



The Windam Frogs

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North American

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On a cloudy night in July, 1758, the people of Windham, Connecticut, were awakened by screams and shrill voices. Some sprang up and looked to the priming of their muskets, for they were sure that the Indians were coming; others vowed that the voices were those of witches or devils, flying overhead; a few ran into the streets with knives and fire-arms, while others fastened their windows and prayerfully shrank under the bedclothes. A notorious reprobate was heard blubbering for a Bible, and a lawyer offered half of all the money that he had made dishonestly to any charity if his neighbors would guarantee to preserve his life until morning.

All night the greatest alarm prevailed. At early dawn an armed party climbed the hill to the eastward, and seeing no sign of Indians, or other invaders, returned to give comfort to their friends. A contest for office was waging at that period between two lawyers, Colonel Dyer and Mr. Elderkin, and sundry of the people vowed that they had heard a challenging yell of "Colonel Dyer! Colonel Dyer!" answered by a guttural defiance of "Elderkin, too! Elderkin, too!" Next day the reason of it all came out: A pond having been emptied by drought, the frogs that had lived there emigrated by common consent to a ditch nearer the town, and on arriving there had apparently fought for its possession, for many lay dead on the bank. The night was still and the voices of the contestants sounded clearly into the village, the piping of the smaller being construed into "Colonel Dyer," and the grumble of the bull-frogs into "Elderkin, too." The "frog scare" was a subject of pleasantry directed against Windham for years afterward.

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