

## CHAPTER X

### OTHER ACCOUNTS

I have believed it well to set out in an additional chapter other accounts of the captivity of Mrs. Wiley. It is not necessary to make any comment on them, for when they are read in connection with my account as written from the dictation of Adam P. Wiley the causes for any differences of statement will readily appear.

The adventures of Mrs. Wiley are related in every household in the Big Sandy Valley. I was perfectly familiar with them long before I ever saw Mr. Wiley. They are related now in a variety of forms, and like all traditional accounts of an important event after the lapse of more than a century they differ somewhat as to details. The following account furnished me by my friend, James Hayden Van Hoose, of Fayetteville, Arkansas, is a fair statement of the tradition as it is briefly related in these days. Writing me under date of August 4, 1895, he says:

I have heard my grandmother tell the story as she received it from old Jennie Wiley nearly ninety years ago. Jennie Wiley was one of the early settlers in Western Virginia, and on a day in the fall of the year while all the men folks of the settlement were off on a scout, a band of Indians came in and murdered and plundered the people left at home. All her children were killed except her youngest, then about 15 months old, which they allowed her to carry with her into captivity. They took her down into Kentucky and kept her with them until in the early part of the next spring. Another babe was born which they allowed her to nurse for a few weeks, but becoming uneasy about some news brought in by their scouts, they killed both of her babes one night and dried their little scalps by the fire before her eyes. She saw that trouble was brewing and resolved to make an effort to escape.

After they were asleep she quietly stole away from the camp, traveling in the direction she thought would lead to the white settlements. All night she traveled, accompanied by her faithful little dog who had followed her from her home, and stayed by her all the time in captivity.

She reached the mouth of this little creek which empties into Paint Creek, and she followed it to its head. During the day a little snow fell, and for fear they would track her in the snow she waded in the water, but her little dog would run along the bank. To keep them from finding his tracks in the snow, she called him to her in the water, and held him under until he was drowned. She said she could not keep back the tears while drowning him as she thought of how faithful he had been to her. She said she passed through the low gap now known as "Hager's Gap," where my father afterward built his house, in which I was born 66 years ago and a portion of which yet stands. Traveling up a little branch, once known as the "Stillhouse Branch," to its head, she reached the "Limestone Cliff," at the mouth of the "Limestone Branch," late at night. She rested under the cliff of rocks and slept a few hours until daylight, when she renewed her tramp along the river bank, until she reached a point directly opposite the blockhouse, or rude fort. She called loudly as she could for some one to come over after her. The river was very high, and some of the women came down to the bank. She called to them to send some one over after her, as she knew the Indians were after her; but they answered her by saying there was no canoe about the fort, and that the men were all gone after Indians on a scout, and only one old man left with the women and little children, and he was 80 years old, and feeble. She told them to get some dry logs and pin them together and make a raft, but they told her there was not any auger about the place. Then she said tie the logs together with ropes. But there was no rope. Then she said "get a grape vine" and tie the logs together with that.

The old man and women got three dry poplar logs and fastened them together with grape vines, and got a board for a paddle. The old man got on the raft and shoved it from the shore. He finally reached the side where she was so anxiously waiting, and she got on the other end of



The escape of Mrs. Wiley from the Indians at the Falls of  
Little Mudlick Creek

the raft and shoved it from the shore. The old man began paddling for the shore from whence he had come. The strong current carried them down the river some distance, and finally the vines began to come loose. The raft began to spread apart. The old man ceased paddling and fell upon his knees and began to pray, but Mrs. Wiley had more faith in "works" than in prayer. She seized the paddle out of his hands, and while he prayed she paddled, and succeeded in propelling the raft in under some swinging maple limbs that overhung the water. The old man grabbed hold of the limbs and pulled the raft ashore; they both reached dry land in safety. And none too soon, either; for just as they reached the top of the bank, three Indians came to the opposite shore, on her trail, and called out in a loud voice, "Whoopee, my pretty Jinnie!" But "Jinnie" was all right, for she had reached the fort, and the Indians not knowing that the men were all gone, were afraid to venture over.

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The following is the account of the captivity of Mrs. Wiley written by Rev. Zephaniah Meek, editor and proprietor of *The Central Methodist*, of Catlettsburg, Kentucky, for Dr. Ely's *The Big Sandy Valley*. With the exception of the date this brief sketch is singularly accurate. Mr. Meek was familiar with the story of Mrs. Wiley almost all his life. I believe he was born near the Wiley homestead on the Big Sandy River.

#### JENNY WILEY

The most romantic history in the early settlement of the Big Sandy Valley is that of Jenny Wiley. This history we proceed to give from the most reliable sources at our command, drawing our facts mainly from Hardesty's "Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia."

There is hardly a man or woman in Eastern Kentucky who is not familiar with the story of the life of this remarkable woman. The facts of her capture by the Indians, escape from them, and return to her home, have been handed down from parent to child, and they are well remembered. Her maiden name was Jenny Sellards. She married Thomas Wiley, a native of Ireland, who had em-

igrated and settled on Walker's Creek, in Wythe, now Tazewell County, Va., where they were living at the time of the capture by the Indians. She had a sister living near by, the wife of John Borders, who was the father of the Rev. John Borders, a noted Baptist preacher, Hezekiah Borders, Judge Archibald Borders, and several daughters. Several families named Harmon lived in the same neighborhood, some of whom were noted Indian scouts.

At the time of the capture of Jenny, Thomas Wiley, her husband, was out in the woods digging ginseng. This was in the year 1790. The destruction of the Wiley family, as hereafter recorded, was a result of a mistake on the part of the savages. Some time previously, in an engagement with a party of Cherokees, one of the Harmons had shot and killed two or three of their number, and a party of five returned to seek vengeance on the Harmons, but ignorant of the location of their cabin, fell upon Wiley's instead.

John Borders warned Mrs. Wiley that he feared Indians were in the neighborhood, and urged her to go to his house and remain until Wiley's return, but as she had a piece of cloth in the loom, she said she would finish it and then go. The delay on the part of Mrs. Wiley was a fatal one. Darkness came on, and with it came the attack upon the defenseless family. The Indians rushed into the house, and after tomahawking and scalping a younger brother and three of the children, and taking Mrs. Wiley, her infant (a year and a half old), and Mr. Wiley's hunting dog, started towards the Ohio River. At the time the Indian trail led down what is now known as Jennie's Creek, and along it they proceeded until they reached the mouth of that stream, and then down Tug and Big Sandy rivers to the Ohio.

No sooner had the news of the horrid butchery spread among the inhabitants of the Walker's Creek settlement than a party, among whom were Lazrus Damron and Matthias Harmon, started in pursuit. They followed on for several days, but failing to come up with the perpetrators of the terrible outrage, the pursuit was abandoned, and all returned to their homes. The Indians expected that they would be followed, and the infant of Mrs. Wiley proving an incumbrance to their flight, they dashed out its brains against a beech tree when a short distance below

where Mr. William C. Crum now resides, and two miles from Jennie's Creek. This tree was standing and well known to the inhabitants of this section during the first quarter of the present century.

When the savages, with their captive, reached the Ohio, it was very much swollen; with a shout of O-high-o, they turned down that stream, and continued their journey to the mouth of the Little Sandy. Up that stream they went to the mouth of Dry Fork, and up the same to its head, when they crossed the dividing ridge and proceeded down what is now called Cherokee Fork of Big Blaine Creek, to a point within two miles of its mouth, where they halted and took shelter between a ledge of rocks. Here they remained for several months, and during the time Mrs. Wiley was delivered of a child. At this time the Indians were very kind to her; but when the child was three weeks old they decided to test him, to see whether he would make a brave warrior. Having tied him to a flat piece of wood they slipped him into the water to see if he would cry. He screamed furiously, and they took him by the heels and dashed his brains out against an oak tree.

When they left this encampment they proceeded down to the mouth of Cherokee Creek, then up Big Blaine to the mouth of Hood's Fork, thence up that stream to its source; from here they crossed over the dividing ridge to the waters of Mud Lick, and down the same to its mouth, where they once more formed an encampment.

About this time several settlements were made on the headwaters of the Big Sandy, and the Indians decided to kill their captive, and accordingly prepared for the execution; but just when the awful hour was come, an old Cherokee chief, who in the meantime had joined the party, proposed to buy her from the others on condition that she would teach his squaws to make cloth like the gown she wore. Thus was her life saved, but she was reduced to the most abject slavery, and was made to carry water, wood, and build fires. For some time they bound her when they were out hunting; but as time wore away they relaxed their vigilance, and at last permitted her to remain unbound.

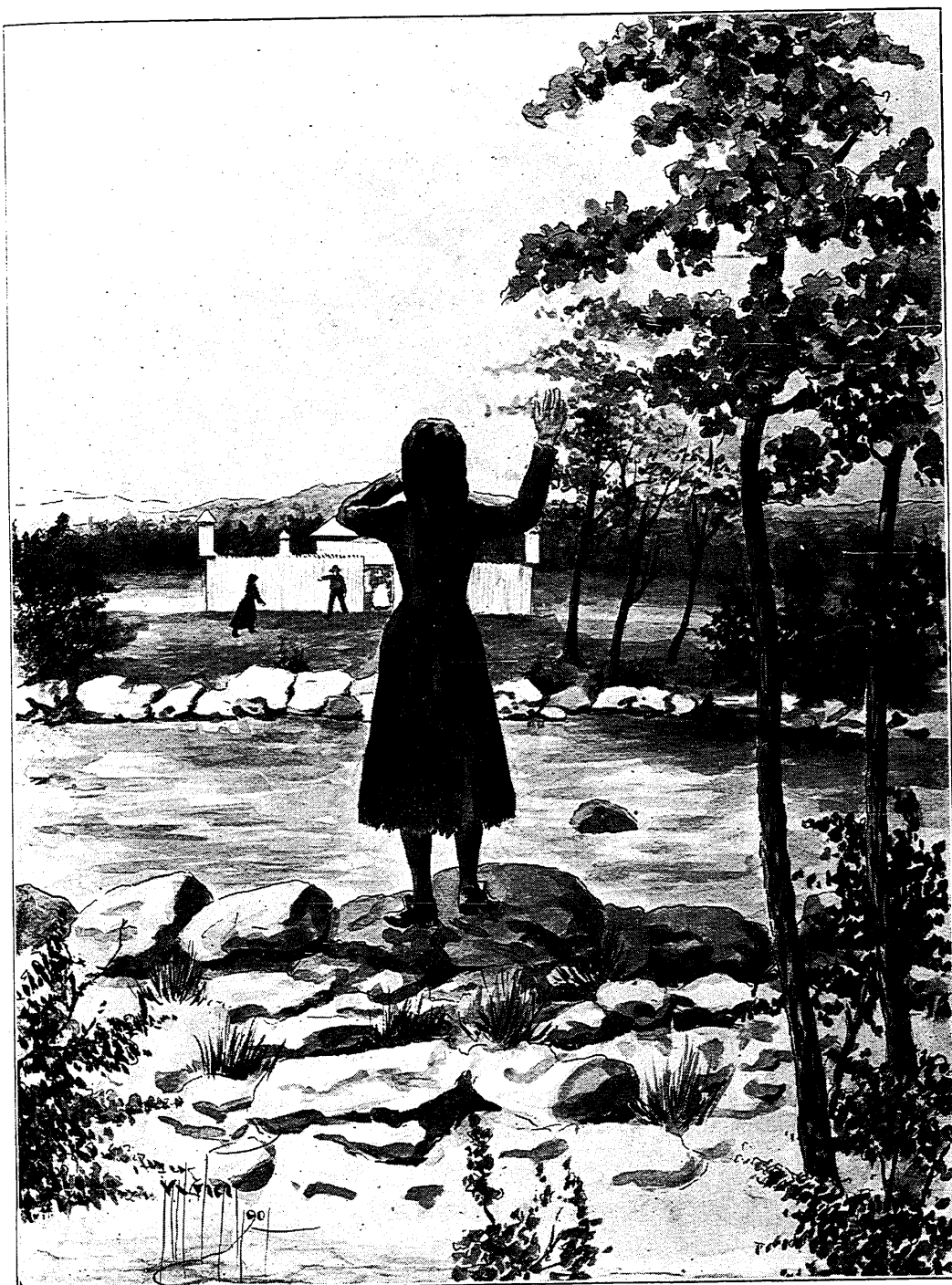
On one occasion, when all were out from camp, they were belated, and at nightfall did not return, and Mrs. Wiley now resolved to carry into effect a long-cherished

object, that of making her escape and returning to her friends. The rain was falling fast, and the night was intensely dark, but she glided away from the camp-fire and set out on her lonely and perilous journey. Her dog, the same that had followed the party through all their wanderings, started to follow her, but she drove him back, lest by his barking he might betray her into the hands of her pursuers. She followed the course of Mud Lick Creek to its mouth, and then crossing Main Paint Creek, journeyed up a stream (ever since known as Jennie's Creek) a distance of some miles, thence over a ridge and down a stream, now called Little Paint Creek, which empties into the Levisa Fork of Big Sandy River. When she reached its mouth it was day-dawn, and on the opposite side of the river, a short distance below the mouth of John's Creek, she could hear and see men at work erecting a block-house. To them she called, and informed them that she was a captive escaping from the Indians, and urged them to hasten to her rescue, as she believed her pursuers to be close upon her. The men had no boat, but hastily rolling some logs into the river and lashing them together with grape-vines, they pushed over the stream and carried her back with them. As they were ascending the bank, the old chief who had claimed Jenny as his property, preceded by the dog, appeared upon the opposite bank, and striking his hands upon his breast, exclaimed in broken English, "Honor, Jenny, honor!" and then disappeared in the forest.

That was the last she ever saw of the old chief or her dog. She remained here a day or two to rest from her fatigue, and then with a guide made her way back to her home, having been in captivity more than eleven months. Here she rejoined her husband, who had long supposed her dead, and together, nine years after—in the year 1800—they abandoned their home in the Old Dominion, and found another near the mouth of Tom's Creek, on the banks of the Levisa Fork of Big Sandy. Here her husband died in the year 1810. She survived him twenty-one years, and died of paralysis in the year 1831.

The Indians had killed her brother and five of her children, but after her return from captivity five others were born, namely: Hezekiah, Jane, Sally, Adam, and William.

Hezekiah married Miss Christine Nelson, of George's



Mrs. Wiley on the River-bank opposite the Blockhouse calling for help



Creek, Kentucky, and settled on Twelve Pole Creek, where he lived for many years; he died in 1832, [1882], while on a visit to friends in Kentucky. Jane married Richard Williamson, who also settled on Twelve Pole. Sally first married Christian Yost, of Kentucky, and after his death was united in marriage with Samuel Murray. She died March 10, 1871. William raised a large family, and after the sale of the Wiley farm moved to Tom's Creek, about two miles from the mouth, where he lived until his death.

Of the children of Jenny Wiley, Adam P. was the most noted. In physique he was scarcely excelled by any man in the Sandy Valley. Tall, straight as an arrow, brown of skin, slow of movement and speech, he was an attractive figure to look upon. He was known far and wide as "Vard" Wiley, sometimes called "Adam Pre Vard." Why thus designated the writer is unable to say.\* In his early life "Vard" was a great fiddler, and carried his violin far and near, to make music for the young people to dance by. But uniting himself with the Baptist Church, he for a time gave up the fiddle and went to preaching. His sermons were, like himself, very long, and he was very zealous and earnest. After some years in the ministry—the number we do not remember—he gave up his calling, and was often seen making his old violin ring out charming music for the young people at the log-rolling, house-raising, or corn-husking. He lived to a ripe old age, and died only a few years ago, at his home in Johnson County. Before his death he visited the writer, for the purpose of having him write out the life of his mother as he would detail it from memory, but our business engagements were such that it was impossible to comply with his request.

The Wiley family, descendants of Jenny, are quite numerous in Johnson; they are a hard working set of men, and retain in their memory the heroic life of Jenny Wiley as a heritage of priceless value.

The farm upon which Mr. Wiley settled, just below the mouth of Tom's Creek, was known to all the old people, far and near, as the "Wiley Farm." About forty years ago it was sold to James Nibert, who lived upon it until

\* His name was Adam Prevard Wiley. The name Adam was for Adam Harman who settled at Draper's Meadows in 1748. The Sellards and Harman families intermarried.—*William E. Connelley.*

some ten years ago, when he sold it to Samuel Spears, who is the present owner and occupant.

As the writer was born and reared almost in sight of the "Wiley Farm," he is perfectly familiar with all the leading facts in the life of Jenny Wiley, during her stay with the Indians, and after her escape.

While they were camping on Mud Lick, some six miles above where Paintsville now stands, she said they frequently ran short of lead, and when they wanted to replenish their stock they had no trouble to do so, and in a very short time. They would go out in the forenoon, and after three or four hours' absence return with something which looked like stones. Then they would build a large fire out of logs, on sidling ground, throw the ore on, and it would melt and run off into trenches prepared for it; afterwards, as needed, it was moulded into bullets. But, notwithstanding the ease with which the Indians procured their lead, the whites have never been able to find the mines from which it was taken. Years have been spent in its search, and long pilgrimages have been made, by those claiming to be able to point out the place, but thus far to no purpose.

Were we to repeat all the legends that have been handed down from the days of Jenny Wiley, they would seem too incredible for belief in this age, when romance and hardships are not so intimately associated as they were then. So, in the preparation of this chapter we have confined ourselves to facts, leaving out the fanciful, which the imagination of the reader can supply.

That there are vast lead mines in the valley of Paint Creek, perhaps on Mud Lick, there is little room to doubt. That they have never been found, in view of the universal belief of their existence, is likely due to the fact that the people in that section do not know lead ore when they see it. The story of Jenny Wiley was abundantly confirmed by Indians friendly to the whites, in later days, but they would give no information as to the location. We are sorry we can not tell our readers where to find these mines!

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I insert here the account written by H. Clay Ragland, Esq., editor and proprietor of the *Logan County* (West Virginia) *Banner*. Mr. Ragland wrote a history of his:

county in installments, which he published in his paper. While there are some errors in it, the history is very valuable, and in the publication of it Mr. Ragland did his country a great service. I recognized its value as soon as I saw the first chapter, and procured it all; I have it pasted in a scrap book in consecutive order. It is one of the best annals of the valley yet written. The portion given here is chapter five in the series as published in the paper.

## HISTORY OF LOGAN COUNTY

By

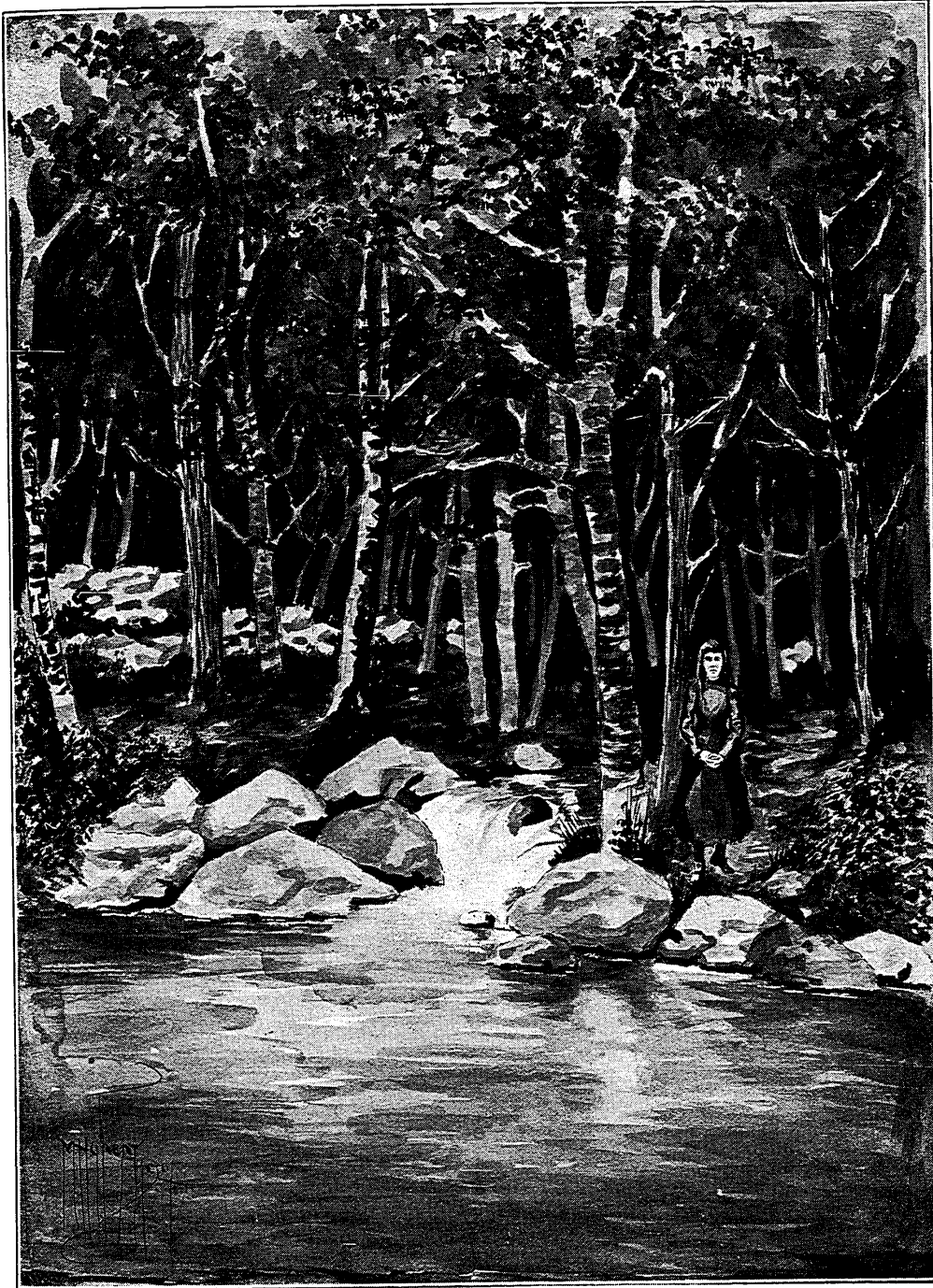
H. CLAY RAGLAND

### CHAPTER V

As early as 1777 Henry Harman, a native of Prussia, with his sons, Henry, George and Mathias, and Absalom Lusk, made a settlement in what is now known as Ab's Valley, in what is now Tazewell County. The place selected by them had formerly been occupied by Indian lodges, and a portion of the land was ready for cultivation. They were soon joined in their new settlement by John Draper, James Moore, James Evans, Samuel Wiley and George Maxwell, with their families, and thus strengthened they felt themselves in a manner secure from Indian raids, and their horses and cattle were allowed to run at large in the fertile valley. For awhile all went well. The crops were planted and the wild game so abundant in the valley was hunted, and peace and plenty was promised. Indian eyes, however, watched from the wooded ridge to the west, and on a bright morning in the early summer of 1778, Mathias Harman and John Draper were out hunting about a mile from the settlement, when, becoming separated, young Harman shot a deer and then commenced to reload his rifle. Before he had finished he was seized from behind by a stalwart Indian, and on looking up he saw several other Indians in a few feet of him, and he gave up without a struggle. The whoop which the Indians raised at his capture notified Draper of the fact and he hurried to the settlement with the news. Henry Harman and his sons Henry and George at once seized their arms,

and with Draper pursued rapidly after the Indians whom they overtook, on what is now known as Harman's branch, in McDowell County. Harman and his companions at once opened fire on the Indians, and when the fight was over young Harman was a free man, and five of the Indians were dead on the field while the others had saved themselves by flight. None of the whites were hurt except Henry Harman, Sr., who was covered with wounds, six arrowheads being broken off in his flesh; not extracted until he had been carried back to his home by his boys. Draper is said to have deserted during the fight, and on reaching the settlement had reported that Harman and all of his sons were killed. Revenge is one of the strongest characteristics of the Indian, as well as all other uncivilized races, and doubtless the Indians who escaped with their lives from the fight of Harman's branch, dreamed of being revenged upon the little settlement of Ab's Valley; yet bided their time until the little settlement should again feel themselves secure from attack.

The crops for 1779 had been scarcely planted and young Mathias Harman was busy raising a company of Rangers to join the patriots in the Carolinas, when in the early part of the spring a party of some thirty Indians dropped, as if from the clouds, upon the little settlement, capturing first James Moore, who had gone to the pasture to look after his horses, and with a savage whoop, bursting into the houses, murdering the Wiley, Moore and Maxwell families, and capturing George Maxwell and Jennie Wiley, the wife of Samuel Wiley, and daughter of James Evans. The alarm was soon given, and Captain Mathias Harman, with about forty men of the company which he had been raising, was soon in the saddle and ready for pursuit. General Preston, who had about one hundred men in his command was notified, and made a junction with Harman the next day at or near the present site of Welch. With this force they pushed down the Tug River to its junction with Levisa, and then down the Big Sandy as rapidly as possible, keeping their scouts in advance of them, but they failed to overtake the Indians; in fact they lost all sign of their trail after passing the mouth of Jennie's Creek, on Tug River. When in about eight miles of the mouth of the Big Sandy, at what is now White's Creek,



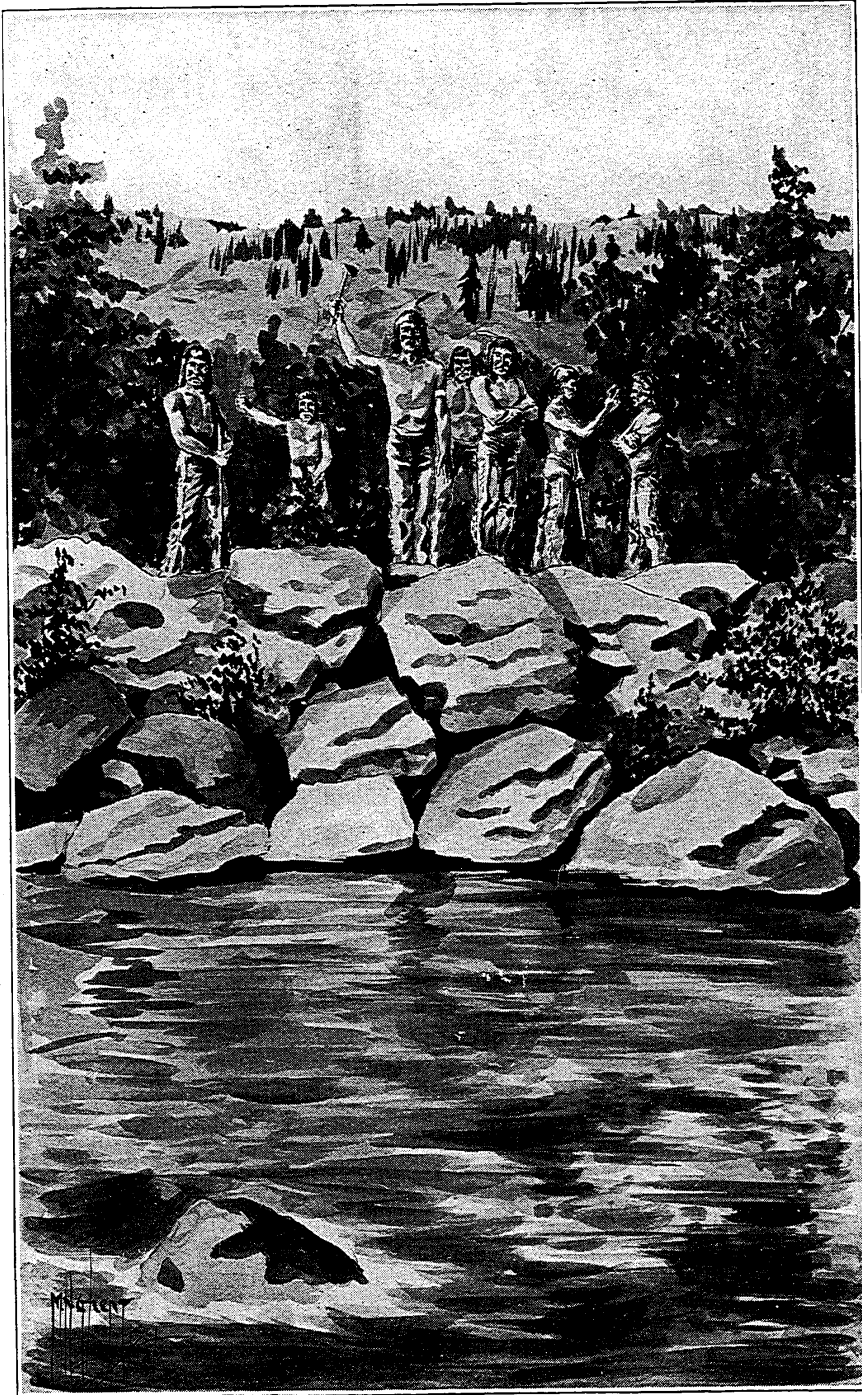
Mrs. Wiley at the mouth of Little Paint Creek (East Point) in her escape from the Indians

the scouts reported a large force of Indians, estimated at a thousand warriors, in front of them, and rapidly advancing up the river. The men had not stopped to hunt on the march, and they were entirely out of provisions, and the forced march which they had made had jaded both horses and men. Less than one hundred and fifty men in a wilderness, more than two hundred miles from a settlement, fronted by a wily and savage foe, numbering more than five to one, and acquainted with every mountain pass in the country, by which a party could have been thrown in their front and an ambushade formed, was indeed a critical position. To fight was certain death and even retreat promised but little else. Nothing else, however, remained to be done, and posting his most experienced men in the rear of his column, Gen. Preston and his brave men, chagrined at their failure in recapturing the prisoners who had been taken from Ab's Valley, set out on their weary retreat up the river. In the meantime a heavy rain had commenced, and the mountain streams were in places overflowing their banks, making fording at times difficult, while the soft and yielding earth doubled the labor of the jaded steeds.

The weary march was kept up during the night, but without incident. The next morning both deer and buffalo were in sight, but they were afraid to fire a gun lest their Indian pursuers might locate them and hurry forward, or worse still, send a column by some nearer route to intercept them. Arriving at the mouth of Marrowbone, they found the carcass of a buffalo, which had been left by the Indians on their retreat down the river, and the bones with what flesh had been left upon them, were divided among the men. A short distance above Marrowbone they came upon a gas spring which had been lighted. Here they paused for the purpose of resting their horses, and of roasting, as best they could, the meat and bones which they had found at the mouth of Marrowbone. Some of the men to satisfy their hunger, cut the tugs from their saddles and roasted them over the spring. After a short rest the gallant little band again took up their line of march up the river. Arriving at the mouth of Pigeon, they found that Charles Lewis, who had been taken sick on their march down the river, and left at that place in charge of two companions, had died. They hastily dug a grave and

buried him, but just as the last sad rites were being completed, scouts reported the Indian column but a short distance below. Examining the creek, and finding it out of its banks and covered with driftwood and debris, they concluded that it was dangerous to attempt to cross it in the face of the foe, and leaving the old trail, they took up their line of march up the northeastern bank of the creek, hoping to find further up the stream where it could be forded, a gap in the mountain by which they could return to the old trail on the river. Arriving at what is now the mouth of Hell Creek, they went up that stream, thinking it would lead them to the old trail, but after proceeding about three miles they found in front of them an impassible barrier of stone and they were forced to retrace their steps to Pigeon, expecting to encounter there the whole force of the Indians. Every gun was examined and a fresh charge of powder put in every pan of their flint-lock rifles. On reaching Pigeon they were agreeably surprised in meeting their scouts to learn that the Indians had gone into camp at the mouth of the creek, throwing only a few scouts across the creek on the old trail.

Gen. Preston then determined to follow the creek to its head, intending to rest for awhile wherever game could be found. A short distance up the creek and at the mouth of a small creek flowing into Pigeon from the eastward, several elks were seen, which were speedily brought down by the trusty rifles, and the party went into camp, picketing their horses so they could feed on the wild grass which was abundant. There were no signs of Indians during the afternoon or night, and after partaking of a hasty meal the next morning the command slowly resumed its march up the creek. A hunting party under charge of Ben Cole was sent on in advance for the purpose of hunting game and fixing up a camp for the next night. This little party pushed to the front, leaving a trail by which the main column could be guided, never leaving the creek until they came to its head. Here they crossed over the mountain and wended their way down a small stream until they came to what is now known as the "Forks of Ben Creek," where they found both game and grass abundant, and Cole, selecting it as the camping ground for the night, made preparations for the command, sending a part of



The Indians on the River-bank opposite the Blockhouse. Mrs. Wiley had been taken from this point on the Raft a few minutes before



his men out to kill game. Gen. Preston on arriving went into camp, and next morning, having heard nothing further of the Indian force, determined to give his men and horses a much-needed rest. It was to him and his command a new country, and scouts were sent out in every direction for the purpose of finding out what they could of the surrounding country, as well as their distance from the old trail over which they had traveled. It was soon ascertained that they were within a mile of the old trail that led up the Tug River, and that they were really camped on another trail that led from the river up the creek. Scouts following this latter trail found that it crossed over a gap of a mountain to another creek which flowed into the Guyandotte River, and now known as Gilbert's Creek.

After resting a few days, Gen. Preston sent the command of Capt. Harman back to the settlements, and crossed with his command to the Guyandotte River, where, after reconnoitering the country as far down as the mouth of Buffalo Creek, and then after resting a few days and feasting on buffalo which were found in large herds, he took up his line of march for the settlements, passing up Huff's Creek by the grave of Peter Huff, which being recognized by some of the men, who were with Huff when he was killed, the command paused and refilled the sunken grave with fresh earth and marched back to the settlements on New River by the same route over which Capt. Hull had returned two years before.

Mr. Ragland places the date of the captivity of Mrs. Wiley in 1779. It is evident that this date is much too early; it is the year given me by Adam P. Wiley as that in which his parents were united in marriage. At the time of the destruction of their family they had four children. Mr. Ragland has the events and dates mixed in the treatment of this and other matters in relation to the history of the Big Sandy Valley. He fixes the number of Indians in the party at "about thirty" or "some thirty." He makes the pursuing party consist of the expedition commanded by General Andrew Lewis, and which was sent out in February, 1756, and which is known in history as

the "Sandy Creek Voyage." He has the expedition commanded by General William Preston and Captain Matthias Harman.