

## 11. Sheltopee, the Ingrate

**D**ANIEL BOONE was now a Shawnee, but his fellow tribesman did not have such implicit faith in the efficacy of their own magic as to trust him completely. When he left camp, he was likely to see someone lurking along his trail. Once, when Blackfish gave him permission to turn his horse out to grass, he was secretly amused to see that the old chief had posted armed Indians to watch him from concealment. Worst of all, his little Indian sisters were set to watch him, and there is no vigilance like a child's.

Boone was careful to show every sign of contentment and went quietly about the Indian camp, whistling to himself as he usually did at home, "apparently so contented among a parcel of dirty Indians." He was, in fact, living the life he loved best. Some of his fellow prisoners were amazed and disgusted.

Blackfish and his squaw treated him with invariable affection, addressed him as "son," made no distinction between him and their two real children. They had recently lost a son—killed, it is sometimes said, by Boone's own men in the rescue of the kidnapped girls—and Boone had now, by tribal ritual, taken his place. The other two children were little girls. One, Pom-me-pe-sy, was an ill-tempered little creature of four or five; the other, Pim-me-pe-sy, an agreeable little girl of one or two, whom Boone helped care for. With the silver trinkets Hamilton

had given him he bought maple sugar from other Indians and brought it back for Blackfish's children, who tried to speak English and call it "molasses."

Sheltowee was much indulged. Sent to chop trees, he blistered his hands and complained to Blackfish that this was no work for a warrior. In Kentucky a warrior had servants to do that kind of thing. The chief amiably relieved him of future tasks of the sort. When Boone voluntarily went out to work in the fields, Blackfish assured him he need not do so; his own squaw would have corn enough for both families when Rebecca came from Kentucky to live with the Shawnees. Sometimes the war chief drew maps in the soil and explained the local terrain to his son, who in turn dilated on the valuable arts of civilization that the Kentuckians would contribute to tribal prosperity.

Boone afterward reported that "the Shawanese king took great notice of me, and treated me with profound respect, and entire friendship, often entrusting me to hunt at my liberty. I frequently returned with the spoils of the woods, and as often presented some of what I had taken to him." The "king" was probably Moluntha, Cornstalk's successor as tribal chief; but he might have said the same thing of Blackfish.

While Sheltowee was preparing for escape, he was at the same time joining heartily in the target shooting and other sports of his fellow braves. Blackfish's squaw, whose attachment to him greatly touched her white son, was careful to warn him that he must let the Indians beat him. Sheltowee himself remembered well enough what had happened in North Carolina in his early youth, when the Catawba brave, Saucy Jack, had grown jealous of his marksmanship. Though exhibiting his strength and skill, he was careful not to excel the others, or at least not often enough to arouse ill-feeling. He noticed "in their countenances and gestures, the greatest expressions of

joy when they exceeded me; and, when the reverse happened, of envy."

Though Big Turtle was allowed to hunt for the camp, wise old Blackfish was shrewd enough to dole out a measured and limited quantity of powder and lead before each trip. Shel-towee either had to show a reasonable amount of game or return ammunition.

As Boone came and went on these expeditions through the woods around the camp, he was wise enough to make no suspicious movements. He had already detected the favorite Indian device of giving a prisoner apparent freedom but watching him secretly. He did, however, with infinite pains, slowly build up a secret hoard of lead and powder, cutting bullets in two, using only half of each, and firing with the lightest possible powder charges at small game. He also hid away some jerked venison.

His ability as a gunsmith stood him in good stead. In emergencies when rifles were used as clubs, the stocks often broke, and the ability to repair them was rare and valuable, especially among Indians. A Kentuckian once remarked of another that he "was neither the biggest fool or the wisest man he knew, but he stocked a gun well."

Boone repaired one rifle successfully. When the admiring Indians clustered round to watch, he used to turn unexpectedly in his seat. The long barrel would swing around suddenly and the watchers had to leap out of the way swiftly to save their shins. It was just Daniel's little joke, but the Indians never dreamed of his amusement.

As soon as he was done, the Shawnees gave him the lock and barrel of another to repair for them, and he set to work. Boone now had firearms, of a kind, for his escape, together with the little store of ammunition he had saved and three or four bullets which the Indians had given him for "setting" the rifle he

was repairing. Not much, but better than nothing. He tucked the bullets in his shirt flap and waited.

He even made jokes about escaping, and in doing so persuaded the simple red men that he possessed the gifts of a really powerful medicine man. One day when the warriors were less observant than usual, he managed to draw the bullets out of their rifles. (It was an old trick which he had played as a boy in Pennsylvania.) Then he told Blackfish he was going home.

"No you ain't," said Blackfish. "If you attempt it, I'll shoot you."

Boone set out and at forty yards invited the astonished warriors to shoot him if they could. Thoroughly convinced by this time that he really was escaping, they all fired, while Sheltowee made a great show of catching invisible bullets in a leather apron. Then he walked quietly back, shaking out of his garments the bullets he had taken from the rifles earlier:

"Here, take your bullets—Boone ain't going away."

Sensation in the audience.

Boone was also sharing the hardships of the tribe's nomadic existence. At one period the food supply of the Shawnee camp ran so low that they had to kill and eat their dogs, and when these were gone existed for ten days on a decoction of the inner bark of white oak, "which after drinking Boone could travel with the best of them." When at length they killed a deer, no one ate, but all partook first of a jelly made of the entrails. Boone swallowed his share of the vile mess but "his stomach refused it." Finally, he was able to keep down half a pint "with wry face and disagreeable retchings," which greatly amused the still starving Shawnees. They told Boone he might eat now, but "if he had done so before this treatment he would have died." A venison feast followed.

In June the camp moved to salt springs on the Scioto River,

north of the Ohio, where for ten days Sheltowee made salt for his red brothers. The spring was a Shawnee secret. The Indians had opened the rocks to bring water to the surface and had then fitted a round flat stone over the opening to hide it. But now Sheltowee was a member of the tribe. It need not be concealed from him.

During this time a war party had been out, engaged in an attack upon Donnelly's Fort on the Greenbrier River and Fort Randolph at Point Pleasant, in West Virginia. Just after Boone and the rest of Blackfish's family got back from their salt-making, these warriors returned after a sharp defeat and immediately began to plan the long-discussed attack on Boonesborough to retrieve the disaster on the Greenbrier. It was to be a very large war party. No one who, like Boone, was living in the camp, and knew Indians, could mistake the meaning of all the bustle.

If Boone was ever to escape, this was the time. Blackfish probably expected to use him as a guide and interpreter in attacking Boonesborough, and may even have hoped that Boone would again oblige him by persuading his fellow-settlers to surrender. But on June 16, 1778, the Shawnee camp looked for its fellow tribesman, Big Turtle, in vain.

His actual departure was not very spectacular. While off on a bear hunt, the Shawnee band stirred up a flock of wild turkeys. The usual way to hunt wild turkeys was to scare them into trees and then pick them off at leisure. As the men scattered in pursuit, Boone found himself alone with the squaws and children, who had been left with the salt-kettles and camp gear. He knew it would not be long now before the war party descended on Boonesborough. This opportunity seemed as good as any likely to offer. He waited till he knew by the reports of their rifles that the Indian hunters were occupied.

Then he walked over to his horse, cut the lashings, and tumbled off the kettles.

"My son, what are you doing?" cried his Shawnee mother.

"Well, mother," said her adopted son calmly, "I am going home. I must go and see my squaw and children and in a moon and a half I shall bring them out here to live with you."

"You must not go," cried the scandalized old squaw. "Blackfish will be angry."

When the kindly old woman warned Boone that he would certainly die in the woods, he confessed that he had arms and ammunition, bade her a friendly farewell, mounted, and rode off, leaving the squaws screaming at the tops of their voices to give the alarm.

Using the beds of running streams to obliterate his tracks, the escaping prisoner rode all night and all the next morning until his horse gave out about ten o'clock, dripping sweat and unable to go farther. Turning it loose in the forest, Boone went on afoot, breaking his trail when he could by running along fallen trees. Distancing his pursuers, he covered the 160 miles to Boonesborough in four days, eating only one meal besides his jerked venison.

After crossing the Ohio, he stocked his rifle with a bit of wood that happened to fit the breech fairly well. Having nothing else, he lashed the rifle together with thongs, as was sometimes done on the frontier. It was good enough to shoot a buffalo, when he was close enough home to dare risk the report. Later, he twice made deposition to the fact that he halted in his flight at a spot in Mason County where a buffalo road met the forks of three branches of "Johnson's Fork," and there "roasted some meat, and got some drink near the mouth of the branches." He enjoyed the feast, but even in his hunger he remembered to save the tongue, a great delicacy, for his eight-

year-old son, Daniel Morgan Boone, whom he hoped to see in a few hours.

His journey was an amazing record of endurance and self-reliance, though not quite so amazing as represented by some of the early biographers, who quietly eliminate the horse, forget about the hidden store of jerked venison, and either say outright, or strongly hint, that he made the entire trip on foot.

Crossing the Ohio was an adventure in itself, or would have been but for an astounding bit of luck. Hardy woodsman though he was, Boone was not a strong swimmer. The Ohio is not a wide river, but the fugitive reached it in time of flood. As he ranged hastily along its northern bank, never knowing when Indians might appear, he found an old canoe, very likely hidden there by some war party who expected to use it at their next crossing. It had a hole stove in one end, but Boone plugged it and got safely across.

According to another story, he made a raft and, putting his rifle and clothes on it, swam the stream. Still another story makes it "a Buckeye chunk."

Once across the Ohio, Boone was in familiar and relatively safe country—in no more danger than on any of his hunting trips, and it was but a short distance to Boonesborough. He paused for his first rest, and made an "ooze" of oak bark for his scalded feet.

Weary, bedraggled, Daniel Boone limped along over the last miles of forest, bearing his gift for his child and eager to see his wife. There was excitement in Boonesborough as the exhausted fugitive appeared.

Only Jemima was there to greet him. His family was gone, his cabin empty. Its humble furnishings were already somewhere on the Yadkin River. When Daniel and Rebecca saw each other again, they discovered that she had turned her horse

in at the Bryan cabin on the very day he had returned to their own cabin at Boonesborough.

Nothing was left, or so it seemed to the disconsolate Daniel as he stood looking at the rough logs, the cold, blackened fireplace, the empty pegs. Even the cat was gone. A deserted home is always depressing; but imagine returning to an empty and deserted log cabin after four months of captivity in Indian wigwams, after four days of peril in the wilderness, after hunger, cold, thirst, and constant danger! And imagine bringing home a buffalo tongue, through all that, to please a little boy, and then finding no little boy.

As he stood looking at the emptiness, Boone felt something rub against his leather leggings. He glanced down. Rebecca had forgotten the cat. Living as a stray among the other cabins, it had recognized its master and come home. It knew him. It rubbed purring against his legs. Boone sat down. The cat jumped into his lap.

Neighbors crowded around to console him, bringing so much to eat that one of his friends feared he would die with gorging. Sternly, he took everything eatable away from the exhausted man and fed him on nothing but broth till he was sure he had recovered.

There may have been some black looks, too. Wives and relatives and friends remembered the men still in the power of the Shawnees. It was hard to forgive a loss like that and easy to hold one man responsible. No one knows what tales of Boone's fraternizing with the Indians Andrew Johnson had brought back.

But after all, the man was a tower of strength. The news spread: Daniel Boone was back. From Harrodsburg, Colonel John Floyd wrote to a friend in the settlements: "Capt Boone has runaway from the Shawanese & arrived with abundance of news." North of the Ohio, back in Chillicothe, Blackfish post-



poned his attack. He knew well enough what kind of news Sheltowee would carry. The settlers would have warning, now. After all his planning and trouble, his attack would have to be delayed. Wearily, he sent word to Governor Hamilton. He needed further instructions.

There were times when the war chief of the Shawnees was not entirely pleased with his adopted son.

Boone had returned in the very nick of time. In spite of the raid at the Salt Licks, the frontiersmen had continued to neglect their defenses. The fort was still in bad condition—so bad that when Daniel Boone arrived it probably could not have been defended at all. The wooden palisades had gone to pieces. The Indians could almost walk in whenever they pleased. Like most of the early Kentucky forts, it had no adequate water supply within the stockade; and the gates and the two block-houses both needed repair.

Looking back from the safe and comfortable life of the twentieth century America they helped create, the Kentucky settlers seem incurably slack in the very matters on which their lives depended. Again and again the Indians surprised them easily. Twice, they just climbed over the walls of sleeping forts and started scalping! In the midst of hostile Indian country, close to the Warriors' Path, the settlers let their forts get out of repair. Stumps were allowed to stand and weeds to grow up around the stockade, offering cover under which the Indians could creep up, and denying the defenders a clear field of fire for the long, brown Kentucky rifles. The weeds could have been cut down easily enough and the stumps leveled off—but no one ever troubled.

The settlers' indifference to water supply inside the stockade seems strangest of all. Boonesborough did have an old well, but it gave very little water. Few of the others had even that.

They depended on springs outside the palisades, on chance rainfall caught on the cabin roofs and run into water-barrels. Everyone knew that these frontier forts had to be ready to shelter not only the settlers but their thirsty horses and cattle whenever danger threatened—as it invariably did threaten several times a year. But the Kentuckians, inveterately American from the very first, always took a chance on defense and hoped for the best.

When, however, one considers the pitifully small numbers of the Kentucky settlers and the arduous and immense labor they faced daily, one begins to understand why so many important things were neglected. They had, in the first place, to clear the virgin forest. Then the trees had to be cut into lengths, some hundreds of yards of deep trenches had to be dug, the logs “up ended” to serve as palisades, and the trench filled in. Cabins had to be built and furniture improvised. Nails and screws were scarce. Iron was too heavy to pack over wilderness trails; and everything had to be pegged together or logs cut to dovetail. Where a modern carpenter swiftly drives a nail, these men had to whittle pegs and bore holes to receive them. Then the rank forest earth—a tangle of roots, stumps, and stones—had to be broken to the plow and the crops started, somehow. The crops were likely to be destroyed by Indian marauders at any time, but the effort had to be made and the chance of destruction taken. Crops and game and a few wild fruits were the only source of food supply. In addition, firewood had to be cut, dried, and brought in against the winter.

Often, all this had to be accomplished with only half of the men at work. It was quite usual for men outside the fort to take turn-and-turn-about—one standing guard while the other labored. Sometimes, even so, the Indians were adroit enough to slip up and kill the guard quietly before attacking the worker.

As for water supply, it was obvious that one ought to find a spring and build a fort around it; but this was rarely practicable. The land around springs was usually too marshy for a stockade. To sink a well with nothing but picks and shovels was a tedious operation, and the frontiersmen held the old belief that underground water ran only in well-defined streams which they had no way of locating. The usual practice was to build on high ground, as near a spring as possible, and carry water into the fort every day. Rain barrels helped a little.

A prolonged Indian siege could have starved out or parched out any settlement at any time; but Indian sieges usually lasted a day or two at most. The Indians were too impatient for real siege operations, and they always ran the risk that a relief would come up from other stations, catching them between two fires. Given a few days' time, Kentucky could, in the latter part of the Revolution, raise a force of six or seven hundred rifles, quite enough to deal with any Indian war party; and the various settlements were swift, brave, and generous with their aid to one other.

The Indians preferred to surprise a station when they could. If surprise failed, as it usually did, they tried to carry the fort by assault, meantime laying waste crops, killing cattle, and burning cabins outside the stockade. Assaults on a well-defended stockade were nearly useless without artillery; and it was almost impossible to transport the field guns of that day over wilderness trails—only once did the British contrive to bring them in.

Assault having failed, the next step in Indian tactics was to decoy the settlers outside the walls; and if this final stratagem did not at once succeed, they withdrew, to strike somewhere else.

A relatively small water supply was, therefore, usually suffi-

cient. If the settlers could hold out for two or three days, they were safe from any ordinary Indian attack.

But the approaching attack on Boonesborough was not ordinary. The war party that Boone had seen preparing in Chilli-cothe was the largest yet sent against the Kentucky settlements. Every man Boonesborough could get would be needed in the defense. George Rogers Clark had taken a good many riflemen for his campaigns farther west. For the time being, this meant that men were scarcer, and the Kentucky settlements weaker, than ever.

Though Rebecca had long since returned to the Eastern settlements, her husband did not follow, but remained in Boonesborough where he was so badly needed. He sent a call for help to the settlements on the Holston River, themselves far enough away to be comparatively safe. From close at hand, Benjamin Logan sent fifteen men, cutting his own force at Logan's Station down to a bare twenty-four, and Harrodsburg also sent a small force.

There was as yet no thought of any course but fighting it out to the bitter end. The settlers repaired and strengthened their fort and made ready for the coming ordeal. They even began a new well inside the walls, but with typical frontier recklessness abandoned it as the days wore on and there was no sign of Indians. The sheer good luck of getting rain storms at the right time was all that saved Boonesborough from the consequences of this folly.

The neglect was partly caused by the urgent necessity of strengthening the fort. Only two corners had projecting blockhouses enabling the defenders to enfilade the front of their own walls if the enemy got too close. These two, by firing in two directions each, could actually rake all four of the walls, but four blockhouses were really needed. Daniel Boone promptly got his men to work on the palisades and set them

to strengthening the two blockhouses already built and erecting two more. He carried their walls up two stories, with defenses on the second story to the height of a man's head. There was no time to roof them.

A small group of riflemen went north as far as the Licking River and brought back the salt-kettles which Boone's party had abandoned six months before and which had been too heavy for the Indians to carry off. A party had previously gone out to hide them. It was no small task, for it took two men to lift one of the huge, flat, iron vessels.

While preparations for defense were in progress, Simon Kenton brought word of Clark's capture of the British post at Kaskaskia; and from beyond the mountains came the joyful news that the King of France had sent his fleet to aid the Revolution.

Everything was quiet. The riflemen saw no Indians. Scouts roamed the forests and sentinels at last stood guard by night, but there was no trace of an enemy.

Had the fickle red men given up their plans entirely? Was Boone's escape, together with the warning which the Indians knew he must have carried, enough to discourage them for good?

At this juncture, on July 17, 1778, came William Hancock, another of Blackfish's prisoners.

Hancock, a poor woodsman, had taken nine days for the journey that Daniel Boone had made in four. He had started with three pints of dried corn, but he had almost no clothes left on him and arrived so nearly dead that Boone and others nursed him for three days. Exhausted, lost, and discouraged, he had lain down to die. Glancing up, he saw his brother's name carved on a tree, recognized a place where they had formerly camped together, realized that he was only four miles from Boonesborough, and staggered on. He was so weak that when he reached the north bank of the Kentucky River oppo-

site Boonesborough he could barely make himself heard on the other side.

Hancock brought news that after Boone's escape the Indians had postponed the expedition against Boonesborough for three weeks, but nine days of the time had already expired.

Hancock had actually been at Old Chillicothe during the council which preceded final preparations for the attack, had seen the presents sent to the Indians from Detroit, and had talked with the British officers who brought them. The Indians had said they were bringing four hundred men and four field guns. Unless the settlers consented to join the British, they would either batter down the walls with the cannon or else starve them out by siege warfare, supporting themselves meantime on the settlers' own cattle.

The Indians were coming, then!

"If men can be sent to us in five or Six Weeks," says a letter to the Virginia military authorities, written in another's hand but signed by Daniel Boone, "it would be of infinite Service, as we shall lay up provisions for a Seige. We are all in fine Spirits, and have good Crops growing, and to intend to fight—hard in order to secure them." He expected the Indians, he added, "in twelve days from this"—that is, about the end of July. Virginia immediately began plans to send relief.

But still no Indians came. It was now six full weeks since Boone had escaped and the fort was quite ready to give a good account of itself. Was it possible that Indian scouts, seeing its strength, had carried back word of the preparations? Was it possible that the attack had been abandoned after all?

It did not seem likely, but the daring Boone proposed to do a little preliminary raiding on his own account. He might find out something important.

There was a good deal of argument about this expedition. Colonel Callaway thought it was the wrong thing to do, and

he had his own doubts about Boone's motives, which were in fact mixed, though they never included the treachery Callaway feared. As Trabue reports his arguments, Boone insisted that "the indians would certainly be their in a few Days but they would have time to go against some indians that lived not far over the Ohio and if a few men would go with him he would conduct them to this little Camp and as these indians was rich in good horses and beaver fur they could go and make a great speck and get back in good time to oppose the big army of Indians." The prospect of "a great speck" was too much for the frontiersmen. Callaway lost both the argument and his temper, and the stubborn Daniel had his way. No wonder there were mutterings that "it was the nature of Boone" to be "fool-hardy."

At the head of a tough little band of thirty, prepared to live on the parched corn they could carry and the game they could kill along the way, he set out for the Indian country. Beyond the Blue Licks a third of his men lost courage and went back to the fort, but the rest rode on. With Boone were Simon Kenton and Alexander Montgomery, scouts and woodsmen as skillful as himself.

Behind, in Boonesborough, sulked the suspicious Colonel Callaway, who thoroughly disapproved of the whole undertaking, and who had probably for some time entertained lingering doubts of Daniel Boone's loyalty. As a matter of fact, he need not have been so suspicious, for higher authority in the East distinctly approved of Boone's latest exploit. "A Capt and 11 men from Kentucky went within 5 miles of Chillacotha lately undiscovered, and return'd safe," wrote Colonel Arthur Campbell to a colleague, suggesting a similar incursion from the East while Blackfish was busy at Boonesborough.

Boone's was a reconnoissance in force, amply able to take care of itself, large enough to cope with any ordinary band of

marauders, and yet small enough to evade a larger one. They crossed the Ohio in safety, either leaving their horses on the Kentucky side or swimming them across, and then, painted like Indians, pushed on toward the Scioto Valley, where Daniel Boone had made salt for Blackfish.

In the midst of these scenes of their leader's captivity, they stumbled on one small group of Indians in camp and decided to attack during the night or in the early morning. When the time came, however, the others declined to go, and Boone slipped up to the camp alone. A dog began to bark. An old Indian rose in his blankets and called to it. As he did so, Boone could see the glitter of a silver half moon on the warrior's breast. He aimed at this and killed him. The rest, supposing they were attacked in force, fled to the underbrush, while Boone slipped quietly back to his companions. A little later they fell in with an Indian war party of thirty warriors—part of the force gathering to attack Boonesborough. There was a desperate little wilderness battle, in which the Kentuckians, without loss on their side, killed one Indian, wounded several more and captured three horses with all the Indian baggage.

The Indians were first discovered by Simon Kenton, who was, as usual, scouting ahead. Moving silently through the woods, he was startled by the tinkling of a bell and took cover. As he did so, two Indians appeared, one riding a small pony, the other following on foot. As Kenton watched, the man on foot sprang suddenly upon the horse behind the rider, and both Indians burst into a roar of laughter.

Kenton let them come within range and then dropped both with a single rifle shot—one dead, the other badly wounded. As Kenton ran up to get their scalps, he heard something rustle in the cane and looked up to see two more Indians aiming at him. Dodging the two shots just in time, he hid in the vegetation. It was not thick enough to hide him long from the warriors,



who soon began to hunt, though in some portions of Boone's march it had been so thick that the men could hardly get through and had to take turns breaking it down. At this moment Boone and his men appeared and after some brisk firing drove off the Indians. They could not carry off the body of the Indian Kenton had killed. Kenton scalped him.

The Kentuckians were now within four miles of Paint Creek Town. Kenton and Montgomery went ahead cautiously until they could peer into the village from the underbrush, and then reported to Boone that no warriors were there.

Boone had seen enough. From the absence of the Paint Creek braves, it was evident the Indians were gathering in force and that could mean only one thing. His party turned and headed for the fort at full speed, leaving the two scouts, Kenton and Montgomery, alone in the woods in hostile territory, living on what they could find, watching the Indians and seizing every opportunity for a little bushwhacking. If Indians could skulk in Kentucky, these hardy scouts could do a little skulking of their own in the Shawnees' Ohio country.

To avoid discovery, Boone's men had done no hunting, and had been for several days without fresh meat. Deciding hungrily that by this time one shot would make very little difference, they killed a buffalo and feasted. They finished it unmolested; but as they took up the homeward journey, they discovered the place from which two Indian scouts had been watching everything.