

# THE SPRING OF DEATH

A LEGEND OF THE OZARKS.

BY ALLAN HINCHEY



ROVING band of Osages had gone south, past the Renault mines, over the granite hills, and across the rivers St. Francois and La Pomme, until they reached the Tiwappatee bottom. When the Osages were on the move it meant trouble for everyone else, for, as they went they stole, slew and burned. They were dreaded by the French and Spanish settlers, and by the more peaceably inclined Indians.

On this particular occasion, however, they were not so aggressive as they traveled south, for they intended going into the lands of the Delawares, and they knew that too much violence on their part would arouse the whites, the Chawanons and the Delawares to such an extent that they would join forces and annihilate their band before assistance could come to them from their tribe in the North. It was the intention of the chief who led them to go swiftly into the country of the Delawares, strike quickly and fiercely, and then retreat, before an alarm could be given.

Having penetrated the jungle of Tiwappatee Bottom for some distance, and being within a few miles of the Delaware village, the Osages halted to await the coming of night, when they intended to pounce down upon the unsuspecting Delawares, take a few scalps and drive away as many of their horses as they could capture.

Shortly after concealing themselves they saw a party of Delaware horsemen coming, about twenty of them, and each man was leading one or two extra ponies. They were evidently returning from a pasturage, where their ponies had been grazing.

The Osages attacked and killed all of the Delawares, except one, the son of the Delaware chief, whom they captured, badly wounded. Binding their prisoner upon one of the captured ponies they quickly secured the other horses, and the scalps of their victims, and began a hasty retreat.

Fearing that a knowledge of their passage through the country had reached the whites and Chawanons, who might be on watch for their return, the Osages decided to go farther towards the west before turning north to their own lands.

With the ingenious cruelty peculiar to them, they harrassed and tortured their unfortunate captive as they retreated rapidly through the forest. The poor Delaware, feverish from his wounds, asked for water. It was given to him, but with salt dissolved in it, which, of course, greatly aggravated his thirst, until his suffering became terrible.

On the second day they came to the bank of a river, near which a large spring of water flowed from under the bluffs. This spring was well known to the Indians, and was called by them the "Big Spring."

Here they stopped to rest and re-

fresh themselves. Their captive implored them to give him water. But they drank plentifully of it themselves and refused his appeals. And, that his suffering might be increased, the Delaware, with swollen tongue, blood-shot eyes and crazed brain, was firmly bound and placed with his face within a few inches of the running water.

Fearing pursuit the Osages did not tarry long at the spring, but after consultation regarding the prisoner, and fearing he might retard them in their flight, they decided to leave him. So, cruelly tearing off his scalp-lock, they left him by the pool of water, and once more began their retreat.

The shades of night settling over the forest, the people of the Delaware village began to wonder at the delay in the arrival of the young men who had

gone to bring in the ponies from the range. The chief ordered that a party go in search of them. And thus was learned the awful truth.

The chief summoned his warriors, and preparations were made for a hasty pursuit. As the band of warriors left the village the chief's squaw, having learned that her son was not among the slain, and fearing his fate at the hands of his captors, joined the cavalcade.

Easily following the trail of the Osages, they finally came to the "Big Spring," and there found the body of their tribesman. To their Indian instinct the story was easy to read. The cruelty of the thirst torture—the excruciating pangs of thirst aggravated by the sounds of running water, was



*"Would you drink of the water whose music tortured your brother?"*

plainly evident from the swollen tongue and distorted features.

Some of the Delawares, thirsty after their hard riding, were in the act of drinking from the spring, but the mother of the murdered warrior drove them back with reproaches. "Would you drink of the water whose music tortured your brother?" she asked. "From this day may these waters be accursed. May all, beast and man,

who drink of this spring, sicken and die."

Whether the curse of the grief-stricken mother still hangs over the spring we cannot say, but the "Big Spring," now known as Mill Spring, a station on the Iron Mountain Railway, still runs plentifully, and its water is cool and clear, but the inhabitants will tell you that disease lurks in it, and the cattle and wild animals shun it always.

## AT BEDTIME

BY WILL T. HALE.

THE little eyes are sleepy now ;  
 At last he kneels beside my chair ;  
 And God, I think, his ear bends low  
 To hear the baby lisp his prayer—  
 "An' now I lay me down to s'leep,  
 An' p'ay thee, Lord, my soul to teep."

How many years have passed away  
 Since last we knelt back there alone !  
 But may I hope the child's prayer may  
 Be still remembered, Holy One—  
 When chilling vapors round me creep,  
 And I shall "lay me down to sleep !"