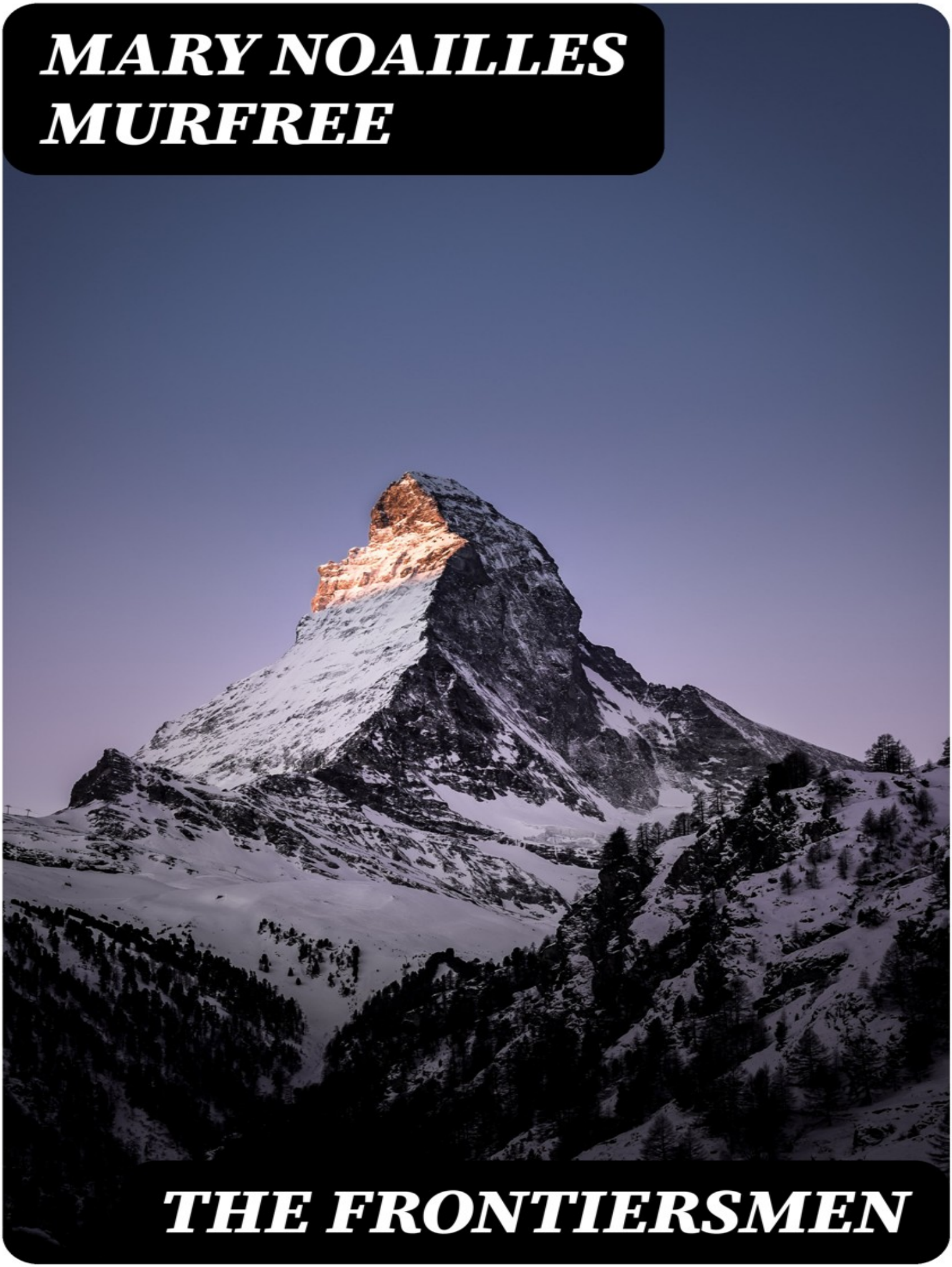
MARY NOAILLES MURFREE



THE FRONTIERSMEN

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The Frontiersmen

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THE LINGUISTER

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The mental image of the world is of individual and varying compass. It may be likened to one of those curious Chinese balls of quaintly carved ivory, containing other balls, one within another, the proportions ever dwindling with each successive inclosure, yet each a more minute duplicate of the external sphere. This might seem the least world of all,—the restricted limits of the quadrangle of this primitive stockade,—but Peninnah Penelope Anne Mivane had known no other than such as this. It was large enough for her, for a fairy-like face, very fair, with golden brown hair, that seemed to have entangled the sunshine, and lustrous brown eyes, looked out of an embrasure (locally called "port-hole") of the blockhouse, more formidable than the swivel gun once mounted there, commanding the entrance to the stockade gate. Her aspect might have suggested that Titania herself had resorted to military methods and was ensconced in primitive defenses. It was even large enough for her name, which must have been conferred upon her, as the wits of the Blue Lick Station jocularly averred, in the hope of adding some size to her. It was large enough also for the drama of battle and the tragedy of bloody death—both had befallen within its limits.

There had been a night, glooming very dark in the past, an unwary night when the row of log houses, all connected by the palisades from one to the other, presenting a blank wall without, broken only by loopholes for musketry, had

been scaled by the crafty Cherokees, swarming over the roofs, and attacking the English settlers through the easy access of the unglazed windows and flimsy batten doors that opened upon the quadrangle. Although finally beaten off, the Indians had inflicted great loss. Her father had been one of the slain settlers who thus paid penalty for the false sense of security, fostered by long immunity. Even more troublous times came later,—the tumult of open war was rife in all the land; the station was repeatedly attacked, and although it held out stanchly, fear and suspense and grief filled the stockade,—yet still there was space for Cupid to go swaggering hither and thither within the guarded gates, and aim his arrows with his old-time dainty skill, albeit his bow and quiver might seem somewhat archaic in these days of powder and lead. For Peninnah Penelope Anne Mivane spent much of her time in the moulding of bullets. Perhaps it was appropriate, since both she and her young pioneer lover dealt so largely in missiles, that it was thus the sentimental dart was sped. Lead was precious in those days, but sundry bullets, that she had moulded, Ralph Emsden never rammed down into the long barrel of his flintlock rifle. Some question as to whether the balls had cooled, or perhaps some mere meditative pause, had carried the bits of lead in her fingers to her lips, as they sat together on the hearth and talked and worked in the fire-lit dusk for their common defense. He was wont to watch, lynx-eyed, the spot where these consecrated bullets were placed, and afterward carried them in a separate buckskin bag over his heart, and mentally called them his "kisses;" for the youths of those days were even such fools as now, although in the lapse of

time they have come to pose successfully in the dignified guise of the "wise patriots of the pioneer period." More than once when the station was attacked and the women loaded the guns of the men to expedite the shooting, she kept stanchly at his elbow throughout the thunderous conflict, and charged and primed the alternate rifles which he fired. [1] Over the trigger, in fact, the fateful word was spoken.

"Oh, Nan," he exclaimed, looking down at her while taking the weapon from her hand in the vague dusk where she knelt beside him,—he stood on the shelf that served as banquette to bring him within reach of the loophole, placed so high in the hope that a chance shot entering might range only among the rafters,—"How quick you are! How you help me!"

The thunderous crash of the double volley of the settlers firing twice, by the aid of their feminine auxiliaries, to every volley of the Indians, overwhelmed for the moment the tumult of the fiendish whoops in the wild darkness outside, and then the fusillade of the return fire, like leaden hail, rattled against the tough log walls of the station.

"Are you afraid, Nan?" he asked, as he received again the loaded weapon from her hand.

"*Afraid?*—No!" exclaimed Peninnah Penelope Anne Mivane—hardly taller than the ramrod with which she was once more driving the charge home.

He saw her face, delicate and blonde, in the vivid white flare from the rifle as he thrust it through the loophole and fired. "You think I can take care of you?" he demanded, while the echo died away, and a lull ensued.

"I know you can," she replied, adjusting with the steady hand of an expert the patching over the muzzle of the discharged weapon in the semi-obscurity.

A blood-curdling shout came from the Cherokees in the woods with a deeper roar of musketry at closer quarters; and a hollow groan within the blockhouse, where there was a sudden commotion in the dim light, told that some bullet had found its billet.

"They are coming to the attack again—Hand me the rifle—quick—quick—Oh, Nan, how you help me! How brave you are—I love you! I love you!"

"Look out now for a flash in the pan!" Peninnah Penelope Anne merely admonished him.

Being susceptible to superstition and a ponderer on omens, Ralph Emsden often thought fretfully afterward on the double meaning of these words, and sought to displace them in their possible evil influence on his future by some assurance more cheerful and confident. With this view he often earnestly beset her, but could secure nothing more pleasing than a reference to the will of her grandfather and a protestation to abide by his decision in the matter.

Now Peninnah Penelope Anne's grandfather was deaf. His was that hopeless variety of the infirmity which heard no more than he desired. His memory, however, was unimpaired, and it may be that certain recollections of his own experiences in the past remained with him, making him a fine judge of the signs of the present. Emsden, appalled by the necessity of shrieking out his love within the acute and well-applied hearing facilities of the families of some ten "stationers," to use the phrase of the day, diligently

sought to decoy, on successive occasions, Richard Mivane out to the comparative solitudes of the hunting, the fishing, the cropping. In vain. Richard Mivane displayed sudden extreme prudential care against surprise and capture by Indians, when this was possible, and when impossible he developed unexpected and unexampled resources of protective rheumatism. The young lover was equally precluded from setting forth the state of his affections and the prospects of his future in writing. Apart from the absurdity of thus approaching a man whom he saw twenty times a day, old Mivane would permit no such intimation of the extent of his affliction,—it being a point of pride with him that he was merely slightly hard of hearing, and suffered only from the indistinctness of the enunciation of people in general. And indeed, it was variously contended that he was so deaf that he could not hear a gun fired at his elbow; and yet that he heard all manner of secrets which chanced to be detailed in his presence, in inadvertent reliance on his incapacity, and had not the smallest hesitation afterward in their disclosure, being entitled to them by right of discovery, as it were.

Emsden, in keen anxiety, doubtful if his suit were seriously disapproved, or if these demonstrations were only prompted by old Mivane's selfish aversion to give away his granddaughter, finally summoned all his courage, and in a stentorian roar proclaimed to the old gentleman his sentiments.

Richard Mivane was a man of many punctilious habitudes, who wore cloth instead of buckskin, however hard it might be to come by, and silver knee-buckles and

well-knit hose on his still shapely calves, and a peruke carefully powdered and tended. He had a keen, wrinkled, bloodless face, discerning, clever, gray eyes, heavy, overhanging, grizzled eyebrows, and a gentlemanly mouth of a diplomatic, well-bred, conservative expression.

It was said at Blue Lick Station that he had fled from his own country, the north of England, on account of an affair of honor,—a duel in early life,—and that however distasteful the hardships and comparative poverty of this new home, it was far safer for him than the land of his birth. His worldly position there gave him sundry claims of superiority, for all of which his hardy pioneer son had had scant sympathy; and Ralph Emsden, in the difficult crisis of the disclosure of the state of his affections, heaved many a sigh for this simple manly soul's untimely fate.

The elder Mivane, with his head bent forward, his hand behind his ear, sat in his arm-chair while he hearkened blandly to the sentimental statements which Emsden was obliged to shout forth twice. Then Richard Mivane cleared his throat with a sort of preliminary gentlemanly embarrassment, and went fluently on with that suave low voice so common to the very deaf. "Command me, sir, command me! It will give me much pleasure to use my influence on your behalf to obtain an ensigncy. I will myself write at the first opportunity, the first express, to Lieutenant-Governor Bull, who is acquainted with my family connections in England. It is very praiseworthy, very laudable indeed, that you should aspire to a commission in the military service,—the provincial forces. I honor you for your readiness to fight—although, to be sure, being Irish,

you can't help it. Still, it is to your credit that you are Irish. I am very partial to the Irish traits of character—was once in Ireland myself—visited an uncle there"—and so forth and so forth.

And thus poor Ralph Emsden, who was only Irish by descent, and could not have found Ireland on the map were he to hang for his ignorance, and had been born and bred in the Royal province of South Carolina,—which country he considered the crown and glory of the world,—was constrained to listen to all the doings and sayings of Richard Mivane in Ireland from the time that he embarked on the wild Irish Sea, which scrupled not to take unprecedented liberties with so untried a sailor, till the entrance of other pioneers cut short a beguiling account of his first meeting with potheen in its native haunts, and the bewildering pranks that he and that tricksy sprite played together in those the irresponsible days of his youth.

Emsden told no one, not even Peninnah Penelope Anne, of his discomfiture; but alack, there were youngsters in the family of unaffected minds and unimpaired hearing. This was made amply manifest a day or so afterward, when he chanced to pause at the door of the log cabin and glance in, hoping that, perhaps, the queen of his dreams might materialize in this humble domicile.

The old gentleman slept in his chair, with dreams of his own, perchance, for his early life might have furnished a myriad gay fancies for his later years. The glare of noonday lay on the unshaded spaces of the quadrangle without; for all trees had been felled, even far around the inclosure, lest thence they might afford vantage and ambush for musketry

fire or a flight of arrows into the stockade. Through rifts in the foliage at considerable distance one could see the dark mountain looming high above, and catch glimpses of the further reaches of the Great Smoky Range, blue and shimmering far away, and even distinguish the crest of "Big Injun Mountain" on the skyline. The several cabins, all connected by that row of protective palisades from one to another like a visible expression of the chord of sympathy and mutual helpful neighborliness, were quiet, their denizens dining within. At the blockhouse a guard was mounted—doubtless a watchful and stanch lookout, but unconforming to military methods, for he sang, to speed the time, a metrical psalm of David's; the awkward collocation of the words of this version would forever distort the royal poet's meaning if he had no other vehicle of his inspiration. There were long waits between the drowsy lines, and in the intervals certain callow voices, with the penetrating timbre of youth, came to Emsden's ear. His eyes followed the sound quickly.

The little sisters of Peninnah Penelope Anne were on the floor before a playhouse, outlined by stones and sticks, and with rapt faces and competent fancies, saw whatsoever they would. In these riches of imagination a little brother also partook. A stick, accoutred in such wise with scraps of buckskin as to imitate a gallant of the place and period, was bowing respectfully before another stick, vested in the affabilities of age and the simulacrum of a dressing-gown.

"I love your granddaughter, sir, and wish to make her my wife," said the bowing stick.

"Command me, sir; command me!" suavely replied the stick stricken in years.

The scene had been an eye-opener to the tender youth of the little Mivanes; the pomp and circumstance of a sentimental disclosure they would never forget.

Emsden, as hardy a pioneer as ever drew a bead on a panther or an Indian, passed on, quaking at the thought of the wits of the Station as he had never yet feared man, and his respected Irish blood ran cold. And when it waxed warm with wrath once more it came to pass that to utter the simple phrase "Command me" was as much as a man's life was worth at Blue Lick Station.

Emsden thought ruefully of the girl's mother and wondered if her intercession would avail aught with the old autocrat. But he had not yet ventured upon this. There was nothing certain about Mrs. Mivane but her uncertainty. She never gave a positive opinion. Her attitude of mind was only to be divined by inference. She never gave a categorical answer. And indeed he would not have been encouraged to learn that Richard Mivane himself had already consulted his daughter-in-law, as in this highhanded evasion of any decision he felt the need of support. For once the old gentleman was not displeased with her reply, comprehensive, although glancing aside from the point. Since there were so many young men in the country, said Mrs. Mivane, she saw no reason for despair! With this approval of his temporizing policy Richard Mivane left the matter to the development of the future.

Emsden's depression would have been more serious had he not fortunately sundry tokens of the old man's favor to

cherish in his memory, which seemed to intimate that this elusiveness was only a shrewd scheme to delay and thwart him rather than a positive and reasonable disposition to deny his suit. In short, Emsden began to realize that instead of a damsel of eighteen he had to court a coquette rising sixty, of the sterner sex, and deafer than an adder when he chose. His artful quirks were destined to try the young lover's diplomacy to the utmost, and Emsden appreciated this, but he reassured himself with the reflection that it was better thus than if it were the girl who vacillated and delighted to torture him with all the arts of a first-class jilt. He was constantly in and out of the house almost as familiarly as if he were already betrothed, for in the troublous period that seemed now closing, with its sudden flights, its panics, its desperate conflicts with the Indians, he had been able to give an almost filial aid to Richard Mivane in the stead of the son whom the old man had lost.

Richard Mivane had always felt himself an alien, a sojourner in this new land, and perchance he might not have been able even partially to reconcile himself to the ruder conditions of his later life if the bursting of a financial bubble had not swept away all hope of returning to the status of his earlier home in England when the tragedy of the duel had been sunk in oblivion. The frontier was a fine place to hide one's poverty and fading graces, he had once remarked, and thereafter had seemed to resign himself to its hardships,—indeed, sometimes he consigned his negro body-servant, Cæsar, to other duties than his exclusive attendance. He had even been known to breakfast with his head tied up in a handkerchief when some domestic crisis

had supervened, such as the escape of all the horses from the pinfold, to call away his barber. As this functionary was of an active temperament and not at all averse to the labor in the fields, he proved of more value thus utilized than in merely furnishing covert amusement to the stationers by his pompous duplication of his master's attitude of being too cultured, traveled, and polished for his surroundings. He was a trained valet, however, expert in all the details of dressing hair, powdering, curling, pomatuming, and other intricacies of the toilet of a man of fashion of that day. Cæsar had many arts at command touching the burnishing of buckles and buttons, and even in clear-starching steinkirks and the cambric ruffles of shirts. As he ploughed he was wont to tell of his wonderful experiences while in his master's service in London (although he had never crossed the seas); and these being accepted with seeming seriousness, he carried his travels a step farther and described the life he remembered in the interior of Guinea (although he had never seen the shores of Africa). This life so closely resembled that of London that it was often difficult to distinguish the locality of the incidents, an incongruity that enchanted the wags of the settlement, who continually incited him to prodigies of narration. The hairbreadth escapes that he and his fellow-servants, as well as the white people, had had from the wrath of the Indians, whom the negroes feared beyond measure, and their swift flights from one stockade to another in those sudden panics during the troubled period preceding the Cherokee War, might have seemed more exciting material for romancing for a venturesome

Munchausen, but perhaps these realities were too stern to afford any interest in the present or glamour in the past.

It was somewhat as a prelude to the siege of Fort Loudon by the Cherokees in 1760 that they stormed and triumphantly carried several minor stations to the southeast. Although Blue Lick sustained the attack, still, in view of the loss of a number of its gallant defenders, the settlers retreated at the first opportunity to the more sheltered frontier beyond Fort Prince George, living from hand to mouth, some at Long Cane and some at Ninety-Six, through those years when first Montgomerie and then Grant made their furious forays through the Cherokee country. Emsden, having served in the provincial regiment, eagerly coveted a commission, of which Richard Mivane had feigned to speak. Now that the Cherokees were ostensibly pacified, —that is, exhausted, decimated, their towns burned, their best and bravest slain, their hearts broken,—the fugitives from this settlement on the Eupharsee River, as the Hiwassee was then called, gathered their household gods and journeyed back to Blue Lick, to cry out in the wilderness that they were "home" once more, and clasp each other's hands in joyful gratulation to witness the roofs and stockade rise again, rebuilt as of yore. Strangely enough, there were old Cherokee friends to greet them anew and to be welcomed into the stockade; for even the rigid rule of war and hate must needs be proved by its exceptions. And there were one or two pensive philosophers among the English settlers vaguely sad to see all the Cherokee traditions and prestige, and remnants of prehistoric pseudo-civilization, shattered in the dust, and the tremulous, foreign,

unaccustomed effort—half-hearted, half-believing, half-understanding—to put on the habitude of a new civilization.

"The white man's religion permits poverty, but the Indian divides his store with the needy, and there are none suffered to be poor," said Atta-Kulla-Kulla, the famous chief. "The white men wrangle and quarrel together, even brother with brother; with us the inner tribal peace is ever unbroken. The white men slay and rob and oppress the poor, and with many cunning treaties take now our lands and now our lives; then they offer us their religion;—why does it seem so like an empty bowl?"

"Atta-Kulla-Kulla, you know that I am deaf," said Richard Mivane, "and you ask me such hard questions that I am not able to hear them."

It is more than probable that these stationers in the vanguard of the irrepressible march of western emigration had been trespassers, and thus earned their misfortunes, in some sort, by their encroachment on Indian territory; although since the war the Cherokee boundaries had become more vague than heretofore, it being considered that Grant's operations had extended the frontier by some seventy miles. It may be, too, that the Blue Lick settlers held their own by right of private purchase; for the inhibition to the acquisition of land in this way from the Indians was not enacted till the following year, 1763, after the events to be herein detailed, and, indeed, such purchases even further west and of an earlier date are of record, albeit of doubtful legality.

Now that peace in whatever maimed sort had come to this stricken land and these adventurous settlers, who held

their lives, their all, by such precarious tenure, internecine strife must needs arise among them; not the hand of brother against brother,—they were spared that grief,—but one tender, struggling community against another.

And it came about in this wise.

One day Peninnah Penelope Anne Mivane, watching from the "port-hole" of the blockhouse, where the muzzle of that dog of war the little swivel gun had once been wont to look forth, beheld Ralph Emsden ride out from the stockade gate for a week's absence with a party of hunters; with bluff but tender assurance he waved his hat and hand to her in farewell.

"Before all the men!" she said to herself, half in prudish dismay at his effrontery, and yet pleased that he did not sheepishly seek to conceal his preference. And although the men (there were but two or three and not half the province, as her horror of this publicity would seem to imply) said with a grin "Command me!" they said it *sotto voce* and only to each other.

Spring was once more afoot in the land. They daily marked her advance as they went. Halfway up the mountains she had climbed: for the maples were blooming in rich dark reds that made the nearer slopes even more splendid of garb than the velvet azure of the distant ranges, the elms had put forth delicate sprays of emerald tint, and the pines all bore great wax-like tapers amidst their evergreen boughs, as if ready for kindling for some great festival. It is a wonderful thing to hear a wind singing in myriads of their branches at once. The surging tones of this oratorio of nature resounded for miles along the deep

indented ravines and the rocky slopes of the Great Smoky Mountains. Now and again the flow of a torrent or the dash of a cataract added fugue-like effects. The men were constantly impressed by these paeans of the forests; the tuft of violets abloom beneath a horse's hoofs might be crushed unnoticed, but the acoustic conditions of the air and the high floating of the tenuous white clouds against a dense blue sky, promising rain in due season, evoked a throb of satisfaction in the farmer's heart not less sincere because unaesthetic. The farmer's toil had hardly yet begun, the winter's hunt being just concluded, and each of the stationers with a string of led horses was bound for his camps and caches to bring in the skins that made the profit of the season.

One of this group of three was the psalm-singer of the blockhouse. His name was Xerxes Alexander Anxley, and he was unceremoniously called by the community "X," and by Mivane "the unknown quantity," for he was something of an enigma, and his predilections provoked much speculation. He was a religionist of ascetic, extreme views,—a type rare in this region,—coming originally from the colony of the Salzburgers established in Georgia.

We are less disposed to be tolerant of individual persuasions which imply a personal and unpleasant reflection. Xerxes Alexander Anxley disapproved of dancing, and the community questioned his sanity; for these early pioneers in the region of the Great Smoky Range carried the rifle over one shoulder and the fiddle over the other. He disapproved of secular songs and idle stories, and the settlement questioned his taste; for it was the delight of the

stationers, old and young, to gather around the hearth, and, while the chestnuts roasted in the fire for the juniors, and the jovial horn, as it was called, circulated among the elders, the oft-told story was rehearsed and the old song sung anew. He even disapproved of the jovial horn—and the settlement questioned his sincerity.

This man Anxley looked his ascetic character. He had a hard pragmatic countenance, and one of those noses which though large and bony come suddenly short and blunted. His eyes, small, gray, and inscrutable, seemed unfriendly, so baffling, introspective, unnoting was their inattentiveness. His hair was of a sort of carrot tint, which color was reproduced in paler guise in his fringed buckskin shirt and leggings, worn on a sturdy and powerful frame. His mouth was shut hard and fast upon his convictions, as if to denote that he could not be argued out of them, and when the lips parted its lines were scarcely more mobile, and his words were usually framed to doubt one's state of grace and to contravene one's tenets as to final salvation. He rode much of the time with the reins loose on his horse's neck, and perhaps no man in the saddle had ever been so addicted to psalmody since the days of Cromwell's troopers. His theological disputations grated peculiarly upon Emsden's mood, and he always laid at his door the disaster that followed.

"If I hadn't been so traveled that day,—dragged through hell and skirting of purgatory and knocking at the gates of heaven,—I wouldn't have lost my wits so suddenly when I came back to earth with a bounce," Emsden afterward declared.

For as the hunters were coming at a brisk trot in single file along the "old trading path," as it was called even then, the fleecy white clouds racing above in the dense blue of the sky, their violet shadows fleeting as swift along the slopes of the velvet-soft azure mountains, and the wind far outstripping them in the vernal budding woods, a sudden stir near at hand caused Emsden to turn his head. Just above him, on a rugged slope where no trees grew save a scraggy cedar here and there amidst the shelving ledges of rock outcropping through the soft verdant turf, he saw a stealthy, furtive shape; he was aware of a hasty cowed glance over the shoulder, and then a stretching of supple limbs in flight. Before he himself hardly knew it the sharp crack of his rifle rang out,—the aim was almost instinctive.

And it was as true as instinct,—a large black wolf, his pelt glossy and fresh with the renewal of the season, lay stretched dead in an instant upon the slope. Emsden sprang from his horse, tossed the reins to "X," and, drawing his knife, ran up the steep ascent to secure the animal's skin.

Only vaguely, as in a dream, he heard a sudden deep roar, beheld a horned creature leaping heavily upon its fore quarters, tossing its hind legs and tail into the air. Then an infuriated bull, breaking from the bushes, charged fiercely down upon him. Emsden threw himself into a posture of defense as instantly as if he had been a trained bullfighter and the arena his wonted sphere, holding the knife close in front of him, presenting the blade with a quick keen calculation for the animal's jugular. The knife was Emsden's only weapon, for his pistols were in the holster on the saddle, and his discharged rifle lay where he had flung it on

the ground after firing. He had only time to wonder that his comrades vouchsafed him no assistance in his extremity. Men of such accurate aim and constant practice could easily risk sending a rifle-ball past him to stop that furious career. He could see the pupil of the bull's wild dilated eyes, fiery as with a spark of actual flame. He could even feel the hot puffs of the creature's breath upon his cheeks, when all at once the horned head so close above his own swerved aside with a snort from the dead body of the wolf at his feet. The bull passed him like a thunderbolt, and he heard the infuriated stamping which fairly shook the ground in the thicket below, where this king of the herds paused to bellow and paw the earth, throwing clods high above the environing copse.

The woods seemed full of maddened, frightened cattle, and Emsden's horse was frantically galloping after the cavalcade of hunters and their pack-train, all the animals more or less beyond the control of the men. He felt it an ill chance that left him thus alone and afoot in this dense wilderness, several days' travel from the station. He was hardly sure that he would be missed by his comrades, themselves scattered, the pack-horses having broken from the path which they had traveled in single file, and now with their burdens of value all foolishly careering wildly through the woods. The first prudential care of the hunters he knew would be to recover them and re-align the train, lest some miscreant, encountering the animals, plunder the estrays of their loads of hard-won deerskins and furs.

The presence of cattle suggested to Emsden the proximity of human dwellings, and yet this was problematic,

for beyond branding and occasional saltings the herds ranged within large bounds on lands selected for their suitability as pasturage. The dwellings of these pioneer herdsmen might be far away indeed, and in what direction he could not guess. Since the Cherokee War, and the obliteration of all previous marks of white settlements in this remote region, Emsden was unfamiliar with the more recent location of "cow-pens," as the ranches were called, and was only approximately acquainted with the new site of the settlers' stations. Nothing so alters the face of a country as the moral and physical convulsion of war. Even many of the Indian towns were deserted and half charred,—burned by the orders of the British commanders. One such stood in a valley through which he passed on his homeward way; the tender vernal aspect of this green cove, held in the solemn quiet of the encircling mountains, might typify peace itself. Yet here the blue sky could be seen through the black skeleton rafters of the once pleasant homes; and there were other significant skeletons in the absolute solitude,—the great ribs of dead chargers, together with broken bits and bridles, and remnants of exploded hand-grenades, and a burst gun-barrel, all lying on the bank of a lovely mountain stream at the point where he crossed it, as it flowed, crystal clear, through this sequestered bosky nook.

Something of a job this transit was, for with the spring freshets the water was high and the current strong, and he was compelled to use only one hand for swimming, the other holding high out of the water's reach his powder horn. For, despite any treaties of peace, this was no country for a man to traverse unarmed, and an encounter with an

inimical wandering Indian might serve to make for his comrades' curiosity concerning his fate, when they should chance to have leisure to feel it, a perpetual conundrum.

He had never, however, made so lonely a journey. Not one human being did he meet—neither red man nor white—in all the long miles of the endless wilderness; naught astir save the sparse vernal shadows in the budding woods and the gentle spring zephyr swinging past and singing as it went. Now and again he noted how the sun slowly dropped down the skies that were so fine, so fair, so blue that it seemed loath to go and leave the majestic peace of the zenith. The stars scintillated in the dark night as if a thousand bivouac fires were kindled in those far spaces of the heavens responsive to the fire which he kept aglow to cook the supper that his rifle fetched him and to ward off the approach of wolf or panther while he slept. He was doubtless in jeopardy often enough, but chance befriended him and he encountered naught inimical till the fourth day when he came in at the gate of the station and met the partners of the hunt, themselves not long since arrived.

They waited for no reproaches for their desertion. They were quick to upbraid. As they hailed him in chorus he was bewildered for a moment, and stood in the gateway leaning on his rifle, his coonskin cap thrust back on his brown hair, his bright, steady gray eyes concentrated as he listened. His tall, lithe figure in his buckskin hunting shirt and leggings, the habitual garb of the frontiersmen, grew tense and gave an intimation of gathering all its forces for the defensive as he noted how the aspect of the station differed from its wonted guise. Every house of the assemblage of little log

cabins stood open; here and there in the misty air, for there had been a swift, short spring shower, fires could be seen aglow on the hearths within; the long slant of the red sunset rays fell athwart the gleaming wet roofs and barbed the pointed tops of the palisades with sharp glints of light, and a rainbow showed all the colors of the prism high against the azure mountain beyond, while a second arch below, a dim duplication, spanned the depths of a valley. The frontiersmen were all in the open spaces of the square excitedly wrangling—and suddenly he became conscious of a girlish face at the embrasure for the cannon at the blockhouse, a face with golden brown hair above it, and a red hood that had evidently been in the rain. "Looking out for me, I wonder?" he asked himself, and as this glow of agitated speculation swept over him the men who plied him with questions angrily admonished his silence.

"He has seen a wolf! He has seen a wolf! 'Tis plain!" cried old Mivane, as he stood in his metropolitan costume among the buckskin-clad pioneers. "One would know that without being told!"

"You shot the wolf and stampeded the cattle, and the herders at the cow-pens on the Keowee River can't round them up again!" cried one of the settlers.

"The cattle have run to the Congarees by this time!" declared another pessimistically.

"And it was *you* that shot the wolf!" cried "X" rancorously.

"The herders are holding *us* responsible and have sent an ambassador," explained John Ronackstone, anxiously knitting his brows, "to inform us that not a horse of the pack-train from Blue Lick Station shall pass down to