

A STORY OF EARLY PIONEER LIFE

Relating Incidents Not Recorded in Our
Histories, But Which Will Interest
Our Readers

The following story of pioneer life in Kentucky is published by request and in order to preserve a page of history of the "Dark and Bloody Ground," which is not given in our school histories. The "Colonel Whitley" spoken of is the great grandfather of the better-half of the NEWS. The story was written by Dr. Graham for the Louisville Commercial and published in that paper in 1878.

The veteran pioneer, William Whitley, of whom I shall record the following incidents, was born in August, 1749, in Augusta county, Va. He was among the very first settlers of the almost unknown region west of the mountains called Cane-Tucky. In 1775, having married Easter Fuller, and commenced housekeeping in a small and humble way, and coming in wearied from his toil upon poor land, he told his wife he had heard a fine report of the rich land in the new world, and he thought they could make their living there with less labor. She replied, "Well, Billy, if I was you, I would go and see."

In two days he was on his way with his ax, plow, gun and kettle. Passing through Cumberland Gap, and trudging over mountains and crossing unbridged mountain torrents for near two hundred miles, he descended from the spurs of the Cumberland range down to a beautiful plain covered with crab-apple trees, (now called Crab Orchard,) and two miles southeast of this he erected a fort, known as Whitley's station. There were then but two approaches to the "Dark and Bloody Ground," one by the Ohio river and the other through the Cumberland Gap, and Whitley's station being at the foot of the mountains, and the first upon this land route (originally blazed out by Daniel Boone,) it became the city of refuge and defense of all the settlements around it; and, before I give Whitley's full character, I will relate some of the stirring events and bloody struggles that almost daily occurred around him.

In February, 1775, the danger of the weaker stations was such that, for a time, the settlers retreated to Whitley's Fort, and among them was a daring, reckless fellow, by the name of Joe

Logston, who became hungry for milk, and the Indians having killed all the cows or frightened them off, he pleaded with several to go out with him in search of the cattle, but seeing the danger, all refused. He sallied out alone, and while riding carelessly along a path, the first intimation he had of danger was the sharp crack of two rifles, one on each side of his track. One ball grazed his breast without injuring him, the other struck his horse behind the saddle, when he fell. Logston was on his feet in an instant, with his rifle in his hands, and from his great activity might have escaped by flight, but this he was not disposed to do. The moment the rifles were fired, an athletic Indian sprang toward Logston with upraised tomahawk, but as soon as the latter presented his gun the savage jumped behind two saplings a small distance apart, neither of which was large enough to entirely cover his body; he was compelled to keep darting from one to the other to save himself from the effect of a steady and direct aim. Conscious of having two enemies on the ground, whose motions it was necessary to watch, Logston kept a keen lookout for the other, and by a quick glance detected him behind a tree scarcely large enough to hide him. He was at that time rapidly loading his gun, and in the act of pushing down his bullet he exposed his hips, and in an instant Logston fired and wounded him severely. The other Indian immediately rushed at Logston, whose gun was now empty, with his raised tomahawk. They were well matched; both were large men, and both distinguished among their associates for strength and activity. The Indian made a halt at a distance of fifteen or twenty feet, and threw his tomahawk with all his force. Logston dodged it, clubbed his gun and made at the Indian, thinking to knock him down. The Indian, depending on dodging, sprang into the brush or saplings to avoid the blow. Logston, whose rifle, from being repeatedly struck against the trees, was reduced to the naked barrel, made a side blow with such force that, again missing the Indian, it flew out of his hands and beyond his reach. The Indian now gave an exulting cry and sprang at him with all the savage fury of which he was master. Neither had a weapon, but the savage, seeing Logston bleeding, thought he could throw him down and dispatch him. They seized each other and a desperate struggle followed. Logston could throw his antagonist, but could not hold him down; the Indian being naked and oiled had greatly the advantage in a ground scuffle. After throwing him five or six times Logston found, between violent exertion and loss of blood, that he was being

exhausted, and must change his mode of warfare or lose his scalp. He threw his opponent again and, without attempting to hold him, jumped from him and as he rose, aimed a flat blow at his head which knocked him down again. Each time the savage rose Logston gave him a powerful blow, and at each effort he was slower to recover himself. Logston at length struck him with great force under the ear and the Indian fell, as Logston thought, nearly dead. Bending to grasp his neck, Logston discovered that the savage was so far sensible that he was using his right hand to unsheath a knife that hung at his belt. The knife was short; the Indian was endeavoring to force it up from the sheath and with good success, Logston, keeping his eye upon it, permitted the Indian to work the handle out, when he suddenly grasped it, jerked it from the sheath and sank it in the Indian's breast, the latter soon expiring. Logston now thought of the other Indian. Not knowing to what extent he was wounded, he proceeded cautiously in search of him. He found him with his back broken and propped against a log; but, severely wounded as he was, he had succeeded in loading his gun, and made several efforts to shoot Logston, but at each effort would fall forward and had to push himself against his gun to rise again. Logston, already much exhausted, and not wishing to expose himself to a chance shot, returned to the fort. When he reached there he was covered with dirt and blood, and as his companions, seeing the wretched plight in which he was, refused to credit his story, he told them to sally out and see for themselves.

The next morning a strong party set out for the battle-ground. They found a trail, as if something had been dragged away. On tracing it, they found the body of the larger Indian by a log covered up with leaves. Still pursuing the trail, which was not now so plain, they found the wounded Indian lying on his back with his own knife sticking in his body just below the breast-bone, to show that he had killed himself and had not died by the hands of an enemy. The great efforts he must have made alone and under circumstances of extraordinary agony, show to what a height of savage heroism the Indian character sometimes rises.

In October, 1786, a large number of families traveling by land to Kentucky, known by the name of McNite's company, were surprised in their camp at night, between Big and Little Laurel rivers, by a party of Indians, and defeated with a loss of twenty-one killed and the rest dispersed or made prisoner, and burnt at the stake. Shortly before settlements were made in what is now

called Whitley county, John Tye, his son, and some others, having camped on the head of Big Poplar creek, were attacked by a party of Cherokee Indians. Tye's son was killed and the old man wounded. The others now fled and made their escape. The Indians rushed upon the camp, and two entered, but were met by two cur dogs which defended their wounded master with a bravery that would have done credit to animals of a higher breed. One of the Indians was severely wounded, and as soon as he could extricate himself from the jaws of the enraged dogs, the party fled, leaving their moccasins and leggings on the opposite side of the creek, where they had left them to ford the stream.

In the early settlement of the county, Joseph Johnston was killed by the Cherokees on Lynn Camp. They entered his house when there was no man about but himself, and killed him with their tomahawks. His wife was out milking the cows at the time, ignorant of what was passing until she reached the cabin, when she beheld her bleeding husband in the agonies of death and the Indians standing over him inflicting additional wounds upon the now unconscious body. The savages discovered her the instant she appeared at the door. One of them sprang at her with his tomahawk; she dropped her milk pail and fled in the direction of the house of the elder Johnston, about one hundred and fifty yards off, the Indians in full chase. Mrs. Johnston was a remarkably stout, active, young woman, and the race was one for life. Getting a few yards the start of the savages, she maintained the relative distance between them, until she reached the yard fence of the old gentleman, when she, with one bound, cleared the fence. The savage made an unsuccessful thrust at her head, gave a yell of disappointment and retreated.

In 1785 the camp of an emigrant named McClure was assaulted in the night by the Indians, near the head of Skaggs' creek in what is now Lincoln county, and six whites were killed. Mrs. McClure ran into the woods with her four children, and could have escaped with three if she had abandoned the infant, whose cries gave the savages notice where she was; she heard them coming where she was hid in the grass and bushes, but she was a mother, and determined to die with her babe. The like feeling prevented her telling her three eldest to fly and hide. She feared they might be lost; hoped they might not be killed. The Indians soon extinguished both fears and hopes in the blood of the three children. She and the infant were made captives; she was taken back to camp and made to cook for them. In the morning she was compelled to mount an unbroken horse and accompany them on their return home. Intelligence of this sad catastrophe, like others of daily occurrence, being conveyed to Whitley's station, he was not at home. A messenger was dispatched for him by Mrs. Whitley, who at the same time sent others to warn and collect his company. On his return he found twenty-one men collected to receive orders. With these he directed his course to the war-path, intending to intercept the Indians returning home. Fortunately they had stopped to divide their plunder, thus enabling Whitley to gain the path in advance of them. He saw they had not passed, and prepared for their arrival. His men were concealed; he had not waited long before the enemy appeared, dressed in their spoils. As they approached they were met by a deadly fire from the concealed whites, which killed two, wounded two others, and dispersed the rest. Mrs. McClure and her infant and a negro woman were rescued, and six scalps taken by the Indians recovered.

Ten days after this a Mr. Moore and his party, also emigrants, were defeated three miles from Raccoon creek, on the same road. In this attack the savages killed nine persons. On receipt of this news Colonel Whitley raised thirty men and started, under the same impression as before, that he could intercept the Indians on their way home. On the sixth day, in a cane-brake, he met the enemy face to face before he had any intimation they were near. He instantly ordered ten of his men to the right, as many to the left, and the others to dismount on the spot with him. The Indians, twenty in number, were mounted on good horses and were well dressed in the plundered clothes. Being in the usual Indian file, still pressing from the rear when the front made a halt, they were brought into full view, but they no sooner discovered the whites than they sprang from their horses and took to their heels. In the pursuit, three Indians were killed, eight scalps retaken, twenty-eight horses, besides cash, clothing and other captured articles.

(Continued next week)

The Honorable Senator Sagebrush

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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Blount was still warm enough to be peremptory. "Yes; you may contradict it. You may say that it is wholly unauthorized." Then he remembered the claims of friendship. "I'll be frank with you, Gantry. This thing has been mentioned to me once, but nothing was decided, absolutely nothing. I didn't even promise to take it under advisement."

Among those who knew him externally Mr. Richard Gantry had the reputation of owning a loose tongue. But none knew better than the real Richard Gantry when to make the loose tongue wag away from the subject which has reached its nicely adjusted climax.

Almost before he knew it Evan Blount was gossiping with his table companion over a social function two days old. A little later the waiter brought the cigars, and the danger point, if any there were, was safely past.

It was when the two young men were on their way to the club smoking room that some one stopped Gantry to talk business with him.

Blount strolled on by himself and, finding the smoking room, went to lounge in a lazy chair, whose chief attraction was that it stood half hidden in a little alcove lined with bookcases. He craved solitude and a chance to think things over fairly and without heat.

A few minutes later Gantry looked in and, apparently missing the half concealed easy chair and its occupant in the bookcase alcove, went his way.

He was scarcely gone before two men entered, coming down the corridor from the grill room.

Blount saw them, and he made sure that they saw him. But when they had taken chairs on the other side of the room he was suddenly assured that they had not seen him. They were talking quite freely of him and of his father.

"Well, the Honorable Sagebrush has got McVickar dead to rights this time," said the elder of the two, a full faced man, to whom Blount had been introduced on his first day in the capital, but whose name and station he could not recall. "This scheme of putting his son up for attorney general is the foxiest thing the senator has ever put across. You can bet the air was blue in the Transcontinental Chicago offices when the news got there."

"What do you suppose McVickar will do?" asked the other.

"He will do anything the senator wants him to do. Blount is land hungry, and I guess he'll take a few more sections of the railroad mesa land under the Clearwater ditch. That was what he did two years ago, when McVickar wanted the right of way for the branch through Carnadine county."

"Don't you believe he's going to take any little Christmas gift this time," was the rasping reply. "He'll sell the railroad something and take good hard money for it! It's a cinch. The railroad can't afford to have the courts against it, and McVickar will be made to sweat blood. You watch the wheels go round when McVickar comes out here."

Evan Blount found himself turning sick at heart. Could it be his father whom they were thus calmly accusing of graft and trickery and blackmailing methods?

His first impulse was to face the two men, to demand proofs, to do and say what a loyal son should. But the sickening conviction that they were discussing only well assured and well known facts crushed him back into his chair, and after that he was anxious for only one thing—that they might finish their cigars and go away without discovering him.

Fate was kind to him thus far. After a little further talk, in which the accepted point of view of the onlooker was made still more painfully evident, the younger of the two men spoke of an engagement, and they both went out together.

One clear thought, and only one, came to Evan out of the sorrowful confusion. Not for any inducement that could be offered would he now lend himself to the furtherance of his father's plans.

Beyond this he did not go in the miserable hour wrought out in the quiet of the club smoking room.

(Continued next week)



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