

### Tales My Mother Told

When she regained consciousness, she thought for a moment she must be in an Indian Heaven -- surrounded by braves and squaws who were watching her with as much concern as their stolid faces could express. She ached from head to feet. But feeling around gingerly she decided no bones were broken. Also she found that the Indians had anointed the sorest bruises and bound her up with their homemade ointments and bandages. They signified that they would take her home -- an offer she gratefully accepted. Two big braves laid her on a stretcher of poles and skins and without any apparent effort, conveyed her gently to a frantically alarmed family. The joy of her safety outbalanced the act of disobedience!

Josephine Barber and her family lived at the edge of the settlement. Josephine later married my Uncle Will and became my beloved Aunt Jo. When Josephine was a year or so old, her father had to go away on a trip of several days' duration. His wife didn't like the idea of being alone in the cabin with a baby -- too far from neighbors for practical help in case of need. But nothing evil ever had happened and probably nothing ever would.

About eleven o'clock in the evening, little Jo was asleep in her crib, at the foot of her mother's home-made bed. Mrs. Barber had not been able to sleep, her mind being too filled with vague worries and apprehensions. When she heard the outer door into the cabin living room open and the tramp of entering feet, she was paralyzed with fright.

She crept to the door and peered through a crack.

Five Indians were standing in front of the fireplace -- two braves and three squaws. They seemed to be holding a consultation.

What did they want? Were they there to tomahawk mother and child? Tales of butchery and tortures ran through her mind. But pioneer women of those days had a grit and courage which carried through many a desperate situation.

Mrs. Barber thought she recognized one of the braves as a previous friendly trader -- and resolving to "take the bull by the horns" and at least not show her terror, she marched out into the living room and greet the intruders with

"How."

"How," they all gravely responded.

Then they made her understand by sign language that they were on a journey and would like to spend the night by the fire. They didn't want food or drink.

What could she do but assent -- and pray!

The group settled themselves with pleased grunts around the rekindled fire, and Mrs. Barber with a calm face and a tumultuous heart went back to her bed.

But not to sleep!