The feeble old man who occupied a log cabin at the edge of the clearing and after whose wants his dear old friend Friedrich looked, staggered back to his lonely abode, after pressing the hands of his friends. Schlicht silently grasped his wife's hand and stepped with her to the window, from which Mrs. Fichte's grave could be seen. Fichte walked totteringly to his cabin, took a glance at the hummock containing the remains of her who was dearest to him in life, and entered his dwelling, muttering to himself: "I will soon be with you, Dora".

To his wife Schlicht said: "Who would believe that in the breast of that faded old man there once glowed such fiery passion for his fellow beings and his country!"

Fichte's words proved true. Six weeks later his neighbors carried him from his lone log cabin to that tamarack, beneath whose shade he now rests in peace and quiet with his spouse.

XVII. THE DUEL.

Deep quiet reigned in and about the Indian village. Nature, too, was at rest. Not a leaf was stirring. The needles of the pines had ceased their whispering. The moonless sky displayed a few isolated stars whose faint and distant light was unable to penetrate the dense foliage of the forest. The gurgling of the brook, which flowed past near the village and had been swollen by the recent rains, was the only sound that interrupted the nightly stillness.

Towards evening a pock-marked fur-trader had visited the village. He was bound to see the queen and inspect the mysterious wigwam, but the queen was "not at home" and the wigwam remained closed to him. Pona and Kaan stood guard at the two wigwams and attended to their business earnestly and courageously. The wigwams were as sacred to them as their palaces are to millionaires.

"Our pelts and furs are already sold to Milwaukee", Kaan said fearlessly; "the traders are cheaters; they do not get our furs".

"Pup, guard your snout; otherwise I shall take your hide with me and cut it up into strings", the trader replied.

The frivolity of the rough customer's remarks was unable to intimidate the boys. They were as unsusceptible to his arguments as were the surrounding groves. The pretended fur-trader was courageous as well as crafty. The unconcerned attitude of the boys, who spoke a surprisingly good English, led him to suppose that gunbarrels were aimed at him from ambush and that he was liable to become personally acquainted with their contents as soon as he handled any of the lads roughly. He had no desire, however, for a perforated body and there was no course left open to him except to retreat.

Some twenty minutes later the sleuth and his companions were gathered at an appointed spot. Exchanging their discoveries, they had to confess that thus far they had made no headway. The only hope they still cherished was that Konrad Weber was still sojourning
in the camp of the redskins, for they had not found another trail leading out of the camp.

The sleuths regaled themselves with victuals which they carried with them in oblong packages fastened to the backs of the saddles. They also partook liberally of whiskey. They decided to attack the two wigwams at night. In order to rest their bodies for the task before them, they stretched themselves out on the grass in the forest. Their plan was thus: Shepard was to force his way unseen into the two wigwams and the three others were to shoot down anyone crossing their path. Shepard threatened everyone, who should touch a hair of Yellowbird's, with dire vengeance. They all knew the ground. They were to be about one hundred feet apart when they proceeded to the attack of the wigwams, but the assault was to be undertaken jointly. In case of there actually being eight or ten Indian warriors in the nest, it would not mean much, for each one of the assailants was able to fire any number of shots, each of which was sure to level a redskin.

Shepard's calculation was as follows: "From the east and west I am secure from hostile bullets since I will be between the two wigwams. My helpers will be to the north of me. Consequently I will be in danger only from the south and darkness will shield me there. If the Indians really expected an attack (of which he, by the way, entertained no doubt), they would shoot from behind the shelter of trees in the distance. Let them shoot! Trees and bashes are so thick about the wigwams that the Indian's bullets will not hit me. Before the Indians have had a chance to reload, I will be with the old man in a safe place".

All seemed favorable to Shepard. Bill, the tall Yankee, would have preferred to do the job by daylight. Of course, they had the advantage that the Indians could not take a sure aim by night and had to shoot in the direction from which they heard a noise, also, that the Indians find more difficulty by night in loading their guns.

In New Holstein the fur-traders had procured two gallons of whiskey which they carried with them in a rubber pouch which formed the center of attraction for them. They partook freely of the liquor. The sun was setting. In three hours they were to begin their enterprise. At daylight Shepard expected to reach his tent with his sweet and rich booty. He was reclining against a tree and puffing huge volumes of smoke out of his pipe. The horses were standing in a dense cluster of trees. They were accustomed to go without fodder for a day or two and yet run with their usual speed. Shepard gave himself up to his thoughts. He thought differently from the way in which he had spoken. He knew that he had committed a great mistake. The violin and the eyes were the cause of it. He could escape from the heavenly tones after he had heard them; but from those eyes — never! They had fascinated him. Shepard stood
motionless while his mind wandered. He wanted to see the fair creature tremble when he mentioned the name of Konrad Weber, he wanted to see Yellowbird on her knees before him, and then draw her up to him, embrace her in his arms and whisper to her that her uncle might live, that Yellowbird should live and be happy, if she would consent to become his wife.

Experienced and well informed as Shepard was he had failed to take into consideration Yellowbird's youthful heart. He knew very well that he ought to have entered the Indian camp while his purposes were still unknown. At that time Yellowbird's uncle had no security except his hiding place, but now preparations for his defense had been made, Shepard also knew very well that if he had undertaken the attack in the afternoon, neither he nor one of his comrades would now be among the living. At the same time, he had to confess to himself, the enterprise would have been a trivial matter to execute a day sooner. How easily could not his Irishman or he himself disguised as a fur trader, have convinced himself of the time when the Indians went hunting. Without trouble they could have captured their man and walked off with him. "I am one day behind one full day", Shepard muttered to himself; "Yesterday I had not yet heard Yellowbird's violin play; I had not yet beheld her eyes — those divine lights. How differently these would have gazed at me, if I had been able to offer their owner a big price for them!"

Shepard took deep draughts out of the liquor flask and continued his meditations: "Who can blame Konrad Weber for defending himself, especially as he knows that money is all we are after? What do we care whether a lousy Junker cools his vengeance or not? Why doesn't the old dotard do his own fighting, as the doctor has done? Instead, they throw away money by the handful and buy sleuths. They say the officers merely perform their duty. O the devil! Duty! If the German lord had been a beggar or day laborer, they could have strangled his wife and children and no cock would have crowed about it. Doctor! defend yourself bravely, if you have no desire to go to Germany. I cannot blame you for wishing to remain here. We areaccursed sleuths! Each of us has more to account for than you. They say you are a right good fellow and committed no crime except to defend yourself when you was attacked. You think more of yourself than others do, and have remained true to yourself to this very day. I remember very well the history of your case as reported in the newspapers. They made you out a noble fellow who, by virtue of the extradition treaties between Germany and the United States, must be delivered up. It is a shame that two men should for money's sake be delivered up to bloated purses. Yet, he that has said A must also say B. My purpose must be accomplished, for a higher prize than the plutocrat's gold is beckoning. The violin and Yellowbird's beautiful eyes!"
The bulky sausage-shaped rubber flask containing the whiskey grew thinner and thinner as the night advanced. The sleuths were evidently equally matched as far as ability to consume the fiery beverage was concerned. Their faces became bloated. When filled up with liquor they were veritable bloodhounds. Their victim is lost when they have his scent. Such, too, is generally the fate of him whom such sleuths are tracking. When they have once smelled blood, its shedding becomes their main object, especially when worked up by the demon of drink.

The fellows were not inconvenienced by the darkness. They found their favorite beverage as well without sunshine. Nothing was stirring. While the sleuths were resting, not even a dog barked.

Scarcely twenty paces away from the camp of the sleuths lay a coil that seemed lifeless. Two big hands lying flat on the ground on either side of the colossus gave it the appearance of a giant turtle. On top, where one had reason to suppose the location of a head, two spots were visible. They were small in comparison with the monster, but emitted weird sparks of fire. The fiercest lion or grizzly bear would have started back like a timid lamb at the sight of this monster; a reptile of the most dangerous kind would have fled precipitously. Yet on the breast of the monster lay a surpassingly handsome girl, like a tender, sleeping angel, and whispered into its ear with a sweet voice what the sleuths were intending to do. She had listened to their counsels and heard all. She had no fear of the monster’s claws. For a time she had placed one of her soft hands into them and the monster seemed to be pleased. Silently as she had come she left the monster to itself. An hour had passed. With the exception of the activity of its fiery orbs, the monster seemed an inert mass, so still it lay.

“Bill, it is now eleven o’clock, the nest must be raided”, Shepard whispered to his neighbor; “don’t forget that we keep track of each other by the gentle breaking of a twig. Shoot down all that cross your path”.

“If every member of the redskinned brood does not resemble a coal-sieve by to-morrow, I will be roasted. To-morrow the meteors will fly to their lairs with the entrails of the red dogs,” Bill replied. Bill had been quite a promising youth with a fair education, but had fallen into bad company and turned out a robber and an assassin.

The Irishman had taken off his coat and put it softly away. After taking a deep drink at the whiskey flask he cautiously crept into the thicket. Dan followed the Irishman’s example in every particular and was getting into the position marked out for him. None of the sleuths had any fear. Shepard told them while they were proceeding to assault the village: “The night seems to be an ideal one for our butterfly hunt. Do not touch the girl under any circum-
stances”. To himself he muttered: “Her I would rather place on another throne”.

“Good bye, boss”, Bill said, after shoving a tremendous quid of tobacco into his mouth.

“Good bye, Bill, take care”, Shepard replied.

“Well, Shepard, I guess we have gone through different trials before Uncle Sam conferred knighthood upon us”, Bill retorted.

Shepard’s course was the shortest route to the wigwams. He had, therefore, ample time to take another drink. The quantities of liquor those fellows could consume was a marvel.

Shepard now also relieved himself of his coat and his arms glittered in the darkness. He knew his way without looking. He was an expert in all he undertook. His nerves and courage were like steel.

As soon as Jack Shepard set himself in motion, life seemed to return into the body of the monster, whose claws began to raise themselves. Immediately the monster resumed his cowering position. With head bent forward and claws extended from the side of the body, the monster moved forward quite as rapidly as the detective, but in spite of his bulk as silently as a worm.

Bill had just broken a twig and Shepard answered the signal. At the same moment Shepard fancied himself transplanted into the mountain forests of Guinea, for before him stood, stiff as a statue, a gigantic gorilla. He stepped back a pace and put his iron hand on the butt of a pistol. The gorilla made a stride forward and both were in the same relative position again.

Shepard’s, blood seemed to freeze in his veins. Such a monster he had never seen. Yet his natural courage, aided by the liquor he had drunk, asserted its supremacy and he reached for a pistol. At the same moment one claw of the monster clutched his throat and the other his right hand. In the darkness of a Wisconsin forest a wrestling, more terrible than can be pictured, ensued. The wild gorilla clutched tightly what he had once grasped. Until now no one had ever vanquished him and he had been in many desperate encounters. Jack Shepard had an advantage over his antagonist, because he could still freely move his left arm. He was about to reach for his knife. In his claws the monster felt the pulsation of every nerve of his foe.

With the agility of a tiger he had pressed Shepard against a tree so that he could not extend his arm for the knife.

Shepard’s eyes were bursting from their sockets. His breast appeared to be on the verge of bursting. With his left hand he aimed blows at the body of his foe who dodged them successfully. He then placed his foot against the tree, and, exerting his utmost strength from top to toe, managed to give his body a swing. Both combatants touched the ground. Shepard was the under body. The giant now sought to break Shepard’s right hand and then to repeat
the experiment with the left; but, although he was endowed with the strength of a hellhound, it was not an easy task, for Shepard's body was like steel.

Shepard was convinced that it was the giant's purpose to kill him as he had himself killed many a victim, by strangling him without giving him an opportunity to utter a sound in order to avoid a rain of bullets from the rear. The giant's touch therefore, at Shepard's neck tightened; his thumb had already sunk deep into Shepard's neck. The strangling contest of the two Herculeses in the dense thicket made no more commotion than the cooing of two lovers. It lasted but a minute.

Although Shepard's face had already turned blue, the crisis had not yet come. Shepard once more strained to the utmost all his huge muscular strength and succeeded in getting on his feet. Curiously, he found himself in the same position as before, leaning against the tree. Shepard now tried to get a firm hold to tear out the monster's entrails, but he succeeded as little in that as in reaching one of his many weapons. In spite of the colossus hanging to his body, Shepard again bobbed up with the result that the gorilla was under him. Yet before Shepard could draw a gun, both were on their feet again. A moment later they were again tugging away at each other on the ground.

Both contestants were exerting to the last degree of tension every nerve and every muscle. Their motions were comparable to the inexplicable jerking movements of decapitated poultry, probably the result of great muscular exertion.

The two dark figures continued to wrestle and came near a half-decayed log close to the brook. Into it both of the fighters, who had not uttered a sound during the struggle, fell. The horrible battle was there decided.

After a brief while Caqua, the victor, crawled up the bank of the brook, drew his hunting-knife from his belt and scraped the mud off his leggings. The water in the brook had been colored black as ink during the strangling battle by the upheaval of the mud at its bottom, and was beginning to get clearer.

Caqua gazed down at his victim. His face, which resembled a big skull, showed a satisfied grin whenever Shepard's corpse appeared on the surface of the water. Shepard's neck, into which Caqua's claws had sunk deep, displayed all colors and was greatly swollen. His right wrist was but a lump of raw meat. The hand itself was crushed.

Caqua considered this deed as the first one worth mentioning which he had performed for his guardian angel. It caused him nameless joy. He vividly conjured up in his mind the scene where Yellowbird — then a mere child — saved him from death by slow torture while he was tied hands and feet and standing "in the pillory".
To-day he at length had found an opportunity to return the favor. He had preformed his task well. The corpse at the bottom of the creek bore evidence to it. If he only could slay a man per day for her, the queen of his tribe! He could see no wrong in that. Remorse was foreign to his animal nature, especially for a deed done upon her request. He would most cheerfully have despoiled the corpse or at least seized Shepard's weapons — but she had prohibited it. Taking a last look at Shepard's remains, Caqua, happier than a victorious hero sauntered slowly toward his wigwam.

XVIII. THE DEBATE.

"Do not touch any of your weapons! Rifles are aimed at you. I will not be unjust to you. Let us have fair play. You see that I am unarmed" said a very tall man to Bill who was standing directly in front of him. The calmness and the firm voice of the speaker had quiet an effect on the ruffian who was somewhat nonplussed. However, his innate rowdiness and impudence, stirred up by the huge quantity of liquor he had imbibed, soon asserted their supremacy, and he replied: "I am a federal officer and never enter into a compromise. Neither do I allow any one to cross my path. I am accustomed to travel them unhindered. In order that we may correctly understand each other, let me inform you that the officers of such a firm acknowledge no obstacle."

"You are here on neutral ground", the stranger answered; "for these lands have not yet been replaced to us by others. The government has not yet decided this question. I ask you now, what business you have in our village at midnight. If your calling brings you here, please show your credentials."

Bill responded: "The papers throwing light upon our actions are in the possession of my chief. The credentials you ask for may be a great surprise to you, because, judging from your fine language, I suspect that you are the bird we are looking for. Your head is very much in demand."

"If Konrad Weber is the man you refer to, "the stranger replied", your suppositions are correct. I, too, have a desire, and that is to retain my head. In this respect I have not yet been able to change my taste to suit that of others."

"But on my side is our great country", Bill threw in, who began to understand whom he was confronting.

Weber continued: "On my side there is only one man, but who has the same rights as your country. Your country and myself owe our existence to the very same creation. This creation, however, gave to none of its creatures more rights than to another. Your firm is anxious to kill me. My firm, on the contrary, desires to live. You see, we are again confronted by the same question. You are risking no more then what is demanded of me — life, the right to continue to exist as a human being."