the power to lead warlike expeditions into savage lands. Such conquests are commonly undertaken by those reckless and daring adventurers who shape and guide each race's territorial growth. They are sure to come when a masterful people, still in its raw barbarian prime, finds itself face to face with the weaker and wholly alien race which holds a coveted prize in its feeble grasp.

Many good persons seem prone to speak of all wars of conquest as necessarily evil. This is, of course, a shortsighted view. In its after effects a conquest may be fraught either with evil or with good for mankind, according to the comparative worth of the conquering and conquered peoples. It is useless to try to generalize about conquests simply as such in the abstract; each case or set of cases must be judged by itself. The world would have halted had it not been for the Teutonic conquests in alien lands; but the victories of Moslem over Christian have always proved a curse in the end. Nothing but sheer evil has come from the victories of Turk and Tartar. This is true generally of the victories of barbarians of low racial characteristics over gentler, more moral, and more refined peoples, even though these people have, to their shame and discredit, lost the vigorous fighting virtues. Yet it remains no less true that the

world would probably have gone forward very little, indeed would probably not have gone forward at all, had it not been for the displacement or submersion of savage and barbaric peoples as a consequence of the armed settlement in strange lands of the races who hold in their hands the fate of the years. Every such submersion or displacement of an inferior race, every such armed settlement or conquest by a superior race, means the infliction and suffering of hideous woe and misery. It is a sad and dreadful thing that there should be of necessity such throes of agony; and yet they are the birth-pangs of a new and vigorous people. That they are in truth birth-pangs does not lessen the grim and hopeless woe of the race supplanted; of the race outworn or overthrown. The wrongs done and suffered cannot be blinked. Neither can they be allowed to hide the results to mankind of what has been achieved.

It is not possible to justify the backwoodsmen by appeal to principles which we would accept as binding on their descendants, or on the mighty nation which has sprung up and flourished in the soil they first won and tilled. All that can be asked is that they shall be judged as other wilderness conquerors, as other slayers and quellers of savage peoples, are judged. The same standards must be applied to Sevier and his hard-faced horse-riflemen that we apply to the Greek colonist

of Sicily and the Roman colonist of the valley of the Po; to the Cossack rough-rider who won for Russia the vast and melancholy Siberian steppes, and to the Boer who guided his ox-drawn wagon-trains to the hot grazing lands of the Transvaal; to the founders of Massachusetts and Virginia, of Oregon and icy Saskatchewan; and to the men who built up those far-off commonwealths whose coasts are lapped by the waters of the great South Sea.

The aggressions by the Franklin men on the Cherokee lands bore bloody fruit in 1786.<sup>1</sup> The young warriors, growing ever more alarmed and angered at the pressure of the settlers, could not be restrained. They shook off the control of the old men, who had seen the tribe flogged once and again by the whites, and knew how hopeless such a struggle was. The Chickamauga banditti watched from their eyries to pounce upon all boats that passed down the Tennessee, and their war bands harried the settlements far and wide, being joined in their work by parties from the Cherokee towns proper. Stock was stolen, cabins were burned, and settlers murdered. The stark riflemen gathered for revenge, carrying their long rifles and riding their rough mountain horses. Counter-inroads were carried into the Indian country. On

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., vol. ii., No. 71, Arthur Campbell to Joseph Martin, June 16, 1786; Martin to the Governor of Virginia, June 25, 1786, etc.

one, when Sevier himself led, two or three of the Indian towns were burned and a score or so of warriors killed. As always, it proved comparatively easy to deal a damaging blow to these southern Indians, who dwelt in well-built log-towns; while the widely scattered, shifting, wigwam-villages of the forest-nomads of the North rarely offered a tangible mark at which to strike. Of course, the retaliatory blows of the whites, like the strokes of the Indians, fell as often on the innocent as on the guilty. During this summer, to revenge the death of a couple of settlers, a backwoods colonel, with the appropriate name of Outlaw, fell on a friendly Cherokee town and killed two or three Indians, besides plundering a white man, a North Carolina trader, who happened to be in the town. Nevertheless, throughout 1786 the great majority of the Cherokees remained quiet.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1787, however, they felt the strain so severely that they gathered in a great council and deliberated whether they should not abandon their homes and move far out into the western wilderness; but they could not yet make up their minds to leave their beloved mountains. The North Carolina authorities wished to see them receive justice, but all they could do was to gather the few Indian prisoners who had been captured in the late wars and return them to the Cherokees.

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 162, 164, 176.

The Franklin government had opened a land office and disposed of all the lands between the French Broad and the Tennessee,<sup>1</sup> which territory North Carolina had guaranteed the Cherokees; and when, on the authority of the Governor of North Carolina, his representative ordered the settlers off the invaded land, they treated his command with utter defiance. Not only the Creeks, but even the distant Choctaws and Chickasaws became uneasy and irritated over the American encroachments, while the French traders who came up the Tennessee preached war to the Indians, and the Spanish Government ordered all the American traders to be expelled from among the southern tribes unless they would agree to take commissions from Spain and throw off their allegiance to the United States.

In this same year, the Cherokees became embroiled, not only with the Franklin people, but with the Kentuckians. The Chickamaugas, who were mainly renegade Cherokees, were always ravaging in Kentucky. Colonel John Logan had gathered a force to attack one of their war bands, but he happened instead to stumble on a Cherokee party, which he scattered to the winds with loss.

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., vol. ii., No. 71. Letter to Edmund Randolph, February 10, 1787; Letter of Joseph Martin, of March 25, 1787; Talk from Piominigo, the Chickasaw Chief, February 15, 1787.

The Kentuckians wrote to the Cherokee chiefs explaining that the attack was an accident, but that they did not regret it greatly, inasmuch as they found in the Cherokee camp several horses which had been stolen from the settlers. They then warned the Cherokees that the outrages by the Chickamaugas must be stopped; and if the Cherokees failed to stop them they would have only themselves to thank for the woes that would follow, as the Kentuckians could not always tell the hostile from the friendly Indians, and were bent on taking an exemplary, even if indiscriminate, revenge. The Council of Virginia, on hearing of this announced intention of the Kentuckians, "highly disapproved of it,"<sup>1</sup> but they could do nothing except disapprove. The governmental authorities of the eastern States possessed but little more power to restrain the backwoodsmen than the sachems had to restrain the young braves. Virginia and North Carolina could no more control Kentucky and Franklin than the Cherokees could control the Chickamaugas.

In 1787, the State of Franklin began to totter to its fall. In April,<sup>2</sup> Sevier, hungering for help or friendly advice, wrote to the gray statesman

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 71. Resolutions of Kentucky Committee, June 5, 1787.

<sup>2</sup> State Department MSS. Franklin Papers, viii., Benjamin Franklin to His Excellency Governor Sevier, Philadelphia, June 30, 1787.

after whom his State was named. The answer did not come for several months, and when it did come it was not very satisfactory. The old sage repeated that he knew too little of the circumstances to express an opinion, but he urged a friendly understanding with North Carolina, and he spoke with unpalatable frankness on the subject of the Indians. At that very time he was writing to a Cherokee chief<sup>1</sup> who had come to Congress in the vain hope that the Federal authorities might save the Cherokees from the reckless backwoodsmen; he had promised to try to obtain justice for the Indians, and he was in no friendly mood towards the backwoods aggressors.

“Prevent encroachments on Indian lands,” Franklin wrote to Sevier,—Sevier, who, in a last effort to rally his followers, was seeking a general Indian war to further these very encroachments,—“and remember that they are the more unjustifiable because the Indians usually give good bargains in the way of purchase, while a war with them costs more than any possible price they may ask.” This advice was based on Franklin’s usual principle of merely mercantile morality; but he was writing to a people who stood in sore need of just the teaching he could furnish and who would have done

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Letter to the Chief “Cornstalk” (Corn Tassel?), same date and place.

well to heed it. They were slow to learn that while sober, debt-paying thrift, love of order, and industry, are perhaps not the loftiest virtues and are certainly not in themselves all-sufficient, they yet form an indispensable foundation, the lack of which is but ill supplied by other qualities even of a very noble kind.

Sevier, also in the year 1787, carried on a long correspondence with Evan Shelby, whose adherence to the State of Franklin he much desired, as the stout old fellow was a power not only among the frontiersmen but with the Virginian and North Carolinian authorities likewise. Sevier persuaded the legislature to offer Shelby the position of chief magistrate of Franklin, and pressed him to accept it, and throw in his lot with the Westerners, instead of trying to serve men at a distance. Shelby refused; but Sevier was bent upon being pleasant, and thanked Shelby for at least being neutral, even though not actively friendly. In another letter, however, when he had begun to suspect Shelby of positive hostility, he warned him that no unfriendly interference would be tolerated.<sup>1</sup>

Shelby could neither be placated nor intimidated. He regarded with equal alarm and anger the loosening of the bands of authority and order

<sup>1</sup> Tennessee Historical Society MSS. Letters of Sevier to Evan Shelby, Feb. 11, May 20, May 30, and Aug. 12, 1787.



among the Franklin frontiersmen. He bitterly disapproved of their lawless encroachments on the Indian lands, which he feared would cause a general war with the savages.<sup>1</sup> At the very time that Sevier was writing to him, he was himself writing to the North Carolina government, urging them to send forward troops who would put down the rebellion by force, and was requesting the Virginians to back up any such movement with their militia. He urged that the insurrection threatened not only North Carolina, but also Virginia and the Federal Government itself; and, in phrases like those of the most advanced Federalist statesman, he urged the Federal Government to interfere. The Governor of Virginia was inclined to share his views, and forwarded his complaints and requests to the Continental Congress.

However, no action was necessary. The Franklin government collapsed of itself. In September, 1787, the legislature met, for the last time, at Greenville. There was a contested election case for senator from the county of Hawkins, which shows the difficulties under which the members had labored in carrying their elections, and gives a hint of the anarchy produced by the two

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 71. Evan Shelby to General Russell, April 27, 1787. Beverly Randolph to Virginia Delegates, June 2, 1787.

contending governments. In this case, the sheriff of the county of Hawkins granted the certificate of election to one man, and the three inspectors of the poll granted it to another. On investigation by a committee of the Senate, it appeared that the poll was opened by the sheriff "on the third Friday and Saturday in August," as provided by law, but that in addition to the advertisement of the election which was published by the sheriff of Hawkins, who held under the Franklin government, another proclamation, advertising the same election, was issued by the sheriff of the North Carolina county of Spencer, which had been recently created by North Carolina out of a portion of the territory of Hawkins County. The North Carolina sheriff merely wished to embarrass his Franklin rival, and he succeeded admirably. The Franklin man proclaimed that he would allow no one to vote who had not paid taxes to Franklin; but after three or four votes had been taken the approach of a body of armed adherents of the North Carolina interest caused the shutting of the polls. The Franklin authorities then dispersed, the North Carolina sheriff having told them plainly that the matter would have to be settled by seeing which party was strongest. One or two efforts were made to have an adjourned election elsewhere in the neighborhood, with the result that in the con-

fusion certificates were given to two different men.<sup>1</sup> Such disorders showed that the time had arrived when the authorities of Franklin either had to begin a bloody civil war or else abandon the attempt to create a new State; and in their feebleness and uncertainty they adopted the latter alternative.

When, in March, 1788, the term of Sevier as governor came to an end, there was no one to take his place, and the officers of North Carolina were left in undisputed possession of whatever governmental authority there was.

The North Carolina Assembly which met in November, 1787, had been attended by regularly elected members from all the western counties, Tipton being among them; while the far-off log hamlets on the banks of the Cumberland sent Robertson himself.<sup>2</sup> This assembly once more offered full pardon and oblivion of past offences to all who would again become citizens; and the last adherents of the insurrectionary government reluctantly accepted the terms. Franklin had been in existence for three years, during which time she had exercised all the powers and functions of independent statehood. During the first year her sway in the district was complete;

<sup>1</sup> Tennessee Historical Society MSS. Report of "Committee of Privileges and Elections" of Senate of Franklin, November 23, 1787.

<sup>2</sup> Haywood, 174.

during the next she was forced to hold possession in common with North Carolina; and then, by degrees, her authority lapsed altogether.

Sevier was left in dire straits by the falling of the State he had founded; for not only were the North Carolina authorities naturally bitter against him, but he had to count on the personal hostility of Tipton. In his distress, he wrote to one of the opposing party, not personally unfriendly to him, that he had been dragged into the Franklin movement by the people of the county; that he wished to suspend hostilities, and was ready to abide by the decision of the North Carolina Legislature, but that he was determined to share the fate of those who had stood by him, whatever it might be.<sup>1</sup> About the time that his term as governor expired, a writ, issued by the North Carolina courts, was executed against his estate. The sheriff seized all his negro slaves, as they worked on his Nolichucky farm, and bore them for safe keeping to Tipton's household, a rambling cluster of stout log buildings, on Sinking Creek of the Watauga. Sevier raised a hundred and fifty men and marched to take them back, carrying a light field-piece. Tipton's friends gathered, thirty or forty strong, and a siege began. Sevier hesitated to push matters to extremity by charging home.

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 416, 421. Sevier to Martin, April 3 and May 27, 1788.

For a couple of days there was some skirmishing and two or three men were killed or wounded. Then the county-lieutenant of Sullivan, with a hundred and eighty militia, came to Tipton's rescue. They surprised Sevier's camp at dawn on the last day of February,<sup>1</sup> while the snow was falling heavily; and the Franklin men fled in mad panic, only one or two being slain. Two of Sevier's sons were taken prisoners, and Tipton was with difficulty dissuaded from hanging them. This scrambling fight marked the ignoble end of the State of Franklin. Sevier fled to the uttermost part of the frontier, where no writs ran, and the rough settlers were devoted to him. Here he speedily became engaged in the Indian war.

Early in the spring of 1788, the Indians renewed their ravages.<sup>2</sup> The Chickamaugas were the leaders, but there were among them a few Creeks, and they were also joined by some of the Cherokees proper, goaded to anger by the encroachments of the whites on their lands. Many of the settlers were killed, and the people on the frontier began to gather into their stockades and block-houses. The alarm was great. One murder was of peculiar treachery and atrocity. A man named

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. iii. Armstrong to Wyllys, April 28, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 396, 432.

John Kirk,<sup>1</sup> lived on a clearing on Little River, seven miles south of Knoxville. One day, when he was away from home, an Indian named Slim Tom, well known to the family, and believed to be friendly, came to the cabin and asked for food. The food was given him and he withdrew. But he had come merely as a spy; and, seeing that he had to deal only with helpless women and children, he returned with a party of Indians who had been hiding in the woods. They fell on the wretched creatures, and butchered them all, eleven in number, leaving the mangled bodies in the court-yard. The father and eldest boy were absent and thus escaped. It would have been well had the lad been among the slain, for his coarse and brutal nature was roused to a thirst for indiscriminate revenge, and shortly afterwards he figured as chief actor in a deed of retaliation as revolting and inhuman as the original crime.

At the news of the massacres the frontiersmen gathered, as was their custom, mounted and armed, and ready either to follow the marauding parties or to make retaliatory inroads on their own account. Sevier, their darling leader, was among them, and to him they gave the command.

Another frontier leader and Indian fighter of note was at this time living among the Cherokees.

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. ii., p. 435. Proclamation of Thos. Hutchings, June 3, 1788.

He was Joseph Martin, who had dwelt much among the Indians, and had great influence over them, as he always treated them justly; though he had shown in more than one campaign that he could handle them in war as well as in peace. Early in 1788, he had been appointed by North Carolina Brigadier-General of the western counties lying beyond the mountains. In the military organization, which was really the most important side of the government to the frontiersmen, this was the chief position; and Martin's duties were not only to protect the border against Indian raids, but also to stamp out any smouldering embers of insurrection, and see that the laws of the State were again put in operation.

In April, he took command, and, on the twenty-fourth of the month reached the lower settlements on the Holston River.<sup>1</sup> Here he found that a couple of settlers had been killed by Indians a few days before, and he met a party of riflemen who had gathered to avenge the death of their friends by a foray on the Cherokee towns. Martin did not believe that the Cherokees were responsible for the murder. After some talk he persuaded the angry whites to choose four of their trusted men to accompany him as ambassadors to the Cherokee towns in order to find out the truth.

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. ii. Joseph Martin to H. Knox, July 15, 1788.

Accordingly, they all went forward together. Martin sent runners ahead to the Cherokees, and their chiefs and young warriors gathered to meet him. The Indians assured him that they were guiltless of the recent murder; that it should doubtless be laid at the door of some Creek war-party. The Creeks, they said, kept passing through their villages to war on the whites, and they had often turned them back. The frontier envoys at this professed themselves satisfied, and returned to their homes, after begging Martin to stay among the Cherokees; and he stayed, his presence giving confidence to the Indians, who forthwith began to plant their crops.

Unfortunately, about the middle of May, the murders again began, and again parties of riflemen gathered for vengeance. Martin intercepted one of these parties ten miles from a friendly Cherokee town; but another attacked and burned a neighboring town, the inhabitants escaping with slight loss. For a time Martin's life was jeopardized by this attack; the Cherokees, who swore they were innocent of the murders, being incensed at the counter attack. They told Martin that they thought he had been trying to gentle them, so that the whites might take them unawares. After a while they cooled down, and explained to Martin that the outrages were the work of the Creeks and Chickamaugas, whom they could not



control, and whom they hoped the whites would punish; but that they themselves were innocent and friendly. Then the whites sent messages to express their regret; and, though Martin declined longer to be responsible for the deeds of men of his own color, the Indians consented to patch up another truce.<sup>1</sup>

The outrages, however, continued; among others, a big boat was captured by the Chickamaugas, and all but three of the forty souls on board were killed. The settlers drew no fine distinctions between different Indians; they knew that their friends were being murdered by savages who came from the direction of the Cherokee towns; and they vented their wrath on the Indians who dwelt in these towns because they were nearest to hand.

On May 24th, Martin left the Indian town of Chota, the beloved town where he had been staying, and rode to the French Broad. There he found that a big levy of frontier militia, with Sevier at their head, was preparing to march against the Indians; Sevier having been chosen general, as mentioned above. Realizing that it was now hopeless to try to prevent a war, Martin hurried back to Chota, and removed his negroes, horses, and goods.

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 71, vol. ii. Martin to Randolph, June 11, 1788.

Sevier, heedless of Martin's remonstrances, hurried forward on his raid, with a hundred riders. He struck a town on Hiawassee and destroyed it, killing a number of the warriors. This feat, and two or three others like it, made the frontiersmen flock to his standard<sup>1</sup>; but before any great number were embodied under him, he headed a small party on a raid which was sullied by a deed of atrocious treachery and cruelty. He led some forty men to Chilhowa<sup>2</sup> on the Tennessee; opposite a small town of Cherokees, who were well known to have been friendly to the whites. Among them were several chiefs, including an old man named Corn Tassel, who for years had been foremost in the endeavor to keep the peace, and to prevent raids on the settlers. They put out a white flag; and the whites then hoisted one themselves. On the strength of this, one of the Indians crossed the river, and, on demand of the whites, ferried them over.<sup>3</sup> Sevier put the Indians in a hut, and then a horrible deed of infamy was perpetrated. Among Sevier's troops was young John Kirk, whose mother, sisters, and brothers had been so foully butchered by the Cherokee Slim Tom and his associates. Young Kirk's brutal

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. iii. Geo. Maxwell to Martin, July 9, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Thos. Hutchings to Martin, July 11, 1788.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Hutchings to Maxwell, June 20, 1788. Hutchings to Martin, July 11, 1788.

soul was parched with longing for revenge, and he was, both in mind and heart, too nearly kin to his Indian foes greatly to care whether his vengeance fell on the wrong-doers or on the innocent. He entered the hut where the Cherokee chiefs were confined and brained them with his tomahawk, while his comrades looked on without interfering. Sevier's friends asserted that at the moment he was absent; but this is no excuse. He knew well the fierce blood-lust of his followers, and it was criminal negligence on his part to leave to their mercy the friendly Indians who had trusted to his good faith; and, moreover, he made no effort to punish the murderer.

As if to show the futility of the plea that Sevier was powerless, a certain Captain Gillespie successfully protected a captive Indian from militia violence at this very time. He had come into the Indian country with one of the parties which intended to join Sevier, and while alone he captured a Cherokee. When his troops came up they immediately proposed to kill the Indian, and told him they cared nothing for his remonstrances; whereupon he sprang from his horse, cocked his rifle, and told them he would shoot dead the first man who raised a hand to molest the captive. They shrank back, and the Indian remained unharmed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haywood, p. 183.

As for young Kirk, all that need be said is that he stands in the same category with Slim Tom, the Indian murderer. He was a fair type of the low-class, brutal white borderer, whose inhumanity almost equalled that of the savage. But Sevier must be judged by another standard. He was a member of the Cincinnati, a correspondent of Franklin, a follower of Washington. He sinned against the light, and must be condemned accordingly. He sank to the level of a lieutenant of Alva, Guise, or Tilly, to the level of a crusading noble of the Middle Ages. It would be unfair to couple even this crime with those habitually committed by Sidney and Sir Peter Carew, Shan O'Neil and Fitzgerald, and the other dismal heroes of the hideous wars waged between the Elizabethan English and the Irish. But it is not unfair to compare this border warfare in the Tennessee mountains with the border warfare of England and Scotland two centuries earlier. There is no blinking the fact that in this instance Sevier and his followers stood on the same level of brutality with "keen Lord Evers," and on the same level of treachery with the "assured" Scots at the battle of Ancram Muir.

Even on the frontier, and at that time, the better class of backwoodsmen expressed much horror at the murder of the friendly chiefs. Sevier had planned to march against the Chickamaugas with

the levies that were thronging to his banner; but the news of the murder provoked such discussion and hesitation that his forces melted away. He was obliged to abandon his plan, partly owing to this disaffection among the whites, and partly owing to what one of the backswoodmen, in writing to General Martin, termed "the severity of the Indians,"<sup>1</sup>—a queer use of the word severity which obtains to this day in out-of-the-way places through the Alleghanies, where people style a man with a record for desperate fighting a "severe man," and speak of big, fierce dogs, able to tackle a wolf, as "severe" dogs.

Elsewhere throughout the country the news of the murder excited great indignation. The Continental Congress passed resolutions condemning acts which they had been powerless to prevent and were powerless to punish.<sup>2</sup> The Justices of the Court of Abbeville County, South Carolina, with Andrew Pickens at their head, wrote "to the people living on Nolechucke, French Broad, and Holstein," denouncing in unmeasured terms the encroachments and outrages of which Sevier and his backwoods troopers had been guilty.<sup>3</sup> In their zeal the Justices went a little too far, paint-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. iii. Maxwell to Martin, July 7, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 27, p. 359, and No. 151, p. 351.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 56, Andrew Pickens to Thos. Pinckney, July 11, 1788; No. 150, vol. iii., letter of Justices, July 9th.

ing the Cherokees as a harmless people who had always been friendly to the Americans,—a statement which General Martin, although he too condemned the outrages openly and with the utmost emphasis, felt obliged to correct, pointing out that the Cherokees had been the inveterate and bloody foes of the settlers throughout the Revolution.<sup>1</sup> The Governor of North Carolina, as soon as he heard the news, ordered the arrest of Sevier and his associates—doubtless as much because of their revolt against the State as because of the atrocities they had committed against the Indians.<sup>2</sup>

In their panic many of the Indians fled across the mountains and threw themselves on the mercy of the North and South Carolinians, by whom they were fed and protected. Others immediately joined the Chickamaugas in force, and the frontier districts of the Franklin region were harried with vindictive ferocity. The strokes fell most often and most heavily on the innocent. Half of the militia were called out, and those who most condemned the original acts of aggression committed by their neighbors were obliged to make common cause with these neighbors,<sup>3</sup> so as to save

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. iii. Martin to Knox, August 23, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 72. Samuel Johnston to Secretary of Congress, September 29, 1788.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Hutchings to Maxwell, June 20th, and to Martin, July 11th.

their own lives and the lives of their families. The officers of the district ordered a general levy of the militia to march against the Indian towns, and in each county the backwoodsmen began to muster.<sup>1</sup>

Before the troops assembled many outrages were committed by the savages. Horses were stolen, people were killed in their cabins, in their fields, on the roads, and at the ferries; and the settlers nearest the Indian country gathered in their fortified stations, and sent earnest appeals for help to their unmolested brethren. The stations were attacked, and at one or two the Indians were successful; but generally they were beaten off, the militia marching promptly to the relief of each beleaguered garrison. Severe skirmishing took place between the war-parties and the bands of militia who first reached the frontier; and the whites were not always successful. Once, for instance, a party of militia, greedy for fruit, scattered through an orchard, close to an Indian town which they supposed to be deserted; but the Indians were hiding nearby and fell upon them, killing seventeen. The savages mutilated the dead bodies in fantastic ways, with ferocious derision,

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. No. 150, vol. ii. Daniel Kennedy to Martin, June 6, 1788; Maxwell to Martin, July 9th, etc. No. 150, vol. iii., p. 357. Result of Council of Officers of Washington District, August 19, 1788.

and left them for their friends to find and bury.<sup>1</sup> Sevier led parties against the Indians without ceasing; and he and his men by their conduct showed that they waged the war very largely for profit. On a second incursion, which he made with canoes, into the Hiawassee country, his followers made numerous tomahawk claims, or "improvements," as they were termed, in the lands from which the Indians fled; hoping thus to establish a right of ownership to the country they had overrun.<sup>2</sup>

The whites speedily got the upper hand, ceasing to stand on the defensive; and the panic disappeared. When the North Carolina Legislature met, the members, and the people of the seaboard generally, were rather surprised to find that the over-hill men talked of the Indian war as troublesome rather than formidable.<sup>3</sup>

The militia officers holding commissions from North Carolina wished Martin to take command of the retaliatory expeditions against the Cherokees; but Martin, though a good fighter on occasions, preferred the arts of peace, and liked best treating with and managing the Indians. He had already acted as agent to different tribes on behalf of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia; and

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., Martin to Knox, August 23, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Hutchings to Martin, July 11, 1788.

<sup>3</sup> *Columbian Magazine*, ii., 472.



at this time he accepted an offer from the Continental Congress to serve in the same capacity for all the Southern Indians.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, he led a body of militia against the Chickamauga towns. He burnt a couple, but one of his detachments was driven back in a fight on Lookout Mountain; his men became discontented, and he was forced to withdraw, followed and harassed by the Indians. On his retreat the Indians attacked the settlements in force, and captured Gillespie's station.

Sevier was the natural leader of the Holston riflemen in such a war; and the bands of frontiersmen insisted that he should take the command whenever it was possible. Sevier swam well in troubled waters, and he profited by the storm he had done so much to raise. Again and again during the summer of 1788 he led his bands of wild horsemen on forays against the Cherokee towns, and always with success. He followed his usual tactics, riding hard and long, pouncing on the Indians in their homes before they suspected his presence, or intercepting and scattering their war-parties; and he moved with such rapidity that they could not gather in force sufficient to do him harm. Not only was the fame of his triumphs spread along the frontier, but vague rumors reached even the old settled States of the sea-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 50, vol. ii., p. 505, etc.  
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board,<sup>1</sup> rumors that told of the slight loss suffered by his followers, of the headlong hurry of his marches, of the fury with which his horsemen charged in the skirmishes, of his successful ambuscades and surprises, and of the heavy toll he took in slain warriors and captive women and children, who were borne homewards to exchange for the wives and little ones of the settlers who had themselves been taken prisoners.

Sevier's dashing and successful leadership wiped out in the minds of the backwoodsmen the memory of all his shortcomings and misdeeds; even the memory of that unpunished murder of friendly Indians which had so largely provoked the war. The representatives of the North Carolina government and his own personal enemies were less forgetful. The Governor of the State had given orders to seize him because of his violation of the laws and treaties in committing wanton murder on friendly Indians; and a warrant to arrest him for high treason was issued by the courts.

As long as "Nolichucky Jack" remained on the border, among the rough Indian fighters whom he had so often led to victory, he was in no danger. But in the fall, late in October, he ventured back to the longer settled districts. A council of officer's with Martin presiding and Tipton present as

<sup>1</sup> *Columbian Magazine* for 1789, p. 204. Also letter from French Broad, December 18, 1788.

one of the leading members, had been held at Jonesboro, and had just broken up when Sevier and a dozen of his followers rode into the squalid little town.<sup>1</sup> He drank freely and caroused with his friends; and he soon quarrelled with one of the other side who denounced him freely and justly for the murder of Corn Tassel and the other peaceful chiefs. Finally they all rode away, but when some miles out of town Sevier got into a quarrel with another man; and after more drinking and brawling he went to pass the night at a house, the owner of which was his friend. Meanwhile one of the men with whom he had quarrelled informed Tipton that his foe was in his grasp. Tipton gathered eight or ten men and early next morning surprised Sevier in his lodgings.

Sevier could do nothing but surrender, and Tipton put him in irons and sent him across the mountains to Morgantown, in North Carolina, where he was kindly treated and allowed much liberty. Most of the inhabitants sympathized with him, having no special repugnance to disorder, and no special sympathy even for friendly Indians. Meanwhile, a dozen of his friends, with his two sons at their head, crossed the mountains to rescue their beloved leader. They came into Morgantown while court was sitting and went un-

<sup>1</sup> Haywood, 190.

noticed in the crowds. In the evening, when the court adjourned and the crowds broke up, Sevier's friends managed to get near him with a spare horse; he mounted and they all rode off at speed. By daybreak they were out of danger.<sup>1</sup> Nothing further was attempted against him. A year later he was elected a member of the North Carolina Legislature; after some hesitation he was allowed to take his seat, and the last trace of the old hostility disappeared.

Neither the North Carolinians, nor any one else, knew that there was better ground for the charge of treason against Sevier than had appeared in his overt actions. He was one of those who had been in correspondence with Gardoqui on the subject of an alliance between the Westerners and Spain.

The year before this, Congress had been much worked up over the discovery of a supposed movement in Franklin to organize for the armed conquest of Louisiana. In September, 1787, a letter was sent by an ex-officer of the Continental line,

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey first copies Haywood and gives the account correctly. He then adds a picturesque alternative account,—followed by later writers,—in which Sevier escapes in open court on a celebrated race mare. The basis for the last account, so far as it has any basis at all, lies on statements made nearly half a century after the event, and entirely unknown to Haywood. There is no evidence of any kind as to its truthfulness. It must be set down as mere fable.

named John Sullivan, writing from Charleston, to a former comrade in arms; and this letter in some way became public. Sullivan had an unpleasant reputation. He had been involved in one of the mutinies of the underpaid Continental troops, and was a plotting, shifty, violent fellow. In his letter he urged his friend to come west forthwith and secure lands on the Tennessee; as there would soon be work cut out for the men of that country; and, he added, "I want you much — by God — take my word for it that we will speedily be in possession of New Orleans."<sup>1</sup>

The Secretary of War at once directed General Harmar to interfere, by force if necessary, with the execution of any such plan, and an officer of the regular army was sent to Franklin to find out the truth of the matter. This officer visited the Holston country in April, 1788, and after careful inquiry came to the conclusion that Sullivan had no backing, and that no movement against Spain was contemplated; the settlers being absorbed in the strife between the followers of Sevier and of Tipton.<sup>2</sup>

The real danger for the moment lay, not in a movement by the backwoodsmen against Spain,

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 150, vol. iii. John Sullivan to Major Wm. Brown, September 24, 1787.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Lieutenant John Armstrong to Major John P. Wyllys, April 28, 1788.

but in a conspiracy of some of the backwoods leaders with the Spanish authorities. Just at this time the unrest in the West had taken the form, not of attempting the capture of Louisiana by force, but of obtaining concessions from the Spaniards in return for favors to be rendered them. Clark and Robertson, Morgan, Brown, and Innes, Wilkinson and Sebastian, were all in correspondence with Gardoqui and Miro, in the endeavor to come to some profitable agreement with them. Sevier now joined the number. His newborn State had died; he was being prosecuted for high treason; he was ready to go to any lengths against North Carolina; and he clutched at the chance of help from the Spaniard. At the time North Carolina was out of the Union, so that Sevier committed no offence against the Federal Government.

Gardoqui was much interested in the progress of affairs in Franklin; and in the effort to turn them to the advantage of Spain he made use of James White, the Indian agent who was in his pay. He wrote <sup>1</sup> home that he did not believe Spain could force the backwoodsmen out of Franklin (which he actually claimed as Spanish territory), but that he had secret advices that they could easily be brought over to the Spanish interest by proper

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Gardoqui to Florida Blanca, April 18, 1788.

treatment. When the news came of the fight between Sevier's and Tipton's men, he judged the time to be ripe, and sent White to Franklin to sound Sevier and bring him over; but he did not trust White enough to give him any written directions, merely telling him what to do and furnishing him with three hundred dollars for his expenses. The mission was performed with such guarded caution that only Sevier and a few of his friends ever knew of the negotiations, and these kept their counsel well.

Sevier was in the mood to grasp a helping hand stretched out from no matter what quarter. He had no organized government back of him; but he was in the midst of his successful Cherokee campaigns, and he knew the reckless Indian fighters would gladly follow him in any movement, if he had a chance of success. He felt that if he were given money and arms, and the promise of outside assistance, he could yet win the day. He jumped at Gardoqui's cautious offers; though careful not to promise to subject himself to Spain, and doubtless with no idea of playing the part of Spanish vassal longer than the needs of the moment required.

In July, he wrote to Gardoqui, eager to strike a bargain with him; and in September sent him two letters by the hand of his son, James Sevier, who accompanied White when the latter made his

return journey to the Federal capital.<sup>1</sup> One letter, which was not intended to be private, formally set forth the status of Franklin with reference to the Indians, and requested the representatives of the Catholic king to help keep the peace with the southern tribes. The other letter was the one of importance. In it he assured Gardoqui that the western people had grown to know that their hopes of prosperity rested on Spain, and that the principal people of Franklin were anxious to enter into an alliance with, and obtain commercial concessions from, the Spaniards. He importuned Gardoqui for money and for military aid, assuring him that the Spaniards could best accomplish their ends by furnishing these supplies immediately, especially as the struggle over the adoption of the Federal Constitution made the time opportune for revolt.

Gardoqui received White and James Sevier with much courtesy, and was profuse, though vague, in his promises. He sent them both to New Orleans that Miro might hear and judge of their plans.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, nothing came of the project, and doubtless only a few people in Franklin ever knew that it existed. As for Sevier, when he saw that he was baffled, he suddenly became a Federalist and an advocate of a strong central government; and

<sup>1</sup> Gardoqui MSS., Sevier to Gardoqui, September 12, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Gardoqui to Miro, October 10, 1788.



this, doubtless, not because of love for Federalism, but to show his hostility to North Carolina, which had at first refused to enter the new Union.<sup>1</sup> This particular move was fairly comic in its abrupt unexpectedness.

Thus the last spark of independent life flickered out in Franklin proper. The people who had settled on the Indian borders were left without government, North Carolina regarding them as trespassers on the Indian territory.<sup>2</sup> They accordingly met and organized a rude governmental machine, on the model of the commonwealth of Franklin; and the wild little State existed as a separate and independent republic until the new Federal Government included it in the territory south of the Ohio.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Columbian Magazine*, August 27, 1788, vol. ii., 542.

<sup>2</sup> Haywood, 195.

<sup>3</sup> In my first three volumes I have discussed, once for all, the worth of Gilmore's "histories" of Sevier and Robertson and their times. It is unnecessary further to consider a single statement they contain.

## CHAPTER V

### KENTUCKY'S STRUGGLE FOR STATEHOOD

1784-1790

WHILE the social condition of the communities on the Cumberland and the Tennessee had changed very slowly, in Kentucky the changes had been rapid.

Colonel William Fleming, one of the heroes of the battle of the Great Kanawha, and a man of note on the border, visited Kentucky on surveying business in the winter of 1779-80. His journal shows the state of the new settlements as seen by an unusually competent observer; for he was an intelligent, well-bred, thinking man. Away from the immediate neighborhood of the few scattered log hamlets, he found the wilderness absolutely virgin. The easiest way to penetrate the forest was to follow the "buffalo paths," which the settlers usually adopted for their own bridle trails, and finally cut out and made into roads. Game swarmed. There were multitudes of swans, geese, and ducks on the river; turkeys and the small furred beasts, such as coons, abounded. Big game was almost as plentiful.

Colonel Fleming shot, for the subsistence of himself and his party, many buffalo, bear, and deer, and some elk. His attention was drawn by the great flocks of parroquets, which appeared even in winter, and by the big, boldly colored, ivory-billed woodpeckers—birds which have long drawn back to the most remote swamps of the hot Gulf coast, fleeing before man precisely as the buffalo and elk have fled.

Like all similar parties he suffered annoyance from the horses straying. He lost much time in hunting up the strayed beasts, and frequently had to pay the settlers for helping find them. There were no luxuries to be had for any money, and even such common necessities as corn and salt were scarce and dear. Half a peck of salt cost a little less than eight pounds, and a bushel of corn the same. The surveying party, when not in the woods, stayed at the cabins of the more prominent settlers, and had to pay well for board and lodging, and for washing, too.

Fleming was much struck by the misery of the settlers. At the Falls they were sickly, suffering with fever and ague; many of the children were dying. Boonsborough and Harrodsburg were very dirty, the inhabitants were sickly, and the offal and dead beasts lay about, poisoning the air and the water. During the winter no more corn could be procured than was enough to furnish an occa-

sional hoe-cake. The people sickened on a steady diet of buffalo-bull beef, cured in smoke without salt, and prepared for the table by boiling. The buffalo was the stand-by of the settlers; they used his flesh as their common food, and his robe for covering; they made moccasins of his hide, fiddle-strings of his sinews, and combs of his horns. They spun his winter coat into yarn, and out of it they made coarse cloth, like wool. They made a harsh linen from the bark of the rotted nettles. They got sugar from the maples. There were then, Fleming estimated, about three thousand souls in Kentucky. The Indians were everywhere, and all men lived in mortal terror of their lives; no settlement was free from the dread of the savages.<sup>1</sup>

Half a dozen years later all this was changed. The settlers had fairly swarmed into the Kentucky country, and the population was so dense that the true frontiersmen, the real pioneers, were already wandering off to Illinois and elsewhere; every man of them desiring to live on his own land, by his own labor, and scorning to work for wages. The unexampled growth had wrought many changes; not the least was the way in which it lessened the importance of the first hunter-settlers and hunter-soldiers. The great

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS., Colonel Wm. Fleming, MS., "Journal in Kentucky." November 12, 1779, to May 27, 1780.

herds of game had been woefully thinned, and certain species, as the buffalo, practically destroyed. The killing of game was no longer the chief industry, and the flesh and hides of wild beasts were no longer the staples of food and clothing. The settlers already raised crops so large that they were anxious to export the surplus. They no longer clustered together in palisaded hamlets. They had cut out trails and roads in every direction from one to another of the many settlements. The scattered clearings on which they generally lived dotted the forest everywhere, and the towns, each with its straggling array of log cabins, and its occasional frame houses, did not differ materially from those in the remote parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia. The gentry were building handsome houses, and their amusements and occupations were those of the up-country planters of the seaboard.

The Indians were still a scourge to the settlements<sup>1</sup>; but, though they caused much loss of life, there was not the slightest danger of their imperilling the existence of the settlements as a whole, or even of any considerable town or group of clearings. Kentucky was no longer all a frontier. In the thickly peopled districts life was reasonably safe, though the frontier proper was

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 151, p. 259. Report of Secretary of War, July 10, 1787; also, No. 60, p. 277.

harried and the remote farms jeopardized and occasionally abandoned,<sup>1</sup> while the river route and the Wilderness Road were beset by the savages. Where the country was at all well settled, the Indians did not attack in formidable war bands, like those that had assailed the fortified villages in the early years of their existence; they skulked through the woods by twos and threes, and pounced only upon the helpless or the unsuspecting.

Nevertheless, if the warfare was not dangerous to the life and growth of the commonwealth, it was fraught with undreamed-of woe and hardship to individual settlers and their families. On the outlying farms no man could tell when the blow would fall. Thus, in one backwoodsman's written reminiscences, there is a brief mention of a settler named Israel Hart, who, during one May night, in 1787, suffered much from a toothache. In the morning he went to a neighbor's, some miles away through the forest, to have his tooth pulled, and when he returned he found his wife and his five children dead and cut to pieces.<sup>2</sup> Incidents of this kind are related in every contemporary account of Kentucky; and though they commonly occurred in the thinly peopled dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia State Papers*, iv., 149, State Department MSS. No. 56, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS., Whitley MS. "Narrative."

tricts, this was not always the case. Teamsters and travellers were killed on the high-roads near the towns—even in the neighborhood of the very town where the constitutional convention was sitting.

In all new-settled regions in the United States, so long as there was a frontier at all, the changes in the pioneer population proceeded in a certain definite order, and Kentucky furnished an example of the process. Throughout our history as a nation the frontiersmen have always been mainly native Americans, and those of European birth have been speedily beaten into the usual frontier type by the wild forces against which they waged unending war. As the frontiersmen conquered and transformed the wilderness, so the wilderness in its turn created and preserved the type of man who overcame it. Nowhere else on the continent has so sharply defined and distinctively American a type been produced as on the frontier, and a single generation has always been more than enough for its production. The influence of the wild country upon the man is almost as great as the effect of the man upon the country. The frontiersman destroys the wilderness, and yet its destruction means his own. He passes away before the coming of the very civilization whose advance guard he has been. Nevertheless, much of his blood remains, and his striking characteristics

have great weight in shaping the development of the land. The varying peculiarities of the different groups of men who have pushed the frontier westward at different times and places remain stamped with greater or less clearness on the people of the communities that grow up in the frontier's stead.<sup>1</sup>

In Kentucky, as in Tennessee and the western portions of the seaboard States, and as later in the great West, different types of settlers appeared successively on the frontier. The hunter or trapper came first. Sometimes he combined with hunting and trapping the functions of an Indian trader, but ordinarily the American, as distinguished from the French or Spanish frontiersman, treated the Indian trade as something purely secondary to his more regular pursuits. In Kentucky and Tennessee the first comers from the East were not traders at all, and were hunters rather than trappers. Boon was a type of this class, and Boon's descendants went westward generation by generation until they reached the Pacific.

Close behind the mere hunter came the rude hunter-settler. He pastured his stock on the wild range, and lived largely by his skill with the

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner: *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. A suggestive pamphlet, published by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.



rifle. He worked with simple tools and he did his work roughly. His squalid cabin was destitute of the commonest comforts; the blackened stumps and dead, girdled trees stood thick in his small and badly tilled field. He was adventurous, restless, shiftless, and he felt ill at ease and cramped by the presence of more industrious neighbors. As they pressed in round about him he would sell his claim, gather his cattle and his scanty store of tools and household goods, and again wander forth to seek uncleared land. The Lincolns, the forbears of the great President, were a typical family of this class.

Most of the frontiersmen of these two types moved fitfully westward with the frontier itself, or near it, but in each place where they halted, or where the advance of the frontier was for the moment stayed, some of their people remained to grow up and mix with the rest of the settlers.

The third class consisted of the men who were thrifty as well as adventurous, the men who were even more industrious than restless. These were they who entered in to hold the land, and who had handed it on as an inheritance to their children and their children's children. Often, of course, these settlers of a higher grade found that for some reason they did not prosper, or heard of better chances still farther in the wilderness, and so moved onwards, like their less thrifty and more

uneasy brethren, the men who half-cleared their lands and half-built their cabins. But, as a rule, these better-class settlers were not mere life-long pioneers. They wished to find good land on which to build, and plant, and raise their big families of healthy children, and when they found such land they wished to make thereon their permanent homes. They did not share the impulse which kept their squalid, roving fellows of the backwoods ever headed for the vague beyond. They had no sympathy with the feeling which drove these humbler wilderness-wanderers always onwards, and made them believe, wherever they were, that they would be better off somewhere else, that they would be better off in that somewhere which lay in the unknown and untried. On the contrary, these thriftier settlers meant to keep whatever they had once grasped. They got clear title to their lands. Though they first built cabins, as soon as might be they replaced them with substantial houses and barns. Though they at first girdled and burnt the standing timber, to clear the land, later they tilled it as carefully as any farmer of the seaboard States. They composed the bulk of the population, and formed the backbone and body of the State. The McAfees may be taken as a typical family of this class.

Yet a fourth class was composed of the men of means, of the well-to-do planters, merchants, and

lawyers, of the men whose families already stood high on the Atlantic slope. The Marshalls were such men; and there were many other families of the kind in Kentucky. Among them were an unusually large proportion of the families who came from the fertile limestone region of Botetourt County in Virginia, leaving behind them, in the hands of their kinsmen, their roomy, comfortable houses, which stand to this day. These men soon grew to take the leading places in the new commonwealth. They were of good blood—using the words as they should be used, as meaning blood that has flowed through the veins of generations of self-restraint and courage and hard work, and careful training in mind and in the manly virtues. Their inheritance of sturdy and self-reliant manhood helped them greatly; their blood told in their favor as blood generally does tell when other things are equal. If they prized intellect they prized character more; they were strong in body and mind, stout of heart, and resolute of will. They felt that pride of race which spurs a man to effort, instead of making him feel that he is excused from effort. They realized that the qualities they inherited from their forefathers ought to be further developed by them as their forefathers had originally developed them. They knew that their blood and breeding, though making it probable that they would with proper

effort succeed, yet entitled them to no success which they could not fairly earn in open contest with their rivals.

Such were the different classes of settlers who successively came into Kentucky, as into other western lands. There were, of course, no sharp lines of cleavage between the classes. They merged insensibly into one another, and the same individual might at different times stand in two or three. As a rule, the individuals composing the first two were crowded out by their successors, and, after doing the roughest of the pioneer work, moved westward with the frontier; but some families were of course continually turning into permanent abodes what were merely temporary halting-places of the greater number.

With the change in population came the corresponding change in intellectual interests and in material pursuits. The axe was the tool, and the rifle the weapon, of the early settlers; their business was to kill the wild beasts, to fight the savages, and to clear the soil; and the enthralling topics of conversation were the game and the Indians, and, as the settlements grew, the land itself. As the farms became thick, and towns thrived, and life became more complex, the chances for variety in work and thought increased likewise. The men of law sprang into great prominence, owing in part to the interminable litigation

over the land titles. The more serious settlers took about as much interest in matters theological as in matters legal; and the congregations of the different churches were at times deeply stirred by quarrels over questions of church discipline and doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Most of the books were either textbooks of the simpler kinds or else theological.

Except when there was an Indian campaign, politics and the river commerce formed the two chief interests for all Kentuckians, but especially for the well-to-do.

In spite of all the efforts of the Spanish officials, the volume of trade on the Mississippi grew steadily. Six or eight years after the close of the Revolution the vast stretches of brown water, swirling ceaselessly between the melancholy forests, were already furrowed everywhere by the keeled and keelless craft. The hollowed log in which the Indian paddled; the same craft, the pirogue, only a little more carefully made, and on a little larger model, in which the creole trader carried his load of paints and whisky and beads and bright cloths to trade for the peltries of the savage; the rude little scow in which some backwoods farmer drifted down-stream with his cargo, the produce of his own toil; the keel-boats which, with square-

<sup>1</sup> Durrett Collection; see various theological writings; *e. g.*, *A Progress*, etc., by Adam Rankin, Pastor at Lexington. Printed "at the Sign of the Buffalo," January 1, 1793.

sails and oars, plied up as well as down the river; the flotilla of huge flat-boats, the property of some rich merchant, laden deep with tobacco and flour, and manned by crews who were counted rough and lawless even in the rough and lawless backwoods—all these and others, too, were familiar sights to every traveller who descended the Mississippi from Pittsburg to New Orleans,<sup>1</sup> or who was led by business to journey from Louisville to St. Louis or to Natchez or New Madrid.

The fact that the river commerce thrived was partly the cause and partly the consequence of the general prosperity of Kentucky. The pioneer days, with their fierce and squalid struggle for bare life, were over. If men were willing to work, and escaped the Indians, they were sure to succeed in earning a comfortable livelihood in a country so rich. "The neighbors are doing well in every sense of the word," wrote one Kentuckian to another; "they get children and raise crops."<sup>2</sup> Like all other successful and masterful people the Kentuckians fought well and bred well, and they showed by their actions their practical knowledge of the truth that no race can ever hold its own unless its members are able and willing to work hard with their hands.

<sup>1</sup> John Pope's *Tour*, in 1790. Printed at Richmond in 1792.

<sup>2</sup> Draper MSS. Jonathan Clark Papers. O'Fallan to Clark, Isles of Ohio, May 30, 1791.

The general prosperity meant rude comfort everywhere; and it meant a good deal more than rude comfort for the men of greatest ability. By the time the river commerce had become really considerable, the rich merchants, planters, and lawyers had begun to build two-story houses of brick or stone, like those in which they had lived in Virginia. They were very fond of fishing, shooting, and riding, and were lavishly hospitable. They sought to have their children well taught, not only in letters, but in social accomplishments like dancing; and at the proper season they liked to visit the Virginian watering-places, where they met "genteel company" from the older States, and lodged in good taverns in which "a man could have a room and a bed to himself."<sup>1</sup>

An agreement entered into about this time between one of the Clarks and a friend shows that Kentuckians were already beginning to appreciate the merits of neat surroundings even for a rather humble town-house. This particular house, together with the stable and lot, was rented for "one cow" for the first eight months, and two dollars a month after that—certainly not an excessive rate; and it was covenanted that everything should be kept in good repair, and particularly that the

<sup>1</sup> Letter of a young Virginian, L. Butler, April 13, 1790. *Magazine of American History*, i., 113.

grass plots around the house should not be "trodden on or tore up."<sup>1</sup>

All Kentuckians took a great interest in politics, as is the wont of self-asserting, independent freemen, living under a democratic government. But the gentry and men of means and the lawyers very soon took the lead in political affairs. A larger proportion of these classes came from Virginia than was the case with the rest of the population, and they shared the eagerness and aptitude for political life generally shown by the leading families of Virginia. In many cases they were kin to these families; not, however, as a rule, to the families of the tidewater region, the aristocrats of colonial days, but to the families—so often of Presbyterian Irish stock—who rose to prominence in western Virginia at the time of the Revolution. In Kentucky, all men mixed together, no matter from what State they came, the wrench of the break from their home ties having shaken them so that they readily adapted themselves to new conditions, and easily assimilated with one another. As for their differences of race origin, these had ceased to influence their lives even before they came to Kentucky. They were all Americans, in feeling as well as in name, by habit as well as by birth; and the positions

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. Wm. Clark Papers. Agreement between Clark and Bagley, April 1, 1790.



they took in the political life of the West was determined partly by the new conditions surrounding them, and partly by the habits bred in them through generations of life on American soil.

One man who would naturally have played a prominent part in Kentucky politics, failed to do so from a variety of causes. This was George Rogers Clark. He was by preference a military rather than a civil leader; he belonged by choice and habit to the class of pioneers and Indian fighters whose influence was waning; his remarkable successes had excited much envy and jealousy, while his subsequent ignominious failure had aroused contempt; and, finally, he was undone by his fondness for strong drink. He drew himself to one side, though he chafed at the need, and in his private letters he spoke with bitterness of the "big little men," the ambitious nobodies, whose jealousy had prompted them to destroy him by ten thousand lies; and, making a virtue of necessity, he plumed himself on the fact that he did not meddle with politics, and sneered at the baseness of his fellow-citizens, whom he styled "a swarm of hungry persons gaping for bread."<sup>1</sup>

Benjamin Logan, who was senior colonel and county lieutenant of the District of Kentucky, stood second to Clark in the estimation of the

<sup>1</sup> Draper MSS. G. R. Clark to J. Clark, April 20, 1788, and September 2, 1791.

early settlers, the men who, riding their own horses and carrying their own rifles, had so often followed both commanders on their swift raids against the Indian towns. Logan naturally took the lead in the first serious movement to make Kentucky an independent State. In its beginnings this movement showed a curious parallelism to what was occurring in Franklin at the same time, though when once fairly under way the difference between the cases became very strongly marked. In each case the prime cause in starting the movement was trouble with the Indians. In each, the first steps were taken by the commanders of the local militia, and the first convention was summoned on the same plan, a member being elected by every militia company. The companies were territorial as well as military units, and the early settlers were all, in practice as well as in theory, embodied in the militia. Thus in both Kentucky and Franklin the movements were begun in the same way by the same class of Indian-fighting pioneers; and the method of organization chosen shows clearly the rough military form which at that period settlement in the wilderness, in the teeth of a hostile savagery, always assumed.

In 1784, fear of a formidable Indian invasion—an unwarranted fear, as the result showed—became general in Kentucky, and in the fall Logan

summoned a meeting of the field officers to discuss the danger and to provide against it. When the officers gathered and tried to evolve some plan of operations, they found that they were helpless. They were merely the officers of one of the districts of Virginia; they could take no proper steps of their own motion, and Virginia was too far away and her interests had too little in common with theirs, for the Virginian authorities to prove satisfactory substitutes for their own.<sup>1</sup> No officials in Kentucky were authorized to order an expedition against the Indians, or to pay the militia who took part in it, or to pay for their provisions and munitions of war. Any expedition of the kind had to be wholly voluntary, and could of course only be undertaken under the strain of a great emergency; as a matter of fact the expeditions of Clark and Logan in 1786 were unauthorized by law, and were carried out by bodies of mere volunteers, who gathered only because they were forced to do so by bitter need. Confronted by such a condition of affairs, the militia officers issued a circular-letter to the people of the district, recommending that on December 24, 1784, a convention should be held at Danville further to consider the subject, and that this

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, himself an actor in these events, is the best authority for this portion of Kentucky history; see also Green; and compare Collins, Butler, and Brown.

convention should consist of delegates elected one from each militia company.

The recommendation was well received by the people of the district; and on the appointed date the convention met at Danville. Colonel William Fleming, the old Indian fighter and surveyor, was again visiting Kentucky, and he was chosen president of the convention. After some discussion the members concluded that, while some of the disadvantages under which they labored could be remedied by the action of the Virginia Legislature, the real trouble was deep-rooted, and could only be met by separation from Virginia and the erection of Kentucky into a State. There was, however, much opposition to this plan, and the convention wisely decided to dissolve, after recommending to the people to elect, by counties, members who should meet in convention at Danville in May for the express purpose of deciding on the question of addressing to the Virginia Assembly a request for separation.<sup>1</sup>

The convention assembled accordingly, Logan being one of the members, while it was presided over by Colonel Samuel McDowell, who, like Fleming, was a veteran Indian fighter and hero of the Great Kanawha. Up to this point the phases through which the movement for state-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Madison Papers, Wallace to Madison, September 25, 1785.

hood in Kentucky had passed were almost exactly the same as the phases of the similar movement in Franklin. But the two now entered upon diverging lines of progression. In each case the home government was willing to grant the request for separation, but wished to affix a definite date to their consent, and to make the fulfilment of certain conditions a prerequisite. In each case there were two parties in the district desiring separation, one of them favoring immediate and revolutionary action, while the other, with much greater wisdom and propriety, wished to act through the forms of law and with the consent of the parent State. In Kentucky, the latter party triumphed. Moreover, while up to the time of this meeting of the May convention the leaders in the movement had been the old Indian fighters, after this date the lead was taken by men who had come to Kentucky only after the great rush of immigrants began. The new men were not backwoods hunter-warriors, like Clark and Logan, Sevier, Robertson, and Tipton. They were politicians of the Virginia stamp. They founded political clubs, one of which, the Danville Club, became prominent, and in them they discussed with fervid eagerness the public questions of the day, the members showing a decided tendency towards the Jeffersonian school of political thought.

The convention, which met at Danville, in May, 1785, decided unanimously that it was desirable to separate, by constitutional methods, from Virginia, and to secure admission as a separate State into the Federal Union. Accordingly, it directed the preparation of a petition to this effect, to be sent to the Virginia Legislature, and prepared an address to the people in favor of the proposed course of action. Then, in a queer spirit of hesitancy, instead of acting on its own responsibility, as it had both the right and power to do, the convention decided that the issuing of the address, and the ratification of its own actions generally, should be submitted to another convention, which was summoned to meet at the same place in August of the same year. The people of the district were as yet by no means a unit in favor of separation, and this made the convention hesitate to take any irrevocable step.

One of the members of this convention was Judge Caleb Wallace, a recent arrival in Kentucky, and a representative of the new school of Kentucky politicians. He was a friend and ally of Brown and Innes. He was also a friend of Madison, and to him he wrote a full account of the reasons which actuated the Kentuckians in the step they had taken.<sup>1</sup> He explained that he

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Madison Papers, Caleb Wallace to Madison, July 12, 1785.

and the people of the district generally felt that they did not "enjoy a greater portion of liberty than an American colony might have done a few years ago had she been allowed a representation in the British Parliament." He complained bitterly that some of the taxes were burdensome and unjust, and that the money raised for the expenses of government all went to the east, to Virginia proper, while no corresponding benefits were received; and insisted that the seat of government was too remote for Kentucky ever to get justice from the rest of the State. Therefore, he said, he thought it would be wiser to part in peace rather than remain together in discontented and jealous union. But he frankly admitted that he was by no means sure that the people of the district possessed sufficient wisdom and virtue to fit them for successful self-government, and he anxiously asked Madison's advice as to several provisions which it was thought might be embodied in the constitution of the new State.

In the August convention, Wilkinson sat as a member, and he succeeded in committing his colleagues to a more radical course of action than that of the preceding convention. The resolutions they forwarded to the Virginia Legislature, asked the immediate erection of Kentucky into an independent State, and expressed the conviction

that the new commonwealth would undoubtedly be admitted into the Union. This, of course, meant that Kentucky would first become a power outside and independent of the Union; and no provision was made for entry into the Union beyond the expression of a hopeful belief that it would be allowed.

Such a course would have been in the highest degree unwise; and the Virginians refused to allow it to be followed. Their Legislature, in January, 1786, provided that a new convention should be held in Kentucky in September, 1786, and that, if it declared for independence, the State should come into being after the 1st of September, 1787, provided, however, that Congress, before June 1, 1787, consented to the erection of the new State and agreed to its admission into the Union. It was also provided that another convention should be held, in the summer of 1787, to draw up a constitution for the new State.<sup>1</sup>

Virginia thus, with great propriety, made the acquiescence of Congress a condition precedent to the formation of the new State. Wilkinson immediately denounced this condition and demanded that Kentucky declare herself an independent State forthwith, no matter what Congress or Virginia might say. All the disorderly, unthinking, and separatist elements followed his

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, i., 224.



lead. Had his policy been adopted the result would probably have been a civil war; and at the least there would have followed a period of anarchy and confusion, and a condition of things similar to that obtaining at this very time in the territory of Franklin. The most enlightened and far-seeing men of the district were alarmed at the outlook; and a vigorous campaign in favor of orderly action was begun, under the lead of men like the Marshalls. These men were themselves uncompromisingly in favor of statehood for Kentucky; but they insisted that it should come in an orderly way, and not by a silly and needless revolution, which could serve no good purpose and was certain to entail much disorder and suffering upon the community. They insisted, furthermore, that there should be no room for doubt in regard to the new State's entering the Union.

There were thus two well-defined parties, and there were hot contests for seats in the convention. One unforeseen event delayed the organization of that body. When the time that it should have convened arrived, Clark and Logan were making their raids against the Shawnees and the Wabash Indians. So many members-elect were absent in command of their respective militia companies that the convention merely met to adjourn, no quorum to transact business being obtained until January, 1787. The convention

then sent to the Virginia Legislature explaining the reason for the delay, and requesting that the terms of the act of separation already passed should be changed to suit the new conditions.

Virginia had so far acted wisely; but now she in her turn showed unwisdom, for her Legislature passed a new act, providing for another convention to be held in August, 1787, the separation from Virginia only to be consummated if Congress, prior to July 4, 1788, should agree to the erection of the State and provide for its admission to the Union. When news of this act, with its requirement of needless and tedious delay, reached the Kentucky convention, it adjourned for good, with much chagrin.

Wilkinson and the other separatist leaders took advantage of this very natural chagrin to inflame the minds of the people against both Virginia and Congress. It was at this time that the Westerners became deeply stirred by exaggerated reports of the willingness of Congress to yield the right to navigate the Mississippi; and the separatist chiefs fanned their discontent by painting the danger as real and imminent, although they must speedily have learned that it had already ceased to exist. Moreover, there was much friction between the Federal and Virginian authorities and the Kentucky militia officers in reference to the Indian raids. The Kentuckians showed a dis-

position to include all Indians, good and bad alike, in the category of foes. On the other hand, the home authorities were inclined to forbid the Kentuckians to make the offensive return-forays which could alone render successful their defensive warfare against the savages. All these causes combined to produce much irritation, and the separatists began to talk rebellion. One of their leaders, Innes, in a letter to the Governor of Virginia, threatened that Kentucky would revolt not only from the parent State, but from the Union, if heed were not paid to her wishes and needs.<sup>1</sup>

However, at this time Wilkinson started on his first trading voyage to New Orleans, and the district was freed from his very undesirable presence. He was the main-spring of the movement in favor of lawless separation; for the furtive, restless, unscrupulous man had a talent for intrigue which rendered him dangerous at a crisis of such a kind. In his absence the feeling cooled. The convention met in September, 1787, and acted with order and propriety, passing an act which provided for statehood upon the terms and conditions laid down by Virginia. The act went through by a nearly unanimous vote, only two members dissenting, while three or four refused to vote either way. Both Virginia and the Continental Congress were notified of the action taken.

<sup>1</sup> Green, 83.

The only adverse comment that could be made on the proceedings was that in the address to Congress there was expressed a doubt, which was almost equivalent to a threat, as to what the district would do if it was not given full life as a state. But this fear as to the possible consequences was real, and many persons who did not wish for even a constitutional separation, nevertheless favored it because they dreaded lest the turbulent and disorderly elements might break out in open violence if they saw themselves chained indefinitely to those whose interests were, as they believed, hostile to theirs. The lawless and shiftless folk, and the extreme separatists, as a whole, wished for complete and absolute independence of both State and nation, because it would enable them to escape paying their share of the Federal and State debts, would permit them to confiscate the lands of those whom they called "non-resident monopolizers," and would allow of their treating with the Indians according to their own desires. The honest, hardworking, forehanded, and farsighted people thought that the best way to defeat these mischievous agitators was to take the matter into their own hands, and provide for Kentucky's being put on an exact level with the older States.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS. Madison Papers, Wallace to Madison, November 12, 1787.

With Wilkinson's return to Kentucky, after his successful trading trip to New Orleans, the disunion agitation once more took formidable form. The news of his success excited the cupidity of every mercantile adventurer, and the whole district became inflamed with desire to reap the benefits of the rich river trade; and, naturally, the people formed the most exaggerated estimate of what these benefits would be. Chafing at the way the restrictions imposed by the Spanish officials hampered their commerce, the people were readily led by Wilkinson and his associates to consider the Federal authorities as somehow to blame because these restrictions were not removed.

The discontent was much increased by the growing fury of the Indian ravages. There had been a lull in the murderous woodland warfare during the years immediately succeeding the close of the Revolution, but the storm had again gathered. The hostility of the savages had grown steadily. By the summer of 1787 the Kentucky frontier was suffering much. The growth of the district was not stopped, nor were there any attempts made against it by large war bands; and in the thickly settled regions life went on as usual. But the outlying neighborhoods were badly punished, and the county lieutenants were clamorous in their appeals for aid to the Governor of Virginia. They wrote that so many settlers had been

killed on the frontier that the others had either left their clearings and fled to the interior for safety, or else had gathered in the log forts, and so were unable to raise crops for the support of their families. Militia guards and small companies of picked scouts were kept continually patrolling the exposed regions near the Ohio, but the forays grew fiercer, and the harm done was great.<sup>1</sup> In their anger the Kentuckians denounced the Federal Government for not aiding them, the men who were loudest in their denunciations being the very men who were most strenuously bent on refusing to adopt the new constitution, which alone could give the National Government the power to act effectually in the interest of the people.

While the spirit of unrest and discontent was high, the question of ratifying or rejecting this new Federal Constitution came up for decision. The Wilkinson party, and all the men who believed in a weak central government, or who wished the Federal tie dissolved outright, were, of course, violently opposed to ratification. Many weak or short-sighted men, and the doctrinaires and theorists—most of the members of the Danville political club, for instance—announced that they wished to ratify the Constitution, but only after it had been amended. As such prior amend-

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 71, vol. ii., pp. 561, 563.

ment was impossible, this amounted merely to playing into the hands of the separatists; and the men who followed it were responsible for the by no means creditable fact that most of the Kentucky members in the Virginia convention voted against ratification. Three of them, however, had the patriotism and foresight to vote in favor of the Constitution.

Another irritating delay in the march toward statehood now occurred. In June, 1788, the Continental Congress declared that it was expedient to erect Kentucky into a State.<sup>1</sup> But immediately afterwards news came that the Constitution had been ratified by the necessary nine States, and that the new government was, therefore, practically in being. This meant the dissolution of the old confederation, so that there was no longer any object in admitting Kentucky to membership, and Congress thereupon very wisely refused to act further in the matter. Unfortunately, Brown, who was the Kentucky delegate in Congress, was one of the separatist leaders. He wrote home an account of the matter, in which he painted the refusal as due to the jealousy felt by the East for the West. As a matter of fact, the delegates from all the States, except Virginia, had concurred in the action taken. Brown suppressed this fact, and used language carefully

<sup>1</sup> State Department MSS., No. 20, vol. i., p. 341, etc.

calculated to render the Kentuckians hostile to the Union.

Naturally, all this gave an impetus to the separatist movement. The district held two conventions, in July and again in November, during the year 1788; and in both of them the separatist leaders made determined efforts to have Kentucky forthwith erect herself into an independent State. In uttering their opinions and desires they used vague language as to what they would do when once separated from Virginia. It is certain that they bore in mind, at the time at least, the possibility of separating outright from the Union and entering into a close alliance with Spain. The moderate men, headed by those who were devoted to the national idea, strenuously opposed this plan; they triumphed, and Kentucky merely sent a request to Virginia for an act of separation in accordance with the recommendations of Congress.<sup>1</sup>

It was in connection with these conventions that there appeared the first newspaper ever printed in this new West; the West which lay no longer among the Alleghanies, but beyond them. It was a small weekly sheet, called the *Kentucke Gazette*, and the first number appeared in August, 1787. The editor and publisher was one John Bradford, who brought his printing-press down

<sup>1</sup> See Marshall and Green for this year.



the river on a flat-boat; and some of the type were cut out of dogwood. In politics, the paper sided with the separatists and clamored for revolutionary action by Kentucky.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the extreme separatist was, unquestionably, to keep Kentucky out of the Union and turn her into a little independent nation,—a nation without a present or a future, an English-speaking Uruguay or Ecuador. The back of this separatist movement was broken by the action of the fall convention of 1788, which settled definitely that Kentucky should become a State of the Union. All that remained was to decide on the precise terms of the separation from Virginia. There was at first a hitch over these, the Virginia Legislature making terms to which the district convention of 1789 would not consent; but Virginia then yielded the points in dispute, and the Kentucky convention of 1790 provided for the admission of the State to the Union in 1792, and for holding a constitutional convention to decide upon the form of government, just before the admission.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Kentucky was saved from the career of ignoble dishonor to which she would have been doomed by the success of the disunion faction.

<sup>1</sup> Durrett Collection, *Kentucke Gazette*, September 20, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, i., 342, etc.

She was saved from the day of small things. Her interests became those of a nation which was bound to succeed greatly or to fail greatly. Her fate was linked for weal or for woe with the fate of the mighty Republic.

END OF VOLUME IV.









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