The
White
Indian
Boy

A Tale of
William Wells
pioneer, warrior
and border scout

A Century
of Progress
International Exposition
Chicago • 1933
The

White

Indian

Boy

By

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EARLY spring in Kentucky! Young deer in the forests! Dogwood and redbud clean and afire! Rolling green hills! Streams flush to their banks with winter's gift from melted snows! Men at work in virgin fields! Women singing, forgetting the winter and the ever-present terror of the Red Man! Children, free again, all outdoors for a playground!

Over on the eastern coast the Revolutionary War was winning a way to a great freedom. Washington had brought his ragged band through the sorry winter at Valley Forge. There was suffering and grief and fear and dissen-sion among the colonies, but out in Kentucky where Daniel Boone was helping to open up a new country, men were also fighting the wilderness—protecting themselves and their families from the Indians, making homes, clearing ground, pioneering a new land—a land that for generations had been the Indians' guarded hunting ground.

In a little settlement on the edge of the blue grass country a young boy, of twelve, stood at the door of a log cabin. He was a slim, up-standing lad, with bright blue eyes, a square jaw, and a pleasant, friendly smile. Out in the fields his older brother Samuel was working with his father. In the house, his mother at her spinning wheel was chatting with two of the few women in the settlement. It was afternoon. The air was very still and William Wells was bound for the woods. His task was to cut timber, for the winter's supply of wood was low, but he was thinking as he started
out with his axe over his shoulder and his gun in his hand, not of the work to be done, but of the great forest for which he was bound. A forest in clean, grass-grown ground, free from underbrush, where gray-trunked beeches laced branches overhead, where maples and oaks and tulip trees exchanged greetings, where the trees were so wide spaced that he had once seen a deer some three hundred yards away as it bounded along. A forest to be known in years to come as the greatest deciduous forest in the world.

His mother called to him as he was about to leave.

"Will, remember what I told you. There are Indians about. Don't go far into the forest and do watch carefully."

"Don't you worry," he called back. "Nobody wants me but you. I'm all right."

He hesitated a moment and stepped back into the house.

"You know the Kentucky rangers cleaned out that band of Indians up the river last week." He leaned against the doorjamb, his gun resting on the floor, while his hand moved up and down its smooth barrel.

"The Indians wouldn't dare attack us here anyway," he went on. "Look at Fort Nelson. That means business and they know it."

One of the neighbor women laid down her sewing:

"William," she said, "it was only two months ago that my brother came back to his home just five miles from here to find nothing left but the ashes of his house. His wife and children were gone. He doesn't know where—whether they are alive or what has happened to them."

The boy at the door shifted his feet.

"Well, I must be moving along. Be back for early supper, Mother. Goodbye."

He loitered on the way to the woods. Stopped to take a shot at a deer too far away to be in any danger; started a covey of quail, exchanged insults with a quarreling and cowardly panther on a branch just above his head, and chased rabbits for the sheer joy of running in the open.

But William Wells even as a boy was a worker and his axe rang out with his steady strokes, as on the edge of the forest he made ready for the next day's work, which would be the hauling home of the firewood.

Suddenly he stopped. An ominous sound came from the direction of the settlement. Indian cries! He knew them. And then the sound of guns, again and again, with ever the repeated savage yells. He dropped his axe and with gun in hand rushed toward his home. Running in the shelter of the trees, he managed to keep a screen between himself and the firing. The settlement came into view. Houses on fire, savage figures running to and fro, all met his eye. He heard the screams of women and fancied one was his mother's voice, and then because he was young and because he was brave he forgot all caution and ran like one of his own wild deer straight towards the firing and the burning houses.

Before he knew it he was in the midst of a fighting, yelling crowd of Indians. He turned one way and another. It was useless. He lifted his gun to fire. It was struck from his hand by a heavy arm that appeared from behind him. Then he felt himself pinioned, lifted from his feet and thrown to the ground. He looked up and over him stood a heavy, painted warrior with an uplifted tomahawk.

Wells set his already square young jaw. At least he would not be a coward. He struggled to his feet and launched a blow with his bare fist at the huge figure above him. The Indian laughed and stepped aside with a motion to someone beyond him. Turning as he stood almost reeling, Wells saw another Indian about to fire. In a fit of boyish rage and futility he lifted his arms in the air and shook his fists violently at the savages. Then he felt a strong hand on his shoulder. He knew it could not be that of a white man, but there was something in the first touch.
of that hand that gave him a strange confidence, which in all the years afterwards he never lost. The hand turned him slowly, until he looked up into the grave face of Little Turtle, the chief of all the Miami tribes.

The Chief said something to the Indians—Wells did not know what, but its import was plain, for they turned away. Little Turtle kept his hand on the boy’s shoulder and led him from the tumult, which was gradually dying out, towards the little hills away from the forest.

The boy came unresisting. He knew he could do nothing else. That great hand would not permit it, but still he was not afraid. He stopped once to look back fearfully toward the burning settlement, but Little Turtle only waited for a moment without sound or change of feature. Then they went forward again, until they reached the Indian camp.

William Wells was a captive.

**EPISODE TWO**

**Adopted Into the Tribe**

The Indian village was very peaceful one afternoon in early fall. For many weeks there had been no raids—no war parties had gone forth. Life was dull for the braves. But for William Wells, who had now been a member of the Indian tribe for nearly three years, life was never dull. So much freedom in the open he had never known; so much hunting and fishing, so much riding and racing had never been part of his young life, which hitherto had had its share of work. In the Indian life the women were the workers, the hewers of wood and drawers of water, while to the men fell only the tasks of hunting and of warfare.

This day was a quiet one and Wells and his young comrade, Yellow Bird, were stretched out in the mild hazy sunlight, which flecked down upon them through the wide branches of the forest which adjoined the Indian camp.

Both the Indian lad and the “White Indian Boy”, as Wells was called, were now tall, slim youths, bronzed from the sun, straight and lithe. Yellow Bird’s eyes were keener and his sight truer than were Wells’, but the white boy was a clearer thinker, more skillful with his hands, more resourceful than the Indian who had been trained to accept conditions, not improve them.

Wells felt lazy this afternoon. Yellow Bird was always lazy except when hunting and fishing and riding. He was still too young to be a warrior, but looked forward to the day when he might join the ranks of the men who went to fight as the great event of his young life.

“Black Snake,” drawled Yellow Bird, giving Wells the name which the Indians had bestowed upon him, “the hunting season will soon be here—then for the great days.”

“I am going to get a lot of big game this year,” replied Wells. “I’m shooting much better.”

Yellow Bird’s impassive Indian face relaxed a little.

“Brother,” he said, “you’ll never make a better shot than when last fall you brought down that mad buffalo which was about to finish me.”

Wells was a little embarrassed.

“That was easy—I was so near him.”

“I shall not forget,” returned Yellow Bird. “It was my life.”

“Look, look,” cried Wells, leaping to his feet and pointing to the edge of the forest where a band of Indians were riding slowly in the direction of the camp.

The pow-wow was under way when the boys reached the camp and edged into the outskirts of the group. The vis-
itors were a band of friendly Indians who had been on a peaceful expedition into Kentucky. Wells had learned the Indian language fairly well in his three years among them, and listened with a new catch in his breath to their story of their homeland and what they had found there. He was too well trained an Indian boy by this time to ask questions, but his eyes sought those of Little Turtle with a half-frightened query. He turned his head away as the Chief put to the visitors the question as to Wells' family, but drew a long breath and almost laughed up into the skies with relief when he heard of their safety.

Life may have been peaceful, but it did not promise so to continue. The visitors brought news of disaffection among the Indian tribes, of individual troubles and encounters between the Red and White men, and even of dissensions between the tribes themselves.

Little Turtle would not allow his leadership to be questioned. He was master in his own domain. No other tribes might intrude.

"We will sing our war song against them."

Little Turtle stood very straight, proud, a little aside and alone as he spoke.

"If they come into our land, we will drape our belts with their scalps. When you see these people—if you do see them—say to them that Little Turtle will break the heads of their women and children and make a rampart of their dead bodies. And upon that rampart he will pile the remainder of the nation. It is enough. I have spoken."

When the visitors had ridden away, Little Turtle motioned to his son, Yellow Bird, and to Wells to follow him to his wigwam. They sat down in solemn circle and Little Turtle spoke, addressing himself to the white boy.

"My son, for I have made you my son by the adoption which my tribe follows. You are now as much my son as is Yellow Bird whose mother is my Squaw. You know now that your people are safe. I have known it these many moons."

Wells made a movement as of remonstrance, but the Chief quieted him with an uplifted hand.

"I did not tell you, because I wanted you to become strong. Man only grows strong when he learns to suffer and to be silent. That day when I saw you near Louisville I knew you could become a warrior—a little boy shaking his fists in the face of strong men. I knew I could teach you many things. You have learned. You saved the life of your brother Yellow Bird last summer when you stood without flinching in the path of the mad and wounded buffalo after Yellow Bird had fallen to the ground. You brought down the beast with one shot. Then I knew. Perhaps some day—I do not know—you may want to go back to your own people—but not yet—not yet."

"My Father," said Wells, "they are my people and you—you are my friend and my father, but you are their enemy."

"Hear me, Black Snake," the old Indian was very slow and very measured with his words.

"No people are all bad—not even the whites. But they have come into a land which was our land. We have lived here for more moons than I can tell you. We have made our villages, we have taught our youths and our maidens, we have hunted our game. We have fought with each other sometimes, but white men do that, too. Then came the white man. Did he say, 'May we live among you?' No. He came by force; he killed our people; he is driving us from our own homes. Soon we shall have no homes—we shall no longer be a nation—I shall be gone, but my son will not be a Chief. Should I not fight for the life of my people?"

The dark was falling. Little Turtle was silent. The Indian trained mind of the young paleface was troubled.
Not a word was exchanged. The two young men walked into the wigwam, rolled themselves in their blankets. But Wells remembered always that this was the only night in all the years he lived with the Miamis when Yellow Bird had waited for him.

Gradually, however, he was broken into warfare—and to Indian warfare at that. Though he revolted at first against its fearful and useless cruelty, he gradually became accustomed to that aspect of the fight. He found great satisfaction in the cunning tactics of warfare, the excitement of the contest, the thrill of his own courage, and became one of the most skillful of the Indian scouts. Not even Yellow Bird could follow more silently and certainly, with less chance of being discovered than he. Not even Little Turtle, himself, in his most alert days, could have deciphered the story of a broken twig or the significance of a half dead trail more shrewdly than Black Snake. His strength and endurance were almost without measure. His eyesight was as keen and discriminating as that of his Indian companions, and a gun in his hand was a weapon of sure death.

One day in the early fall, after Wells and Yellow Bird had become recognized as warriors, though they had never taken part in actual warfare against the whites, Little Turtle summoned them.

"Black Snake and Yellow Bird"—the old Chief was always formal and dignified, "war is coming between the Indian and the white man. Black Snake, are you of us?"

"I am, my father," responded the white Indian boy.

"We have news," continued the Chief, "that an expedition of whites has been sent from Fort Washington against us. A white chief named Harmar is heading it. Linden birds have been singing in our ears and they tell us that he has fourteen hundred men or more. Already he has taken many of our little villages where the Indians, believing his strength to be greater than it is, have not opposed him. Tomorrow we go to meet him—to fight him—to kill."
All night they made ready for the march and before morning were on their way. Reaching the Miami river at daybreak, they saw the white troops drawn up in three columns.

Little Turtle called Yellow Bird.

“What would you do, my son? Let me see if you know how to attack.”

Yellow Bird and Black Snake had just returned from scouting along the river. Black Snake waited breathlessly longing to have Yellow Bird prove himself to his father.

“I would attack at once,” said the young warrior slowly. “Attack with a small force to draw off the militia. The rest of my force I would conceal. So I would draw the militia away, and as they were being separated from the main body, I would close-in upon the main body. They would have no chance.”

“The fight is yours, Yellow Bird,” commended the Chief. It was a short fight. Yellow Bird had planned it well. The militia were separated from the main body of troops and the great mass of Indians crowded upon them as had been planned. Everywhere in the thick of the fight was Yellow Bird. Everywhere Black Snake, so bronzed, so straight, so rigid of feature, he could hardly have been told from an Indian by his side. White after white fell under the fierce attack of the Indians. Even the Commander was slain. And young Wells was indeed Wells no longer. He was altogether Black Snake, taking part in all the rejoicing after the battle.

The winter that followed was hard. So many Indian villages had been plundered that many suffered for food. Attacks upon the whites increased. Indians became bold in entering settlements, carrying off goods and attacking whites in the very presence of numbers of citizens.

When spring came, plans were well under way for more war. And Black Snake was now sitting in the councils of the warriors. His plans were listened to and his opinions heard, though Little Turtle was chief and would be chief as long as he lived.

“I think the whites will never come near enough to attack in body,” complained Yellow Bird. “Our plans are made these many moons. Summer is now come. We hear from the north that an old man, St. Clair, expects to overwhelm my father, Little Turtle, the chief of the greatest Indian confederacy in the northwest. He is foolish. He will not come.”

Black Snake took his pipe from his mouth.

“They will come,” he predicted. “The whites will not lose this territory, if they can keep it; but how can an old man—and they say he is sick as well—how can he defeat the great chief of the Miamis.”

“If he were an Indian,” said Yellow Bird—“he would paint his face black—to show that he knew death and defeat were before him.”

But moons came and went and it was not until the November moon was high in the heavens that Black Snake fought again with Little Turtle and Yellow Bird against his own people.

It was cold the day of the battle—ice on the river, so Yellow Bird and Black Snake reported, with the militia on one side of the stream and the regulars on the other. The old tactics of Yellow Bird to separate the militia and the main forces were again agreed upon and, gay in their war paint with all the panoply and pomp of battle, the Indians made a sudden assault upon the militia which broke in confusion and retreated in disorder to where the regulars were drawn up in battle array. The troops sprang to arms, but the Indians, seeming to withdraw, found refuge behind logs and trees, and, led by Little Turtle with Black Snake in charge of one division and Yellow Bird of another, they crept closer and closer to the enemy, surrounding them, bearing down upon them, killing them, while the white troops never knew how many were their opponents. They
only glimpsed an occasional black head, with eagle and hawk feathers braided in the hair, as it moved stealthily among the bushes.

"We have them," cried Black Snake jubilantly to Yellow Bird. "They are in a panic, fleeing from us."

"We must continue to fight in silence," said Yellow Bird. "then they cannot know how many we are or where we are."

The two men separated. But the Indians followed the white troops for miles down the road, led by Little Turtle and Black Snake slaughtering those in the rear who were unable to keep up with the fleeing mass.

"The old man is defeated indeed," murmured Little Turtle with satisfaction that evening as he sat in camp with his pipe.

"He was foolish," volunteered Black Snake. "He had no scouts. If he had had men looking, finding, watching, we could never have won so great a victory."

"Ah, my son," Little Turtle was happy and at ease, "that is what we Indians know. The whites cannot track the enemy as well as we can. We know what scouting is and how it is done. They can never beat us unless they learn from us."

"That," said Yellow Bird, "we will never let them do."

EPISODE FOUR

Back To His Own

BLACK SNAKE had become a great man in his adopted tribe. He had proven himself a warrior both in the campaign against Harmar and in the tragic defeat of St. Clair. Now Little Turtle, pleased with his courage and youthful wisdom, planned still more honors for him.

"You must now learn to deal with our tribes, with unfriendly tribes and even with the whites in peace. You must be not only a warrior, Black Snake—you must be like a chief as well, wise in counsel. I shall send you with Yellow Bird to Detroit to meet there with some of our people. You shall talk also with the whites. You will find out what they plan to do. You will make friends if you can, but if you cannot, then you will learn their plans so we may deal with them as enemies."

So they rode off together—a dozen Indians with them—through the long grass of Ohio meadows, under the great spreading trees of her forests, traveling from sun-up till dusk, sleeping in the open. Days passed before they reached Detroit. It was a small settlement, a few hundred men, including the officers in the Fort, the able-bodied men in the town and surrounding country, with their wives and families, and a few seamen on the little crafts in the river. But to the two young braves it was immense, crowded, overwhelming.

Young Wells was more silent than usual. He was less Black Snake and more the boy who had come from a quiet Kentucky home. He could not quite understand the strange feeling of homesickness—for he did not call it that—which came over him as they met with groups of white men at Detroit, heard the inflection of his own people, saw the ready smile and expressive faces of the whites.

He talked with them much, for he had gone as interpreter as well as envoy, and though his English at first was halting for he had not spoken it for many years, yet he soon found himself waiting eagerly for a chance to speak in his own tongue.

The Captain sent for him one evening.

"Wells," he said, "Where will your Indian friends stand in this coming trouble with England?"

"Trouble with England?" questioned Wells, "I don't know what you mean."
“Just this,” replied the Captain. “I know you have been away from your people a long time, but I suppose you know that the colonies became free during the revolution and that we have a government of our own.”

Wells was indignant, but, Indian by training, he was calm even under provocation.

“We are not ignorant, Captain,” he said.

“Then if you know the struggle your country has gone through and in addition that there are troubles with the Indians, why do you stay with the Indians, why are you against your own people?”

“It is not that I am against my people, but they have treated the Indians badly. They have robbed them of lands, of home and of power—and robbed them ruthlessly.”

The Captain leaned across the table looking straight into the face of the young woodsman.

“Would you rather England ruled? Would you like to see England join with the Indians to drive our people away?”

Wells stood up, startled for a moment out of his Indian composure.

“That does not make sense.”

“It makes facts,” retorted the officer. “As long as you fight with the Indians, you fight with two enemies of these colonies, the Indians and Great Britain. If you care as little for your people as all that—very well.”

The Captain picked up a paper from his desk.

“That’s all,” he said curtly.

Wells walked slowly to the door, and then turned back.

“Is it really true Captain that many Indians are allied with Great Britain to take away from the Americans everything they have gained?”

“There is a saying of the Indian chiefs, which is all I need to give you, ‘I have spoken.’”

Down at the factor’s that evening where a crowd of men were gathered there was much talk of battles fought, of Indian atrocities, of women and children who suffered, of brave men tortured. And through all this talk crept a running story of what the white man was doing with a yet uncultivated country, of how civilization was advancing, and one man spoke something of beauty and learning.

“Yellow Bird, my mind is troubled,” confided Wells to his Indian brother. “For nights, ever since we defeated St. Clair, I have wondered, ‘Could any of them have been my own people?’ Is England coming in with the Indians to snatch our homes from us? I have wakened in the night to think of it.”

“You are a warrior, Black Snake. You should not think such thoughts. They are womanish.”

Yellow Bird himself was troubled by the attitude which he found in Wells, and his only way of meeting the situation was by reassertion of his Indian stoicism.

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Little Turtle looked thoughtfully at the man who stood before him, tight of lip, sharp of eye, lithe and iron-muscled.

“Speak, my son.” The Chief broke the silence.

Wells folded his arms and stood very straight. There was pride in the old Chief’s eye even as he listened to unwelcome words.

“My father, you said to me once the time might come when I would return to my own people. That time has come. You and I have long been friends. We are now friends. But tomorrow, when the sun stands there,” and Wells pointed to the zenith, “from that time we are enemies. You may kill me if you wish. I may kill you if I choose.”

Behind the impassive face of Little Turtle appeared the equally immovable countenance of Yellow Bird. It was the Chief who lifted his hand.

“You have spoken.”
For a moment all three were as statues. Then Wells turned and walked away—away from the years of youthful association—away from friends of his heart—away from savagery to his own people, to civilization.

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He rode hard. The nearer he approached his old home the keener became his desire, the more impatient his heart. His horse raced up a little slope and topped a hill. How could he have stayed away so long! There was the same matchless forest from the edges of which he had seen the Indian raid those long years ago. Riding at still greater speed, the old house came into view, spared by a caprice of fate from the fire and battle. He thought he would never reach it. As he leaped from his horse at the dooryard, a little six-year-old girl, blue of eyes, with long yellow curls, came running up to meet him.

"Who are you," he asked, lifting her up in his arms.

"I’m Rebekah—Rebekah Wells. Who are you?"

And then the door opened—and his Mother stood there with arms wide.

EPISODE FIVE

William Wells the Scout

INDIAN power was waning like an old moon. Little Turtle sat in his camp and thought of the white settlers crowding into his country. His own tribesmen were loyal but discouraged. Other tribes took the strangers by the hand. He shook his head sadly. The white man would sometime take the Indian away from his home and keep him; but he, Little Turtle, the great chief, could not keep even one white boy.

He had not seen Wells since the day they parted; but he had, with true Indian guile, followed every step of his way. He knew that Wells had become chief of scouts for "Mad Anthony" Wayne who was even now making ready for battle. Little Turtle was in command of all the tribes summoned to resist the new attack of the white man. He and Blacksake would fight against each other.

For nearly two years General Wayne had been drilling his troops and perfecting his corps of scouts. The evening before the battle he sat in conclave with Wells.

"What’s your report, Captain?"

"The Indians have gathered at Fallen Timbers, five miles from here, where there was a tornado once. The ground is still covered with trunks of fallen trees. Fine place for Indians to hide. But they haven’t a chance now that we know about it."

"Good. What else?"

"Little Turtle—he’s a great old man, General. Some day you’ll find that out. Well, he has tried to get them to accept your overtures of peace. He says there’s no use fighting ‘the chief who never sleeps.’ Some of the northern tribes have already slunk away, but there’s about two thousand warriors down there in those old timbers."

"All right, Bill. I’m satisfied, you and your scouts have covered our advance so effectively that the Indians haven’t much idea what we are doing. When we finally clean them out, it will be as much your work with the scouts as mine with the army."

"It was your work getting the scouts, General. I remember years ago when I was living with the Miamis, and Little Turtle and Yellow Bird and I were talking about how we could always beat the whites because they didn’t use their scouts enough. And Yellow Bird said that the Indians would never let them know their mistakes. But you found out."

"That’s all Bill."

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The Battle of Fallen Timbers was quickly over. No longer could the Indian tactics of fighting from supposedly hidden places prevail. Mad Anthony’s soldiers, now well trained, his scouts, his own untiring fearlessness resulted in the dragoons and the infantry driving the savages through the woods to an utter defeat. It was the end of Indian warfare in the valley of the Ohio.

By the light of the camp fire Wayne planned a treaty which should make another such war impossible. It was many months before the Indians and the whites met to arrange for a permanent peace.

Little Turtle sat in this meeting, an old man. He had seen that which he had long known would happen—the vanquishing of his people by the whites. He called Wells to him.

“Black Snake,” he said, addressing him in the Indian language by the familiar name; “It is good that you should be here. You will repeat truly what I say and what the Chief who Never Sleeps may say. You were with us. You went away. You did not tell me a lie. I will trust you.”

He turned to Wayne, speaking slowly, with dignity, arms folded.

“Elder Brother, when the Indians and the white men are no more at war, and when I sign the paper, I shall do what I shall say. We must have a man between us. We must have a man who can come from the white man to the Indian and go back to the white man. We must have a man who will not speak with the forked tongue. We must know his heart is right and you must know his heart is right. Elder Brother when this treaty is signed, will you agree with us that there is only one man for us both—my son, Black Snake.”

And so he stood for years between the two—one hand stretched out to the Indian and one to the white—the man whom they both trusted. Long after the treaty was signed and Little Turtle and Yellow Bird had gone back to their camp, and Wells was Indian agent at Fort Wayne, those words crept up in his mind. He saw again the face of the old chief and he smiled.

“Old times are good,” he said to his new friend and companion, Captain Nathaniel Heald, commanding officer at Fort Wayne.

“Old times?” queried the younger man. “I want new times.”

“You are seeing them soon, Captain. Aren’t you being transferred to Dearborn up on the Chicago river?”

“Unfortunately yes.”

“Why unfortunate? That is the most strategic position in the whole northwest. The man who goes there will make history. I was up there once. And some day a big city will stand where that little fort is—and the lake will have great boats upon it.”

“That’s not it, Wells. You know I’m going to marry that little niece of yours Rebekah—”

“Yes”—Wells sighed a little, “I know.”

“And it’s a frontier post. I hate to take her there. Who knows what may happen. I would like the fight—but not for Rebekah. However, the Indians are very quiet, I don’t suppose we will ever have any more real Indian troubles.”

Wells looked down at the young Captain and smiled, his tight, friendly smile.

“Captain, I lived with the Indians many many moons; but if you can tell what they are going to do, you know more about them than I do.”

“I thought you trusted them?”

“I do trust my friends Little Turtle and Yellow Bird—I would lay my life in their hands; but what a bunch of Indians are going to do—” Wells spread out his hands with a questioning gesture.
New moons became old moons. Corn was planted and harvested. Spring rains were followed by summer shines and winter snows. Wells, at Fort Wayne, was still the guide to the Indians, their friend and the friend of the whites as well. Up in the little post of Fort Dearborn on the outskirts of wilderness, Captain Nathaniel Heald and his young wife who had been Rebekah Wells were living an isolated life in a strange country, on the banks of a muddy stream.

And then, came war with England, and new confidence among the Indians. Wells watched all these events with the same wary eye with which he had noted every broken twig and every footprint in his scouting days. He had no intimate knowledge of what was passing among the Indians in the Illinois country though rumors came fresh every day, but his instinct said to him—trouble—war.

It came one day, just as he had known it would—word that Captain Heald had been ordered to vacate Fort Dearborn and march to Fort Wayne. Wells knew the danger of that march; he could imagine the temper of the Indian tribes. His own people were once more threatened by foreign foe and by Indian foe; his friend was at Fort Dearborn—and little Rebekah was there too.

Once more on the march—Wells and Yellow Bird, Miami warriors thirty in number—Indian silence—Indian haste. Relief riding for Fort Dearborn!

EPISODE SIX

Red Death Threatens

YELLOW BIRD stirred restlessly in his sleep. A cautious rustle of a branch nearby and he was sitting upright, looking with eyes that could see through the dark, out into the breaking dawn. Slowly his glance traveled and his sharp ears hearkened. But he saw nothing and heard nothing more. Quiet as a canoe on unruffled lake waters, he rose and moved like a shadow towards the little copse from which the faint sound had come. He parted the branches of a little tree and peered through. Nothing there. Listening and watching, he finally satisfied himself, and stole back to the camp of the warriors where he stopped beside the sleeping Captain. A slight touch on the arm was enough to arouse Wells. Yellow Bird motioned towards the little wood and together they left the camp.

When they were out of sight and hearing they paused, sat down on a log and looked silently for a moment towards the lighting east.

“What did you hear, brother?” asked Wells.

“Only the breaking of a twig,” replied Yellow Bird. “But someone has been here. Some men—Red men, have followed our trail, and their intent is not friendly.”

Wells nodded,

“This is no surprise. When we passed those war parties yesterday I knew we were bent on a hazardous journey. How many parties did we see, Yellow Bird?”

The Indian lifted his hand with four fingers extended and nodded.

“They are gathering from all around,” continued Wells. “All this news of the war between England and America has made them sure that they can win back their lands, and that they can beat us in battle. You know, my brother, the white man will not give up these lands. I do not say he has been just to the red men. I am of both races by upbringing and by ties of friendship. But no good can come now except we learn to live together in peace.”

Yellow Bird smiled a grave Indian smile.

“Am I not with you on this march? And did I need to come had I not wanted to fight with you?”

Wells stood for a moment in a listening attitude. Apparently he was satisfied.
"We must move rapidly." He turned to Yellow Bird. "Waken our men. It is still twenty miles to Fort Dearborn. They will need us."

Within half an hour the troop was on its way. Wells riding in advance, gay in his army coat with its high red collar, white epaulets and brass buttons, and the white stock under his chin. He had dressed himself carefully that he might ride into the Fort as a soldier in command of troops coming for relief—with all the dignity they might assume. His thirty Miamis, led by Yellow Bird, followed him in single file along the lake shore. Riding at full speed whenever the trail permitted. Slowing for the deadly tediousness of sand. Splashing through the little creeks that emptied into the lake. And never failing with a watchful eye to mark the woods and dunes to the south of them that they might not be surprised by foes.

The trail wound around a large dune. Then the sunlight picked out the little Fort a mile away. The Stars and Stripes were flying in the prairie wind.

The Indians saw the flag even before Wells. And following his example speeded up their ponies. The Fort might still be saved.

Crowds rushed to meet them. Soldiers, civilians, women and children; bright uniforms, dingy garments, woodsman’s garb, gay fluttering dresses; relief, apprehension, hope, fear, courage. There was excited laughter, eager questions, greetings too long delayed.

Wells looked searchingly into the face of yellow haired Rebekah. She was just as he had hoped to find her, filled with high courage and unbreakable determination. How much she was to need those great virtues before another sun would set, he could not know; but he rejoiced that this girl, a soldier’s wife and a soldier’s niece, was a true soldier herself.

Captain Heald, Commander of the Fort, and John Kinzie, trusted friend of the Indians, with Lieutenant Helm, motioned to Wells to join them. The excitement of the moment died down. The residents about the Fort slipped back one by one within the high stockaded walls. The Miamis turned their horses out to grass and settled themselves for rest and a pow-wow. Down the river on the low-lying land beside the muddy stream was a large Indian encampment. It had sprung up within the last few days. Wells looked at it with uneasy eyes.

"Who are these camped at your door, but not your friends," he asked as he joined the group.

Captain Heald was grave, Kinzie serious but full of ideas as always, and Helm apprehensive.

"The Indians have been gathering for days," said Captain Heald. "They have heard of English victories and they have heard, too, that we have been ordered to evacuate the Fort."

"How could they have heard," interpolated Lieutenant Helm, impetuously. "They have no way of getting messages as soon as we."

"Make no mistake, Lieutenant"—Kinzie’s voice was very slow. "Those boys know everything that happens. How they get it is more than I can say, but they get it. They know. Now what are we going to do?"

"I can do but one thing, as a soldier and commander of this Fort," replied Captain Heald. "And that is obey my commanding officer. General Hull has ordered me to evacuate this fort, to destroy the ammunition and guns and liquor, to give away the supplies to friendly Indians—"

"Friendly Indians—ha." Lieutenant Helm was hardly a soldier at that moment. He was an incensed and alarmed young man.

Captain Heald was too concerned with the exigencies of the moment to stop for military courtesies. He passed over the interruption without a sign.

"Also we are to proceed at once to Fort Wayne. What do you think of our chances of getting through, Captain Wells?"
"I would like to have a talk with those Indians down on the river before I answer that question. There are unfriendly tribes between here and Fort Wayne, but if these tribes are well disposed we may make it. Give me an hour to see what I can find out."

They were a picturesque pair as they strode down to the Indian camp—Wells in the bright glitter of his uniform, with his square chin and keen eyes, and Yellow Bird, gay in his savage apparel with his blanket wrapped in a forbidding dignity about his tall rangy figure.

Before the hour was passed they returned. No one except Little Rabbit, the youngest of all the Miamis on the march, could have told the difference in their mien. He saw the change in their step, the wariness of their look, and the hard lines on their faces, before they had fairly reached the group. He was little more than a boy himself, not yet admitted to councils, but as Wells passed into the Fort, Little Rabbit crept up stealthily to the walls and lay with his ear to the ground till at last he heard Wells' voice just within the stockade.

"Can you not wait a while longer Captain Heald? These Indians are about to go on the warpath. They believe they will have help from England. They are infuriated that the liquor and the guns are to be destroyed.—Oh, yes, they know that too. Can you not wait for further reinforcements from Ft. Wayne?"

Captain Heald shook his head.

"Impossible, I have my orders. And how much better off would we be here than on the road with the chance of getting through to Fort Wayne."

"But Captain," persisted Wells, "you have ample provisions here for, say a two months siege. You cannot be cut off from your water supply. You have sufficient ammunition. And this Fort is built to withstand attack. I fear very much you will not get through to Fort Wayne and reinforcements will be on their way soon."
John Kinzie added his pleas to those of Wells. Lieutenant Helm was even more insistent.

But Heald was firm.

“Your reasoning is good,” he finally said. “If the commanding officer were here he might order us to stay. But I am a soldier and I have my orders to evacuate this post, and I can do nothing but obey the orders of my superior officer. You will go with us?”

“I have my doubts whether you can hold out against these war parties that we have seen gathering, but if you go, then I go with you. We’ll make a dash for it, and try to reach Fort Wayne, but it will be a race for life.”

Wells saluted. He turned and walked through the long afternoon shadows of the hot sun towards the Miamis. Behind him he heard the soldiers breaking up the muskets, knew they were pouring the liquor into the gutters to be carried off into the river, and that the ammunition was being destroyed.

Little Rabbit was by his side, but he asked no questions. They reached the camp. Yellow Bird turned questioning eyes to Wells.

“We march to Fort Wayne in the morning,” was the Captain’s reply. “You may do whatsoever you like. But I shall paint my face black.”

EPISODE SEVEN

Massacre at Fort Dearborn

Old Fort Dearborn awakened to its last day. The rising sun that touched so brightly the log embattlements and glistened on the flag was to set in a welter of blood and bitter defeat. Blue waters of the lake, unclouded sky, slow moving current in the sandy stream, all spoke of peace.

Only in the hearts of the little band of whites gathered in the Fort was there foreboding of the tragedy. And only in the mind of William Wells was there grim certainty of the outcome.

He came early from the Miami camp to the Fort, garbed in full Indian array—hawk and eagle feathers on his head, buckskin clothes, mocassined feet, and face painted black. But for the bright blue of his eyes, he could not have been distinguished from one of his Miami warriors.

Plans for the march had been made the preceding night. Wagons had been loaded, guns and ammunition were in order. The women had gathered together the few little belongings they were permitted to take with them. All the laughter of the morning came from the children. For them it was a joyous adventure, traveling, riding in wagons. Happily they could not know that sure death rode with them—that the Indian tomahawk was to fall no place more mercilessly than upon these little children.

Captain Heald disposed his troops. The gates of Fort Dearborn opened for the last time and the people filed out. They had found life in the wilderness hard—they had suffered for want of comforts, even from lack of necessities, from loneliness and from dread. Yet they looked back at the Fort they were leaving with regret. Many of the men had helped to build the Fort. It was the only home they knew. It was the only place of safety for scores of miles.

The line formed. Captain Wells with his thirty Miamis rode in advance to lead the way and to guard against surprise attacks. Then came the troops, only fifty-five in number, led by Captain Heald and Lieutenant Helm. Riding with them, soldierly even on the march were Mrs. Heald and Mrs. Helm. The baggage wagons followed and in them were the other women and children and the sick or disabled men. John Kinzie who had sent his family away by boat, was riding with the militia who guarded the wagons.
Slowly they came south on the bank of the river, and below its mouth followed the shore line of the lake. They were all encouraged at first—all save Wells with his black painted face. They believed that the band of Pottawatomi Indians, who were riding on their right on pretext of acting as escort, were friendly. On the east they were protected by the lake. Back at the Fort everything looked peaceful, and ahead of them was William Wells—the scout of fame, the friend of the Indians, the incomparable fighter. Surely they were safe, and Fort Wayne would be reached.

One by one the Pottawatomi vanished behind the sand dunes to the west. Wells was too far in advance to see the move, and no one else seemed to sense the sinister significance. To the soldiers and militia it looked as if the Indians had found a better and easier route and had merely vanished for a few moments behind the hills. None of them realized danger until they were startled by the sight of Wells riding back at full speed, waving his hat over his head in circular fashion to indicate that the troops were being surrounded.

Guns sounded. The heads of the Indians were now seen popping up from behind the ridges of the sand dunes, as they trained their guns on the little band. Heald's men charged at once—racing, firing, up the dunes. Indian strategy was again at work. Having lured the troops to the attack, another band of redskins, turning back from the line of march behind the hills, fell upon the wagons in the rear. Savage fury was unrestrained. The air was thick with smoke, with war cries, the screams of women and children, the moans of dying men. The militia fought valiantly, but were unable to cope with the ever increasing force of armed and yelling redskins. Only two men were left as a guard to the wagons. In a moment they were surrounded—cut down. A young Pottawatomi leaped with a yell of triumph into one of the wagons. Dreadful cries arose. When he reappeared, bloody and triumphant, not a child was left alive. A woman standing on the ground snatched a gun from a dead soldier and fired at him, but he tore the gun from her grasp and struck her to the ground. On her knees she fought, with a knife, with a hammer she picked up in her desperation—but he fired a last shot and she was still. He turned. There were more whites he must kill—more women—perhaps more children. An old squaw who had just scalped a dying soldier grinned at him. Then around the corner of the wagon came a flaming young figure of vengeance—yellow hair flying in wild disorder—the hard blue eyes of the fighter looking out from her stern young face. Rebekah Heald, gun in hand, faced the two savages. They leaped towards her, but she fired the two shots that stopped and silenced them forever with the same steady hand her uncle had taught her in far off days.

Then Wells came riding. His Miamis were gone. He believed they had all forsaken him. He did not know that Yellow Bird was still in the fight and that Little Rabbit lay a forlorn stilled figure in the dunes. Heald was still holding off the Indians in the sand-hills, the fight around the wagons had died down, and Rebekah felt when she saw Wells that the day might yet be won. But he struggled from his horse, gasping, blood running from his mouth.

"I'm through. I'm dying," he gasped. "I'll fight as long as I can. When I'm gone, take this gun. Die like a soldier."

Bullets whizzed again. One brought down Wells' horse against which he was leaning. It fell upon him, pinning him to the ground. Still he kept firing, until the gun was shot from his hand. His breath was almost gone. The Indians closed in upon him. He was a great scout. It would be an honor to kill him. Wells half raised himself. He smiled at Rebekah. Then he pointed to his heart and traced a circle around his head. The red man's bullet found its mark. William Wells was dead.

A tall warrior rode up in fierce anger. He stopped beside Wells' body—sadness and revenge written on his face. Then he lifted his hand to the sun and cried to the Pottawatomies who stood about him—
"You are traitors—traitors to the white man and to the red man. And you have killed my brother, Black Snake. The day will come when I will ride back and fasten all your scalps to my belt."

Their rage now rose. Rebekah stood by the body of her uncle directly in the line of fire, but Yellow Bird thrust her behind him and held the foe off. Again the battle languished. A chief claimed Rebekah as prisoner and with her horse started to lead her to camp. An old squaw walking beside the horse admired the gay saddle blanket which in the fray had become loosened. She reached up a skinny hand to grab the blanket. A whip descended sharply on her shoulders again and again and she looked up—a surprised old squaw—into the infuriated face of Rebekah. The chief laughed. He knew courage when he saw it. Rebekah was safe.

The battle was over. Heald was a prisoner of war with ultimate freedom both for himself and Rebekah. The bodies of the slain lay on the shores of the lake. In their camp on the river savage rejoicings were heard. There was torture and there was more death.

Little Rabbit would never move again from the sandy dunes. Yellow Bird was riding alone to the east. Never before in his life had he known loneliness. Now, it would never leave him.

William Wells, lay quiet in death near the lapping waters of the lake. The Indians had cut out his heart, and had eaten it, that they might thus achieve some of his great courage. He smiled as he lay there. He had fought a good fight. Some day the sun would rise upon the land of which he had dreamed—a land where whites and Indians would dwell together in peace, for "no people are all bad."

And so he smiled!