

## 13. Treasons or Stratagems?

THE siege was hardly past when the jealousies or suspicions among Boonesborough's leaders, which had barely been glossed over while the Indians were on the other side of the palisades, broke out openly. The Callaway and Boone families had been friends and neighbors for a long time. Colonel Richard Callaway had been one of the first settlers in Kentucky. He and Boone had worked together from the beginning. Their daughters had been captured by the Indians while out for a boat ride together; and the two fathers had jointly directed the rescue, each heading one of the two parties. The success of Boone's men and the failure of Colonel Callaway's may not have improved the colonel's temper. The links between them had, however, been drawn still closer when young Flanders Callaway, the colonel's nephew, married Jemima Boone.

But in spite of these years of friendship there had been bitter dissension and dark suspicion during the siege. Colonel Callaway had fiercely objected to the Paint Creek expedition and to what he thought Boone's foolhardiness, or worse, in leaving the fort to parley with the enemy. Boone, to be sure, was personally acquainted with Chief Blackfish and Chief Moluntha, and Callaway had not the privilege. But the parley had actually gained three days' time—a success which probably increased the good colonel's ire.

Even though it had proved an eventual success, Boone's in-

sistence on negotiation had very nearly ended in getting eight of the leading men of Boonesborough killed or captured at a moment when every rifle counted.

Worse still, there were grave suspicions of Boone's loyalty. They were cruel, and they were unjust; but they were very natural, especially in the gossipy atmosphere of a small and utterly isolated frontier community, with little to talk about save Injuns, crops, and each other. After the siege, when the Injuns had gone and the crops were all destroyed, gossip flourished. Talk about disloyalty at Boonesborough seems to have been widespread. It is worth noting that old William Clinkenbeard, an early settler at Strode's Station, who had lived in Boonesborough for a while, used in his later years to murmur mysteriously about the "Tories" there and does not even mention the name of Daniel Boone.

It was bad enough for Boone to let himself be captured, but he had even guided the Indians to the salt-makers' camp and had compelled his own men there to surrender without a fight. True, Boone explained that he did this only to lure the Indians away from Boonesborough. True, he actually had lured the Indians away. True, too, that an attack at that time would certainly have ended in a massacre.

But the other captives at Detroit and Chillicothe had seen him made much of by the Indians. Everyone had seen the friendship and esteem that Blackfish and Moluntha showed him. Later they had seen him received by the British with similar marks of friendship.

The wily old hunter really had deceived Hamilton into thinking that Kentucky was nearly ready to come over to the British side. "By Boone's account," the lieutenant-governor excitedly reported, "the people of the frontier have been incessantly harassed by parties of Indians they have not been able to sow grain and at Kentucke will not have a morsel of bread by

the middle of June. Cloathing is not to be had, nor do they expect relief from the Congress—their dilemma will probably induce them to trust to the Savages who have shewn so much humanity to their prisoners, & come to this place before winter.”

Just what Daniel Boone hoped to gain by these tales is not clear now. He may have thought that British belief in Kentucky's weakness would induce Hamilton to send out relatively weak war parties. He may also have thought that if Hamilton had any hope of winning the Kentuckians over peacefully he would cease sending war parties altogether. There is no question that Boone's ingenious tales did secure a delay which made it possible to get Boonesborough ready for defense. If the others had been as active as he, it would have been ready a couple of months before the Indians arrived.

But all these sinister tales were carried back to Boonesborough by the little stream of escaping captives who found their way to Kentucky both before and after Boone's own escape.

When the Indians arrived, Boone was naturally the first man they asked for. They had quite definite hope that he would persuade the Kentuckians to surrender but there is not a scrap of evidence that he ever counseled anything of the sort—and his enemies would never have missed the chance to bring out such discreditable evidence if it had been possible. When Colonel Callaway objected to going outside to negotiate, Boone was evidently one of those who overruled him. Callaway was naturally irritated, particularly when it turned out Boone had been right all the time.

No one will ever know what bitter recriminations passed when the negotiations that Boone insisted on had failed; when the time that they had gained proved too short for relief to arrive, after all; when defeat and a horrible death for every living being in the fort seemed imminent from moment to moment; when husbands thought in agony of the fate of their

wives and their children; and when the little group of leaders debated anxiously the last, hopeless expedients that might possibly save their lives.

It was no wonder that when it was all over the finger of an evil suspicion pointed at the man who had lived four months with the enemy; who was an adopted member of their tribe; who was the "son" of the chief who had commanded the attack and a friend of the "hair-buying general" himself.

There was some ground, too, for suspecting Toryism. Americans were a puzzled race in those years. Washington and his army were technically rebels. They had taken up arms against their sovereign lord, the King. Many other Colonists had loyally and legally taken up arms on the King's behalf, and others were in silent sympathy with the royal cause. Rebecca's family were mostly Tories, some merely as sympathizers, some as active soldiers of the King against his Colonists. Her relative, Samuel Bryan, had just returned from Kentucky when he was killed fighting for the King. It was even said that Daniel Boone had never wished to fight on the rebel side, that he had gone to Kentucky in 1775 to avoid the revolutionary struggle then impending.

As the war dragged on and the tension grew, the lot of Tories in the East became more and more unhappy. Many of them in the states bordering on Kentucky sought refuge from their troubles on the frontier, where fewer questions were asked. A still larger Tory immigration came later. By 1780 many of the settlers could hardly be driven to arms and many, when captured, quietly took lands in loyal British territory and calmly settled down as subjects of the King again.

How much of this Tory attitude existed in Kentucky in 1778 there is no telling, but the charges against Boone grew out of the realization that such a situation was developing. As early as 1777 the British had tried some highly modern propaganda

methods. During the attacks on Logan's fort a man was killed and scalped at the gate. When the Indians were gone the defenders found beside the body a bundle of proclamations by Sir Guy Carleton, British commander-in-chief in Canada, addressed to Kentuckians in general and to Clark and Logan by name. They promised pardon, lands, equal rank and equal pay for all who would join the Canadian forces. If they yielded, the Kentuckians were promised that Indian attacks would cease.

Logan cannily gathered the papers up and stowed them away without divulging their contents—"for what reason is not known," observes John Bradford naïvely. It all helps to explain Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton's credulity as he listened to Daniel Boone's tales, and Colonel Callaway's suspicion as reports of them came in. Worse still, Boone is said to have remarked that while he was with the Indians, "he could hear from Boonesborough every week." He probably meant that Indian scouts watched the fort steadily, as was easy enough from the high hills across the river; but the remark could be twisted into suspicious evidence of treason within the fort itself.

There was nothing for it but a formal trial, on which Colonel Callaway and Captain Benjamin Logan insisted. Courts-martial were not infrequent in the loosely organized and unruly frontier militia, and Boone himself, as a militia officer, sometimes sat as one of the judges. Unfortunately, the records of this particular trial have vanished from the archives, having probably been removed and destroyed by some well-wisher eager to clear the defendant's reputation.

Daniel Boone's good name actually suffers very little if at all from the episode, if we may judge from the only account of it that has come down to modern times. Colonel Daniel Trabue, who knew Boone and was "present at his Tryal," wrote down a full account in his reminiscences. The charges were preferred by Callaway and Logan and the two, as Trabue

naïvely remarks, were "not pleased" by the acquittal which immediately followed. Boone was charged: first, with leading the Indians to the camp of his salt-makers and compelling their surrender; second, with encouraging the reconnoitering expedition to invade the Indian country before the siege of Boonesborough; third, with being "willing to take all our officers to the Indian camp to make peace out of sight of the fort"; and fourth, with being "in favour of the british." "All his conduct proved it," according to Callaway, who thought that "he ought to be broak of his commysion."

But "Boon insisted otherwise." He had indeed, he admitted, urged the salt-making party at the Blue Licks to surrender; but "the reason he give up these men at the blue licks was that the Indians told him they was going to Boonesborough, to take the fort Boon said he thought he would use some stratigem he thought the fort was in bad order and the Indians would take it easy he Boon said he told the Indians the fort was very strong and had too many men for them that he was friendly to them and the officers at Detroyt and he would go and show them some men to wit 26 and he would go with them to Detroyt and these men also and when they come to take Boonesborough, they must have more warriors than they now had Boon said he told them all these tails to fool them he also said he Did tell the British officers he would be friendly to them and try to give up Boonesborough, but that he was a trying to fool them."

Boone might have added that the Indians outnumbered the salt-makers four to one and that the Indians were sure to find the salt-camp anyway. Blackfish was only a few miles away, and the Blue Licks were on a much traveled warpath, though Colonel Callaway contended that the war party was "not going towards the men" at the moment Boone was captured. It was a point on which Callaway could not possibly have any first-hand

knowledge, since he was thirty or forty miles distant at the time.

If Boone had not acted as he did, Blackfish's war party would probably have captured Boonesborough and scalped the very men who later held the court-martial, besides surprising and killing both the salt-makers and the relief party which was just leaving Boonesborough. As a result of Boone's adroitness, no salt-makers were killed, and the relief party was able to get back to shelter. Thanks wholly to him Boonesborough was attacked, not when it was weak, but months later when it had plenty of warning, was in good repair, and—as the event proved—well able to stand a siege.

There is no doubt that Boone had discussed joining the British with Hamilton; and poor Chief Blackfish had apparently lent too credulous an ear to the guileful Daniel. That Boone ever really contemplated treason is a ridiculous idea, disproved by all his years of faithful service. That he worked a legitimate ruse of war for all it was worth is likely enough. But traitors do not carry warning.

Callaway's suspicion was largely due to William Hancock, who had been captured with the salt-makers and had escaped after being held in the Shawnee camps and also in Detroit. There he had seen the deference paid Boone by the British. It was he who brought back the wild rumor that Boone "had agreed with the British Officers that we would come with the Indians, and that the Fort should be given up. That the people should be taken to Detroit, and live under the Jurisdiction of his gracious Majesty, King George III."

It was a foolish tale—military treason is hatched a little less publicly than that, and casual prisoners of war like Hancock are not taken into the secret; but it helps explain the suspicion that arose later when Blackfish and his warriors really did arrive with precisely such a proposal as Hancock had predicted.

Boone "told the same tale that Mr. Hancock had stated, only said he was Deceiving the British Officers and Indians. That he was now come home to help his own people fight, and they must make that preparatione that they could."

There is no record that Boone even troubled to defend himself against the charge of negotiating with the Indians "out of sight of the fort." He had actually met them well within sight of the fort, and the suspicious Colonel Callaway had gone along. Treating with the Indians had delayed the siege three days and everybody knew it. Callaway was either influenced by personal animosity or he was too ready to believe the wild gossip that Hancock brought home.

The court-martial found Boone not guilty, a reasonably obvious verdict; and he was further vindicated by prompt promotion to the rank of major.

It is not unusual for an officer with a clear conscience, whose conduct is being gossiped about or called in question, himself to demand a court-martial in order to clear his name. To take a very modern instance, such was the action of the unfortunate German lieutenant-colonel of the general staff who ordered the retreat from the Marne. At least one of Boone's idolaters has pretended that Callaway and Logan really pressed the charges out of pure good nature. They knew, according to this version, that gossip was going round and they wanted to scotch it at once and see their old comrade's name kept clear.

There is not a particle of evidence for this bit of charity. Trabue, who was there, heard the evidence on both sides, and saw the participants in the court, is quite definite that Callaway and Logan were disgusted by the acquittal. One of the women used to say that "Boon never deserved any thing of the country." One of the Bryans summed it up by saying simply that "Boone was blamed by a few—but when tried acquitted."

Once cleared of the charges, Daniel Boone hurried off to the



settlements to find his wife and family. He was so quick about it that he was actually on the way before all of the relief had come in, and he met part of these troops on the Wilderness Road.

What did Boone think of it all, as he made his way eastward through the forests?

No selfish motives had kept him at Boonesborough. His own family was safe in the settlements. There was plenty of time before the Indians came. If he wanted to join the Tories, he could easily go to North Carolina and join them there. But his first loyalty was to the settlers who had trusted him and followed him to Kentucky. With them he would stay and with them he would die if necessary.

His reward was charges of treachery and a court-martial at the hands of these very people. It was not the last time that he was to feel the ingratitude of his friends, but it was the first and perhaps the bitterest. In later years his children often repeated his stories and opinions, but to this episode they seem never to have referred. At least once Boone discussed it with a kinsman. Otherwise he kept silence.

But just after the siege, before his return to North Carolina, he wrote a letter to his wife denying the charges of Toryism in language so profane that the blushing Rebecca took her scissors and snipped the bad words out. It had been alleged that he was a Tory and had taken the oath of allegiance to the King. It was not true: "God damn them they had set the indians on us," runs the only sentence of that emphatic letter that has been preserved. Rebecca was shocked; her Daniel rarely swore.

It was all over, so far as Daniel Boone was concerned. There was comfort in his acquittal—no ordinary verdict of "not guilty," but a complete exoneration by his friends and neighbors, an exoneration made more emphatic by his immediate

promotion. His accusers were not promoted. Daniel harbored no malice. He gave still more heroic service to Kentucky. He risked his own life and his family's lives again and again.

The last word may well be Simon Kenton's: "They may say what they please of Daniel Boone: he acted with wisdom in that matter."