

*“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace.”*

Romans 14:19

## Faint Heart

*In 1677 and '78, William Penn helped about eight hundred Quakers escape persecution in England by moving to New Jersey in North America. Then in 1681, Penn obtained a large portion of land in North America as a grant from King Charles II. King Charles named the huge wooded area “Pennsylvania.” Many more Quakers left England and moved to Pennsylvania. Some of them, like the brothers in this story, pioneered the way into the wilderness for other Quakers.*

*Unlike the Scotch Presbyterians, who were also moving to the new land of America, Quakers refused to take up arms and fight. We can imagine the brothers in this story clearing a place in the forest and planting crops in preparation for the Quaker families who would soon join them and form a new “Society of Friends,” as the Quakers called themselves.*

Candlelight flickered across the faces of the two men talking in the one-room log cabin. Although the brothers were dressed alike in the plain clothes of the Society of Friends and had a strong family **resemblance**, they nevertheless presented a marked contrast. Miles was only a little older than Henry, but his face already bore lines of care and anxiety. His shoulders drooped slightly. Restlessness mingled with grim determination in his **demeanor**. Henry, though no less determined, still **retained** the eagerness of adventure with which they had set out from England many months ago to seek freedom in a new world.

“We must rise before light tomorrow,” Miles was saying, “and go to the upland clearing. Our corn is certainly ready for its first hoeing. That was splendid seed Arrow-in-the-Dark gave thee.”

“A fine stand of corn, Miles, and the rain last week came just right for it. But there’s a long day’s work ahead. Shall we take our dinner with us? We can eat it under the pines by the brook.”

“Aye, that is well planned. As the crow flies, it cannot be more than

two miles from here, but the way we poor mortals must travel, it seems a long journey indeed. It's a lonely spot. From the bare knoll to the west, one faces a whole new world. Thou know'st the place I mean, Henry?"

"Indian Rock? Aye, 'tis there the braves hold their War Council. Night before last they met, some say a hundred strong, all in war paint and feathers. The village nearby has posted **sentries**, and this morning the men were at work strengthening the stockade, bringing in supplies to stand a **siege**, if necessary. I wish that they might see their mistake in season. Fear breeds fear. If the settlers shared our conviction against violence, the Indians would trust them, as they trust us."

"Thy faith never falters, does it, Henry?"

"Why should it falter? Our dealings with the natives have been acts of friendship, and in return they have given us assistance and helpful advice. Arrow-in-the-Dark told me about planting corn on the ridge above the frost, and what time of moon to plant, after the oak buds opened."

Miles shook his head solemnly and cast a glance toward the open doorway before he replied in a low voice, "Thomas Vinton in the village cautioned me only yesterday against going unarmed to work in the upland. He said that Arrow-in-the-Dark is old in craft and gave us that plot of ground so far from the village to lay a trap for us."

"Next moon your scalps may be dangling from Arrow-in-the-Dark's belt, and squaws will take over a corn patch planted and hoed by two white men whose bones the crows are picking. Better go armed," warned Thomas."

"Cheerful advice, that, but I don't believe a word of it. Arrow-in-the-Dark is a man of honor. I'd trust him as I'd trust thee, Miles. The villagers' problem is that they do not follow the way of peace, as we do."

Before daylight the next morning the two brothers set out, carrying in a light basket of birchbark enough simple food for their dinner. For drink they counted on sparkling brook water. Henry hoped to find the sunny slope south of Indian Rock red with wild strawberries. Arrow-in-the-Dark had showed him the white blossoms a few weeks ago.

"The Great Spirit," the old chief had told him, "causes the fruit to ripen, a gift to all his children without toil or payment. The Indian shows

his white brother where to look for them. Take what you wish. There is peace between us."

At noon, after a hard morning's hoeing, Miles and Henry sat down by the brook to eat, rested a bit, and then went to see whether the wild strawberries were ripening. They found the berries just commencing to crimson beneath the leaves.

"In another week there will be quantities. Dost thou not find their taste delicious, Miles?"

Henry clambered up the steep face of Indian Rock. Miles watched him, but stayed below, still hunting for berries, and rather soberly wondering if Indians were watching them.

During the afternoon, Miles was absorbed, and they hoed silently, side by side, anxious to finish the last rows before sunset. But hard as they toiled, they presently saw that they must return in the morning.

On their way home they heard rustling in the hazel brush along the trail, and the eerie cry of the whippoorwill across the dusk of the lowland.

"The Indians can imitate every bird and every wild creature of the forest," Miles worried. "One never knows whether what one hears is the true or the false. But methinks never were whippoorwills so plentiful as this evening. Birds, they may be, but more likely signals to surround the village."

"Miles, pray thee frighten not thyself nor me by thy talk. If the Indians rise against us, they rise. But to my thinking, a show of resistance on the part of the village will cause them to rise all the sooner."

At the edge of the settlement an armed party of villagers came out to meet the brothers.

"You've returned safely! Bad news arrived by messenger within the hour. Not far from here to the eastward, the savages are on the warpath. Many settlers have been massacred, for they were unwarned. We have word in season. Tonight we will all gather within the stockade. It's our only security. Though we be but a handful, every man is well-armed, and every man will be needed for defense."

"We do not fear the Indians," Henry said stoutly. "Arrow-in-the-Dark has always been friendly. If we arm, they will arm. Nor can we blame an Indian if he takes a leaf from our book."

"Well enough to practice peace in peace times, neighbor, but war is a grim fact. There are our women and children to think of."

"I do think of them, especially," replied Henry. "Their chances are far better without resistance on your part."

The armed villagers laughed aloud at Henry's simplemindedness.

"What would be your defense, then?"

"We will proceed as usual. Miles and I always sleep in our cabin with the latchstring out. Tomorrow we go back to finish hoeing our corn patch. And a fine stand of corn we have. If it harvests well, there will be plenty for all our people whom we expect before harvest, and plenty to share with you."

"Do you hoe under the shadow of Indian Rock without arms?" sneered one man.

"Assuredly. Why should we not?"

"You'll never live to see your corn in tassel. Braves on the warpath spare none. The more scalps, the more glory."

That evening the brothers talked again in the darkness, and the fear which prevailed in the village kept them alert for sounds of danger. But no harm came during the night, and at dawn they made ready for work again.

"We can finish ere noon, methinks," said Miles. "No need to carry food with us. But hark thee, Henry. I lay till long after midnight, pondering on this situation. It may be sheer foolhardiness to go to a lonely place unarmed. When we go to the forest for game we carry muskets. Today if we take along powderhorns and muskets the Indians will see that we are armed and fear to attack us. I would never shoot a man, red or white, being, as thou knowest, a stout believer in peace. But just bearing a weapon may serve to keep the warriors at a distance. In sooth, Henry, I like my scalp where God put it, as well as any man. So I go forth this morning, hoe on one shoulder, and musket on the other. And so I intend to return, the hoe having performed an active service and the musket a passive one."

"I think thee art wrong, Miles. The Indians will see your gun and conclude that we no longer trust in their good faith. Arrow-in-the-Dark is our friend."

"These hostile Indians may be none of his tribe. Nay, Henry, I am

older than thou. Be guided by my counsel. 'Tis folly to throw our lives away. Our strength and our usefulness we owe to the coming community."

So in the fair pink sunrise the two brothers set out to hoe their corn. In silhouette against the morning sky their tall figures strode on, Henry with a hoe, and Miles ahead with a musket over one shoulder and a hoe over the other. The younger man was sullen and sick at heart. The elder was a prey to fears he had not known when he still believed in good faith between Indians and settlers. He was a little ashamed of his **defection**, and felt that he had fallen in Henry's estimation. They went on in silent discomfort, unhappy at not being in their customary accord.

The path they took skirted the knoll called Indian Rock. Suddenly from behind thickets of hazel and alder came a rain of arrows. Miles was struck, and then Henry. Side by side they lay, not a hundred yards from their growing corn. They lay still, mercifully pierced to the heart by the sure aim of the warriors.

Later in the day, Arrow-in-the-Dark came to the cornfield to see if the brothers were safe. He found them lying in the path.

"Those were my friends you have slain," he said sternly to his tribesmen.

"Friends do not bring muskets when they work in the fields, O Chief!" replied the warriors. "They came against our Council Rock with a musket. Behold beside their bodies, the musket loaded to kill. So we killed first. Yesterday we watched also. They brought only hoes, and food. They ate berries and drank water. We let them live. Today they are dead. Peace had gone from their hearts."