

THE RED STORM

Or the Days of Daniel Boone

By JOEL ROBINSON

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)

"There is your rifle," said his benefactor.

"I see it; but I don't feel as though I could go without sayin' a few words that seem to be pressin' up from my heart. You have saved my life and I thank you for it," returned the forester, with much feeling. "I've been looking at you for a good while as you sat by the fire so pensive and melancholy-like, and somehow or other I took a fancy to you."

"I'm such a half savage that I don't see how anybody living could be pleased with me," replied Innis, weeping violently.

"If anybody else should dare to call you a half savage, I reckon they'd never do it again in my hearing," returned Ballard emphatically. "The fact is you suit me exactly, and I hope you'll excuse me for sayin' so. You see, I'm a plain-speakin' man, and I say what I mean and mean honest. I don't want to make you blush, nor be forrad on short acquaintance; but if you shouldn't take a likin' to me, I'm sure that in the course of natur' somethin' will break."

The bold scout laid his hand on his heart, as if to intimate that the "somethin'" which might be expected to "break" was in that particular locality.

"Do go, Mr. Ballard, for I don't feel as though I ought to stand talking with you here. It's not likely we shall meet again," said Innis.

"I shall go, but I shall come to see you again," said Ballard, moving toward the open air. The scout paused and turned once more toward his benefactor.

"I hope this affair won't get you into any trouble," he added thoughtfully.

"Don't think of me; I shall do very well," returned Innis, hastily.

"If you should ever want a protector, or feel the need of a friend, let me know it, and I'll go through fire and water to serve you," he added. And invoking a hearty blessing upon Innis McKee, he glided quietly out of the cavern, and the cool, free air of heaven kissed his brow.

As he hurried from the hills, he forgot the dull ache occasioned by the blow upon his head, and thought only of the renegade's daughter, whose beauty had quite conquered him. He resolved to seek her again at the earliest opportunity, and do all in his power to make a favorable impression upon her young heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Allan Norwood raised Simon Kenton from the ground, and discovered that blood was flowing from the sleeve of his hunting shirt. He instantly bared the left arm, and found that a ball had lodged in it just below the left shoulder. He then proceeded to bind his handkerchief tightly about the limb, in order to stop the profuse hemorrhage. Kenton soon revived, and sturdily protested that the wound was a mere scratch, and that he should have no difficulty in going forward according to their original intentions.

A fire was kindled, and a choice piece of venison which they had brought with them cooked for their evening meal. Kenton's wounded arm had ceased bleeding, and he professed to feel much refreshed, and in good spirits. He proposed that they should proceed toward a Cherokee village which was situated in a south-eastern direction. If Rosalthe had been carried there by any of the war parties, the greater portion of the distance was probably accomplished by water, which would effectually baffle pursuit in the ordinary way; consequently, to learn anything of Rosalthe, providing that she had been thus abducted, the chances of success would be greatest to take the nearest way to the village, and trust to circumstances and their own resources for the rest.

Before morning Norwood perceived that his companion began to falter; his foot pressed the soil less firmly; he gave evident signs of exhaustion, and his breathing grew hurried. His haggard features and tollsome tread checked the impatience and excited the pity of Allan.

"This is not right!" he exclaimed, stopping suddenly. "You are exerting yourself beyond your strength."

"I believe," said Kenton, faintly, "that the blood has started again."

Norwood hastened to examine the wound, and found that the handkerchief had been displaced by his exertion in walking and the bleeding had commenced anew, and was very profuse. The handkerchief was again adjusted and they were on the point of moving on when the bark of a dog attracted their attention. Kenton leaped to his feet, and laying his right hand heavily upon Allan's shoulder, said, in a tone that sent the blood upon its way with a quicker impulse:

"That is an Indian dog; we are pursued. Nothing remains for us but to run for our lives, and break the trail," replied Kenton.

"Let us lose no time, then. I fear more for you than for myself; your strength may fail on account of that unfortunate wound."

"When my strength fails, then you must leave me to my fate," said Kenton, calmly.

"Never, while I have life," said his companion. "It were shame indeed for me to abandon a brave man in the hour of his most pressing need. May heaven save me from that heinous sin!"

The young men now exerted their ut-

most strength to evade their savage pursuers, but occasionally the bark of a dog admonished them that they were still unsuccessful.

"We can never elude them while that dog is after us," said Kenton, at length. "We must wait till he comes up and shoot him."

"That will be a dangerous experiment, for the Indians are probably not far behind him."

"It's our only chance; so you may go on. I will stop and dispatch him."

"Rather reverse that proposition, for I am in better condition than you."

But Kenton would not change his resolution, and Norwood protested that he would not leave his side. Both the parties stood perfectly still, and the dog came on at full speed.

"I will stop his barking," observed Allan, cocking his rifle.

"Take good aim," said Kenton, anxiously.

"Be calm. I am always self-possessed in the hour of danger. I am called a good shot, also."

Our hero took deliberate aim and fired at the dog; he fell, and they heard a rustling among the leaves, produced by his death struggles.

"Twas coolly done," remarked Kenton. "And now let us change our course once more. When you find strong grape vines that have climbed tall trees, lay hold of them and swing yourself forward as far as possible, in order to break the trail. I will set the example."

They had gone but a short distance from the spot before an opportunity offered to try this experiment. Kenton grasped the vine with both his hands, as well as his wounded arm would permit, and swung himself forward a distance of several yards, and striking upon very rocky soil, his feet left no perceptible imprint. Allan followed his example, with similar results, and then both ran for life, for they heard the savages approaching.

All the various artifices to baffle pursuit were resorted to; but when the parties paused, ready to fall down with exhaustion, the sound of the savage horde came faintly to their ears through the intervening distance.

"I cannot continue this much longer," said Kenton. "My strength is failing fast. Go on; you may yet escape; but if you try to save me, both will perish. I will await here the coming of the Indians. My rifle and pistols are loaded, and I shall kill the first that appears. Yes, I shall have the pleasure of three good shots before I die."

Without making any reply, Allan placed his ear to the earth, and listened with breathless interest. He heard approaching steps, and knew the elastic bounding tread of the red men. He grasped his rifle firmly, stood a moment in thought, and looked earnestly at his friend.

"My dear Kenton!" exclaimed Allan. "I would not desert so bold and heroic a comrade for a thousand worlds; no, not to save my life. Trust to me, and we will both escape, or fall side by side. My plan is formed; proceed as fast as you are able, and I will soon overtake you."

"But this generosity is madness; by giving your life to yonder yelling demons, you will not prolong mine five minutes—scarcely as many seconds!" cried Kenton.

"I do not value existence so lightly that I am willing to throw it away without a chance of success. So go forward, in heaven's name!" said Allan.

"I will," replied Kenton, sorrowfully. "We may never meet again; farewell!"

With tearful eyes, and heart melted and subdued, the forester arose to his feet, and making a desperate effort, staggered on with a speed that surprised Norwood. The latter threw himself upon the ground among the rank shrubbery. He laid his rifle beside him, and drew his hunting knife from his belt. The light, bounding footsteps which he had heard, came more distinctly to his anxious ears.

By the sounds which he had heard, he judged that one of the pursuers was far in advance of all the rest. If that conclusion was just, he could wait for the foremost savage to come up, and then slay him on the spot. In the event that there should prove to be more than one, it would only remain for him to do the best he could, and leave all to the Great Disposer of events.

Allan's eyes were turned with intense interest toward the spot where a painted face, or faces, were expected to appear. One moment more of breathless expectation, and a gigantic Indian sprang into view. He was darting onward like a bloodhound, panting with exertion. In his right hand he held his gun, and his eyes were fixed with fearful eagerness upon the trail, casting occasionally keen and sweeping glances into the forest beyond.

He came on; he was flying past the spot where the bold hunter lay. The latter bounded up, leaping upon the savage like a young lion—the hunting knife flashed in the first faint beams of the morning, and then sank deep in the red man's breast. A hollow groan was given to the gentle winds, and the pursuer had run his race. The athletic limbs quivered an instant, and all was still.

Allan thrust his crimson blade into its sheath, cast one look at the quiet outlines of the body, and then left the spot with hasty tread. He overtook Kenton, who was dragging his exhausted

frame along. When he heard steps behind him he turned about and cocked his rifle, thinking the savages were upon him; but saw instead the resolute face of our hero.

"My dear Norwood!" he cried, while large tears rolled down his sunburnt cheeks. "I never expected to see you again on earth. What have you done?"

"I have slain the leader of the pursuit; I have sent him on the eternal trail that no warrior ever retraced."

"You have done well; the next half hour will decide this question of life or death," returned Kenton.

"I know it; now lean on me, and we will baffle them yet. Here is a brook; we will walk in it—it may break the trail."

By Norwood's help Kenton was able to proceed. They doubled on their own tracks; they changed their direction many times; and when the sun was an hour high, no sound of pursuit could be heard, and they began to hope that the savages were at fault, or had abandoned the enterprise altogether.

It was now imperatively necessary that Kenton should rest. While looking for a place suitable to that object, they discovered an Indian lodge, which proved to be uninhabited. Of this they immediately took possession. To the surprise of both parties, they perceived that a fire had recently been kindled there, and several articles of comfort were left, among which were pieces of venison, mats, a few undressed deerskins, etc.

Allan hailed this discovery as a singular piece of good fortune, and instantly set himself at work to minister properly to the wants of his friend. He dressed his wound as well as he could, searched for a spring, brought him cool and refreshing water, and then arranged the mats and deerskins, and prevailed upon him to lie down and recruit his exhausted energies.

Kenton complied, making efforts during the time to induce Norwood to leave him there, and put a safer distance between himself and the Indians, who might possibly be on their trail.

Our hero was of course deaf to these suggestions; and in a short time had the pleasure of seeing his comrade sink into a deep and tranquil sleep. He then kindled a fire and moving about softly, commenced cooking as well as the case would admit, some of the venison so providentially provided.

While Allan was engaged in this manner, a human figure darkened the lodge door. The unexpected visitor was an Indian maiden. When she beheld our hero, she drew back with an exclamation of surprise.

"Come in," said Allan, perceiving she was in doubt.

"What does the pale face seek here?" she asked, with a dignified air.

"I don't know that it would be proper to make you my confidante," replied Allan, with a smile.

"Confidence sometimes makes friends," added the Indian girl, in excellent English, though somewhat loftily.

"I know it, daughter of the red man," answered Norwood. "Are any of your people with you?"

"I am alone; are you afraid?" replied the maiden.

"Not of you, certainly," said Norwood with a smile.

"Why are you so near our village?" inquired Star-Light.

"A young maiden has disappeared from the station on the Kentucky river," rejoined our hero, resolving to trust her with the object of his mission.

"Such things often happen; but why do you seek her in this direction? Do you lay this new sin at the door of the Cherokee? Is the red face always at fault? Did the Great Spirit make them a nation of thieves?"

"I said not so; but we seek that which is lost in all places where there is a possibility of its being found. Is it not so?"

"Know that the White Cloud is safe; she will return again to Boonesborough before the next moon. Go back and tell her friends so."

"What strange thing is this you say?" cried Allan.

"Am I speaking to the winds, that you do not understand? Are my words so idle that they do not interest you? I said that the white maiden was safe," rejoined Star-Light.

"Where is she? Let me see her—let me speak to her!" cried Allan.

"What is White Cloud to you?" asked Star-Light, coldly, looking steadily at Allan.

"Oh, she is much! I think of her and dream of her!" exclaimed Norwood.

"And does she dream of you?" resumed Star-Light, in the same tone.

"Alas, no! She does not even know me. I am impatient to know more. If you really speak truly, lead me to Rosalthe," added Norwood.

"I should lead you to your death. You would never return to the great fort to say that the pale maiden lives," returned Star-Light, emphatically.

"Rosalthe is a captive among your people—how, then, can she be safe?" asked the young man.

"That is known to me and not to you. I will tell no more," said Star-Light.

"You shall!" cried Norwood, starting to his feet.

"The daughter of the proud Cherokee fears nothing. She is willing to make the friends of the White-Cloud glad by sending them word that she is safe; but should you torture her with fire she would tell no more," replied Star-Light, drawing up her person majestically.

The dignified and assured air of the Cherokee maiden arrested Allan in his purpose. He stood before her irresolute and embarrassed. Before he had recovered his self-possession, Star-Light had glided from the lodge, and disappeared in the forest.

(To be continued.)

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