

A halftone-style photograph of a man standing on a stone wall overlooking a river with a bridge in the background, framed by autumn trees.

**Edward Sylvester Ellis**

*Wetzel, the Scout;  
or, The Captives  
of the Wilderness*



**Edward Sylvester Ellis**

# **Wetzel, the Scout; or, The Captives of the Wilderness**



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# WETZEL, THE SCOUT

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# CHAPTER I. ON THE OHIO.

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“Who fired that gun?” demanded Captain Parks, as he turned around and faced his terrified negro, Pompey. “Hang me, if I don’t believe it was you, Pompey.”

“Heben sabe me, massa captain; I wouldn’t do such a ting for ten fousand dollars!”

“Let me see your gun.”

The trembling African obeyed. It required but a moment for the irascible captain to ascertain that the piece had just been discharged.

“Yes, you black rascal, it was you! Take that!” he added giving his servant a tremendous kick. The latter paid not the least heed to it, and finally added, as if addressing himself,

“Come to tink soberly on de matter, I bring to mind I did have de hammer up, so as to be ready for de Injins when dey do come, and jist now I stubbed my toe, and jerked on de trigger, and I s’pose dat am what made de blasted ting go off so mighty suddint like.”

“Of course it was, you black rascal! It came within an inch of my head. If anything like that happens again, I’ll leave you here in the woods for the Indian’s tomahawk.”

“Heben sabe me, I’ll be careful.”

Captain Parks, a blunt, corpulent, middle-aged man, who had served and been wounded in the Revolutionary war, was toilsomely making his way along the banks of the Ohio, near the close of day, followed by his servant, a great fat negro, of about as much use as a common ox would have

been. He was endeavoring to reach a certain point, which had been described to him by the renowned ranger Lew Wetzel, for the purpose of being taken on board a flat-boat on its way down the Ohio. His own family and a number of friends were on board, and after seeing them embark, a goodly number of miles above, he had gone overland for some distance in order to meet a man on an important business matter. Remaining with him no longer than could be helped, he made all haste toward the rendezvous, which he had just reached at the time we introduce him to the reader.

"Yes, Pompey, here's the spot!" exclaimed Captain Parks, looking around in surprised pleasure. "There's the uprooted tree, with the shrubbery growing around its roots, that Wetzel told me to be on the look-out for."

"Yaas, and dar am de riber dat he said would be dar, too."

"The river, you blockhead? Of course, else how could we meet the flat-boat."

"Dat am so," returned Pompey, thoughtfully, and a moment later he shouted, "Ki yi? dar he comes now."

"You blasted fool, that is a canoe full of Indians! Stoop down, or they'll have our scalps in ten minutes."

The men sank down out of sight, while the canoe that had attracted their attention, made its way swiftly across the river several hundred yards above. Its inmates seemed unaware of their presence, as they advanced straight across the river without swerving to the right or left.

As Captain Parks was anxiously scanning the savages he was certain he saw a white man sitting in the stern, and

from appearances he was the guiding spirit of the forces. While scrutinizing him the negro at his elbow again spoke.

“Dar it am dis time, shuah.”

He was not mistaken this time. Coming around a bend above, the flat-boat floated slowly and silently forward under the perfect control of the current. When first seen it had the appearance of a large, square box, at either end of which was hung a lengthy oar, which now and then swayed and dipped in the water. The cabin ran the entire length, except at each end there was a small space left sufficient to contain a half-dozen men. Above these open spaces the heavy bullet-proof sides rose for five feet. A small narrow window was pierced in the sides, opening and shutting at pleasure, while a trap afforded egress to those within. The spaces at the ends communicated with the cabin by means of another small door, so that the inmates of the boat, whoever they might be, were able to pass and repass without exposing themselves to danger from an ever watchful foe without.

Viewed from the shore, not a sign of life would have been seen at first. Some invisible but skilful hand seemed to dip and sweep the long guiding oars and keep the boat in the channel. But a closer view would have shown a small, dark spot-like appearance above the gunwale at the stern, which at long intervals changed its position, and then for so long a time remained stationary as to give the impression that it was a part of the boat itself. This small object was a coon-skin cap, and it rested upon the head of him who was guiding this boat through the perils that environ it. A nearer approach, and a low hum, as though persons were

conversing in the cabin, might have been heard; but no other appearances of life would have been seen upon the outside, except the one individual referred to. He was a man young in years, yet with an expression of face and appearance of dress that showed he had much experience in backwoods life. He was rather dull, of a muscular, massive frame, and had a fine, intelligent expression of countenance. His nose was small and finely formed, his eyes black and glittering, his long black hair fell in curling masses over his shoulders, his mouth was small and expressive, and there was an appearance of compactness about his frame that showed his formidable reserve of strength and activity. He was attired in the usual hunting costume of the day—coon-skin cap, with hunting shirt, leggins and moccasins made of deer-skin. A belt passing around the waist was the repository of a couple of savage-looking knives, while a long polished rifle rested against the cabin.

Our two friends on shore waited until the flat-boat was nearly opposite, when Captain Parks arose to his feet and made a signal with his hat. The eagle eye of Wetzel quickly detected it, and swinging his own cap over his head to signify that all was right, a small sort of canoe was instantly lowered, and propelled by the skilful paddle of the renowned ranger himself, it soon reached the shore, and received the two men on board.

“Dar am a hundred fousand Ingines!” whispered Pompey in a horrified whisper. “Let’s got back to de flat-boat a little sooner dan possible.”

Wetzel looked inquiringly at the captain, who made answer:



"A canoe full, passed just before you came in sight."

"I seen 'em," returned the ranger. "There's a white man with 'em too. I'm afraid we'll have trouble from 'em afore long, too."

"Golly hebbin! let's go back home."

"Shut up, you black rascal."

A few minutes later our friends were received on board the flat-boat, and most joyfully welcomed by its occupants. It was already getting dark, so that the meeting had not occurred too soon. It singularly happened that both Captain Parks and the flat-boat were delayed several hours in reaching the appointed spot.

There were a dozen upon the boat beside Wetzel, including the females of Stuart, Kingman and Parks, and several young, enterprising men.

Stuart was a sturdy, middle-aged farmer, who had first proposed this undertaking, and was the leading spirit of the enterprise. He was a corpulent, good-natured man, and was accompanied by his wife, and a meek, blue-eyed daughter of eighteen or twenty years. Kingman was a relative of Stuart's, was of about the same age, and of the same pleasant, social disposition. His only child was a son, just verging into manhood, who had hopefully joined the little expedition. The third mentioned was Parks, our first acquaintance, who was about forty years of age, with a heavy grizzly beard and bushy hair, and of so irascible a disposition that he had gained the name of the "Mad Captain." He was childless, having lost his only son in battle some years before.

The party at the time we introduce them to the notice of the reader, were engaged over their evening meal, and thus the hunter Wetzel was undisturbed by the presence of any of them.

Suddenly, like the flash of a demon's eye, a bright spot of fire flamed from the inky blackness of the western shore, the sharp crack of a rifle burst upon the night air, its sullen echoes rolling far up and down the river. Not a motion or word on the flat-boat betrayed that the sound of a rifle had been heard. Wetzel was standing as usual, resting quietly on the oar, and heard the whizz of the bullet as it skimmed over the boat in front of him. Not the least discomfited, he neither spoke nor changed his position at the startling sound. A deliberate half-turning of the head and an apparently casual glance at the shore from which the shot had come, were all that betokened his knowledge of the threatened danger. There was little need of cautioning the inmates, as they were well aware of the dangers by which they were surrounded. Around Wetzel stood Kingman and Parks, while at the opposite end were young Kingman and a friend by the name of Russel. The females remained below.

The night was one of those clear, beautiful ones, when the silence is so perfect that the dark forest seems to have a deep, sullen, and almost inaudible roar, and there is soft music in the hum of the myriads of insects in the air. As the moonlight rested upon the youthful, but already bronzed face of the brave Wetzel, it disclosed one of no ordinary intelligence.

There is a magic power in the moonlight, when it rests like a silver veil upon the countenance, softening and

mellowing the outlines, until every feature glows with a radiant mildness.

And, when a few moments later, Irene Stuart made her appearance, her face was of surpassing beauty. She was rather below the medium size, of a light delicate frame. As she emerged from below a heavy shawl enveloped her, concealing her faultless form to the shoulders. There was no covering for the head, and her dark clustering hair gathered loosely behind, fell in a black mass over her shoulders. The moonlight gave to the mild blue eyes a languid softness, and the whiteness of the face seemed increased by the same enchanting veil. The night journey was continued in safety, and the next day the wished-for settlement was reached. Here they were all received with open arms, and were speedily incorporated into the settlement proper.

The men had come for the purpose of carving out new homes for themselves in this great wilderness, and they went to work with the determination to do so. By mutual assistance, cabins for all were soon erected, and a large portion of the forest cleared and put under cultivation.

Matters progressed well until, after the lapse of a few months, rumors reached the settlement of a frightful increase of the outrages upon the part of the savages. The menacing danger to the settlement finally assumed such a form that stockades were erected and the place put in a state of defense.

A month or two passed thus, until the succeeding spring, when Wetzel arrived at the settlement with a call for twenty men to join a company that were going to march into the

Indian country for the purpose of teaching them that the whites could not be murdered with impunity.

The desired twenty at once responded to the call. Among these were Mad Captain Parks, Kingman, Stuart, and others who were in the flat-boat. Wetzel was to be the leader until they reached the appointed rendezvous, a number of miles up the river, when the whole was to be placed under the command of Col. Sandford, a man who had experienced considerable Indian fighting. The entire force was to number two hundred and fifty, and it was confidently hoped that a summary check would be put to the outrages that were becoming frightfully common along the frontier.

At the appointed time the whole two hundred and fifty gathered at Fort Lafayette (the one of ancient days) and with high hopes they set out for the Indian town of Lushne, under the lead of the gallant Colonel Sandford.

To reach this, it was necessary to cross a large stream—a tributary of the Ohio. This was done in safety, and late one night they encamped within a comparatively short distance of the Indian town. A greater number of sentinels were put on duty, and the rest lay down to be ready for the “tug of war” that they confidently counted on for the morrow.

In spite of the extraordinary precautions that were taken the picket line was broken through, and an overwhelming body of Indians poured into the camp. The officers endeavored to rally them; but Colonel Sandford was almost instantly shot, and the panic become complete.

Many of the men performed prodigies of valor. Wetzel raged like a madman; but the men broke, and were scattered like chaff, and were hewn down as they ran.

Finding it was all useless to attempt to stay the tide, Wetzel, Captain Parks and Kingman attempted to save themselves. The two former successfully made their escape in the darkness, but the latter was wounded, and crawled for safety beneath a cluster of bushes. Here he lay all night, while the dreadful carnival went on. He caught sight of the shadowy forms rushing to and fro, heard the continual shrieks of the victims, and now and then the death yell of some over-venturesome Indian. He expected every moment to be discovered, and to share the fate of his companions.

When the morning finally dawned, the tumult died away, and overpowered by his exhaustion he fell asleep. When he awoke the day was well advanced. As he regained his consciousness he looked about him; but no person was visible. The massacre was finished.

Kingman crawled to a brook near by and quenched his thirst, and then made his way back again, seeing no prospect for him but to lie there and perish, or suffer a death of violence from the hands of the first one who should discover him.

He lay there all day. At nightfall he was startled by the appearance of a little whiffit of a dog directly in front of him. Knowing that some one else must be close at hand, he managed to lure the brute to him, when he cut his throat from ear to ear.

"There," he muttered, as he wiped the blood from his hands, "you can't betray my hiding place.—sh!"

Just then he looked up and saw the renegade Johnson but a few rods away, and apparently looking for something.