

16. The Year of Blood: DEATH AT THE BLUE LICKS

NEXT day Daniel Boone led in the men from Boonesborough, and other contingents came in from Lexington and Harrodsburg. Scouts out looking for Indian "sign" had seen enough to show that the enemy had retreated from Bryan's Station, northward along the buffalo trace. Nowhere in the woods was there sign to indicate that any of the savage warriors had lingered behind.

There was a bustle of hurried preparation in the fort all morning. A council of war debated whether to pursue the Indians at once, with such force as they had; or to wait until Colonel Benjamin Logan could come up with four or five hundred men from the southern settlements, when they would be in overwhelming force. Major Hugh McGary of the Lincoln County militia was for waiting, but he was ridiculed as timid. Colonel Todd pooh-poohed his advice. One lost day would enable the Indians to get across the Ohio into safety. John Craig, who had been in command during the siege, insisted they now had enough men to catch and defeat the Indians. It looked as if Craig ought to know. Todd thought the Indians' numbers were exaggerated—and anyhow, "the more the merrier."

At noon they marched, the men of Bryan's Station, Lexington, Harrodsburg, and Boonesborough—well under two hundred in all, but confident that Logan would be coming up with

reënforcements in a day or two. They were marching, had they but known it, to the last pitched battle of the American Revolution. Meantime, Bryan's Station lay silent in the wilderness, guarded only by its women and its children.

The scene, as Boone and the rest marched out of the fort, was enough to make any man long for revenge. Everything outside the stockade that would burn was in ashes. Leather had been stolen from the tanning vat. Dead cattle, hogs, and sheep lay where they had been slaughtered, already rotting in the August sun. The Indians had cut meat from some, but many had been killed solely for the sake of destruction. The hemp had been burned, the potato vines pulled up, the cornstalks broken down. It was part of the effort to make Kentucky uninhabitable for the Americans; it was also exactly what the Kentuckians had done in many an Indian village; but no one thought of that.

No finer fighting men ever faced an enemy than the leathery frontiersmen who looked around at the desolation, gripped their rifles, and rode on. Daniel Boone was now approaching fifty but his age meant nothing—he was to roam the woods for thirty years to come. It was now thirteen years since he had first entered Kentucky. He knew every brook and creek, every buffalo path and ravine, every hiding place for a deer, a hunter, or an Indian. Captured by the Indians two or three times, he had lived among them and knew the queer processes of the red man's brain, and he had won a kind of grudging admiration from them. The Shawnees never quite got over hoping that Sheltowee would join the tribe again, some day, and settle down to the life of a sensible Indian. Boone had already lost a brother and a son, both killed by Indians, but he was risking his family's blood as well as his own again today. His son Israel Boone, his nephew, a son-in-law, and other relatives by marriage marched with him.

The other two commanders were John Todd, veteran of the

battle at Point Pleasant, one of the men in Henderson's original legislature at Boonesborough in 1775; and Stephen Trigg, who had come to Kentucky as one of the court of land commissioners and had remained as an Indian fighter. Like Boone, each of these was lieutenant-colonel of his county militia, and theoretically in command of its troops. Sometimes the command was very theoretical. Even after a council of war the three commanders could not get their orders obeyed!

These Kentucky woodsmen were fierce but not especially enthusiastic fighters. They wanted lands, homes, and security; and they were perfectly willing to fight anyone—British or Indian—who interfered. But except for a few adventurous spirits like Kenton, they found no zest in the business. They cared so little for military display that only one officer carried a sword. Colonel Todd, as commander, had borrowed Daniel Boone's, the only one in Kentucky. It was lost next day in the battle, but was later fished out of the Licking River and identified.

The strict obedience—intelligent but unquestioning—which is the soul of an army was wholly alien to everything in the settlers' wild independent life. There was no magic in a commission. Under the system which gave every little hamlet a full quota of company and even field officers, at least a quarter of the expedition held commissions anyway. The less than two hundred men who started off on Girty's trail were "commanded" by no less than three lieutenant-colonels, enough for a modern infantry regiment of three thousand. They were men highly respected in their communities, and experienced in wilderness war, but that did not in the least mean that they could get their orders obeyed by their unruly troops. If discipline failed, there was nothing to do but fall back on mob impulse.

When Girty, Caldwell, McKee, and their Indians gave up their attack and slipped away from Bryan's Station, they had gone quietly into camp at the ruins of Ruddle's Station, which had

been looted and burned twenty-two months before. The prisoners who had been brought back to Kentucky slept that night amid the ruins of their homes.

The Indians had plenty of food, for as McKee later officially reported they had "killed upwards of 300 hogs, 150 head of cattle, and a number of sheep." As they had also captured some horses, there was no difficulty in carrying supplies.

They were careful to guard their rear against the retaliation that they knew would follow, but their night's rest was undisturbed. Not until next day did the pursuit even get under way. Breaking camp at their leisure in the morning, the retreating invaders moved on to the Blue Licks. They had been traveling very light, and one hundred Indians, leaving the war party at Ruddle's Station, "went after their things they left at the Forks of Licking."

The rest, impudently blazing the trail behind them so that the pursuing Kentuckians might make no mistake about their route, took the shorter way to the Blue Licks, where they went into camp on "ground advantageous in case the enemy should pursue us." Scouts lingered along the trail behind, especially about the Blue Licks, watching for the pursuit which by this time was not far off. In the early morning one of them brought Caldwell news that the Kentuckians were only a mile away.

At this point the main Licking River bends through three quarters of a circle around a hill. Just behind the crest of the hill were two ravines filled with a tangle of fallen timber. It was perfect cover and Caldwell decided to ambush the Kentuckians right there. The Indians at first objected that the Blue Licks were an important hunting ground. They were afraid a battle might frighten the buffalo away. Eventually Caldwell persuaded them. The main body of warriors wriggled into the fallen trees where they were completely invisible, and a few others remained in sight on the hillside. It was an ideal posi-

tion for an ambush, with water around them almost everywhere, cutting off the Kentuckians once they had crossed, and yet with a clear line to the rear for the Indians themselves. Retreat would be easy if the Kentuckians turned out to be more numerous than reported. It would be hard for the white men if the Indians won.

On the trail behind, the white pursuers pushed on in brash confidence, very bold and very sure of themselves—all but one.

Daniel Boone was doing some thinking. The leisurely Indian retreat, the failure to conceal the trail, the obvious confidence of the retreating invaders, what did they mean? Had the Indians wished to escape, they could have traveled at twice the speed they were making; or they could have broken up into many small bands which, scattering in all directions, would leave no trail whatever.

Just what were the redskins planning? Daniel Boone had his suspicions. Was this the same trick that had failed at Boonesborough and at Bryan's Station? An attempt to draw the white men out of their defenses into ambush?

Out there, somewhere in the woods ahead, what was Simon Girty thinking? Bryan's Station had been so magnificently defended that there was no hope of immediate capture. Very well, then. Retreat. Draw the whole Kentucky force out into the wilderness. Catch them on unfavorable ground and destroy them all.

Caldwell's Wheeling expedition had barely got started; his attack on Bryan's Station had been a failure; but he still had a chance to wipe out half the fighting men of Kentucky in a single smashing blow.

As the Kentucky pursuers moved swiftly through the forests, more and more unpleasant reflections of this sort kept passing through the mind of Daniel Boone. He had carefully counted

the Indian camp fires, and "concluded there were at least 500 Indians."

The abandoned camp of the night before at Ruddle's Station looked as if the Indians were stronger than the Kentuckians supposed. Why hadn't they hidden their camp fires? The warriors would have scattered if they wanted to escape pursuit; instead, they kept together. Their trail ought to have been concealed, all traces of passage hidden, footmarks few and far between, taxing the observation of the keenest scout. Daniel kept his sharp blue eyes on the ground and did not in the least like what he saw. Anybody could follow a trail like this. Discarded equipment lay along the line of march. Tomahawks had blazed the trees. The only reason for blazing a trail is an expectation it will be followed. Did these Indians *want* to be followed?

Lieutenant-Colonel Daniel Boone was increasingly uneasy. The more "sign" he saw the less he liked it. Boone knew his Indians; and this was not the way fleeing Indians ought to act.

At sundown the Kentuckians halted and the plan of battle was explained to everyone. They might encounter Indians any moment now. Half the men were to ride their horses straight into the Indian line. The rest, on foot, were to follow close behind, attacking at close range when the cavalry charge had broken the enemy.

After a short rest they mounted again and pushed on through the darkened forest until midnight. Then they went into camp near the present town of Ellisville in Nicholas County. They had covered thirty-three miles from Bryan's Station that day.

The Indian camp was only three or four miles away, but neither side knew where the other was. The Kentucky camp was not harassed in the night, and if the Indian scouts found it at all, they sent no message back.

Early in the morning the Kentuckians pushed on, with a

screen of five scouts ahead of them. As these men came over the hill-top looking down into the river and across the valley, they saw two Indians walking back and forth on the opposite ridge. Nothing else was in sight and everything seemed visible, for the hills had been gnawed bare by buffalo hungry for salt. The scouts halted and waited for the rest to come up.

When Todd arrived, he took one look and sent back along the column for Boone. Daniel approached with the remark, "Colonel, they intend to fight us."

"How do you know?" asked Todd.

"They have been for some time concealing their number by treading in each other's tracks." He pointed down to the ground at their feet, where the Indian trail wound forward through the forest. "Don't you see they are doing so?"

Boone, who had known this part of the country for years, suggested that they cross the river higher up and then strike the trace again in the high ground to the north. That would take them around any possible ambush. He was overruled, and the whole cavalcade blundered down to the Blue Licks ford beyond which, on their hill, the Indians waited in cheerful anticipation. A medicine man, after due incantation, is said to have learned from the Great Spirit the night before that the white men would soon be at the river and would offer battle.

As the Kentucky advance guard came down to the river bank, they could still look across and see a few Indians moving on the hill a mile beyond the stream. Had they caught up with the enemy? Or were these merely stragglers?

The Kentuckians again halted for council. Somewhere in the rear Logan must now be hurrying after them with four or five hundred rifles. With such a force they would be overwhelming. But would the Indians wait to be overwhelmed? Delay might mean their escape. It might also mean that the Kentuckians would be attacked instead of attacking.

Daniel Boone proposed delay. He knew the country only too well. He had passed here with Michael Stoner in 1774. Near this very place, six years before, he had been captured by Blackfish's warriors, and a few years later had driven off two Indians single-handed. Along the hill in front, they could see for a mile, and it was true that all seemed clear. But over the crest and out of sight, two ravines ran from the hill down to the river. It was a likely spot for an ambush, and Boone pointed this out with emphasis.

Two volunteers splashed their horses across the river, rode for a mile and a quarter, and returned to report they had seen nothing. It was what in modern military parlance is called "negative information"—a notoriously treacherous thing. If you have seen the enemy, well, you have seen him. But if you have not seen him, there is always the uncomfortable possibility that he is there all the same, and you have just overlooked him.

For two scouts to ride alone into enemy country is a nervous business. The best of scouts is never without a thought of his own skin and its safety. The two volunteers had not looked quite so carefully as they thought, nor had they seen so much as they thought. Some hundreds of Indians, keeping close to the ground and using cover as only Indians can, were in the very area they had reconnoitered—or said they had reconnoitered. Simon Kenton, who could live undetected for days at a time on the outskirts of an Indian village, might not have been so easily deceived; but Kenton was far in the rear, toiling ahead with Logan and the reënforcements. Boone would have done better, but his place as a commander was with his own men.

The early morning quiet was still unbroken, that treacherous quiet which was so often the prelude to bloody massacre. Only a few Indians had been sighted—smoking their pipes!—and they had offered no resistance; but the Kentucky com-

manders were still unsatisfied. With their men in a circle around them, Todd asked Boone's opinion.

Boone insisted that there were three to five hundred Indians (his official report afterwards said four hundred or more) in ambush in the ravines just ahead. No matter what the scouts reported, he knew the ground and he knew Indians. He proposed that half the Kentuckians move upstream, cross near Elk Creek, and attack one ravine in flank, while the rest attacked from some other position.

It was the soundest kind of modern tactics—a holding attack combined with an attack in flank—but even that might not have succeeded in such wooded country. The two attacks would have to be absolutely simultaneous to be successful and Todd might have to wait for Logan to come up before he had enough troops for such an enveloping movement.

Not a sound came from the warrior-packed ravines. Boone's advice might have been heeded even yet. But an ill-timed remark about McGary's courage, made by someone or other at Bryan's Station a couple days before, still rankled. McGary had been in favor of waiting for Logan then. But now he wanted to fight, and he wanted to fight in a hurry. Boone warned him that the horseshoe bend where they stood was the worst possible ford. If he really insisted on crossing, there was a really good ford two miles downstream.

McGary sneered something about cowardice.

Boone, nettled at the slur, grumbled: "If you are determined to go and meet the enemy at this great disadvantage, go on: I can go as far into an Indian fight as any other man."

"By Godly," inquired McGary—it was his pet oath—"what have we come here for?"

"To fight the Indians," said somebody.

"By Godly," cried McGary, "then why not fight them?"

With that, swearing he would prove his own courage at

least, he waved his rifle over his head and rode into the river, yelling:

“All who are not damned cowards follow me, and I’ll soon show you the Indians.”

With the three leaders still in council, this piece of bravado was the worst sort of insubordination, but it suited the temper of the frontiersmen. Instantly men were everywhere scrambling into their saddles and splashing through the river, while the Indian scouts watching from above must have wondered if the white men had lost their minds.

The best the crestfallen commanders could do was to follow their unduly enthusiastic troops across and try to get them into some sort of formation. This they managed to do. Trigg took the right, Todd the center, Boone the left. The men dismounted, stripped to their shirt sleeves, tied their clothes to their saddles, and left their horses standing with the reins flung over their necks, but not tied. They would need them to pursue Indians. Only a few officers were still mounted. Boone himself went ahead on foot.

An advance guard of twenty-five men—commanded by three majors!—started forward, the impetuous McGary with them. The rest followed in three long narrow columns abreast of each other. They reached the top of the ridge and then started toward the ravines where Boone expected the Indian ambush. Leaving their horses behind, they moved to within sixty yards of the Indians—point blank range.

There was a rattle of shots as the advance guard stumbled into the Indians, then the fire quickened and a volley brought down all but three of them. McGary survived the mischief he had done. Within three minutes, forty men were down. On the right the Indian line extended far beyond Trigg’s little force. Trigg was soon shot through the body and fell dead, or dying, with blood gushing both from breast and back. His men, dis-

heartened, began to yield ground. The Indians not only drove them back in an instant, but swung in behind them, so that in a few minutes the Kentuckians were caught between two fires. As soon as these woodsmen—used only to their own style of go-as-you-please fighting, and never accustomed to waiting for a steadying word of command—realized that the Indians were behind them, it was every man for himself. Some of them got in three or four shots. Then it was all over. Disciplined troops might still have won. These men, equally brave, could not.

Boone's troops were the only ones who drove the enemy back and Boone himself later suspected their retreat was merely a feint. But in the excitement of battle none of Boone's fighters noticed what was going on elsewhere. Boone was elated. He was carrying an extra-long fowling piece which he rarely used, loaded with three or four balls and sixteen or eighteen buck-shot.

"You be there!" he cried as he fired at an Indian and saw him fall—an exclamation so strange under the circumstances that someone remembered it afterward. The Indians dodged backward from tree to tree for about a hundred yards while Boone and his men pursued.

At this moment McGary rode up:

"Col. Boone, why are you not retreating? Todd's and Trigg's line has given way, and the Indians are all around you." Boone looked back and saw the other Kentuckians running for their lives.

The battle itself had lasted about five minutes. The rest was a panic-stricken rush for the river, more than a mile away. Men who were still on horseback rode for the ford. The rest ran for their horses, but as the whooping warriors rushed forward, the horses stampeded.

The Indians dropped their rifles and leaped ahead with

knife and tomahawk. They were in among the horses almost as soon as the fleeing white men, slashing and cutting at them as they tried to mount. The flight was over bare, open ground. There was no chance of concealment.

Alone or in small groups, on horse or on foot, as best they might, the Kentuckians made for the river, the Indians whooping among them as they plied their tomahawks or tripped up the fleeing men to stab them as they fell, or took occasional prisoners to be tortured later to a slow death, or leaped into the saddles of the Kentucky horses and rode ahead to waylay the fugitives when they reached the ford.

Knowing the country as he did, Daniel Boone saw there was only one possible chance of escape. Gathering his men together, he led them swiftly off through the woods to the west. His son Israel paused for one more shot as his father passed him. Daniel, finding a horse, told Israel to mount and ride off, while he went for another. But the boy exclaimed, "Father, I won't leave you!"

There was a shot and Daniel turned to see his son with one quivering arm still stretched in front of him, blood gushing from his mouth. As he fell Daniel gathered him up and carried him off in his arms. Once an Indian, swinging his tomahawk, got within a few feet of the burdened father before he could lay his son down and fire. Seeing that Israel was either dying or already dead, Boone laid him on the ground. Tradition says that he hid the body in a cave. Then he mounted and rode for his life. As he did so a volley rang out behind him, cutting the branch of a tree, which fell across his horse's neck. He got his men safely across near the mouth of Indian Creek, farther down the Licking River. They paused for one last volley as they reached the southern bank.

Of all the horrors of his long life, this episode made the deepest impression upon Boone. Thirty years afterward, he could

not describe it without tears. Just recovering from fever, Israel had been urged to stay at home, but he had insisted on sharing the dangers of the expedition.

Squire Boone, Jr., Daniel's nephew, rode all the way back with a broken thigh. A friend got him on a horse, and rode along pushing off the frantic fugitives who tried to climb up behind the wounded man. At Strode's Station he is said to have paused, without dismounting, for a drink—of buttermilk; then to have pushed on to Boone's Station. Eventually he "got well and went to preaching."

While Daniel Boone had been struggling to save his son, another fugitive, Anthony Sowdusky, had managed to get Israel's horse and was just riding off when he heard a cry from a white man, "for God's sake not to leave him," stopped, got the man into the saddle and rode off with seven or eight bullets in his clothing but only one grazing the skin.

Boone's son-in-law, Joseph Scholl, reached the river so weak that he turned to a companion, Andrew Morgan, with the words:

"I'm afraid I can't get over the river with my rifle; I can't part with it."

"Hold on to my shoulder as we pass the river," said Morgan.

As they reached the other bank in safety, Morgan, parched with the long run under an August sun, said:

"Now you can wade out; I'll stop and drink"—which, with rifle balls kicking the water up in spurts around him, he did. One fugitive felt his wounded brother shot in his arms after carrying him half way over the stream. Of fifteen men crossing with him, he alone survived.

The river line, more than a mile in rear, now became the center of such resistance as was still possible. It was deep enough to be an obstacle to wounded men on foot; but it was an obstacle for the pursuing Indians, too. They were a clear

and helpless target as they struggled across, and by this time the Kentucky rifles were beginning to speak from the other bank.

The real hero of the retreat, however, was a certain Benjamin Netherland. In the rough banter of the frontier, cowardice was a frequent accusation, easy enough in bushwhacking forest war when escape alive was often more important than a petty local triumph. The day had not yet come when a few yards of trench were thought worth innumerable lives. This border warfare was so desperate that even men were valuable.

Netherland had been suspected of cowardice and about this very time was refused promotion because he was a "trifling" character. But it was he who partially saved the day that McGary's foolhardy bravado had lost. He had seen some fighting in the East in the first years of the Revolution, had been with Lafayette, and had fought at Guilford Courthouse. Then—as was not unusual—he had left the army and come West to Kentucky.

Well-mounted, Netherland got safely across the ford. As he looked back, he could see the slaughter all along the other bank. The way to safety was clear ahead of him. It was a matter of minutes before the woods on this bank, too, would be full of savages, crossing above and below him and racing in behind to cut him off. Netherland swung his six feet two out of the saddle and stopped the fleeing men around him:

"Let's halt, boys, and give them a fire."

From the shore his line of ten or twenty rifles opened an aimed fire at close range, blazing at every Indian that showed himself. The warriors, many without rifles, fell back to cover, and the weary and wounded fugitives began to struggle across. It was only a few minutes' delay, but it was enough. The men rushed across the ford or swam the deeper parts of the river to safety, then vanished into the forests. Netherland and his band

mounted and galloped safely away, reaching Bryan's Station that evening. Nearly fifty years later, Captain Robert Patterson wrote him: "I cannot ever forget the part you acted in the Battle of Blue Licks."

Patterson himself owed his life to that very Aaron Reynolds whom he had rebuked for swearing a few weeks earlier. Although he had never fully recovered after being shot and tomahawked some years before, Patterson fought with Boone on the Kentucky left. In the retreat he had managed to get as far as the river where he stopped, too exhausted to struggle across. Meantime Reynolds had seen a horse with a dead man dragging by the stirrup, had cut the body loose, taken the horse, and ridden to the river. Seeing Patterson helpless on the bank, Reynolds jumped off, pushed him into the saddle, and himself swam safely across. But his buckskin trousers were so heavy with water he could hardly move. He sat down to pull them off. Indians had crossed safely lower down and were ranging through the woods along the river, looking for white men. They captured Reynolds unhurt, kept him for torture, and went on, leaving him with a single guard. Watching the Indian closely, Reynolds noted that his rifle was not ready to fire, and waiting till he stooped to tie his moccasin, knocked him out with his bare hands and escaped.

Ahead of Patterson, attired solely in his shirt, he reached Bryan's Station, where his story was received with incredulity until Patterson himself rode in, confirmed it, and presented his rescuer with two hundred acres. Aaron Reynolds, the mighty swearer, thereafter settled down, joined the Baptist Church, and became a model citizen—all thanks to a quart of liquor, Simon Girty, and a minor massacre. He confessed that he had begun to form a secret admiration and affection for Patterson from the very day the captain first rebuked him for swearing.

The Indians followed about two miles beyond the Licking

River and then decided, in Caldwell's words, that "as the enemy was mostly on horseback, it was in vain to follow further." They returned to have some fun with the prisoners, whose slashed bodies were later found with the hands still tied, showing that they had been taken alive and tortured to death. As Caldwell reports the results of his interrogation of prisoners, he may have saved some from torture; or he may have questioned them first and then turned them over to the savages. British officers in general discouraged the torture of prisoners as much as they could. Some torture there certainly was, for Jesse Yocum, one of the prisoners, remarked after his escape that "he did not know how many they burned, but the smell of a human was the awfulest smell he ever had in his life."

In the meanwhile Colonel Logan with the reënforcements had crossed the Kentucky River forty miles to the south about the time Boone and the others were leaving Bryan's Station. On Monday, the day of the battle, he was at Bryan's Station himself, and here learned for the first time that the pursuit had already pushed ahead without waiting for him. "Dreading the consequences that might ensue from this precipitate affair," he started after them; but a few miles beyond Bryan's he ran into the first haggard survivors with their story of the massacre. Expecting the Indians right behind them, he rushed a line of outguards forward and prepared for attack, while one by one or in small bands the men who had escaped alive from the Blue Licks straggled through the reënforcements to safety.

Logan waited in vain—the Indians had given up pursuit long before, and were now amusing themselves with the prisoners. They counted their own dead. Then they counted the scalps they had taken. They had lost sixty-four killed and had taken but sixty scalps. Four prisoners must die to even up the balance. In vain the British officers protested.

Five white men were forced to sit down on a log. A warrior drew them to their feet one by one and compelled them to stretch out their arms while another warrior stabbed them. The fifth man, waiting his turn with the bleeding bodies writhing on the ground in front of him, suddenly found he was to be spared. He never knew why. It was evidently because four men were enough to even up the score, and the British lieutenant-governor paid more money for prisoners than for scalps. Girty exulted that his Indians "had killed all their damned commanders."

Learning from their captives of Logan's approach, the Indians waited for him near the river. But Logan, too cautious to fall into such a trap, went back to Bryan's Station. There he gathered 470 men and waited, while all night long and part of the next day fugitives limped into the fort—wounded, bedraggled, exhausted, shattered men.

Daniel Boone seems to have hurried straight to his own station; but he was with Logan when, five days later, the second march to the Blue Licks began.

As the column came down into the valley, they could look across the river and see the scavenging birds circling over the battlefield where the bodies of the slain had been lying alone in the wilderness for nearly a week. Stripped, robbed, scalped, mutilated, bloated by the heat, gnawed by animals, and decayed, the bodies could rarely be identified.

Daniel Boone was one of the few able to recognize his dead. He found Israel's body, knew it only by the clothing, and took it back to Boone's Station. One of the burial party at the Blue Licks later told his daughter that "they couldn't tell one man from another—of the dead—the weather being so warm—they had swollen so much. He had thought he would be afraid in battle; but when he saw the dead bodies it made him feel like fighting."

As much earth as possible was scraped away. The men built a stone wall four feet high and forty feet long. Behind this they piled the dead, throwing over them rocks, logs, brush, more rocks—anything to keep the animals off. It was the best they could do—better than the usual burial of a man killed far from home in the woods. But they did not find them all. A few years later, a surveyor who carried a chain through the battleground said that he “never saw bones thicker in any place; never buried nor nothing.”

The Kentuckians were nervous, and though parties of hostile Indians were still skulking about the country, Logan did not investigate but withdrew hurriedly.

“Logan is a dull, narrow body,” wrote a contemporary, “from whom nothing clever need be expected. What a figure he exhibited at the head of near 500 men to reach the field of action six days afterwards, and hardly wait to bury the dead, and when it was plain, part of the Indians were still in the Country.”

The critical gentleman was sitting safely at home in Virginia. Boone, who had seen the fury of the Wyandots and the horror of the defeat, was not so cocksure.

The Wyandots had brought a new kind of warfare to the frontier. They were willing to throw away their rifles after the first few shots and close with tomahawks. Braddock's bayonets had failed in 1755, but only cold steel could have stopped the Indian rush at the Blue Licks.

Kentucky rifles, however, were not fitted for the stabbing blade. Even if they had been, the pioneers did not understand its use. There were no bayonets on the frontier anyway. Washington and his Continentals needed all they could get. Back in Virginia, after the battle, Colonel Arthur Campbell saw what was needed and wrote to a fellow officer: “The method of arming and arraying our militia ought to be varied.

The Bayonet and Scymeter must be introduced to enable us now to face the Indians. And Evolutions suited to the woods should be learned by both Foot and Horse. All our late defeats have been occasion[ed] thro' neglect of these, and a want of a proper authority and capacity in the Commanding Officers. Never was the lives of so many valuable men lost more shamefully than in the late action of the 19th of August, and that not a little thro' the vain and seditious expressions of a Major McGeary. How much more harm than good can one Fool do."

Boone wrote the Governor of Virginia that they had "Marchd to the Battle Ground again But found the Enemy were gone off So we proceeded to Bury the Dead—which were 43 found on the ground, and Many more we Expect Lay about that we Did not See as we Could not tarry to Search very Close, being Both Hungry and weary, and Some what Dubious that the Enemy might not be gone quite off."

By that time, however, the greater part of the enemy had been gone for some days. When Logan did not immediately appear, they resumed their march toward Ohio. A hundred and forty-two miles to the north, Caldwell was just reaching Wapatomica and composing a formal report to his superiors.

The blow at the Blue Licks had fallen heavily upon all Kentucky, which had had an average of three hundred marauding savages within its borders at intervals every year for four years. The defense of Bryan's Station had been heroic—but it had been in vain. It had been a mere prelude to the Blue Licks defeat. The losses had been terrific for that struggling little outer fringe of civilization. The Indians were a perpetual terror. In six years, "Eight Hundred & sixty fell, the matchless massacread victims of their unprecedented Cruelty." The country was full of widows and of orphans. It looked as if all the settlers would be driven out—"the welthy will forthwith Emigrate to the Interior parts of the Settlement & the Poor to the Spaniards.

Sir

You are hereby required to be ready to go
on the intended Expedition against the Shawnee
Your Service will be required as a field Officer
agreeable to your late Recommendation made
by the County Court in the mean time
every exertion will be made by you to forward
the business in the ~~most~~ agreeable to
the Orders hereto issued relative to the same

I am Sir your most Obedt Servt

Daniel Boone

Copy of the Order: 25th 1782

Col. Lieut. Col. Rob. Patterson

DANIEL BOONE ISSUES ORDERS

Colonel Patterson was apparently too badly exhausted at the Blue Licks to join the retaliatory campaign immediately. Reproduced by permission from the original in the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Draper Collection.

Dreadful alternative!! Nature recoils at the thought!" One man offered fourteen hundred acres of land for one little black horse to take his family back to Virginia, "exclaiming that after all their toil they had to loose [sic] the whole country."

Practically every settlement had lost men at the Blue Licks, or in its aftermath. In one county every magistrate had been killed and the public business nearly came to a standstill. Boone wrote the Governor of Virginia that Kentucky must be either reënforced or abandoned: "I have Encouraged the people here in this County all that I Could, but I Can no longer Encourage my Neighbourns nor my Seff to risque our Lives here at Such Extraordinary hazzards. the Inhabitants of these Counties are very much alarmd at the thoughts of the Indians Bringing another Campaign into our Country this fall, which if it Should be the Case will Break these Settlements, So I hope your Excellency will take it into Consideration and Send us Some Relief as quick as possaple."

There was a good deal of recrimination in Kentucky and Virginia. General George Rogers Clark thought that the officers had been at fault—in short, "the conduct of those unfortunate Gents was extremely reprehensible." Worse, "Colonel Todd's militia was excused from all other duty but that of keeping out proper scouts and spies on the Ohio and elsewhere to discover the approach of the enemy." But instead, Clark complained, "the enemy was suffered to penetrate deliberately into the bowels of the country and make the attack before they were discovered."

The victims of the Blue Licks tragedy were just as emphatic over the shortcomings of Clark's own strategy. Logan bluntly told the governor that the higher command was to blame: "I am inclined to believe that when your Excellency and Council become acquainted with the military operations in this country that you will not think them so properly conducted as to answer the general interest of Kentuckey." Clark, he said, had

first called away a hundred men needed for local defense, and had then ordered more men off to build his "row galley" and other defenses. "Thus," said Logan, "by weakening One end to strengthen another the upper part of the country was left entirely exposed."

Boone's fellow officers in Fayette County agreed with him that their defenses had been weakened to protect western Kentucky and Louisville, "a Fort situated in such a Manner that the Enemy coming with a design to Lay waste our Countrey would Scarcely come with in one Hundred miles of it, & our own Frontiers, open & unguarded."

In all the bitter letters and reports that passed back and forth, however, Boone is never named as personally at fault. But his grandson observed years later that as an old, old man Daniel Boone still felt guilty because he had not been able to get his advice followed and persuade the others to attack at a more reasonable place.

Kentucky took swift revenge, in spite of its terror. At the end of September, George Rogers Clark gathered a thousand men at the old rendezvous on the mouth of Licking, with John Floyd and Benjamin Logan as seconds in command, and Boone again leading his own detachment. They advanced secretly toward Chillicothe. But four Cherokee conjurors at Piqua had used magic to foretell the white men's coming. So, at least, the Indians said. White skeptics suspected that vigilant scouting had accompanied the incantations. The expedition again burned Chillicothe, which the Shawnees had rebuilt, and also destroyed Piqua. The destruction of the September crops was a particularly severe blow to the red men.

The force fell back into Kentucky almost unmolested. Indeed, the Indian pursuit was so weak that the land-hungry Daniel Boone found time to examine the land on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River, near Maysville, with a view to future settlement when the war was over.