

ordered it, but, enraged at the treachery of the troopers, he and all with him were willing to die in order to secure reprisal. On the first fire of the Indians, the whites, without returning the volley, fled in great consternation, pursued by about twenty-five savages, until nightfall ended the chase. But nightfall did not end the rout. The volunteers, haunted by the genius of fear, dashed through their own impregnable camp, leaving everything behind them, plunging madly through swamps and creeks till they reached Dixon's, twenty-five miles away, where they straggled in for the next twenty hours. Many of them did not stop there, but kept on at a keen gallop till they reached their own firesides, fifty or more miles further, carrying the report that Black Hawk and two thousand blood-thirsty warriors were sweeping all northern Illinois with the besom of destruction. The white casualties in this ill-starred foray amounted to eleven killed, while the Indians lost the two spies and but one of the flag-bearers, who had been treacherously shot in Stillman's camp — his companions owing their lives to the fleetness of their ponies.

The flight of Stillman's corps was wholly inexcusable, It should, in any event, have stopped at the camp, which was easily defensible.' Stillman, no doubt, exerted himself to his utmost to rally his men, but they lacked discipline and that experience which gives soldiers confidence in their officers and each other. Their worst fault was their dishonorable treatment of bearers of a flag of truce, a symbol which few savage tribes disregard. But for this act of treachery, the Black Hawk War would have been a bloodless demonstration. Unfortunately for our own good name, this violation of the rules of war was more than once repeated by the Americans during the ensuing contest.

¹ "I never was so surprised, in all the fighting I have seen — knowing, too, that the Americans, generally, shoot well — as I was to see this army of several hundreds, retreating without showing fight, and passing immediately through this encampment. I did think that they intended to halt here, or the situation would have forbidden attack by my party, if their number had not exceeded half mine, as we would have been compelled to take the open prairie, whilst they could have picked trees to shield themselves from our fire."— *Autobiography*, p. 122.