

## 12. Blackfish Lays Siege

**B**LACKFISH and his Shawnee warriors had actually started on the warpath while Boone's band was hovering near their villages. But in spite of the pitched battle that had been fought, the Shawnees seem to have had no idea that the white raiders were still out. Neither do they seem to have hurried to reach Boonesborough before the white men could get back. Moluntha, "the Shawnee King," certainly knew that Boone's party had been in the Ohio country, because a day or two later he told Boone so.

The Indians were a large body of warriors and large bodies of troops always travel slowly. They crossed the Ohio near Cabin Creek in the vicinity of modern Maysville, went on to the Upper Blue Licks, and then followed the old buffalo trace towards Boonesborough. On September 5 Boone and his men slipped past them in the woods at the Lower Blue Licks and reached the fort at Boonesborough without being molested, bringing full information. One man's feet gave out and he lingered a day in the woods with one companion, returning safely the next night.

Knowing that the enemy would arrive at once, Boonesborough spent its last night of peace in final preparations, cleaning and repairing rifles, molding and trimming bullets—slow business, since the molds made only one or two at a time—and filling all available vessels with water.

Boone himself reckoned the enemy's numbers as 444 Indians and twelve Frenchmen—that is, French-Canadians. He was probably right, for on August 17, 1778, the British Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton who had sent out the expedition officially reported "at least 400 Indians assembled to attack the Fort of Kentucke where Captain Boone was taken last year," while there were other large war parties on the Ohio. The Indians were led by Boone's foster-father, Blackfish, war chief of the Shawnees, with the French-Canadian Lieutenant Antoine Dagneaux De Quindre, of the Detroit militia, as aide. A certain Isadore Chêne went with them as interpreter for the Wyandots and Ottawas, and they were also accompanied by Peter Drouillard, a trader who later rescued Kenton. Other Indian chiefs were Moluntha, who had led many raids into Kentucky; Catabecassa (Black Hoof), who had been at Braddock's defeat; and Blackbird, the Chippewa chief, who later left the British side and joined the Americans.

With the warriors came a pack train. They had all the ammunition they could possibly need, and soon made lavish use of it. The Indians had been armed and even provided with war paint by the British Army. A report of Hamilton's from Detroit in this very month lists eighty pounds of rose pink and 550 pounds of vermilion. Indians liked to be brilliant, but this was enough to daub up a small army. A more sinister item in the same inventory is "150 doz scalping knives." Even Blackfish's army could not use them all.

Boone's patrol rode into the fort on September 6. The Indians, close behind them, camped that night on the north bank of the Kentucky River. Early in the morning they slipped across at a place not far from the fort but safely screened from view, still pointed out as Blackfish Ford. Getting the neighboring ridge between themselves and Boonesborough, they moved down under its shelter and then crossed under cover of the trees and

underbrush until they were fairly near the fort. It was a model bit of minor tactics for infantry.

The Indians seem to have had no very bad intentions in the beginning. Throughout his life they cherished a queer, half-humorous fondness for Daniel Boone. They had refused a huge sum for him at Detroit, and as Boone himself said, during his captivity he had "had a great share in the affection of my new parents, brothers, sisters, and friends," as well as the "entire friendship" of the chief Moluntha, now with the warriors surrounding the fort. Even after several more years of warfare the four Shawnee braves who later cornered Boone unarmed in his tobacco shed and could easily have killed him, treated the affair as an enormous practical joke—the American Indian always had a keen sense of humor. They merely tried to catch him again and take him home with them.

In the main, Blackfish and his men had kept the bargain made when Boone's party of salt-makers were captured. None of the prisoners had been killed or tortured, and Boone had received the signal honor of adoption by Chief Blackfish himself. What more, from the Shawnee point of view, could a reasonable man's heart desire? It is mortifying to have your beloved tribal kinsman show you a clean pair of heels and run away. But the Shawnees seem still to have believed that their adopted brother—at least subconsciously—loved them after all, even if he had had the bad taste to escape.

Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton himself believed that he could persuade the Kentuckians to leave their homes and their allegiance to the American cause and come to Detroit as faithful subjects of the King. Considering how nearly Kentucky did come to breaking away from the Union a few years later, after the Revolution, this was not a wholly vain hope; and it accounts for the friendly attitude of both sides as the siege began.

The Indians were first seen about ten o'clock. Daniel Boone

was outside the stockade, rifle in hand, and his nephews, Moses and Isaiah, sons of Squire Boone, were watering horses. Seeing men in the distance, the little boys supposed they were the expected reënforcements and were just about to ride out to meet them when their uncle warned them that these were Indians and sent them inside the stockade.

The long line of Indians straggled into view over the hill, displaying the British and French flags. Making no further effort to conceal their presence, the invaders immediately sent their English-speaking envoy, the negro Pompey, into the clearing with a flag of truce. The black messenger climbed on the cornfield fence and waved his white flag as he hailed the fort, asking if Captain Boone were there. The Shawnees had rather expected him to get lost and die in the woods, though a white man living with them had been sure that he would go "straight as a leather string, home."

The settlers let Pompey hail again before they answered. They did not want to appear too eager. But when he called once more, Boone himself answered, "Yes."

His presence once recognized, Pompey shouted that Hamilton expected Boone to fulfill his promises and surrender peaceably. The Indians had letters from the lieutenant-governor, and they wanted Daniel Boone to come out and get them.

The leaders inside the stockade took hurried counsel together and then yelled across the stockade to Pompey that no one would come out; but that he might bring the letters up to the stockade if he wanted to. At this, Blackfish himself called to Boone from some distance, addressing him as his son Sheltopee, and asking him to come out.

Boone agreed to meet him at a certain stump, walked out to Pompey and was taken to the chief. The Indians spread a blanket for Boone to sit on and then clustered around him. As the

watching settlers saw them close in, they concluded in despair that "Boone was gone."

But Blackfish was still friendly. He and Boone shook hands like the best friends in the world, and blandly asked after each other's health. It was now about three months since they had met.

There was a certain strain in the conversation:

"Well, Boone, how d'y?"

"How d'y, Blackfish?"

"Well, Boone, what made you run away from me?"

"I wanted to see my wife and children so bad that I could not stay any longer," said Sheltowee gravely.

"If you had only let me know," replied Blackfish, "I would have let you go at any time, and rendered you every assistance."

It was no time for Sheltowee to express incredulity. He did, however, at length venture to ask Blackfish why the Shawnees had not fought more stoutly when surprised in a minor skirmish a few weeks before. Blackfish said nothing, but clapped his hands in quick repetition to imitate rifles. The white men's fire had been too fast.

Blackfish handed over a letter and proclamation from Hamilton, urging surrender, warning against the folly of resistance, pointing out that Indians were hard to control and reminding Boone that resistance would probably end in a massacre. Boone explained to Blackfish that he had been away so many months that he was no longer in command. He told the Indians that "there great virginia father had sent them a bigger Captain since there frend Boone had been with them; and that he wold not surrender the fortress, notwithstanding there friend Boone wished them to do so."

Going back to the fort, Captain Boone presently emerged with Major William Bailey Smith, elaborately attired in scarlet uniform and "macaroni hat" complete with ostrich plume. This,

as the simple red men could see, was indeed a commander. But still there was no final agreement.

Blackfish remarked at some stage of the conversations that his warriors were hungry. The woods were full of deer, but Boone, knowing perfectly well that the Indians would take what they wanted anyway, kept up his friendly pose. He told his "father" to let his warriors help themselves to the station's provisions.

"There, you see plenty of cattle and corn; take what you need, but don't let any be wasted." Both now retired, and the Indians fell upon the supplies.

Inside the fort there was little debate. Daniel Boone offered to do whatever the rest decided. Being no longer in command, he had no intention of taking the whole responsibility of decision on himself. The Indians were getting angry. They could not be put off with negotiations much longer. They had promised to take the Kentuckians safely to Detroit and would probably do so. But that meant surrender. If Boonesborough resisted and lost, there would be a dreadful massacre of women and children. There were obvious advantages in yielding, and if Daniel Boone presented them to the anxious little council, he did no more than his duty.

Boonesborough, however, was unanimous for battle to the death and no surrender. Colonel Callaway sputtered indignantly that his family at least was not going to grow up among the Indians. Squire Boone, the pious Hardshell Baptist, said "he would never give up; he would fight till he died." The rest were of the same opinion.

"Well, well," remarked Daniel philosophically, "I'll die with the rest."

But however willing to fight, all realized the value of delay. Virginia had been getting reinforcements ready for weeks. No one knew how soon help might arrive. They must negotiate

with the Indians as long and as slowly as they possibly could.

Daniel is said to have brought back word from Blackfish that to make peace all the officers must go over to his camp, out of sight (which meant out of rifle range) of the fort. Callaway vehemently opposed the idea, and it was finally agreed that the Indian chiefs would have to come up somewhere near the stockade.

Even to the stoutest heart it all looked pretty hopeless. Boonesborough was very weakly defended. There were only thirty men and twenty boys, including a few pack-horse drivers who had recently come in as temporary visitors. There were a number of women, including Boone's daughter, Jemima Callaway, and his brother Squire's wife, and a number of children; but there was no need to worry about Rebecca. She had been safe in the settlements for some time.

Though the settlers anxiously debating behind their log walls did not know it, the trusting aborigines had already been grossly deceived by a quick-witted Kentucky prisoner with the added virtues of a really good liar. Captured not long before, he had elaborately persuaded Hamilton that each of the Kentucky forts had lately been reënforced with three companies of seventy men each! Hamilton had passed this apparently important, but completely false, information along to his red allies.

The half-dug second well was badly needed now, when hands to finish it could not be spared from the loopholes; but the Indians made no effort to interfere with the bucket-carriers, who went from the fort to the Lick Spring for Boonesborough's usual water supply. The horses of Boone's reconnoitering band, who had returned just ahead of the war party, were safe within the stockade, and to the delight of the settlers the Indians let their livestock alone, killing only what they needed. Some of the cattle came up to the fort for milking as usual at sundown, and were brought inside. Under cover of darkness a few bold

spirits slipped out and brought in vegetables from the garden, which had been planted just outside the stockade, where it could be temporarily protected from marauders.

Boone, Callaway, and Major W. B. Smith went out to meet Blackfish, Moluntha, the Canadian commander, De Quindre, and some twenty warriors. Boone, like other frontiersmen, had at least a smattering of Shawnee, and De Quindre probably spoke English, but the interpreter Chêne was retained. Later Boone and others were confused by the two French names, and Boone's ghost-writing biographer, John Filson, got the idea that a wholly imaginary Duquesne was the French commander—an error followed by a good many writers, though the British documents since revealed make the whole thing perfectly clear.

The situation was slightly embarrassing to Sheltoewe. Both Blackfish and Moluntha, "the Shawnee King," had shown him special kindness until his escape a few weeks before. To make matters worse, somebody had killed Moluntha's son "the other day, over the Ohio," and the grim old father now reproached Boone for it. Indians were always killing or getting killed in the woods, and there is no telling who was really responsible for this brave's death. Boone had just returned from this very country; but the only Indians his men had killed had been an old Indian killed by Boone, and Simon Kenton's victim. Boone was able to assure Moluntha that he personally had had nothing to do with it. But Moluntha replied: "It was you, I tracked you here to this place."

Nevertheless, a panther-skin was spread on a log for the ambassadors to sit upon, and warriors courteously held branches over their heads. Blackfish displayed a wampum belt in three colors—black for warning, white for peace, red for war—and ended his speech with the words, "I come to take you away easy."



Major W. B. Smith remarked that it would be hard to transport so many women and children.

"I have brought forty horses," said Blackfish, "on purpose for the old people, women and children to ride."

Boone asked for the rest of that day and all of the next to consider the matter. It was agreed that the Indians would stay beyond a line thirty yards from the fort, and the whites would not carry arms outside the stockade. Blackfish assured Boone there would be no wanton slaughter of their stock. An escort of warriors accompanied Boonesborough's negotiators homeward, as far as the line agreed upon.

Blackfish gallantly presented seven smoked buffalo tongues for the women, and though some suspicious settlers feared they were poisoned, the meat turned out to be perfectly good. At one time Blackfish even suggested that he and some warriors would like to see Boone's squaws, but Sheltopee replied gravely that white squaws were very much afraid of Indians. It was all very handsome and quite unlike the usual methods of Indian raiders. They were very friendly out there, strolling in the clearing together, with the rifles covering every move from the fort and with Indian rifles just as ready back in the underbrush.

The Indians had been outmaneuvered in this backwoods diplomacy. They had practically admitted that they had no artillery which, though it had never yet appeared in Kentucky, was always feared. Furthermore, if Blackfish really had brought forty horses to take away women and children, he had brought far too many. Evidently, then, he had a wholly exaggerated idea of the numbers in the fort. Believing the tales of that unidentified but admirably plausible Kentucky romanticist who had been captured not long before, the war chief of the Shawnees supposed that the force inside the walls was very nearly equal to his own, besides being well protected behind a strong stockade, newly repaired. The Kentuckians had beaten off his war-

rriors easily enough the year before. Their boldness, in the face of a large Indian force, spoke for itself.

The Kentuckians encouraged the delusion. Colonel Callaway had quietly staged a sly little masquerade. Women, children, even the slaves were dressed up, armed and kept moving about inside the fort. Great numbers of heads, or at least hats, were perpetually popping over the stockade or bobbing about behind it; and a man with a head, two hands, and two or three hats is as good as Cerberus when the copper-colored census-taker has to observe from bushes across a clearing over which rifles will soon be cracking.

All the hats and hunting shirts in the settlement were pressed into service and it is said that dummies were rigged up to make the showing more impressive. The big fort gate was kept wide open to let the Indians see the fictitious multitude. Pompey seemed unduly eager to get close to the fort. He might easily have found out too much and had to be warned to keep his distance or he would be shot.

There were several other reasons why the peace proposal, remarkable though it was, could not be regarded as wholly insincere. Hamilton had shown Boone a great deal of kindness in the preceding March, he certainly bore him no personal ill-will now, and rather imagined the surrender was already prepared. The Indians had been much impressed by George Rogers Clark's success in first capturing, and then winning over to the American side, the French settlers around Cahokia and Kaskaskia, who were on friendly terms with the redskins. As John Bowman wrote to Clark in October, one reason why the settlers at Boonesborough were willing to negotiate was that "Hearing that the Indians gladly treated with you at the Illinois gave them reason to think that the Indians were sincere."

There was a good deal of changing sides about this time. Two of the enemy's leaders were about to go over to the Americans

—the Chippewa chief, Blackbird, now with the force outside Boonesborough, and the Canadian Beaubien, who had helped capture the salt-makers at the Blue Licks. In Detroit the British governor knew that many of his French subjects were inclined to make friends with the Americans and entertained justifiable suspicions of some of the British. It was easy to change sides, since the revolting Colonists were quite as British by blood as the King's faithful subjects and sometimes members of the same families.

Some Kentuckians eventually joined the Detroit Militia. On the other hand, part of the Detroit Militia deserted to the American side, and Hamilton later declared that "secret treason" had ruined his government at Detroit. Things were all very mixed-up out there in the backwoods, where the hard task of survival was the main problem.

Blackfish's proposal was one of the most amazingly generous ever made by an overwhelmingly strong force to an enemy one sixth or one eighth their number, but it made much more sense then than it makes after the lapse of a century and a half. The Indians were probably far more sincere than the whites. They never dreamed of the rejection of such favorable terms, and they really did want their adopted brother, Big Turtle, to come back to them.

Blackfish remained impressed by the glowing prospects of white coöperation with the Shawnees that Boone had drawn while a captive. Moreover, he still did not suspect how much stronger his own force was. He probably never found out.

Preparations for battle went on swiftly inside the stockade, while outside everything was peaceful. Powder was served out, flints were picked, rifles cleaned, bullets molded—women and children working with the men. The night passed with sentries alert in the blockhouses and men dozing by their rifles, but not

an Indian appeared. If Blackfish's men kept watch over the fort, there was not a sign of their presence.

The following day was equally quiet; but at evening came the white flag again, followed by the impassive chiefs. Boone himself told them the bad news. The Kentuckians were "determined to defend the fort while a man was living." Gravely the chiefs moved to one side to discuss this unexpected reply. Then they returned with a proposal equally unexpected. Through the interpreter, De Quindre insisted that they had come on a peaceful, not a warlike, errand. Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton had ordered them to avoid bloodshed. Allowing the cattle to enter the stockade was evidence of their pacific intentions. Even if the Kentuckians did not wish to return to Detroit, it might still be possible to negotiate a peace treaty. Why not have still a third meeting to draft it? If nine of the Kentucky leaders would sign, the Indians would withdraw, and they would all live as friends thereafter. This, as Boone remarked, "sounded grateful to our ears."

When negotiations were resumed next day, the same atmosphere of friendliness prevailed. By this time all the negotiators were well acquainted. As John Bowman wrote a month afterward, two days were "taken up in this matter till they Became Quite fimeleyer with one another." In spite of that, the settlers distrusted all Indians enough to make sure that the peace conference should meet, not inside the fort as the Indians ingenuously proposed, but in the hollow of the Lick Spring, only about eighty yards from the stockade and easily swept by rifle fire from it.

Here the negotiators gathered around a cloth-covered outdoor table, Indians, British, and Americans. A clerk took down the decisions. It was all very formal. The British union jack (and, for some queer reason, the flag of France, then fighting on the American side) were displayed by De Quindre. Boonesborough

possessed an American flag by this time, but there is no record the settlers brought it along.

Only eight of the Kentuckians, instead of the nine stipulated, appeared at the council table: Daniel and Squire Boone; the suspicious Richard Callaway and his nephew Flanders (Daniel Boone's son-in-law); William Hancock, like Boone an escaped prisoner; Boone's old associate Stephen Hancock; Major William Bailey Smith, later historian of the siege, and William Buchanan. At the stockade, masqueraders were showing themselves in great numbers for the benefit of Blackfish, De Quindre, and a large number of Indians who now emerged from the forest.

There was a prolonged discussion. The Indians showed the white negotiators every hospitality. Skins were spread as seats. Food and drink from the British commissariat at Detroit were provided, a subtle temptation for the pioneers, who had enjoyed nothing of this sort for years. There was much conversation, in the course of which Squire Boone, the preacher, created a sensation by mendaciously remarking that George Rogers Clark, the terror of the Indians, was on his way to Boonesborough with a large army.

After a day of this curious combination of war, revelry, and diplomacy, an agreement was reached. It was to be signed the next day. Blackfish stipulated that eighteen warriors should attend him, so that all the villages represented in his army would also be represented at the conference. Boone and the others objected in vain. Blackfish was adamant on this point. Otherwise, he explained, the Indians could not be induced to regard the treaty as binding. The settlers did not dare bring an equal number, for it was not safe to risk having half their forces surprised outside the fort. They retired knowing that they would be outnumbered more than two to one when the treaty was signed.

The Indians may have been sincere in their first offers; Boone and the pioneers never had been. They had merely been playing for time under a cloak of friendship and eagerness for peace from the very start. Now it was the Indians' turn to try a little duplicity. A number of signs increased the settlers' suspicions. Toward evening Blackfish was seen walking around the fort at a little distance and surveying it carefully from every angle. From the Indian camp came the sounds of the war dance. It was a queer way to prepare for the signing of a peace treaty.

During the night braves crept down to the hollow by the spring and took cover amid the weeds, which at the end of summer were rank and tall enough to hide a good many of them. Others hid rifles near the treaty grounds. In the morning some cattle, probably scenting Indians, were seen uneasily hanging about the fort. When the visible warriors were told that the "white squaws were afraid to go out to milk," the Indians, anxious to oblige, courteously helped drive the cows up to the fort, where they were promptly secured for the rest of the siege.

Meantime, the women of Boonesborough were busily preparing a feast for the negotiators. The idea was to give an impression of abundance, as if Boonesborough were provisioned for a siege of any length. But after dinner the extra tables, the pewter plates, the knives and forks were carried back to the fort.

Diplomacy began again. All were unarmed, but Boone and the rest had thoughtfully laid their loaded rifles just outside the gate. Inside, every porthole held a rifleman, and the block-house nearest the treaty-makers held a special party of picked marksmen. The suspicious white negotiators had left orders to fire if they waved their hats. The riflemen were not to look for individual targets but to "fire into the lump." The chances were two to one they would hit Indians.

The distrustful Boonesborough men noted uneasily that this time Blackfish was accompanied, not by the older counselors

who had been with him previously, but by young and vigorous warriors. When the Kentuckians pointed this out, the chief had the effrontery to insist that they were the same warriors who had come the day before.

Blackfish proposed that they should "make a lasting peace and forever bury the tomahawk and live as brothers." Boone replied laconically that he "was willing." To everyone's astonishment, Blackfish then offered them six weeks to leave the country! When this was refused, he inquired:

"Brothers, by what right did you come and settle here?"

He was reminded of the Watauga treaty with the Cherokees, of which he pretended never to have heard. Turning to a Cherokee standing near, the Shawnee chief inquired if this were true. Assured by the Cherokee that it was, Blackfish was somewhat taken aback.

"Friends and Brothers," he said, "as you have purchased this land from the Cherokees and paid them for it, that entirely alters the case; you must keep it and live on it in peace." He then proposed the Ohio River as a boundary and the cessation of all hostility. The settlers were to come under Hamilton's authority and take the oath of British allegiance. To this the settlers agreed.

A warrior carried around the "pipe-tomahawk," half hatchet, half peace-pipe, the blade for war, the pipe for peace. Gravely each Indian negotiator took a puff or two as it went around the circle. Boone was instantly ablaze with new suspicion. Familiar with Indian ways, he noted that it was offered only to Indians, not to white men. One of the white men drew up the articles agreed upon. Blackfish said he must announce the agreements to his braves, and stepping to one side delivered a loud and vigorous harangue in Shawnee, largely into space, as few Indians were visible. His elocution was much admired by the listening whites, though none of them understood more than a few

words. His voice, someone later remarked, was "like old preacher Vardaman's."

When he came back, the chief made an extraordinary proposal. It was, he said, "usual with them, in making friends, to shake hands; but when they made a long and lasting peace, they caught each other by the shoulders and brought their hearts together." As there were more Indians than whites, each white brother should shake hands with two Indians at once. Blackfish obviously was adopting a custom to suit his own purposes. But it is not so surprising as it now seems that the Kentuckians fell into the trap. The suggestion was suspicious, of course, but it was not much more suspicious than most of the proceedings of the last three days, and the Indians so far had kept faith scrupulously. After all, they had just concluded a peace treaty.

Rather reluctantly, each Kentuckian held out both hands. An Indian, apparently in the best of humor, seized each hand of each pioneer—two to one. Blackfish himself approached his son Sheltopee and interlocked his right arm with Boone's left, laying his other hand on the other arm, while another Indian also took hold of him. It was instantly apparent that something was wrong, for the grips tightened into a good deal more than a mere handclasp or embrace.

"Go!" cried Blackfish.

At a little distance a warrior pulled a rifle from under his blanket and fired a signal shot into the air. Each pair of warriors tried to drag their particular "brother" over the high, steep banks of the Kentucky River, where they would be under cover and could be dealt with at leisure.

But the pioneers, their nerves taut with suspicion, "began to dispute the matter though unarmed." Colonel Callaway, who had been the most suspicious of all, was the first to break away, and the others shook themselves loose eventually, though "they had a dreadful scuffle." Major Smith, having broken loose,



seized one of the Indians with whom he had shaken hands. But as he did so, a ball from the fort killed the warrior and they fell together, Smith on top. He picked himself up unhurt and made for home. Daniel Boone sent Blackfish sprawling, as he shook himself free, and the startled Indians seem to have thought that the chief was dead. For a crucial moment their fighting slackened. The warrior who had carried the pipe-tomahawk around—it was the only weapon at the scene—struck at Boone, but the blow landed between his shoulders as the prospective victim was bending over. He suffered only a slash on the head and a wound on the back. A second blow with the tomahawk missed Boone but hit Major Smith, “who was that instant passing rapidly by.” Squire Boone, in his excitement, threw the warriors off “as so many little children.” He ran a few steps, was hit by a bullet that knocked him down, picked himself up and made for the fort again. He did not reach it until the gate had been slammed and barred, but he and another man got in by a cabin door, previously designated and guarded for just such emergencies.

It was a lively few minutes. All the negotiators ran for the stockade as soon as they could break away and get in a blow or two. They waved their hats madly as they ran, in the agreed signal. The fort was blazing with rifle fire. From the underbrush Indian rifles blazed an answer, while between the running men the bullets whistled.

Except Squire Boone, all escaped without injury or with slight wounds. One negotiator could not get back into the fort at all. He spent the rest of the day outside on his stomach, earnestly hugging the ground behind a good thick stump. He had no rifle and could not defend himself. The Indians either did not know he was there or could not reach him in the face of the covering fire of the sharpshooters in the blockhouse, who knew he was outside well enough and could probably see him, but

could not go out to his aid. With bullets flying in both directions, there was nothing for the distracted diplomat to do but lie low, keep the stump between himself and the Indians, and pray they would not get around on one side and pot him from the flank. Only when darkness fell was the poor fellow able to worm his way to the gates and safety.

Inside the southwest blockhouse, one William Stafford had beguiled the tedium of his wait during the negotiations by drawing a bead upon an unconscious warrior seated on a log not far from the council. As Stafford fingered his trigger and thought what a fine mark the unsuspecting brave would make, the Indian signal gun cracked and the scuffle commenced. Stafford pulled the trigger and the warrior fell dead.

The Indians were equally ready. On the upper log of another blockhouse, a certain Ambrose Coffey was stretched, lazily surveying the scene and quite unaware that Indian rifles were trained upon him from the underbrush. As the fight commenced, fourteen bullets went through his clothes, but he tumbled into the blockhouse unhurt amid the unsympathetic jeers of his rapidly firing comrades.

There was a great deal of noise. The Indians gave the war whoop. The frontiersmen shouted defiance back. Terrified women and children screamed and cried. Dogs began to howl and bark. The cattle stampeded round and round the fort enclosure. Matters were not helped by the panic of Boonesborough's Pennsylvania Dutch potter, Tice Prock. Instead of joining the riflemen, he fled into Squire Boone's blacksmith shop and hid under the bellows. Mrs. Richard Callaway chased him out with a brush, in spite of the poor fellow's shrieks of "Py sure, I was not made for a fighter!" Her husband, seeing there was no hope of getting him to fight, set him to digging the well deeper, and poor Tice dug away with alacrity in an earnest effort to get as

much earth as possible between him and the bullets as fast as he could.

Presently, however, things quieted down a little, though some rifles went on cracking till dark. Once the Kentuckians were inside the fort, there was very little to fire at, though the Indians watched the portholes and tried to fire into each one that opened. It was useless to rush the palisades, or at least the Indians soon concluded that it was after one or two attempts, not knowing how few the defenders really were.

At the first lull in the firing, Daniel Boone took advantage of the opportunity to cut the bullet out of his brother's shoulder. Squire had managed to fire two shots, with a little help in loading his rifle. No longer able to load at all, he retired to bed in his cabin, valorously taking along a broad ax. This he stood by the bedside, hoping to get in a whack or two before he died if the Indians broke in. Then Daniel and the others had their own wounds dressed and the excitement died down until the Indians attempted a charge, which was quickly repulsed.

Seeing that their steady fire on the fort produced no results, the Indians eventually scattered flax along a fence leading up to the walls and set it on fire, hoping to ignite the wooden palisades. The settlers ran a trench under the wall and out to the fence. Thus sheltered, men crawled out and pulled down part of the fence connecting with the stockade. One night an Indian crept up to within fifteen paces of the fort near this point. London, Colonel Henderson's negro, crawled out into the ditch and fired at the flash of the Indian rifle. Something had gone wrong with their priming, however, and both flintlocks simply snapped without firing. For some time each man aimed at the sound. They went on snapping their locks at each other until the Indian rifle "fired clear" and killed London.

Blackfish now tried stratagem. In the forest quiet, the people in the stockade could hear the sounds of ponies and pack-horses

being caught, saddled, and loaded. Orders were loudly bawled from the thickets nearest the fort. They were mostly in Shawnee but many frontiersmen knew something of the language. During the night all the Indians who could find hiding places crept up as close to the fort as they could get. Just before dawn, while it was still too early to distinguish anything clearly, the whole Indian force—or so it was meant to seem—retreated with a great deal of noise.

It was all just a little too obvious. The red man could drift through the woods with no more noise than a scalped ghost, as the Kentuckians knew only too well. The noisy departure was all a most un-Indian-like proceeding—particularly the steady tooting of a bugle which for some reason De Quindre had brought along, and which now sounded steadily, growing fainter and fainter as the retreating column drew farther and farther off into the hills. Then the Indians slipped silently back.

These far from subtle maneuvers would hardly have deceived a child. They did not for an instant deceive the suspicious Boone listening intently behind the log fortifications and peering cautiously over the upright logs and from the loopholes. Usually there was a strong temptation to rush out at the first assurance that the Indians had gone. The interior of the stockade, especially when cattle, hogs, and horses were penned in with men, women, and children, was uncomfortable, unpleasant, and crowded. Food was scarce and monotonous, water scanty, sanitation deplorably crude. People got on one another's nerves, what with noise, sleeplessness, anxiety, pain, and danger.

The natural thing was to let the stock out to fresh pasture and water—two things no raiders could destroy—as soon as the enemy disappeared. The settlers were always eager to see what had happened to their crops and cabins outside the stockade. Usually they took the precaution of sending out scouts or small patrols to search the woods and make sure that the Indians were

really gone, for even after a real withdrawal small parties of scalp-hunters were likely to lurk about, hoping to kill a man or two, or capture a woman or boy here or there.

This time, however, De Quindre and Blackfish had completely overshot the mark. The settlers were so contemptuously sure the withdrawal was a feint that they did not so much as open the gates or risk sending out a scout. Silence—the menacing silence common in Indian wars—came down upon the clearing. The two parties of Indians lay waiting. Behind their defenses, the Kentuckians waited too—white patience against the red man's.

It was the white men who waited longer. After a little while the Indians realized that their stratagem had failed, and the clearing again blazed with their rifle shots. All day long the Indians fired at every chink and cranny in the Boonesborough defenses. One man was wounded because two logs had not been closely joined. All day long the frontiersmen blazed back at every stir in the underbrush or at every stump that could shelter a redskin.

So far, the invaders had achieved precisely nothing. Now, however, a new sound arose amid the firing. From the shelter of the steep river bank, where the Kentucky fire could not reach, woodchoppers could be heard at work. It sounded as if roots were being cut. Then the sounds changed, and in the clear water of the Kentucky River a broad muddy band appeared. The water upstream remained clear. Downstream the muddy water extended farther and farther, its upper end remaining always at the same spot. Over the edge of the bank, a watcher caught sight of a cedar pole which waved back and forth in a curious way. It looked, he reported, as if it were being used to loosen dirt.

The Indians were digging. The Detroit militiaman, De Quindre, was about to introduce European siege warfare on

the frontier. The Indians were obviously running a mine from the river bank to the stockade. Just what they would do when their mine reached the fort was not so obvious. They might dig under the wall and let it collapse of its own weight. They might try to bring their mine up in the middle of the stockade and rush in. More likely, they intended to bring in powder and blow it up, or to build an immense fire against the logs and burn them. After the siege, huge torches made of poles and rails covered with inflammable flax and hickory bark were found lying ready.

Since it was important to see what the enemy was doing, the settlers constructed a rude watchtower out of such lumber as they could find, and pushed it up on the roof of the cabin which Richard Henderson had used for a kitchen when the fort was built. The cabin's stout log construction could easily carry the weight; the timbers of the watchtower were thick enough to turn bullets; and it went up without casualties.

From the protection of its upper story the lookouts could now peep over the edge of the steep banks and they instantly confirmed the garrison's worst fears. They could actually see the fresh earth being dumped into the river. Day and night reliefs of riflemen watched from the tower, but the Indians were too sheltered to be picked off. Pompey, the negro, occasionally bawled out a demand for surrender, or engaged in an exchange of bad language with the men in the blockhouse.

The only thing to do was to countermine; and a group of amateur engineers set to work. About three feet wide and very deep, the countermine began in the cabin under the watchtower and ran under the other cabins along the river wall of the fort. Under the blockhouse the whole floor had been dug out to a depth of four feet, so that there was plenty of room to shoot Indians as fast as they emerged. The Indians' minehead would inevitably run into this, or at least come near enough

to be detected—in fact it was not long till each side could hear the other digging.

The Indians would have to emerge—if they did emerge—from a long narrow passage, one at a time. There would be a lively skirmish, but they could be dealt with as they came out of the mine, if enough men could be spared from the walls. They would probably attack through the mine and on the surface at the same time.

To advertise to the enemy what they were doing, Boone had the garrison ostentatiously throw the excavated earth out over the stockade. He rigged a box in ropes for the purpose. Captain John Holder picked up all the biggest stones as they were dug up and with murderous intent hurled them over the bank where the Indians were lurking. There were roars of protest from the warriors who, with much profanity, bade the settlers “fight like men, and not try to kill them with stones like children.” One of those solemn, humanitarian females who are always about at the wrong time adjured him: “Don’t do so Captain, it might hurt some of the Indians, and they will be mad and have revenge for the same.”

Digging trenches, as any soldier knows, is the most exhausting labor known to man, and the hot September weather made the task none the easier. The siege dragged on. Each side tried to pick off the other’s men but everyone kept religiously under cover.

Jemima Boone showed her usual courage, moving fearlessly about the fort with ammunition and food for the men at the loopholes. Eventually, while standing at the door of her cabin, she was hit by a spent bullet in what accounts of the matter euphemistically describe as “the fleshy part of her back.” She was not much hurt, the bullet being extracted by a mere tug on the cloth it had carried into the wound.

The fire of the Indian sharpshooters, who could look down

into the stockade from the hills, became annoying, and the settlers cut doors from cabin to cabin, so that it was possible to move under cover almost the whole way around the stockade. Occasionally the Indians killed cattle with their plunging fire from the hilltops, but this merely increased the supply of fresh beef. Sad to say, however, "Old Spot," adored pet of Squire Boone's family, who often gave Indian alarms, was wounded in an anatomical area highly embarrassing to an industrious cow; but with prayerful nursing she survived and dwelt among the Boones to a ripe old age.

Settlers got hurt pretty regularly, but few were killed; and a bullet wound was common enough in those days. Boone is credited with a remarkable shot, very likely fired from the watchtower. The Shawnees' negro, Pompey, had been industriously sniping from a tall tree, and was doing his best to pick off people moving within the stockade, over which, from his lofty perch, he could fire easily enough.

"You black scoundrel," muttered Captain Boone as he raised "Old Tick-Licker," his heaviest rifle, which fired a one-ounce ball, "I'll fix your flint for you!"

At the crack of the rifle, Pompey came tumbling out of the tree, dead. When the siege ended, his was the only body found. The Indians had hidden or carried off their own dead, as usual, to prevent scalping, but no Shawnee cared in the least what had happened to the black body or woolly scalp of a negro slave. Dead or alive, a warrior's honor was safe if he still had his scalp. The bodies of Indians scalped by the whites were simply left to rot in their disgrace, but Boonesborough men secured no scalps during the siege. It was hard enough to save their own.

As Virginia Militia, the Kentuckians flew the new American flag. Its small staff had been lashed to a tall pole set up in the stockade. After several days' firing, the Indians managed to shoot the small staff to pieces, and there were war whoops from



the underbrush as the flag fell. Since the pole had no halyards, the Boonesborough men had to take it down entirely, lash the flag on again, and raise the pole anew with a defiant answering cheer. The flags of the attacking forces, displayed about three hundred yards from the fort, were never brought down.

On the seventh night Indians slipped up near enough to hurl lighted torches against the stockade—a daring venture on their part, since the torches had to be carried well within rifle range; and prancing about in the night with a lighted torch where Kentucky riflemen could see it was distinctly bad for the health. Most of them sailed harmlessly over the stockade and cabins into the open square of the fort where they could do no damage. Blazing arrows accompanied the torches. Some were wrapped in the inner fiber of the shellbark hickory, which is full of oil and burns readily. Others were filled with powder and ignited by a piece of punk which served as a crude kind of time fuse. The torches were made of bundles of this bark, an inch thick at the tip and extending loosely along the shaft to a thickness of four or five inches. The arrows were smaller bunches of the same material. Shooting from the high bluff across the river, it was fairly easy for the Indians to drop them on the cabin roofs. At times the torches, fire arrows, and flashes of rifle fire made everything so bright inside the fort that the settlers could see “to pick up a pin.”

Toward the end, Boonesborough's water supply was nearly exhausted. Squire Boone had unbreached some old muskets and inserted pistons. These improvised squirt-guns would throw a pint to a quart of water on the cabin roofs, and were distributed to the women for use if the cabins took fire.

One way of getting fire arrows off the roof was to go up with a broom and sweep them off, taking the chance of being silhouetted against the light and shot. Since the shingles were secured by a single peg each, they could often be torn off with

one jerk. Sometimes they could be punched off from inside the cabin.

But there was no safe way of reaching the torches that had been thrown against the wooden stockade on the outside. To put them out meant going outside, and Indian rifles were ready for just such a move. John Holder was the only man who took this desperate chance. Looking down from a blockhouse, he saw that a torch had landed against a cabin door which was already blazing to the top. Dashing along the stockade, he burst into the cabin, wrenched open the outer door, and doused it with a bucket of water, swearing like a demon.

Alas for John! He had escaped death from Indian bullets but trouble awaited him within the stockade. Mrs. Richard Callaway, a dauntless but very pious lady, had heard his oaths. She scolded him soundly for daring to use such language in her hearing. It was, she said, a time fitter for prayer than swearing. The agitated Holder swore in return it was at least no time for prayer.

When the torches were at their worst, it looked for a few minutes as if all were lost. If the stockade took fire, the settlers would have no choice but to rush out into the arms of the savages. Even if only a part of the stockade was burned, a storming party of Indians could burst in and end matters with the tomahawk. Despair settled down. The Kentuckians waited.

Behind the Indian lines three white men were lurking and watching all that went on. Simon Kenton and Alexander Montgomery had come back from their scouting trip too late, and found themselves cut off. They might have gone on to Logan's Station, only forty miles away; but they were used to hanging on the outskirts of Indian camps; and throughout the siege they hovered behind Blackfish's band, waiting for the chance that never came, to slip through into the fort, or to strike a blow outside where it would do the most good.

Quite unknown to them, a certain William Patton was also concealed behind the lines. His home was in Boonesborough; but he had been in the woods when the Indians arrived and had come back too late. Finding Indians all around the fort, he settled down in the woods. In the daytime he would slip off to distant hills and watch the fighting, "and sometimes in the night he would approach tolerably near." He was close at hand on the night the Indians attacked with firebrands; and finally, convinced that Boonesborough was taken, he slipped off to Logan's to give the alarm there.

His story is recorded by Daniel Trabue, who was in Logan's Station at the time: "The Indians made in the night a Dreadfull attack on the fort they run up to the fort a large number of them with large fire brands or torches and made the Dreadfullest screams and hollowing that could be imagind Mr Patten thought the Fort was taken he came to our Fort to wit Logans Fort and informed us Boonsbourough was taken and he actuly Did hear the Indians killing the people in the fort They took it by storm &C he heard the women and children & men also screaming when the indians was killing them we beleaved every word he told as he was known to the people to be a man of truth."

As a reporter, Mr. Patton left something to be desired, but he had an undeniable flair for vivid detail. From a comfortable armchair and the distance of a good, safe century or so, it is easy to laugh at his imaginings. From the underside of a wet bush on a rainy night, after a week in the woods, with the scalp very loose on your head, with several hundred murderous fiends yelling, torches flaring, and rifles banging just in front of you, these things were a little less funny. And it is probable that he did hear women scream, children cry, and men yell. It was one of Boonesborough's livelier nights.

As the settlers watched in blank despair, the fires blazed—but

only for a little while. They slowly dimmed, then flickered out. A period of misty, rainy weather had set in during the last few days of the siege. The wood was so damp from the drizzle that it would not burn.

But the digging still went on. There was a good deal of tart conversation about it across the battlements.

"What are you doing down there?" a rifleman would call from his station.

"Digging a hole," a warrior would grunt. "Blow you all to hell tonight. May be so? And what are you doing?"

"Oh, as for that, we are digging to meet you and will make a hole large enough to bury five hundred of you sons of bitches."

In the stable outside the fort was a stallion, brought in to improve the breed of frontier horses. The Shawnees slipped up and shot the animal. After that, there was a great deal of aboriginal humor:

"White man keep a horse in the house!"

"Go and feed the horse!"

"The horse wants water."

"Go take him to the river."

Sometimes the blockhouses yelled back taunting inquiries of their own. What had become of Pompey? Everyone knew well enough he was dead.

At first the replies were evasive. Pompey had gone for more Indians. Pompey had "gone hog-hunting"—after the settlers' swine, which roamed the woods. One brave called:

"Pompey ne-pan." (Pompey is asleep.)

Finally, toward the end of the siege, they admitted:

"Pompey nee-poo." (Pompey is dead.)

It was just another of those little Shawnee jokes. The two words were near enough alike for a pun.

Another brave carried his love of derision to lengths which offended Boonesborough's ideas of decorum. After a few pot

shots from the steep hill across the river, he would climb out on the limb of a tree, stoop, take down his breech clout, and present his copper-colored stern to the white men, at the same time making an extremely indelicate suggestion.

He did it again and again, while Boonesborough fumed—not much shocked but very angry indeed. It was no use shooting. Everyone blazed away at the warrior but it was a waste of ammunition. He was always just out of range, up hill and across a river ninety yards wide.

Finally someone loaded an extra large rifle with an extra large charge and waited. The first shot missed. But the warrior was so pleased with his little joke that he tried again. The second shot brought him down. After that there was no more strip-teasing.

From start to finish there was an odd good nature about this curious siege. Equally strange was the unusual persistence of the Indians and, quite as remarkable, their willingness to do manual labor for several days at a time.

It was Squire Boone who undertook to improvise artillery. A century later Bulgarian peasants, fighting their Turkish oppressors, were to make cannon from the trunks of cherry trees. Kentucky's amateur artilleryman made two cannon barrels from black gum trunks, anticipating the Bulgarian model, and wrapped them with an iron wagon tire. One burst when tried, but Squire loaded the other up with twenty or thirty one-ounce rifle balls; waited for a promising target; trained it finally on a group of unsuspecting aborigines one foggy morning and let drive.

"It made a large Report equal to a Cannon the Indians squandered from that place much frightened." In fact, "it made them scamper perdidiously whether they was hit with the bullets or whether it was the big loud Report it was uncertain." It was, at any rate, consoling to see them scamper.

Unfortunately Squire's mastery of interior ballistics was a little weak, and at the next shot the barrel burst. Thereafter, there was much Shawnee repartee across the stockade, and taunting Indian yells of:

"Fire your wooden gun again!"

"Fire your damned swivel."

Nevertheless, the Shawnees are said to have been uncertain just what had happened, and to have feared that when their mine was completed they might find Squire and his howitzer looking grimly down it.

Matters were growing serious in Boonesborough. There was dissension and distrust among the leaders. Little food was left. Over a week of work, heat, anxiety, loss of sleep, the strain of perpetual vigilance had worn the people down. Through the ground the guards in the station trench could hear the steady, thump-thump as the approaching enemy dug away the last few feet of earth. The relief from the Holston Valley had not appeared.

The rainy eighth day of the siege faded into a black, rain-swept night in which the guards could watch the clearing only by fitful lightning flashes. No one proposed surrender but no one in that wretched, isolated little camp had any expectation of more than a day or two of life.

All through the night the settlers waited. It was so dark that the Indians could easily creep up undetected. The rain drowned any warning sounds. At any moment the explosion of a mine might blow open the gate. The Indians might burst through their tunnel and into the fort. Or all this might be merely a feint and scaling ladders might be rushed to the stockade and hundreds of yelling braves come pouring over.

The night was quiet, soggy, miserable, and anxious. The rain ceased and the guards noted in the stillness that the familiar sounds of digging in the tunnel could no longer be heard.

At camp a few Indians still hung around and there was an occasional shot. When the sun was an hour high, even these were only reports in the distance. What did that mean? Was this another trick? Was this the lull before the storm?

Instead, it meant salvation. The steady rainfall had soaked the earth above the rude mine and many sections had caved in. To the Shawnees it was the final blow. The disgusted warriors gave up. Some say the siege had lasted nine days. Others say eleven. At any rate it had broken all records for Indian warfare in Kentucky.

During the morning, scouts emerged from the fort and cautiously reconnoitered the woods. This time it was true. The enemy were really gone at last; and at noon the gates were opened. The half-starved cattle were let out to grass. The settlers themselves strolled about the clearing to stretch their weary legs after nine days of siege.

Around the portholes of the fort, Indian bullets were embedded to form a thick leaden incrustation. Some had fallen out and lay on the ground outside. Since lead was precious, the British ammunition was scraped up and melted down again into American bullets. Boone himself said that the frugal pioneers picked up 125 pounds of bullets, not counting what remained stuck in the logs.

As they rejoiced, out of the woods emerged Simon Kenton and Alexander Montgomery—but it was only a few days before Kenton was off again, this time to be captured by the Indians and be sold by them to that very Peter Drouillard who had been with the besiegers.

Having done the best they could for Boonesborough, the volunteers from Logan's Station started home. There Captain Benjamin Logan—who had taken Patton's story at its face value—was getting ready for what was coming. He knew well enough whose turn was next if Boonesborough were taken. "He said

there was little doubt but the Indians would come to our Fort," according to Daniel Trabue, who was looking after supplies for him at the moment.

Logan ordered the women and children "to bestir themselves and bring in the fort resting years punkins fill their vessils all full of water." In a short time there was corn in every house and all the pails, tubs, pots, kettles, and even the churns were brimming with water. Then this indefatigable officer bethought him of the permanent store of provisions and inquired of Trabue, his commissary, who later reported the story. When Trabue replied that he had ample supplies for a siege, Logan insisted: "Let me see." When he had seen, he commented: "You have got a good quantity but it is uncertain how long we might be besieged and I think you had best go out to the big lick and Drive some cattle up and we will stop them up in the fort as we may need them if you will go I will send men with you."

"I certainly will go," replied Trabue, and was just starting with six or eight others when Logan called after him: "Stop I am afraid for you to go I will go by my self. go back in the fort I will hunt the cattle & Indians alone I will keep in the cane the whole way."

An hour later he was back with a broken arm and two or three other wounds. Indians—apparently stragglers from Blackfish's band—had caught him in the cane. Next day the cattle came running to the fort with arrows sticking in them; but the settlers were afraid to open the gates lest the Indians might rush in, and the poor cows had to take their chances outside.

With his commander wounded, Trabue had his doubts about morale and "very frequently would go around the fort and look at the rest of the people—they were a couragus people but yet I will say they all looked very wild you might frequently see the woman a walking around the fort looking and peeping



about seeming that they did not know what they was about but would try to incourage one another and hope for the best."

Next day wild figures appeared. The settlers "could not see only the front of them." They were in Indian file.

"Yes yes the indins is a coming," someone shouted.

Women ran to the loopholes to look out. Some of them cried: "Lord have mercy on us yonder they come."

There was a long stillness. Then a woman cried again:

"It is our boys."

The Logan's Station detachment was moving in from Boonesborough with the news of victory. Someone went to the shattered Logan with the news. Says Trabue: "Capt Logan smiled for the first time since he was wounded if ever I had seen people glad it was at that time." Since Beowulf, the Anglo-Saxon has been given to understatement.

It was not long until the Holston Valley militia reached Kentucky. They had arrived too late for the siege, but Boone had asked for them in five or six weeks and they were on time or nearly so. There was still plenty for them to do. Dour Presbyterians of the Cromwellian breed, they were all for smiting the heathen hip and thigh, and wanted to start out after Blackfish. But a council of officers from Boonesborough and Harrodsburg assembled at Logan's Station and finally decided against the plan. Instead, they used the Holston men to drive off the scattered marauders who lingered behind the main war party, trying earnestly for scalps and loot.

Blackfish and most of his warriors moved north toward the Ohio River in complete leisure, regretfully convinced at last that their brother Big Turtle really did not care to join the tribe. They seem to have had no fear of pursuit—may even have hoped for it as a last chance to draw the Kentuckians forth from their defenses. But Kentucky was too weak to give chase.

On their way home the disconsolate warriors ran into Ansel

## Daniel Boone

Goodman and George Hendricks, two of Boone's salt-makers, who together with one other prisoner, Aaron Foreman, had taken advantage of the warriors' absence to escape. Hendricks was recaptured. The other two escaped. The warriors consoled themselves by punishing Hendricks severely for running away.

Last of all comes the bill. There is, in the Virginia State Archives, a small account book dealing—still in pounds, shillings, and pence—with militia affairs. It reduces the epic story of Boonesborough to two entries:

- (1777) Decr 2. Boone, Capt. Daniel; for pay & rations of his Comp<sup>y</sup> Kentucky Militia, *per acco<sup>t</sup>*. [£]713.19.4
- (1778) Nov. 26. Boone, Major Daniel, for horse hire & powder for Boonesborough garrison, *per acct & Cert*, [£]123.3