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CHAPTER IX.

DUNMORE'S WAR.

In the Indian hostilities of 1774, known as "Dunmore's war," the territory now Fayette County saw little, if anything, of actual fighting and bloodshed; yet, in the universal terror and consternation caused by the Indian inroads and butcheries on the west of the Monongahela, it came near being as completely depopulated as it had been twenty years before by the panic which succeeded the French victory over Washington.

The Dunmore war was the result of several collisions which took place in the spring of 1774, on the Ohio River above the mouth of the Little Kanawha, between Indians and parties of white men, most of whom were adventurers, who had rendezvoused there preparatory to passing down the river for the purpose of making settlements in the then new country of Kentucky. The circumstances which attended the beginning of those hostile collisions were afterwards narrated by Gen. George Rogers Clarke, who was himself present and a prominent actor in the scenes which he describes. The account, which bears date June 17, 1798, is as follows:

"This country [Kentucky] was explored in 1773. A resolution was formed to make a settlement the spring following, and the mouth of the Little Kanawha appointed the place of general rendezvous, in order to descend the Ohio from thence in a body. Early in the spring the Indians had done some mischief. Reports from their towns were alarming, which deterred many. About eighty or ninety men only arrived at the appointed rendezvous, where we lay some days. A small party of hunters that lay about ten miles below us were fired upon by the Indians, whom the hunters beat back and returned to camp. This and many other circumstances led us to believe that the Indians were determined on war. The whole party was enrolled, and determined to execute their project of forming a settlement in Kentucky, as we had every necessary store that could be thought of. An Indian town called the Horsehead Bottom, on the Scioto, and near its mouth, lay nearly in our way. The determination was to cross the country and surprise it. Who was to command was the question. There were but few among us who had experience in Indian warfare, and they were such as we did not choose to be commanded by. We knew of Capt. Cresap being on the river, about fifteen miles above us, with some hands, settling a plantation, and that he had concluded to follow us to Kentucky as soon as he had fixed there his people. We also knew that he had been experienced in a former war. He was proposed, and it was unanimously agreed to send for him to command the party. Messengers were dispatched, and in half an hour returned with Cresap. He had heard of our resolution by some of his hunters that had fallen in with ours, and had set out to come to us.

"We thought our army, as we called it, complete, and the destruction of the Indians sure. A council was called, and, to our astonishment, our intended commander-in-chief was the person that dissuaded us from the enterprise. He said that appearances were very suspicious, but there was no certainty of a war; that if we made the attempt proposed he had no doubt of our success, but a war would at any rate be the result, and that we should be blamed for it, and perhaps justly. But if we were determined to proceed he would lay aside all considerations, send to his camp for his people, and share our fortunes. He was then asked what he would advise. His answer was that we should return to Wheeling as a convenient spot to hear what was going forward; that a few weeks would determine. As it was early in the spring, if we found the Indians were not disposed for war, we should have full time to return and make our establishment in Kentucky. This was adopted, and in two hours the whole were under way. . . .

"On our arrival at Wheeling (the whole country being pretty well settled thereabouts) the whole of the inhabitants appeared to be alarmed. They flocked to our camp from every direction, and all we could say we could not keep them from under our wings. We offered to cover their neighborhood with scouts until further information if they would return to their plantations, but nothing would prevail. By this time we had got to be a formidable party. All the hunters, men without families, etc., in that quarter had joined our party. Our arrival at Wheeling was soon known at Pittsburgh. The whole of that country at that time being under the jurisdiction of Virginia,[1] Dr. Connolly[2] had been appointed by Dunmore captain commandant of the district, which was called West Augusta.[3] He, learning of us, sent a message addressed to the party, letting us know that a war was to be apprehended, and requesting that we would keep our position for a few days, as messages had been sent to the Indians, and a few days would determine the doubt. The answer he got was, that we had no inclination to quit our quarters for some

[1] The country around Pittsburgh was then claimed by both Virginia and Pennsylvania, but Clarke, being a Virginian, viewed the matter entirely from the Virginian stand-point.

[2] Dr. John Connolly, a nephew of George Croghan, the deputy superintendent of Indian affairs.

[3] All this region was at that time claimed by Virginia to be within its "West Augusta" District.

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time, that during our stay we should be careful that the enemy did not harass the neighborhood that we lay in. But before this answer could reach Pittsburgh he sent a second express, addressed to Capt. Cresap, as the most influential man amongst us, informing him that the messengers had returned from the Indians, that war was inevitable, and begging him to use his influence with the party to get them to cover the country by scouts until the inhabitants could fortify themselves. The reception of this letter was the epoch of open hostilities with the Indians. A new post was planted, a council was called, and the letter read by Cresap, all the Indian traders being summoned on so important an occasion. Action was had, and war declared in the most solemn manner; and the same evening (April 26th) two scalps were brought into camp. The next day some canoes of Indians were discovered on the river, keeping the advantage of an island to cover themselves from our view. They were chased fifteen miles and driven ashore. A battle ensued; a few were wounded on both sides, one Indian only taken prisoner. On examining their canoes we found a considerable quantity of ammunition and other warlike stores. On our return to camp a resolution was adopted to march the next day and attack Logan's[1] camp on the Ohio, about thirty miles above us. We did march about five miles, and then halted to take some refreshments. Here the impropriety of executing the projected enterprise was argued. The conversation was brought forward by Cresap himself. It was generally agreed that those Indians had no hostile intentions, as they were hunting, and their party was composed of men, women, and children, with all their stuff with them. This we knew, as I myself and others present had been in their camp about four weeks past on our descending the river from Pittsburgh. In short, every person seemed to detest the resolution we had set out with. We returned in the evening, decamped, and took the road to Redstone."

Immediately afterwards occurred the murder of Logan's people at Baker's Bottom and the killing of the Indians at Captina Creek. The so-called speech of Logan fastened the odium of killing his people in cold blood on Capt. Michael Cresap, of Redstone Old Fort. That the charge was false and wholly unjust is now known by all people well informed on the subject. Cresap did, however, engage in the killing of other Indians, being no doubt incited thereto by the deceitful tenor of Dr. Connolly's letters, which were evidently written for the express purpose of inflaming the minds of the frontiersmen by false information, and so bringing about a general Indian war.

The settlers along the frontiers, well knowing that the Indians would surely make war, in revenge for the killing of their people at Captina and Yellow Creek, immediately sought safety, either in the shelter of the "settlers' forts," or by abandoning their settlements and flying eastward across the mountains. A glimpse of the state of affairs then existing in what is now Fayette County is had from two letters written in May of that year to Col. George Washington by his agent, Valentine Crawford, then residing on Jacob's Creek, a few miles northeast of Stewart's Crossings. The two letters referred to are given below, viz.:

"JACOB'S CREEK, May 6, 1774.

"DEAR COLONEL,—I am sorry to inform you that the disturbance between the white people and the Indians has prevented my going down the river, as all the gentlemen who went down are returned, and most of them have lost their baggage, as I wrote more particular in my other letter . . .

"I got my canoes and all my provisions ready, and should have set off in two or three days but for this eruption, which, I believe, was as much the white people's fault as the Indians. It has almost ruined all the settlers over the Monongahela [that is, on the west side of it], as they ran as bad as they did in the years 1756 and 1757 down in Frederick County [his former residence in Virginia]. There were more than one thousand people crossed the Monongahela in one day. . . . I am afraid I shall be obliged to build a fort until this eruption is over, which I am in hopes will not last long."

"JACOB'S CREEK, May 25, 1774.

"From all accounts Captain Connolly can get from the Indian towns they are determined on war, and he has sent to all the people of Monongahela to let them know that a large number of Shawanese have left their towns in order to cut off the frontier inhabitants. This has alarmed the people of our neighborhood so much that they are moving over the mountains very fast; but I have, with the assistance of your carpenters and servants, built a very strong block-house, and the neighbors, what few of them have not run away, have joined with me, and we are building a stockade fort at my house. Mr. Simpson also and his neighbors have begun to build a fort at your Bottom [where Perryopolis now is], and we live in hopes we can stand our ground until we can get some assistance from below."

Again, in a letter dated Jacob's Creek, June 8, 1774, Crawford says to Washington, "We have built several forts out here, which was a very great means of the people standing their ground. I have built one at my house, and have some men to guard it. Mr. Simpson has also built a fort at the place where they are building your mill, by the assistance of his neighbors and part of your carpenters. I have several times offered him all the carpenters and all the servants, but he would not take any of the servants and but four of the best carpenters. His reasons for not taking the servants are that there is a great deal of company at the fort, and drink middling plenty.

[1] The Mingo chief Logan, the murder of whose family in this war was charged on Capt. Cresap; but the whole tenor of this letter of Gen. Clarke goes to prove the injustice of the charge.

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He thinks, therefore, that it would be out of his power to govern them. . . . From Indian alarms and the crowds of people that come to the fort he can get nothing done, even with the small number of hands he has."

In a second letter of the same date he says, "Since I just wrote you an account of several parties of Indians being among the inhabitants has reached us. Yesterday they killed and scalped one man in sight of the fort on the Monongahela,—one of the inmates. . . . There have been several parties of savages seen within these two or three days, and all seem to be making towards the Laurel Hill or mountain. For that reason the people are afraid to travel the road by Gist's, but go a nigh way by Indian Creek, or ride in the night. . . . There is one unhappy circumstance: our country is very scarce of ammunition and arms. I have therefore taken the liberty to write to you to get me two quarter-hundred casks of powder, and send them as far as Ball's Run, or Col. Samuel Washington's, or Keyes' Ferry, where I can get them up here by pack-horses. I want no lead, as we have plenty. . . .

"On Sunday evening, about four miles over Monongahela, the Indians murdered one family, consisting of six, and took two boys prisoners. At another place they killed three, which makes in the whole nine and two prisoners. If we had not had forts built *there would not have been ten families left this side of the mountains* besides what are at Fort Pitt. We have sent out scouts after the murderers, but we have not heard that they have fallen in with them yet. We have at this time at least three hundred men out after the Indians, some of whom have gone down to Wheeling, and I believe some have gone down as low as the Little Kanawha. I am in hopes they will give the savages a storm, for some of the scouting company say they will go to their towns but they will get scalps."

It was the Indian chief Logan, he whose former friendship for the whites had been turned into bitterest hatred by the killing of his people, who came in with his band to ravage the settlements on the west side of the Monongahela, throwing all that country into a state of the wildest alarm. The present counties of Washington and Greene were almost entirely deserted by their people. Dr. Joseph Doddridge, in his "Notes," says that the people in the vicinity of his father's settlement (in the west part of what is now Washington County) fled across the Monongahela to the shelter of Morris' fort, in Sandy Creek Glade, southeast of Uniontown. That fort, he says, "consisted of an assemblage of small hovels, situated on the margin of a large and noxious marsh, the effluvia of which gave most of the women and children the fever and ague."

The terror which prevailed on the east side of the Monongahela was scarcely less than that which drove the people from the west side of that river. Capt. Arthur St. Clair, of Westmoreland County, wrote to Governor Penn, saying, "The panic which has struck this country threatens an entire depopulation thereof." To which the Governor replied, June 28, 1774, "The accounts which you have transmitted of the temper of the Indians and the murders they have already perpetrated are truly alarming, and give every reason to apprehend that we shall not long be exempt from the calamities of a savage war. The desertion of that country in consequence of the panic which has seized the inhabitants on this occasion must be attended with the most mischievous effects, and prove ruinous to the immediate sufferers and distressing to the province in general." The people of this region sent a petition and address to Governor Penn, setting forth "That there is great reason to apprehend that the country will again be immediately involved in all the horrors of an Indian war; that their circumstances at this critical time are truly alarming,—deserted by the far greater part of our neighbors and fellow-subjects, unprotected with places of strength to resort to with ammunition, provisions, and other necessary stores, our houses abandoned to pillage, labor and industry entirely at a stand, our crops destroyed by cattle, our flocks dispersed, the minds of the people disturbed with the terrors of falling, along with the helpless and unprotected families, the victims of savage barbarity. In the midst of these scenes of desolation and ruin, next to the Almighty, we look to your Honor, hoping, from your known benevolence and humanity, such protection as your Honor shall see meet." This petition and the letters above quoted set forth with much of truth and clearness, the alarming situation of affairs existing west of the Laurel Hill in the summer of 1774.

In the mean time (upon the retirement of George Rogers Clarke from Wheeling to Redstone) an express was sent to Williamsburg, Va., to inform the Governor of the events which had occurred upon the frontier, and the necessity of immediate preparation for an Indian war. Upon this, Lord Dunmore sent messengers to the settlers who had already gone forward to Kentucky to return at once for their own safety, and he then without delay took measures to carry war into the Indian country. One force was gathered at Wheeling, and marched to the Muskingum country, where the commander, Col. McDonald, surprised the Indians and punished them sufficiently to induce them to sue for peace, though it was believed that their request was but a treacherous one, designed only to gain time for the collection of a larger body of warriors to renew the hostilities.

But the main forces mustered by Dunmore for the invasion of the Indian country were a detachment to move down the Ohio from Pittsburgh, under the Governor in person, and another body of troops under Gen. Andrew Lewis,[1] which was rendezvoused at

[1] Who had been a captain under Washington in the Fort Necessity campaign of 1754.

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Camp Union, now Lewisburg, Greenbrier Co., Va. These two columns were to meet for co-operation at the mouth of the Great Kanawha River. Under this general plan Governor Dunmore moved from Williamsburg to Winchester and to Fort Cumberland, thence over the Braddock road to the Youghiogheny, and across the territory of the present county of Fayette on his way to Fort Pitt, which in the mean time had been named by his partisans, in his honor, Fort Dunmore. From there he proceeded with his forces down the Ohio River, Maj. William Crawford, of Stewart's Crossings of the Youghiogheny, being one of his principal officers.

The force under Gen. Andrew Lewis, eleven hundred strong, proceeded from Camp Union to the headwaters of the Kanawha, and thence down the valley of that river to the appointed rendezvous at its mouth, which was reached on the 6th of October. Gen. Lewis, being disappointed in his expectation of finding Lord Dunmore already there, sent messengers up the Ohio to meet his lordship and inform him of the arrival of the column at the mouth of the Kanawha. On the 9th of October a dispatch was received from Dunmore saying that he (Dunmore) was at the mouth of the Hocking, and that he would proceed thence directly to the Shawanese towns on the Scioto, instead of coming down the Ohio to the mouth of the Kanawha as at first agreed on. At the same time he ordered Lewis to cross the Ohio and march to meet him (Dunmore) before the Indian towns.

But on the following day (October 10th), before Gen. Lewis had commenced his movement across the Ohio, he was attacked by a heavy body of Shawanese warriors under the chief Cornstalk. The fight (known as the battle of Point Pleasant) raged nearly all day, and resulted in the complete rout of the Indians, who sustained a very heavy (though not definitely ascertained) loss, and retreated in disorder across the Ohio. The loss of the Virginians under Lewis was seventy-five killed and one hundred and forty wounded. Dunmore and Lewis advanced from their respective points into Ohio to "Camp Charlotte," on Sippo Creek. There they met Cornstalk and the other Shawanese chiefs, with whom a treaty of peace was made; but as some of the Indians were defiant and disinclined for peace, Maj. William Crawford was sent against one of their villages, called Seekunk, or Salt-Lick Town. His force consisted of two hundred and forty men, with which he destroyed the village, killed six Indians, and took fourteen prisoners.

These operations and the submission of the Indians at Camp Charlotte, virtually closed the war. Governor Dunmore immediately set out on his return and proceeded by way of Redstone and the Great Crossings of the Youghiogheny to Fort Cumberland, and thence to the Virginian capital. Major Crawford also returned to his home in the present county of Fayette, where, the day after his arrival, he wrote Col. George Washington, the friend of his boyhood, as follows:

"STEWART'S CROSSINGS, Nov. 14, 1774.

"SIR,—I yesterday returned from our late expedition against the Shawanese, and I think we may with propriety say we have had great success, as we made them sensible of their villany and weakness, and I hope made peace with them on such a footing as will be lasting, if we can make them adhere to the terms of agreement. . . . The plunder sold for £400 sterling, besides what was returned to a Mohawk Indian who was there."

The "settlers' forts" and block-houses, which by affording shelter and protection to the inhabitants prevented an entire abandonment of this section of the country in Dunmore's war, were nearly all erected during the terror and panic of the spring and summer of the year 1774, though a few had been built previously. Judge Veech, in his "Monongahela of Old," mentions them as follows:

"These forts were erected by the associated efforts of settlers in particular neighborhoods upon the land of some one, whose name was thereupon given to the fort, as Ashcraft's, Morris', etc. They consisted of a greater or less space of land, inclosed on all sides by high log parapets or stockades, with cabins adapted to the abode of families. The only external openings were a large puncheon gate and small port-holes among the logs, through which the unerring rifle of the settler could be pointed against the assailants. Sometimes, as at Lindley's, and many of the other forts in the adjacent country west of the Monongahela, additional cabins were erected outside of the fort for temporary abode in times of danger, from which the sojourners could, in case of attack, retreat within the fort. All these erections were of rough logs, covered with clapboards and weight-poles, the roofs sloping inwards. A regularly built fort of the first class had its angles, block-houses, and sometimes a ditch protected a vulnerable part. These block-houses projected a little past the line of the cabins, and the upper half was made to extend some two feet farther, like the over-jut of a barn, so as to leave an overhanging space, secured against entrance by heavy log floors, with small port-holes for repelling close attacks or attempts to dig down or fire the forts. These rude defenses were very secure, were seldom attacked, and seldom, if ever, captured. They were always located upon open, commanding eminences, sufficiently remote from coverts and wooded heights to prevent surprise.

"The sites of the 'old forts' (or prehistoric mounds) were sometimes chosen for the settlers' forts. This was the case with the site on the Goe land, just above the mouth of the Little Redstone, where, as before mentioned, there was erected a settlers' fort, called Cassell's, or Castle Fort. How far 'Redstone Old Fort' was so used cannot certainly be known, as, while it existed as a place of defense after settlements began, it was a kind of government fort for the

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storage of ammunition and supplies, guarded by soldiers.[1] Its proper name after 1759 (though seldom given to it) was 'Fort Burd.' And there is evidence that besides its governmental purposes it was often resorted to by the early settlers with their families for protection, though for that object it was less adapted than many of the private forts."

One of the earliest erected forts of this kind was by John Minter, the Stevensons, Crawfords, and others, on land of the former,—since Blackiston's, now Ebenezer Moore's,—about a mile and a half westward of Pennsville.

There was one on the old Thomas Gaddis farm, two miles south of Uniontown, but what was its name cannot certainly be learned, or by whom or when erected, probably, however, by Colonel Gaddis, as he was an early settler and a man of large public spirit.

Another, called Pearse's fort, was on the Catawba Indian trail, about four miles northeast of Uniontown, near the residences of William and John Jones. Some old Lombardy poplars, recently fallen, denoted its site.

About one mile northwest of Merrittstown there was one on land now of John Craft. Its name is forgotten.

Swearingen's fort was in Spring Hill township, near the cross-roads from Cheat River towards Brownsville. It derived its name from John Swearingen, who owned the land on which it stood, or from his son, Van Swearingen, afterwards sheriff of Washington County, a captain in the Revolution and in the frontier wars, and whose nephew of the same name fell at St. Clair's defeat.

One of considerable capacity, called Lucas' fort, was on the old Richard Brown farm, near the frame meeting-house, in Nicholson township.

McCoy's fort, on land of James McCoy, stood where now stands the barn of the late Eli Bailey, in South Union township.

Morris' fort, which was one of the first grade, was much resorted to by the old settlers on the upper Monongahela and Cheat, and from Ten-Mile. It stood on Sandy Creek, just by, and near the Virginia line, outside Fayette County limits. It was to this fort that the family of the father of the late Dr. Joseph Doddridge resorted in 1774, as mentioned in his notes. The late Col. Andrew Moore, who resided long near its site, said that he had frequently seen the ruins of the fort and its cabins, which may yet be traced.

Ashcraft's fort stood on land of the late Jesse Evans, Esq., where Phineas Sturgis lived, in Georges township. Tradition tells of a great alarm and resort to this fort on one occasion, caused thus: On land lately owned by Robert Britt, in that vicinity, there is a very high knob, called Prospect Hill, or Point Lookout. To this eminence the early settlers were wont in times of danger to resort daily to reconnoitre the country, sometimes climbing trees to see whether any Indians had crossed the borders, of which they judged by the smoke of their camps. This hill commanded a view from the mountains to the Monongahela, and from Cheat hills far to the northward. On the occasion referred to, the scouts reported that Indians had crossed the Monongahela, judging from some smoke "which so gracefully curled." The alarm was given, and the settlers flocked to Ashcraft's fort, with wives and children, guns and provisions, and prepared to meet the foe, when, lo! much to the vexation of some and the joy of others, the alarm soon proved to be "all smoke."

Besides the settlers' forts mentioned as above by Veech, there was one where Perryopolis now stands, built by Gilbert Simpson (as previously noticed in a letter of Valentine Crawford to Washington), also a strong block-house at Beeson's Mill (now Uniontown), and perhaps a few others within the limits of Fayette County.

[1] In this statement Veech is mistaken, having evidently confounded the Redstone Old Fort with Fort Burd, which was built near its site, but was an entirely different structure.

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