15. The Year of Blood:
SIEGE OF BRYAN'S STATION

SEVENTEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO has been called Kentucky's "year of blood." One blow after another fell, now here, now there, until the more timid settlers again packed up for departure and Daniel Boone himself was on the verge of despair. Prisoners, escaping from the Indian camps in the early spring, brought word that trouble was brewing. Even before they began to arrive, it had been predicted "that a very formidable army of English and Indians would come Quickly," and "that every Preparation was making for that purpose."

The British and Indians had been making vigorous preparations at Detroit all winter, and each side was now keeping a close eye on the other. All through the early spring hostile scouts had been watching the Kentucky settlements. In August the British commander at Detroit sent in an intelligence report: "Mr. McKee informs me that the people of Kentuck are night and day employed in moving their Families and Effects to a large Settlement called Bryant's Station, where they hope to remain in security." Another reconnoissance had confirmed the report. At the same time, Caldwell had gone down to the Ohio and was there awaiting still further reports on the Americans.

The Indians had been infuriated by the Americans' cold-blooded massacre of ninety-six unarmed and unresisting Christian Indians at the Moravian Settlement of Gnadenhütten, news

of which had been carried back by reconnoitering bands to the chiefs in the home camps on the Ohio. The Shawnees in Ohio were neither Christian nor unresisting, but they had a fellow feeling for their red brethren who were.

They took revenge in June, when they smashed a force of nearly five hundred Pennsylvania and Virginia militia under Colonel William Crawford on the Sandusky River in Ohio, and burned the white commander at the stake.

Crawford died hard—he was two hours in the fire, succumbing only after he had been scalped alive and live coals had been poured on top of his head. The incident became famous, both because Simon Girty, the "white Indian," sat by to enjoy the fun and also because it was better reported than most such tragedies. Dr. Knight, Crawford's fellow-captive, watched the spectacle, with Girty's assurances ringing in his ears that he would soon follow Crawford to the stake; but he managed to escape and wrote a famous narrative of the whole grisly episode.

The year's Indian troubles in Kentucky had begun, however, long before Crawford's disastrous expedition. Spring came quickly that year, but it brought no joy to the dwellers behind the log stockades. As early as February the fine mild weather brought down Indian war parties.

In March the settlers in Boonesborough watched the river grimly. What they saw was only a little thing; but it was a sign of violent and horrible death waiting for someone. Three logs were floating down the river past their wooden battlements. To inexperienced eyes the floating timber meant little enough; but to the keen-eyed woodsmen it could mean only one thing. No white man's hand had fastened those logs together, for there were no white settlements upstream. Somewhere farther up the Kentucky River, Indians were crossing. Which of the settlements would the raiders make for?

They soon found out.

Hitherto most of the Indian fighting in Kentucky had been with Shawnees, coming in from the North. The Cherokees in the South were quiet—at least they made little trouble for Kentucky. But now the savage Wyandots, who had been forced west in inter-tribal warfare some years earlier, had buried the hatchet with their red brethren and were moving east again. In March twenty-five of them passed Boonesborough—probably the very Indians whose raft had given its silent warning to the settlement downstream. Boonesborough was ready and the war party of the Wyandots passed harmlessly by; but at Estill's Station they caught a young girl outside the stockade and gleefully killed her within sight of the fort.

In May Captain Estill led his men out in pursuit of Indians—probably of the same band. He caught up with them and was killed in a bitter fight from which only a few of the white men escaped alive.

By August the Indians were everywhere. From the thickets along the Ohio River to the north, they had at first viewed apprehensively the "row-galley"—armed with artillery and propelled with many oars—with which George Rogers Clark tried to patrol the river and keep the war canoes from paddling over. Clark had discovered that "open small boats will by no means answer the purpose of Cruising on the River as they are often liable to be ambuscaded when they come near the shore, or in narrow parts of the River." His "Gallie" had four-foot bullet-proof gunwales, with additional hinged gunwales that could be pulled up and "Raise her sides so high that she can Lay within pistol shot of the shore without the least danger." Daniel Boone grudged Clark the men that had to be detached to build his galley and other defenses, knowing how much they were needed in his own part of Kentucky.

It was the white man's first effort at naval warfare in these wild streams. Clark's galley could catch and sink any canoe it

sighted; but the trouble was, it never sighted them. The Ohio was only a quarter-mile wide, and the galley had to patrol a couple of hundred miles of it. It was easy enough for the war parties to lay up canoes or rafts in the bushes and make the short dash across when the river was clear. Clark needed a fleet to make the Ohio into a real defensive line for the Kentucky settlements and for that he had neither men nor artillery. In the East, Washington and his Continentals were too hard pressed to spare him either; and not even a whole fleet on the Ohio could have stopped war parties slipping over from the perfect security of the forest on the Ohio bank to the equal security of the forests in Kentucky.

The white settlers should, of course, have kept small armed patrols—or at least pairs of scouts—perpetually reconnoitering through the forest, ready to give the alarm when they ran into a war party. Such arduous and dangerous service might have cost a few lives, but skilled woodsmen in small parties could usually escape easily; and a patrol's traditional duty is to run away, not to fight.

The Kentuckians knew all this well enough. The trouble lay partly in their inbred aversion to standing guard, and partly in their small numbers. They were settlers, not soldiers; and defense, though necessary, was incidental. Their crops, which often had to be tilled by half the men while the other half stood guard; their hunting—a main source of fresh meat; building and guarding their little forts; and the hundred tedious labors of primitive life which city folk take for granted, because they are done for them—all these things were even more needed than reconnoissance. The Indians might or might not come. If they came, they would be dealt with. Meantime, every night the cows had to be milked.

A kind of reconnoissance was, however, occasionally attempted. At this very time Colonel Todd's militiamen had been

excused from all other duty. In June Captain Robert Patterson took forty men from Kentucky to meet Clark's armed galley on the Ohio.

A relatively unimportant but amusing incident of the march arose from the appalling language of an impulsive youth named Aaron Reynolds. Now forced marching through forest country in the insect season does not bring out the best in human nature. One is frequently wet and tired. Muscles ache under heavy burdens. The ground is cold and damp to sleep on—the rheumatism that afflicted the pioneers, as it had afflicted their raiding Anglo-Saxon forebears a thousand years earlier, testifies to that. The strain of perpetual watchfulness and perpetual danger tears at the nerves. Mosquitoes, blackfly, and other pests add their touches of irritation, which find vent in violent speech. And anyhow, the frontier was never a place for the mealy-mouthed.

This Aaron Reynolds, however, had a talent for profanity remarkable even in that day and place. Among the mighty swearers of the backwoods, he stood out as a mightier swearer still. Hard men listened with amazement to the impressive language that poured out of him in his moments of emotional exaltation during the more uncomfortable episodes of an uncomfortable march. The forty rangers do not seem to have minded at all—in fact, they very likely enjoyed the pyrotechnics; but Captain Robert Patterson, a gallant fighter but a pious soul, was much annoyed.

Commanding officers in more modern armies rarely allow themselves to be annoyed for very long by their subordinates. There are ways and means of swift and summary suppression. But the fighting men of the Kentucky frontier could not be handled by any such methods. They thought themselves quite as good as their officers, and were frequently right. Furthermore, they expected to be just friends, neighbors, and equals of

their commanders if they returned unscalped from an expedition. Such discipline as existed in these desperate little bush-whacking forays was therefore strictly *ad hoc,* and very little of that.

It all grated upon the nerves of Captain Robert Patterson; and where discipline failed first and diplomacy was a bad second, Captain Patterson tried bribery.

Kentuckians, both regenerate and unregenerate, have from the earliest days had a keen appreciation of hard liquor. Captain Patterson was a pious soul but he did have a little jug along. He promised his insubordinate warrior a quart of the best if he would swear no more.

The effort seems to have been rather a strain upon Reynolds. When the little band at the end of their dangerous march stood at last on the banks of the Ohio, the Captain declined to make good. Since the agreement, he averred, Reynolds's language might have been somewhat milder than before, but it had hardly been mild enough to earn a whole quart. The indignant Reynolds swore that his language would have graced a bench of bishops, and his fellow Indian-fighters, standing in military array before their commander, shouted their approval from the ranks. They may have hoped for a dividend from Reynolds—fluids of all sorts were getting scarce after their long march.

At any rate, Captain Patterson bowed to the views of his troops (except for the commander of H.M.S. *"Pinafore,"* no captain has been so complaisant since) and regretfully produced the quart, which he had carried all the way through the forests and cherished for his own use.

Reynolds triumphed, but it was to be a matter of only a few weeks before he proved that the vocabulary of iniquity was not his only talent. Patterson was to have good reason to admire the man he had rebuked.

By August the Indians were raiding in force at Hoy's Station.

They prowled around just long enough to cause alarm and capture two boys, and then—sure of pursuit, which was exactly what they wanted—started slowly for the Ohio. This raid was really nothing but a feint, carried out by about seventy warriors to draw the settlers in that direction, while the real attack came down at Bryan's Station. Captain Holder gathered up such men as he could find, all mounted, and rushed off, gathering others as he passed McGee's and Strode's Stations (near Winchester), meantime sending out expresses to summon men from the various stations. Daniel Boone left others in charge at Boone's Station, and rushed over to Boonesborough to turn out his men there.

Holder caught up with the Indians at the Upper Blue Licks. As his men reached the river, they could see in a sand-bar on their side of the stream the footprints of the captive boys who had been forced to run footraces to amuse the warriors. Broiling-sticks lay all around. The Indians cared so little about the pursuit that they had paused for a cooked meal and some relaxation with their captives. They had broken camp just a little ahead of their pursuers—the other side of the ford was still wet from their feet—and a rear guard had probably been watching Holder's approach for some time. As the white men stared, the Indians themselves appeared, lounging along two different trails, as if they were dividing their party.

The ambush was too obvious, as a certain John Fleming pointed out. But Holder and the rest insisted on a fight. The whole party crossed the river, and divided on the other side so as to chase both bands of Indians. They had no means of knowing which band had the prisoners.

Three quarters of a mile farther on, Holder's men saw a solitary Indian ahead of them running for dear life. They gave chase—and ran straight into the ambush that had been prepared

for them about 150 yards above the mouth of what is now called Battle Run Branch.

The Indian chief, whoever he was, was a sound tactician. He had slipped his braves into cover on the edge of a ridge with the stream in front of them. They were invisible and hard to attack, but they could fire straight into the white men as they rode up.

Fleming, who had warned of ambush, was wounded at the first volley. More men, who had dismounted farther to the rear, ran up on foot, but the Indians were too many, and the whole group swung slowly back to the ford to keep from being surrounded. The other party—led by a man who was not named Michael Cassidy for nothing—heard the fight and started for it.

Fleming, shot in the hip, had found refuge behind a log where he was more or less sheltered and where the Indians did not notice him. But just as Cassidy arrived an Indian ran forward swinging his tomahawk. Fleming, too badly wounded to get up, shot him from the ground. Just then a second Indian appeared, and Fleming, unable to move and now with an empty rifle, yelled to Cassidy to shoot. Cassidy shouted back that his rifle was empty, too.

But the Indian didn't know that—as the agitated Fleming pointed out with some annoyance. Cassidy, taking the hint, advanced belligerently with a perfectly useless rifle, and the Indian—who apparently also had an unloaded rifle!—fled.

By this time, Holder's half of the party had been driven off and every Indian in sight was concentrating on Cassidy's men, who withdrew, carrying Fleming and other wounded men dumped over their horses like so many sacks. The first man or two across the river halted on the bank and held back the arriving Indians with rifle fire until the rest could struggle across.

One wounded man was too badly hurt to travel, even in a litter. Hiding him in the bushes, the others promised to come

back the next day bringing milk, which was the one thing the poor devil craved. When they came next day, they found that in the feverish thirst which gunshot wounds produce, he had crawled to the creek for water. But they shook their heads when they saw that the water he drank ran out of his wound, as did the milk they gave him. He was dead before the litter had gone more than two or three miles.

Tradition says that Battle Run Branch ran blood for days afterward—a very doubtful tale as there were no white men around to see; but it is apparently quite true that bullets could be picked out of the trees there for the next half-century. As a rescue, Holder's expedition was a total failure. He had not even seen the prisoners, though they survived and later returned to Kentucky.

The raid at Hoy's Station deceived Daniel Boone and all the other settlers, as it had been meant to do. A war party of seventy Indians was big enough to be alarming, and no one dreamed that they were a mere detachment from an approaching force four or five times their number. Each little fort made ready to send its quota for the relief expedition, which was to pursue and punish the raiders.

In Boone's absence a mounted detachment gathered at Boone's Station under William Ellis. Bryan's Station gathered its Indian-fighters and in the South Colonel Benjamin Logan began to assemble nearly five hundred militia.

It was always dangerous to call out any large number of a station's fighting men. In order to get enough Indian-fighters to relieve an endangered stockade somewhere else, the home fort had to be stripped of its best men and left with only old men, boys—that meant very young boys—and the dauntless frontier women to keep watch, prevent surprise, and drive the Indians back with the accurate fire of the long Kentucky rifles. Food

might run short if there were no hunters to range the woods, and a very small band of Indian raiders could easily destroy a whole season's crops if not promptly driven off.

In the absence of the men it was more dangerous than ever to go out to the spring for water or to bring in the crops. Often there was nobody left to patrol the woods and give warning. The Indians sometimes struck in small parties at several settlements at once, or attacked one after another in quick succession, feeling for a weak spot. When the siege of one station was lifted, it might mean an attack elsewhere and no one knew which little wilderness settlement would come next. The defenders did not always dare march away to relieve a neighboring town even after they had beaten the Indians off from their own, for it was a favorite Shawnee stratagem to withdraw ostentatiously and then slip stealthily back, hoping to waylay the defenders as they emerged into an imagined security.

On this occasion Daniel Boone practically stripped Boonesborough of its defenders, knowing that Logan's large force would be passing that way in a day or two. Boonesborough could hold out for a little while, at worst. Logan would scatter any Indians indiscreet enough to attack it. In the meantime Boone's own forces seemed badly needed farther north. And badly needed they were—though not quite where Daniel Boone thought. At least he was right in believing he could leave Boonesborough unguarded without danger. It was not even harassed.

The Indian wiles that had failed in the siege of Boonesborough four years earlier very nearly succeeded this time at Bryan's Station. The feint at Hoy's just missed being successful. Wholly unsuspected by Daniel Boone or his fellow commanders, the most formidable British and Indian force that had ever entered Kentucky was working swiftly southward. With anything like proper reconnoissance its large numbers should have

led to its detection by American scouts. In mid-July the British leaders, Caldwell and McKee, with some fifty white rangers and about three hundred Indians, left Wapatomica (in northwestern Ohio) to destroy the fort at Wheeling, on the upper Ohio. They had gone only a day or two when runners burst into Wapatomica with the news that George Rogers Clark was coming with a large force and with artillery, always the nightmare of a frontier commander. The chiefs at Wapatomica, in terror, sent runners to recall Caldwell and McKee. They caught up with them on the Scioto; and after some argument with the Lake Indians, whose homes were not threatened, they returned. The two ranger officers and the three Girty brothers now gathered eleven hundred Indians at Piqua, Ohio, with a reserve of three hundred only a day's march away, and waited for Clark.

It was a false alarm. Clark was nowhere near, though excited scouts swore they had seen his army. When the invaders failed to appear, the Indian forces began to melt away. Those who remained insisted on raiding somewhere, and set out to attack Kentucky. The force included Caldwell, McKee, Captain Matthew Elliott, with Simon and George Girty, three hundred Wyandots and some other Indians.

At the Shawnee town of Old Chillicothe they paused for council, and Simon Girty made a famous speech:

> Brothers: The fertile region of Kentucky is the land of cane and clover—spontaneously growing to feed the buffalo, the elk and the deer. There the bear and the beaver are always fat. The Indians from all the tribes have had a right from time immemorial, to hunt and kill unmolested these wild animals, and bring off their skins—to purchase for themselves clothing, to buy blankets for their backs and rum to send down their throats, to drive away the cold and rejoice their hearts after the fatigues of hunting and the toil of war. [Great applause.]
>
> Brothers, the Long Knives [i.e., Virginians] have overrun your country and usurped your hunting grounds. They have

destroyed the cane, trodden down the clover, killed the deer and the buffalo, the beaver and the raccoon. The beaver has been chased from his dam, and forced to leave the country. [Palpable emotion among the hearers.]

Brothers: The intruders on your land exult in the success that has crowned their flagitious acts. They are planting fruit trees and plowing the lands where, not long since, were the canebrake and the clover field. Was there a voice in the tree of forest, or articulate sounds in the gurgling waters, every part of this country would call on you to chase away these ruthless invaders, who are laying it waste. Unless you rise in the majesty of your might and exterminate their whole race, you may bid adieu to the hunting grounds of your fathers—to the delicious flesh of the animals with which they once abounded—and to the skins with which you were once enabled to purchase your clothing and your rum.

After their council the Indians moved down the Little Miami, crossed the Ohio—undiscovered and not even suspected—and moved up the Licking River along the traditional war road. With them they brought some of the people taken the year before at Ruddle's and Martin's Stations, to watch the butchery of their former friends and neighbors. Why the Indians burdened themselves with these Kentuckians during their approach is a mystery. There was always the danger that one of them might escape and carry warning. Why take such a chance? Perhaps the captives were to serve as guides. Perhaps they were to persuade their compatriots to surrender. Perhaps they had changed sides. Certainly no one will ever know the truth of the matter now.

At Bryan's Station no one had the least suspicion that an attack impended. The men were already assembled and engaged in last minute preparations before marching to the relief of Hoy's. Getting ready for battle was a slower business than preparing for a hunting trip. The patches which held the bullets were oiled with extra care. The "necks" which the molds left

on the hand-made bullets had to be filed down with precision. Otherwise a bullet might stick in the barrel. If that happened the only thing to do was to unbreach the rifle. As there was no time for gunsmithing in the heat of combat, a jammed bullet meant one man and one rifle out of the fight at the very moment when they were needed most. Locks were oiled so that the hammer fell easily. Flints were picked till they were sharp. Otherwise the lock would merely snap and the rifle miss fire. While this was going on, Bryan's Station kept its gates barred. They were never opened. Suddenly the settlers became aware that the Indians were all around them. How they found out is a mystery. Not an Indian showed himself. And yet Bryan's Station knew its danger.

There is a story that an express suddenly dashed in with warning. Who sent him? No one knows. It is doubtful that he even existed. It has been surmised that one of the Kentucky captives broke away from the Indians and gave warning. How? There is no record that any of them were seen, even after the station was besieged.

But the gates stayed closed, and riflemen manned the loopholes. The cattle were still pasturing outside the fort. There was no time to bring them in and it would have been sure death for men to go into the woods after them. Worse still, there was no water in the fort and the only spring was some distance outside the stockade.

Bryan's Station at this time was a fortified parallelogram two hundred yards long by fifty wide, with the usual blockhouses at the corners. Forty cabins were arranged at intervals within the stockade, which formed a common rear wall. The stockade itself was made of sharp pointed logs twelve feet high. As usual, there were two gates.

The fort stood on a hillside overlooking a little creek. The high ground around it was roughly cleared and gave the rifle-

men the field of fire they needed; but it was August and a hundred-acre field of tall corn near the fort offered concealment to the enemy. The buffalo trace was lined with trees; fields of hemp, weed, and stumps provided more cover for the Indians, and along the creek the canebrake was so thick and so tall that a man on horseback could hide in it. A few cabins stood outside the walls—to be abandoned in time of danger like the present.

Inside the stockade forty-four riflemen were filling their powder-horns, their bullet bags, and their "patchen pouches" of wadding. The women were pouring molten lead into the molds for extra bullets.

Hidden by trees and underbrush from anxious eyes at the loopholes, the Indians divided. One small group crept down into the cover along the creek. The main body slipped silently into the canebrake and weeds close around the all-important spring. The settlers were now hopelessly cut off from either water supply though the Indians had no means of knowing their advantage. The hot August sun would soon be parching and the Indians would certainly try to fire the cabins and stockade.

But as yet the sun had not risen and the Indian chiefs were not quite certain what lay before them. If the relief from Bryan's Station had already started for Hoy's, the silent stockade must be nearly empty and perhaps it could be rushed. If the men were inside, the invaders still outnumbered them six or ten to one (accounts of the numbers involved vary widely), but there was little to be gained by trying to rush a twelve-foot log wall with forty-four of the finest marksmen in the world shooting from cover while their women reloaded spare rifles behind them. Even in twentieth-century war, aimed rifle fire is still the deadliest thing there is; and these men were habituated to the rifle from childhood, holding it a disgrace to shoot a squirrel anywhere but in the head except when they amused themselves

by the still more difficult art of "barking" the branch under the little animal and bringing it down stunned though untouched. They were less particular, but quite as accurate, when they fired at Indians.

Before daybreak a negro was attacked. A few Indian scouts were seen on the prowl, and at the crack of James McBride's rifle—traditionally the first shot of the siege—one of them fell. Girty the "white Indian" and his companions still hoped that whoever was left at Bryan's might imagine the dead scout belonged merely to some small raiding party such as were always slipping into Kentucky and lurking around the settlements. After all, one dead Indian was nothing unusual.

Thomas Ball and Nicholas Tomlinson—two men, in the desperate hope that one at least would get through alive—rode out into the woods, knowing their danger but hoping to reach Lexington. Once there, it would be easy enough to bring up Boone's and Logan's men. Miraculously, as it then seemed, both men survived. The Indians saw them but let them pass undisturbed. They were unwilling to betray their presence and hoped to finish off the station quickly and be gone before relief came.

The gates had hardly slammed shut behind the messengers when the water problem arose. The women, cooking four days' provisions for the troops the night before, had used up every drop. The Indians had arrived so early that the day's supply had not yet been brought in. If the men went out, they would be doing exactly what Girty and Caldwell wanted. They would all be shot down and the fort would be left undefended. The thing to do was to be as natural as possible. The women of Bryan's Station would go out to the spring this morning as they did every morning, unconcernedly pretending to see nothing and to fear nothing.

There was some trepidation when this scheme was first proposed. One or two women suggested that they were no more

bullet-proof than men. But it was the only way and eventually it was decided that all the women in the fort should go, lest favoritism be shown to any. The whole group knelt inside the stockade to pray for safety. Then these women of the pioneering breed put on their sunbonnets; slipped off their moccasins because they thought they could run faster without them in case of need; gathered up their piggins and noggins; and took along their gourds, because the spring was so shallow that the water had to be dipped up gourdful by gourdful.

They went out at intervals, "stringing along, two or three together, as naturally as possible"—and, as one of them said, "a paler-faced crowd of women was never seen." One little girl in her 'teens kept ahead of her mother, hoping to serve as a shield if the Indians fired.

Slowly the little procession strolled down the hill, covered for part of the way by rifles held just inside the loopholes, but soon beyond range. There was a pause, and probably a good deal of cheerful feminine chatter at the spring. It was a gallant bluff, for Indians were all around them. Under one clump of bushes a hand clasping a tomahawk was visible. Farther on a pair of moccasined feet protruded slightly.

At the fort, inside the gate, stood the long row of moccasins where the women had left them. Husbands, fathers, and sweethearts could look at them and wonder if they would ever again be worn. At the loopholes the men clutched their rifles and watched in agony. Each man had two or three rifles, loaded and ready.

Prone in the underbrush the savages peered in amazement—or more probably in exultation. This was success beyond their hopes. The Kentuckians could not possibly suspect the presence of a large force, or these defenseless women would never have casually emerged from safety intent upon the ordinary day's routine of the pioneer housewife.

Let the women alone. A squaw is always useful about camp. They all would be prisoners later in the day.

More slowly the burdened line of women came up the hill. Grown women carried two pails each. Little girls trotted beside their mothers carrying a piggin or a noggin apiece. Now they were in range again, under the protection of the Kentucky rifles. At least they would not be killed or tomahawked out of hand. That was some comfort.

But they could still be shot from cover; and hundreds of rifles would be blazing at them in an instant if the Indians suspected what was really happening, guessed that the fort was being provisioned under their noses. The bodies would lie out there in the cleared space, the watching husbands knew, the long-haired scalps safe only so long as rifles enough still spoke from the loopholes to keep the scalping knives away from the dead.

These things were not good to think about.

The women were drawing closer and closer to the fort. No sign of haste or alarm, now. That would be fatal. If the women could only play out the gallant little farce, could only go on acting their parts to the end! Now they were nearly out of range from the underbrush and close in under the wicked brown muzzles held just behind the friendly loopholes, not a barrel showing. Now at the gate.

Birds were raising their usual early morning chorus. The creek beyond the fort burbled a little. Otherwise the unearthly silence of the great woods brooded unbroken over forty-four men about to fight for their lives, some hundreds of savages eager for scalps and plunder, and fifty white invaders accompanying the savages, whose thoughts in that moment are beyond speculation.

Through the wooden gate the women and little girls filed slowly in. The timbers grated shut. Bars thudded into place.

They set the water down. Men looked at their women and women looked at their men. Someone must have drawn a long breath, and there may even have been a little kissing.

Outside nothing showed; inside nothing stirred.

Birds cannot sing forever and the silence came down again. Somewhere back in the forest the captives from Ruddle's Station waited to see whether their own fate would be reënacted.

The morning drew on in utter silence. Girty finally grew tired of waiting for the men within the station to open the gates and start off, leaving the fort undefended. On the other side of the fort, opposite the spring side, a small party of Indians appeared. These were decoys intended to draw the Kentuckians out of their defenses in pursuit, or at least to bring all riflemen to the wrong side of the stockade while the hundreds of Indians hidden in the underbrush rushed it from the other side. It was the old device that had tricked Boone and Kenton a few years earlier, but the Kentuckians were used to it now.

Though well aware of what was being planned, the apparently gullible men of Bryan's Station swung open the cabin "outdoors" giving through the stockade in the rear, and a feeble little party of thirteen ran out, firing desperately, drawing a return fire from the Indians, and making as much noise and excitement as they possibly could.

From the underbrush on the creek side, near the spring, Girty and the hundreds of concealed savages heard the fighting. They had no idea how many men the fort contained. The thirteen on the other side were out of sight and they were trying to sound like a great many more than they actually were. For all the attacking party of Indians knew, they really were the entire garrison. None of the attacking savages suspected that twenty-nine riflemen were silently waiting for them on the spring side of the fort, or that the thirteen men in the sally party were by this time running for the stockade with all their might, ready to

add their rifles to the twenty-nine. Four of the cabins' "outdoors" had been left wide open for their retreat.

The war whoop rose from the underbrush and up the hill from the spring, led by Girty, came the naked horde, painted in red and black, waving incendiary torches.

Back and forth along the wall of logs flickered and crackled rifle fire. The Indians were many and had to attack on a narrow front so that the riflemen standing under cover had easy target and plenty of it, while the Indians had to shoot on the run with nothing to aim at but a few loopholes. The frontiersmen, with two or three rifles apiece and the women loading for them, could deliver a volume of fire that was appallingly swift and deadly.

A scattering of Indians reached the fort and managed to set fire to a few of the cabins outside. But it was useless to try to climb a twelve-foot stockade raked by fire from the blockhouses at each corner, with the further prospect of axes and clubbed rifles for any daring brave who succeeded in scrambling across.

The attack melted away, the Indians taking to cover; and, except for the dead and badly wounded, the hillside lay empty. But the danger had not vanished with the Indians, for the burning cabins were sending a shower of sparks over the station whose dry timbers seemed likely to take fire at any moment. From their concealment the Indians watched in exultation. At any moment the settlers might be forced out by fire. But suddenly a stiff east wind sprang up and turned the stream of sparks away from the fort. The station was safe for the time being. If the messengers had managed to get through the Indian lines, relief would soon be on the way—and best of all, it was clear that Girty and Caldwell had no artillery.

The Indians were keeping up a more or less steady fire on the stockade, hoping to pick off the marksmen one by one. It was

not a very successful effort—a whole day's shooting by several hundred Indians killed exactly two Kentuckians.

So steady was the settlers' fire that the Indians could not get near enough to use their torches a second time. Instead, they shot flaming arrows in the usual hope of setting fire to the dry cabin roofs. All the men were needed at the loopholes; but whenever a fire arrow landed on a roof, a little boy was sent up to throw it down and to pour on water which his mother handed up. Being small, the youngsters could still find some shelter even on the roofs. Since the roofs sloped in, this was not so dangerous as it sounds; and there is no record that any of these intrepid urchins were injured. A fire arrow landed in a cradle without harming the baby Richard Mentor Johnson, who grew up to be ninth Vice-President of the United States.

One little girl ate her breakfast from a pewter plate. By lunchtime she had nothing to eat from. Her plate had been melted down and was flying across the clearing in the form of bullets.

Once during the siege little Betsy Johnson ran up to her mother, who had led the procession to the spring, crying:

"Jake Stucker has just killed an Indian!"

"Pshaw," replied the mother. "What's one Indian?"

There was indeed an embarrassing surplus of Indians outside at the moment, but relief was on the way. Though the settlers did not know it, their messengers had both survived. By this time Girty knew it well enough, and knew what it meant, too. He had failed to surprise the fort. He had failed to rush the fort. He had failed to set the fort on fire. From the loopholes the rifles cracked viciously whenever an Indian showed himself. At any time, now, Boone, Logan, and Todd would be moving up with the militia. Girty prepared to ambush the relief, which would have to come in along the trace leading from Lexington to the northeast gate of Bryan's Station.

The messengers had reached Lexington without difficulty. They knew that the militia had already been called out, and they hoped to find them, like their own force at Bryan's Station, waiting the order to march. But the Indian feint at Hoy's Station had served its purpose. Major Levi Todd and the Lexington men were already on their way to Hoy's. Riding after them, the messengers came up with Todd's force at Boone's Station, where Captain William Ellis's troopers were waiting. Boone himself was still at Boonesborough.

Back along the trail they had come, now pounded Todd's thirty riflemen afoot and Ellis's horsemen, sixteen or seventeen in number. It was two o'clock in the afternoon before they reached Bryan's. By that time the Indians had ceased firing and a strong band had slipped along under cover of the brush on the creek bank and were hopefully waiting in ambush.

As the relief approached the station, there was an absolute hush. Not an Indian was to be seen. The fort lay peaceful in the middle of the clearing and there is no record that the defenders saw the reënforcements or tried to signal.

Todd and Ellis were not in the least deceived. They knew Indians, and they knew an ambush when they saw one—or rather, when they saw nothing, they knew what to expect. They decided to let the horsemen ride hell-for-leather straight at the gate, while the men on foot pushed around through the tall August growth of the hundred-acre cornfield, wholly under cover.

Ellis was one of those powerfully pious men who are sometimes remarkably handy in a rough-and-tumble. He had led the "travelling church" into Kentucky. He now led his handful of cavalry straight into and straight through the Indians' trap. They rode, if not into the jaws of death, at least into the best imitation of hell that the very considerable ingenuity of the American Indian could provide. For a hundred yards they ran

the gauntlet of the fire from the ambushed warriors, while the men at the fort, hearing the uproar and then seeing them emerge, got the gate open.

Incredibly, every man and every horse came through without a scratch. Indians were proverbially bad marksmen; a galloping horse is not a really good target; and with the single-shot firearms of the day most of the Indians got only one chance at them. But legend also says that they got through because of "the great dust that was raised by the horses' feet." The experience of the World War and after shows that smoke screens do reduce the accuracy of rifle fire almost to nothing. It was August and the buffalo trace was dry enough for sixteen or seventeen horses, ridden at a mad gallop, to produce a very fair screen.

The men in the cornfield did not fare so well. Unseen by the Indians, they had slipped through the corn in safety until near the fort. At this moment they heard the burst of yells and rifle shots that greeted the horsemen as they dashed through the ambush. Unhesitatingly they rushed back—to the rescue, as they thought. Actually, they were just in time to run into an overwhelming mob of angry Indians and to see Ellis and his men vanishing into the fort, which they themselves might have reached easily enough if they had kept on as agreed.

Luckily, the Indian rifles were mostly empty when the handful of white men appeared on foot. There was an instant and tremendous stir with ramrods and powder-horns among the red men, but they kept a respectful distance from the menace of the loaded Kentucky rifles, as the whites melted discreetly backward into the maize, firing as little as possible.

The watchers in the fort, waiting for them to break out of the cornfield and dash across the clearing for the gate, suddenly heard an ungodly rumpus in the corn. It was not clear then and it never will be clear now just what did happen in that cornfield. There was much yelling, the flashing of many toma-

hawks, and a violent waving of the tassled cornstalks; but there was almost no shooting. One lucky shot knocked down James Girty, brother of Simon, but he bounced up again unhurt. The blow of the bullet had knocked him off his feet; but to the universal disgust of all Kentucky his life was saved by a piece of leather, stolen from the station vat, which he had wrapped around his powder-horn.

The watchers from the blockhouses waited vainly for their rescuers to emerge from the tangled green of the cornfield. The sounds of combat slowly faded. The rescuers were in full flight for Lexington, leaving two dead men behind them.

It was evident to Girty and Caldwell by this time that the fort could not be taken. It had some sixty rifles now, instead of forty-two, and forty-two had already proved quite enough to keep the Indians at bay. Girty decided to try diplomacy.

Working his way through the hemp, he reached a big stump within five yards of the fort, and in the deadly stillness hailed its defenders. Many of the Kentuckians knew him personally, for he had served as a scout against the Indians in Lord Dunmore's War, and he had been on the American side at the opening of the Revolution. Remembering this, Girty told them who he was and "said he had no doubt a plenty of us knew him." From his stump Girty then shouted a summons to surrender, explaining that he had large forces with him and expected artillery in the evening. If Bryan's Station surrendered now, he would protect the settlers. If they waited till the artillery blew down the stockade and the Indians stormed it, the warriors would be roused to fury and no one would be able to control them.

There was a sickening silence in the little fort. They knew well enough what had followed when British artillery had been emplaced before Ruddle's and Martin's Stations. They remembered the corpses along the trail to the Ohio. Girty's talk about

artillery might be bluff. On the other hand, if he did have artillery coming up through the forest, they all were doomed and they all knew it.

Then up rose Aaron Reynolds, the mighty swearer. Either he had reformed, or the display of his vocabulary upon this occasion has been inadequately recorded for an appreciative posterity. This time there were ladies present, and the listening heroines of Bryan's Station may have cramped the famous Aaron Reynolds style. It looked at the moment extremely probable that he and the ladies and everyone else in that forlorn hamlet would be scalped before nightfall. Simon Girty, if he ran true to form, would probably do his share of the scalping; but in the meantime Aaron Reynolds contemplated Simon Girty's proposal and Simon Girty himself with repugnance and he meant the world to know it.

Setting one barrel on top of another within the capacious stone fireplace of a cabin near Girty's stump, he was able to poke his head out the top of the stone chimney. Thus sheltered, with only his head exposed, he enjoyed very much the same security as a turtle. He presented almost no target in case of a treacherous shot, and he could duck into the safety of good stone walls in an instant.

From his protected perch he gave free rein to his emotions. He owned two good-for-nothing dogs, bawled Aaron. He had named one Simon and the other Girty. That soldier of fortune replied in an injured tone that this was serious and no time for joking; but Aaron Reynolds was irrepressible. The Indians might bring on their artillery, he shouted, and be damned. (That mild expletive is the only profanity recorded.) Kentucky was coming to the rescue. "If you and your gang of murderers stay here another day, we will have your scalps drying in the sun on the roofs of these cabins." Warming up as he went along, Reynolds added that while they had plenty of powder

and lead "to beat such a son of a bitch as Girty," still all they really needed was switches for the "yellow hides" of his Indians.

Bryan's Station was delighted. There was a huge guffaw as Girty heatedly invited Reynolds to come outside and say them words. Morale had improved tremendously.

"Girty," says a contemporary, "took great offence at the levity and want of politeness of his adversary."

Captain John Craig, the commander, managed to get in an official word at some time during the conversation and called over that there would be no surrender. From behind his stump in the clearing, the "white Indian" snarled back his regrets. It was too bad. Bryan's Station would certainly be captured in just one more day, and then—

At that moment Aaron Reynolds turned his dog on him. Girty retired.

All night long the white men stood to their rifles. Sometimes a rattle of shots brought them leaping to the loopholes, but there was no real assault, and toward dawn the silence of the forest settled down again.

The sun dragged up out of the trees. There was the smoke of endless camp fires to show where the Indians had been. But there was no attack. Only silence.

And then a horse galloping and a rider in buckskin waving his hat. The relief was coming in. The messenger dashed up to the fort yelling:

"They are gone! The redskins are gone!"