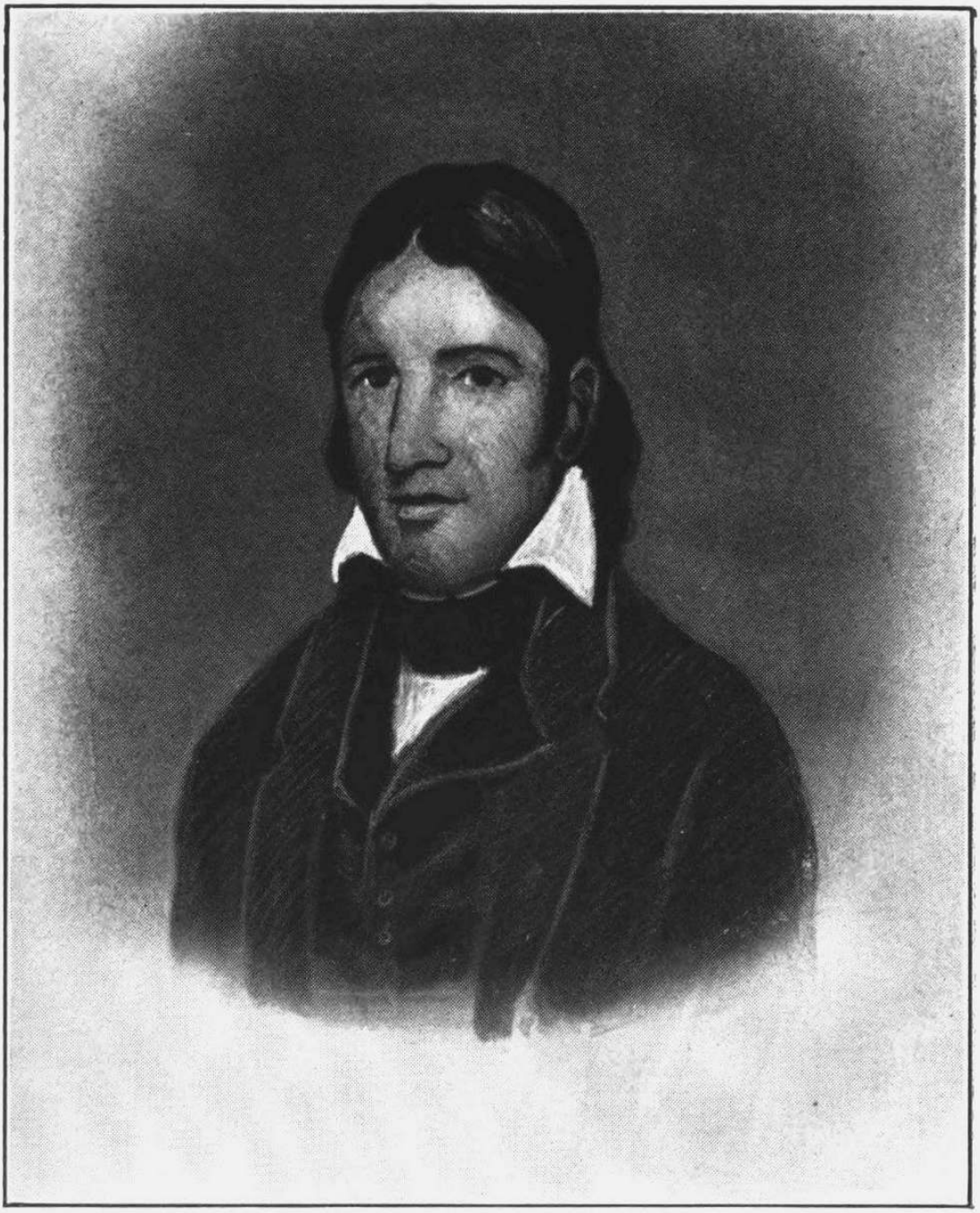
Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library

THE · STORY · OF DAVID CROCKETT



David Crockett

FAMOUS AMERICANS

FOR YOUNG READERS

THE·STORY·OF DAVID CROCKETT

BY

JANE CORBY

BARSE & HOPKINS

NEW YORK N.Y. NEWARK N.J.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

PREFACE

"Be sure you are right, then go ahead," was Davy Crockett's famous motto. Davy himself lived up to it to the best of his ability, although in those rough-and-ready pioneer days it was not always easy to discover what was "right." Crockett was born in East Tennessee, over a century ago, when the country was little more than a wilderness. His father was a tavern keeper, and the boy early came in contact with the roving characters who passed by. He was bound out to a cattle drover headed for Virginia, and as a boy of twelve made his way back home across hundreds of miles of wild country. He grew up as a crack shot and a fearless hunter, either of wild game or of Indians. He was elected to Congress, where he made a picturesque figure, but soon returned to the frontier, his natural habitat. Then he went down to Texas to help that State achieve its independence. The whole world is familiar with the story of the Alamo—how a handful of men braved the Mexican Army until the last defender was slain. One of the very last to fall was Davy Crockett—facing the enemy to the last.

PREFACE

No hero in fiction ever led a more colorful life—as the present writer shows. The story is replete with adventure from first to last, but is founded closely on fact.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE STORY OF DAVID CROCKETT

I

THE TAVERN KEEPER'S SON

"Hi, there, you old varmint! Step up there—get him, Shep, get him!"

Bellowing commands alternately to the straggling members of his half-wild herd of cattle and the two shaggy dogs that yelped and darted in and out among the slow-moving hoofs, an elderly Dutchman tramped along a lonely forest road in the Tennessee Mountains, his own outcries, the hoofbeats of the cattle and the barking of the dogs breaking into the dense stillness of the late autumn twilight.

Pausing a moment to wipe his brow after topping a steep rise in the road, the drover's eye was caught by the figure of a young lad, twelve years old or thereabouts, perched in the fork of a nearby tree. The old birds' nest

which he had been investigating swung idly in the chilly wind, while he gave the full attention of eyes and ears to the thundering herd.

"Hi, son! Give a hand here, will you?" called the old man. Without a word, and with the agility of a panther, the boy leaped to the ground and, seizing a stout stick, wielded it to such effect that he soon had the herd going at a lively trot.

"John Crockett's place around here?" inquired the drover, breathing heavily in the effort to keep up with the light-footed lad.

"Yonder," answered the boy, pointing in a direction at right angles to the road they were traveling. A faint drift of blue smoke was just visible above the close trees.

"You his boy?" continued the Dutchman, eyeing with approval the wiry little figure stepping briskly along the rough road. The boy nodded.

"Fifth," he said shortly.

"Can you tell me the year you were born?" went on the drover, jovially.

"In 1786," returned the boy, "on August 17th."

"And what do they call you?" pursued the

old man, with an interest that betokened more than a desire to make conversation.

"Davy," answered the youngster, with no undue civility.

Observing that he resented his questioning, the Dutchman, who was not overfond of talk himself, lapsed into silence, except for an occasional: "Hi—hi, there." The minutes slipped by as the road uncurled itself under the hurrying feet of the odd cavalcade.

"We're 'most there," remarked the boy suddenly, as an abrupt turn in the road appeared. In a moment the stragglers of the herd had rounded the curve, with a smart reminder or two from Davy's stick, and a rough cabin could be seen just ahead through the deepening gloom. It was larger than log cabins were commonly built, but a rude-looking place nevertheless, with lofty pines shadowing the front door and crowding upon it from the rear, except for a distance of a stone's throw that had been cleared for a bit of planting. Nearby stood a long shed, open on one side, and apparently designed for the shelter of horses or cattle, for a couple of teamsters were to be made out moving among the

shadows, caring for their horses and arranging the wagons.

At the sound of trampling hoofs, a brawny figure appeared at the cabin door, outlined against the light from a roaring fire which could be seen beyond the doorway.

"Howdy, stranger," boomed the man, as the drover approached.

"Welcome to Crockett's Tavern. Rough and ready, that we are, stranger, and our vittles are plain—but hearty. Eh—Davy, lad," catching sight of his son, "it's a stout stick I have for you if you don't turn your hand before supper. Help the men there to put up their horses—drive in the cattle for the gentleman—split up a log or two—sure, the fire's goin' out this minute," and as small Davy turned obediently to carry out these numerous commands, the tavern keeper added to his newly-arrived guest: "Make the fur fly—that's the way to handle the young lads, eh?"

"Keep them on the jump," agreed the drover, making a movement toward following Davy, who was driving the cattle toward the shed.

"Leave him be, leave him be," cried the father, "he'll be tendin' them right enough. Inside with you, Mr. ——"

"Siler," supplied the Dutchman, "Jacob Siler, bound for Rockbridge, in the State of Virginia." He entered the cabin as he spoke and made straight for the fire, where he threw himself down on a pile of bearskins. With his wet and muddy boots stretched out to the blaze, and heaving a sigh of deep contentment, he drew a long, curved pipe from beneath his homespun jacket, together with a pouch of deerskin. His pipe filled, the weary traveler leaned against the log wall, and gazed about the room, through half-shut eyes, while he puffed with evident enjoyment the tobacco smoke forming thick rings about his head.

The room about which his gaze wandered was rough and bare, but in contrast with the fast gathering darkness and chill wind outside it seemed a very haven of comfort to the tired drover. The blazing pitch-pine on the rude hearth (showing, contrary to the tavern keeper's assertion, no immediate sign of being burned out) sent clouds of aromatic smoke eddying up to the chimney hole. A huge pot-

ful of boiling meat swung from the blackened crane and mingled its savory odor with the smell of potatoes, bursting their jackets in the bubbling water of the pot alongside it. At the far end of the room a young girl was busily engaged about a long table—a rough slab resting on log supports that were deeply embedded in the hard-trodden earth that formed the floor.

Not many minutes had passed before a loud jangling resounded just outside the door, apparently the summons to the evening meal, for all hands at once trooped in. Without turning their eyes to the figure beside the fire, they lost no time in bestowing themselves on the benches around the table. Nor did the old drover himself wait for further summons. Knocking the ashes from his pipe and laying it carefully on a ledge formed by the intersection of two logs, he stamped heavily across the room and took a place at the table.

"Howdy," said the man nearest him. "Howdy," replied the Dutchman, and seizing the horn-handled knife and fork before him, he prepared to make an onslaught on the heaping wooden platterful of meat that was making

the rounds. Not a word was spoken throughout the meal, except for an occasional demand on the tavern keeper's wife, who was busy supplying the guests, for "another load of journey cake," or more " 'taters." The "journey cake," as the corn-bread was called, disappeared as fast as the loaves were brought in from the little lean-to beyond the main room, and the men pounced upon the steaming potatoes and chunks of meat as if they were starving, and indeed their long day of hard going along the rough road had reduced them to a state very like famishing.

Little Davy at one end, between a sister and a brother, tackled the food as it went the rounds with unabated vigor, until a dig from his sister's elbow warned him that his share of the evening meal had been exhausted. Rough mountaineers and roving wagoners made terrific inroads on the food that John Crockett was able to supply for his table, and the charges varying from fifteen cents to "two bits" scarcely covered the cost of preparation. Only too well the tavern keeper's family realized the difficulty of feeding many mouths.

With a sigh Davy relinquished his seat at

the table and withdrew to a corner by the fire, where he busied himself with piling on fresh logs and raking the embers till they stirred into leaping flames. Though he did not dream of such a thing, Davy had eaten his last evening meal beneath his father's roof for many weary weeks to come.

II

DAVY SEES A NEW WORLD

The morning brought a threat of rain, that overhung the woods with somber menace.

"Up, Davy lad, stir yourself!" cried the tavern keeper, prodding the sleeping boy with his foot none too gently. Davy was awake instantly, as much because that is the way a wilderness boy wakes all at once, as because his father's boot was brought into action. In the shed outside, the teamsters were already busy with their horses, and Davy lent a willing enough hand. As he buckled on the harness, he caught sight of his father in earnest talk with the drover of the night before, and scraps of the conversation came to his ears.

"There's a likely boy," the Dutchman Siler was saying. "I need a lively young fellow like that to keep that there wild herd of mine on the road."

"Where you aimin' to go?" inquired Davy's father.

"Rockbridge, Virginia," answered the

drover. "I'm makin' a move from Knox County."

"Let's see," observed the tavern keeper, "that there Rockbridge is somewhere around the Natural Bridge, ain't it?"

"About three mile one side of it," replied Siler. "Four hundred mile, all told, from here."

"The lad's never been away from home," Davy's father remarked. "He don't know much about travelin'—on foot too."

Davy's heart gave a sudden sink, and a lump came into his throat. So they were planning to send him away!

But with the bowl of cornmeal mush and milk that constituted his breakfast, Davy's gloomy foreboding began to lighten. After all, he loved the forest, and he had never asked anything better than to roam all day, tracking the gray squirrel or the red fox. Nor had he failed to note the fine rifle that the drover had carried with him the night before. He knew he could not carry the rifle himself, for it was too heavy, but he knew how to shoot, and perhaps the old Dutchman would let him take a shot at a deer or a bear, if they met

one. Davy had never shot anything bigger than a squirrel as yet, and that not more than a half dozen times, for it was no easy task for a small boy to handle a hunter's rifle, made from an iron bar weighing somewhere around fifteen pounds. The more he thought about it, the more convinced Davy became that he would get a chance to shoot big game on this very trip, and his spirits rose accordingly. By the time he was standing before the tavern door, waving a last good-bye to his mother and his sisters and brothers, his heart was swelling with self-importance and confidence. A great world was about to open before him, the world of adventure and travel, and he swung off down the road behind the straggling cattle with his head held high, and his moccasined feet striding forward with the easy, rapid gait of the woodsman.

The drover left the boy strictly alone; he was not talkative and the pace which Davy set was not conducive to the art of conversation. Old Siler kept it up for a few miles, then he called a halt.

"Now there, young fellow," he panted at last, "just take it a bit easier, can't you? Lots

of fine scenery around here. I kind of hate to miss it by going too fast."

After that the little procession moved more slowly, the cattle going at a steady trot, and kept up to the mark by Davy's liberal use of a stick. By and by his movements became entirely mechanical, he put several yards between himself and the drover, and gave himself over to enjoying the charm of the wilderness. He felt quite like an explorer.

"Hi, lad," called the drover, some time later, "I reckon we could do with a bite of food. Keep a lookout for a spring or a clear brook and we'll rest a bit."

It was not long before Davy's sharp hearing caught the tinkle of a stream, and he called the attention of the drover to it; whereupon the two made their way among the trees and underbrush and found a little rippling brook where they could drink long refreshing draughts. They sat down upon the bank of the stream, and the Dutchman took pieces of dried venison from his deerskin pouch, dividing it with Davy. It was not very appetizing food, but there was little time to be wasted in hunting for fresh game, preparing it and cook-

ing it over a fire, so they had to make the best of what they had. As soon as the two travelers had taken the edge from their hunger, they set themselves to rounding up the cattle again, and resumed their steady march along the rough highway. Now a little drizzling rain began to fall, and as the afternoon wore on the wind rose, playing a melancholy air among the bare, shifting branches.

When they reached a small open space among the trees, the drover halted the procession. "I reckon we've found our night's lodging, Davy," he remarked. "I see a pile of rocks yonder that ought to give us a sort of shelter for the night."

They drove the cattle into the little natural yard formed by the ring of trees, and left them to their own devices. They could pick up enough sustenance from the half-dead grass, the drover knew, to keep up their endurance, and instinct would warn them to huddle together when darkness fell. The old man then sought shelter for the boy and himself, but the rocky hillside which formed one side of the open space was singularly barren of any overhanging ledge.

"I'll get some brush and we'll have a fire," Davy said, confidently. But he was doomed to disappointment. The rain had been falling for several hours, and the leafless trees had been no protection to the ground-covering of brush and dead wood.

The dried venison served again for a meal, which was shared by the dogs, and then, weary beyond regard for the wet, Davy and his employer cast themselves upon the ground. Only the dogs, nestling close, provided them with a little warmth. Davy's cheek was pressed against a rough, shaggy coat; he could feel the dog breathing and it gave him a sense of security and comfort. He lay listening to the night sounds for a few minutes; then his walk of twenty miles took its toll, and he dropped fast asleep.

Day broke brilliantly, as it is apt to do when there is frost upon the air. At the first sign of dawn, the drover was up, and while he fumbled for the dried venison in his pouch he roused Davy, who was very weary still. A drink of cool water from a nearby spring, and several pieces of the dried meat, however, put him in fine fettle. He was one day

nearer his journey's end, he reflected, and it was not raining.

Except for this fact, the day was very like the one preceding. Tramp, tramp, over endless hillocks and broken boughs in the road, through low marshland where the cattle trampled the mire until it was knee-deep by the time Davy and the drover had to cross, the little procession wound its way. No wayfarers were passed along the road; only the red fox and the soft-eyed deer watched them go, startled in their hiding-places by the occasional bellow of one of the cattle, by the dogs' barking, or the shouts of old Siler and Davy, when one of the animals became contrary.

Toward night, the drover paused and went forward into a thicket that fringed the road at that point.

"Here, lad," he called to Davy, " 'pears like that's an abandoned cabin, don't it? Reckon we'll camp here for the night, boy. T'ain't often we'll find a spot just like this, and last night wa'n't none too comfortable."

Together they urged the cattle over the tangled underbrush, and turned them loose in what had been the dooryard of the cabin.

Then they started to inspect their own domain. That took very little time, for the cabin consisted of one small room, without furniture of any kind. There was, however, a fireplace at one end, and Davy's eyes twinkled in anticipation of the cozy warmth they would soon enjoy.

"A bite of fresh game would taste good tonight, wouldn't it?" observed the drover, looking at the empty hearth. "You just scuttle around a bit, Davy, and get the fire going, and I'll see what the woods can offer us in the way of supper."

Rifle in hand Siler departed, and Davy left alone went out for dry leaves and the other needfuls for a fire. Soon the drover came back bearing a wild turkey gobbler, and Davy eagerly searched for a forked stick, begging for the boon of being allowed to hold it over the fire.

It was a fine fat gobbler, and as it spluttered over the flames it gave out an aroma that nearly caused hungry Davy to seize it as it was, half cooked, and sink his teeth into its appetizing frame. It was not the first time that he had cooked his own food out in the woods.

"Looks like that gobbler's done to a turn,"

remarked the Dutchman, after what seemed an interminable time, and Davy drew it back, laying it upon a bed of fresh leaves which he had prepared nearby. With his long hunting knife, the drover proceeded to cut the bird into edible proportions, and Davy's teeth sank into the tender, juicy flesh with rapturous joy, the instant he had a piece in his hand. For several minutes there was silence in the cabin, while the two travelers gave themselves up to the full enjoyment of fine food after a ten-mile tramp in the frosty air.

After that the days and the nights went by in much the same fashion. The drover's party managed to make fifteen or twenty miles a day, for the most part—days that were varied chiefly by the amount of food obtainable and by the state of the weather. Frequently there were streams to be forded, often the wind was sharp; there were many dreary rains and the wilderness road was rough and often muddy. It was with relief, therefore, that Davy and old Siler drew up at last at a lonely cabin, after twenty-five days of trudging and struggle. They were made welcome by a man named Hartley, who was Siler's father-in-law,

and Davy was at first disposed to forget the future in the joy of being certain of food and rest.

"You're a good lad, Davy," Mr. Siler told him one day soon after they arrived. "I reckon I've treated you kind of square, haven't I, boy?"

Davy nodded an affirmative. The Dutchman had been kind to him from the very beginning, and he was not ungrateful.

"Well then," the old man pursued, "I reckon you've found as good a place as any between here and Knoxville. I suppose you'll be glad to be staying, now that you're here, and your father's expecting it, as you know. Here's something for your trouble."

Davy took the five dollars that the drover held out to him, but his heart was troubled. He had expected to go home again as soon as they reached Virginia, and now he was being asked to stay where he was. Moreover, his father seemed to have intended it, and Davy had been taught obedience, frequently by the aid of a hickory stick. He said nothing, therefore, about going home, but remained at the Hartley cabin, helping with the cattle and do-

ing odd chores, of which there were plenty. But he did not grow accustomed to his absence from home; he missed the companionship of his brothers, and the rough-and-tumble life of the tavern. Five weeks passed in this way, and then suddenly luck came rumbling up the road, in the shape of three wagons loaded with merchandise, and driven by a man named Dunn and his two sons. David recognized Dunn, he had traveled past his father's tavern before this, and often stopped there for the night. Slipping away from the two boys with whom he had been playing along the road, he followed the wagons until a bend in the road hid them from the Hartley cabin. Then he hailed the elder Dunn.

"Goin' my way?" he called airily, appearing suddenly almost under the horses' feet. Dunn reined in sharply.

"Whoa there!" to the not-unwilling horses. Then, after a moment's scrutiny of the small boy in the road:

"Davy Crockett—or I'm a liar!" he cried, good-naturedly. "How'd you come here, Davy? Folks moved?"

"No," exclaimed the boy. "I was a-helpin'

of a drover with his cattle. He lives back there," pointing to the bend in the road. "I wish I could go back home, though."

"What's the matter—don't he treat you right?" asked the kind-hearted Mr. Dunn.

Davy hastened to reassure him on the point. "Oh, he's kind," he said, "but I've been wondering what they're doin' up home."

"Well, I'm bound for Knoxville," Mr. Dunn remarked. "We're spending the night about seven miles along the road here. Now, in case there was a young lad as wanted to be reaching Crockett's Tavern, it would be a mighty good thing for him if he caught up with us before daylight to-morrow, because he could follow along with these here wagons."

III

THE WAY HOME

It was Sunday evening, and Davy found the whole family out when he returned to the Hartley cabin. He was glad of that, for his heart beat so high that he was sure anyone observing him must suspect something.

"I'll get to bed," he decided at once, "and maybe get my sleepin' done before it's time to start." But for a long time his busy mind forbade sleep.

Then he heard the family returning, and he lay, pretending sleep, long after they had retired for the night. He listened sharply for the heavy breathing that would tell him when the others were wrapped in slumber.

At last it reached his ears—the rhythmic rise and fall of breath that betokened profound sleep. Davy's hour had come! Cautious as a cat, he crept across the loft, on all fours. Stealthily he began to descend the ladder, his feet, in their soft moccasins, as soundless as his bare hands.

With nerveless fingers Davy undid the bar that held the door, opened it a mere crack and squeezed his slender body through, backward, with his gaze intent on the interior of the cabin. In a moment more he had drawn the door shut, and his breath came with sharp relief as he faced about—to confront a world white with snow. The air was filled with the whirling flakes, borne on a wintry gale, and already the trees and bushes were weighted with their load of clinging snow. Davy's feet were buried above the ankle, but it never occurred to him to turn back; he covered his hands as well as he could with the folds of his leathern shirt, and bending his head, stepped out bravely in the direction of the big road. It was a half mile from the cabin to the highway, and in the darkness of the storm there was not a track of any kind visible.

"Now to find the road," he thought confidently. That was no easy matter, even for a boy who had been reared in a practically trackless wilderness. The heavy snowfall had obscured every familiar landmark, but, as he noted with satisfaction:

"This here snow is sure fillin' up my foot-

prints fast. Won't the folks be surprised when they wake up in the mornin' and find me gone, without ever a mark to show which way I went?"

It did not take sharp-sighted Davy very long to discover where the main highway wound its tortuous way among the trees, for the opening it made between the mighty trunks told the forest boy where it lay. He turned in the direction the wagons had taken a few hours before and pushed on through the deepening snow.

The howl of a distant wolf sounded through the forest, but it was far away, Davy knew. He shook his fist in the direction of the sound, and wished aloud for the Dutchman's rifle. But after a while the cold began to creep up from his toes, along his sturdy legs, up, up, numbing his senses and dulling his brain. He no longer thought of the cabin he had left, nor his home, still hundreds of miles away, across the dreadful wilderness; all his strength was gathered into one burning determination—to keep at bay the creeping cold until he should reach the camp of the Dunns. His eyes glazed under the strain of keeping the road clearly

before him; he stumbled and fell more than once, but his determination never wavered. On he trudged—on—on——

"Well, young feller," boomed the hearty voice of old Dunn, as Davy rounded a turn in the road and almost stumbled over the wagoner, who was feeding his horses close to the door of a wayside cabin. Davy's answer was a groan as he toppled forward in the snow. The old man picked him out of the drift, where he lay almost buried, for the damp whiteness was knee-deep by now. Within the cabin there was a fire and warm food, presided over by a motherly woman who had taken care of the Dunns for the night.

"Oh, the poor lamb!" she cried at the sight of little Davy's limp form. "Here, Jack," to one of her own children, "heat some milk while I rub his poor hands and feet."

The heat and the kindly ministrations of the household soon had their effect.

"Let me go!" cried Davy, suddenly sitting up. "Oh, has Mr. Dunn gone?" wildly struggling to free himself from the buffalo robe with which he had been covered.

"The Dunns are outside, getting the teams

ready," answered the woman. "Here now, take it easy. Rest a bit while you can and drink this good hot milk."

"Well, lad, are you most ready?" inquired the old man, appearing in the cabin door as Davy was swallowing the last of the food with which he had been supplied. Without a word, the boy thrust aside the wooden platter which had served as his plate, and stuffing a last chunk of corn-bread into his mouth, he pulled on his beaver-skin cap.

For a hundred miles Davy moved on with the wagons, sometimes beneath sunny skies that made the world glaringly white, sometimes through sleet and driving storms that numbed the hardened wagoners no less than the small boy. But progress was slow.

"I could go twice as fast—if I didn't have to wait for the wagons," Davy put in one day, as a feeler, to Mr. Dunn.

"Is it daft ye've gone, Davy?" inquired the old man solicitously.

"I'm wastin' a good deal of time, Mr. Dunn," answered the boy, "and it ain't like

I was any use to you. I'm sure obliged for all you've done for me, but I would like to be gettin' home."

"And now, what would your father be thinkin' of me, if I let you go traipsin' off through the wilderness alone?" demanded his benefactor. "Me, that's been tryin' to bring you home safe, as a favor to a good friend?"

But Davy was not to be dissuaded. He was "sure anxious to get home again," he repeated to all the Dunns' arguments, and at last, seeing that there was no holding the boy, and realizing that he would go without permission if he could not go with it, they agreed to let him start off on the following morning. Davy was jubilant; he reiterated all through the rest of the day his thanks for the kindness he had received at the hands of the Dunns. Next morning his determination was unshaken, and taking the deerskin pouch filled with dried venison which his friends offered him, he set out on his solitary journey.

It was true that he could move twice as fast when he did not have to wait for the wagons; before he had been walking very long he found that they had been blotted, completely, from

the landscape. The world seemed suddenly empty.

"Now, look a-here, Davy Crockett," he hastily adjured himself, "you've got to fight your way home; you just keep a stiff upper lip and go like a good feller."

Go he did, after that, and his courage held out for several hours. But the cold and the prolonged exertion began to have its effect, late in the afternoon, and, at the sound of a rushing river, Davy's heart sank.

" 'Pears like I'll have to fight that old wildcat of a river," he thought, and shivered in anticipation. But before many minutes had passed, a horse and rider came into view, leading another horse, riderless but saddled and bridled.

"Howdy, straggler," called the horseman cheerily.

"The best o' luck to you," cried Davy, his eyes on the extra horse.

"Where's the rest of yo're party?" inquired the man, curiously, for small boys of twelve roaming the winter forest were an uncommon sight.

"I'm just Davy Crockett; I'm goin' home,"

explained the boy, adding that his father kept a tavern between Jonesboro and Knoxville.

"'Way from out that-a-way!" exclaimed the stranger. "Wall, I'll be shot! I'm a-goin' yo're road, sonny," he said kindly, "and if yuh cared now, to avail yo'self of that 'ar horse, yo're quite welcome."

Davy needed no second hint. He mounted the extra horse, his head held high, and proudly seized the reins. After that the journey was pleasantly smooth and uneventful, the horses moving along steadily at a rapid walk. Davy learned that his benefactor had been down to Virginia to see some stock. He was very willing to have a traveling companion on the way back, and as he spun yarns about his adventures the time passed swiftly. Several days had slipped by when he finally announced that their roads were about to part.

"But," he added, "I reckon you can find yo're way hereabouts purty well. Yo're old man's place is only about fifteen mile yonder."

At the crossroads Davy thanked his companion, slipped to the ground, and patted his horse's nose. Then he turned up his own road, and without a backward glance ran like a

young deer. He reached his father's cabin that night.

"Well, Davy, you back?" was John Crockett's greeting. "Shake a leg there and bring in some wood."

IV

DAVY TAKES TO FLIGHT

With the beginning of the next brief school term, Davy and his brothers were on hand.

The schoolhouse, which they entered, puffing lustily, a moment later, was a rude cabin with a big fireplace. The floor was the solid earth, the benches were rough slabs of wood with wooden stakes for legs. A huge table formed by a great slab three feet wide and resting on hickory pegs stretched across the room, and afforded space for the scholars to try their hand at writing, when it chanced that the pens of goose quills cut into shape by the master, a sufficient quantity of poor ink, and some paper were all available at the same time.

With much shuffling and giggling the boys scuttled into place.

"Jim Aiken," began the schoolmaster, calling the roll. As his name was called, each boy responded by rising. Davy Crockett's name was very near the head of the list; Davy was

always quick to respond. This morning, however, as he started to rise swiftly to his feet, one of his ankles was caught dexterously by a lean bare foot thrust out from behind. He was thrown completely off his balance, and swung ignominiously forward into a row of smaller boys, who promptly protested by vigorous struggles and loud cries.

"Silence!" roared Kitchen, laying his stick to right and left without discrimination. When order had been thus restored, Davy was commanded to step forward.

Blue eyes resentful, Davy approached as bidden.

"I'll teach you to be playing your tricks on me," said the master, in a cold fury, and without delay he proceeded to "teach" Davy, by means of the birch rod applied vigorously to his quivering shoulders. The class was delighted. Any suffering which did not directly concern these forest lads was to be taken in the nature of a show, and they enjoyed the present performance immensely, especially when Davy was finally thrown into a corner, to stand there the rest of the morning with his face to the wall. From the tail of his eye the

angry lad observed the malicious grin on the face of his enemy, Job Higgins. His was the treacherous foot that had sent Davy sprawling across the benches, and Davy's heart smoldered within him as he stood in his ignoble position throughout the long morning.

All day Davy nursed his wrath, and when school was dismissed he was first out of the door, and off down the road like a streak. He was too wary to attempt revenge within sight of the schoolhouse, and he was well out of earshot of the master before he ambushed himself in a thicket.

"The old turkey-cock will be goin' by in a minute," he exulted.

Sure enough, it was but a few minutes before he caught sight of Job Higgins, strutting along the road, brimful of joy on account of the trouble he had given to Davy Crockett. Several smaller boys accompanied him, and he was boasting loudly of what he was going to do to "that little weasel, Crockett," on the morrow. Unsuspecting, he came on, till he was opposite Davy's hiding place, when, with a howl that struck terror to the heart of his enemy, Davy leaped from the thicket like a

catamount, landing square on the big boy's shoulders. Teeth, nails, agile heels and sturdy fists dug relentlessly into his opponent, while Davy proceeded to take all desire for "strut-tin' " out of him. The small boys looked on, applauding Davy's efforts.

"Go it, Davy!" they shrieked delightedly. "Smash his nose!"

"Lemme go!" cried the bully as Davy promptly acted upon the advice of his audience. "Aw—lemme up," for Davy now had his victim prostrate on the ground, and was pummeling his head with all the strength of his furious young fists.

"Had 'nuff?" gasped the victor, between blows.

" 'Nuff," whined the big boy, and Davy, panting from his exertions, but full of the glory of victory, rose to his feet and stood breathing hard, while the vanquished slunk off down the road. His brothers had been interested spectators of the end of the fight, and now they proceeded to give vocal proof of their admiration of Davy's fighting qualities.

"He won't be seein' anythin' but stars for a week," chuckled one.

"You shore took a piece out of his ear, Davy," said another. All the way home the boys talked about the great fight, and the glory that would ever after be Davy's. But before they reached the lonely tavern by the roadside a disquieting thought had arisen.

"Bobcats and alligators, Davy!" exclaimed the oldest boy suddenly, as they rounded the last turn in the road. "What'll old Kitchen do to you when he hears of it?"

Davy made up his mind quickly. "I won't go back to school," he declared stoutly.

"The old man'll take the hide off o' you," replied his brother. Davy realized that only too well. "I'll go out with you, and come back at night, and stay in the woods all day," he announced. The others were doubtful of the result of this conduct, but Davy would listen to no doubts.

For several days all went well. Davy left the tavern each morning with his brothers, and returned with them each night, but he spent the interval in the depths of the woods, stalking game.

Then one day came the explosion. John Crockett received a note, brought by one of the

pupils from the schoolmaster, in which he inquired why Davy had not been sent to school.

"Here, y' young toad!" called the elder Crockett, "what's this about not bein' in school? What about the fine 'coon skins I'm after payin' the master to learn yuh readin' n' writin'?"

Davy was silent, measuring the distance to the cabin door with his eye. His father caught the glance, and seized him roughly by the shoulder.

"Answer me!" he roared.

"I'm afraid to go to school," said Davy, beginning to tremble with apprehension. "I licked a boy, and the schoolmaster will be cookin' me up to a cracklin' in no time."

"I'll give yuh an eternal sight worse trouncin' if yuh don't start for school this minute," cried the father, red in the face and breathing furiously.

"I can't go!" wailed Davy. "Don't send me back—aw, don't send me. I'll work, I'll—oh," he begged, as John Crockett stepped outside the door, and began cutting a stout hickory switch, "oh, don't send me, I'll do anythin' you want, oh—oh!"

With a last despairing shriek Davy fled through the door, for his father was coming toward him, stick in hand. Turning swiftly into the road in a direction away from the schoolhouse, Davy fled nimbly down the rough highway, closely pursued by his angry father. Davy was a good runner, but old Crockett had great strength and endurance, and his feet were winged by his towering passion. The race continued for nearly a mile, when the road led up a steep hill. Davy, flying ahead, gained the top and shot down the other side. Before his father could get well started on the incline, he dashed headlong into the bushes at the side of the road, and hid himself deftly among the underbrush. A few minutes later he both heard and saw his father, panting hard, go past, and he remained hidden until the old man had returned the way he came, discouraged from further chasing by having lost sight of the boy.

When he was safely out of the way, Davy emerged once more, and fearful to go home again, he pushed on down the road. Twilight found him still trudging onward, but close to the cabin of a man he knew.

"Howdy, Mr. Cheek," he said affably, appearing suddenly in that worthy settler's doorway.

"Hello, Davy, that you?" answered his host. "Step in and have a bite."

Jesse Cheek's family was just sitting down to the evening meal, and Davy was glad enough to join them in their repast. He kept his ears wide open, and soon gathered that the man of the house was on the point of starting for Virginia with a drove of cattle.

"I've had some experience in drivin' cattle, myself," remarked Davy. "I'd be pleased to go with you, Mr. Cheek, and help you out."

Under the questioning of the settler Davy was led to tell of his adventures on his previous trip to Virginia, and the upshot of the matter was that Davy was engaged to go along with Jesse Cheek and his cattle to Front Royal, on the Shenandoah River, a couple of hundred miles further into Virginia than Davy's previous trip had taken him. Before they started, another of the Crockett boys, tired of the rough tavern and anxious to see the world, had joined the little party.

V

AN ACCOUNT OF TWO YEARS' WANDERING

Spring had smiled upon the Tennessee valleys, and the sweet arbutus had been tempting the industrious bees all day as a lanky, large-boned boy of about fifteen swung along the old road to Crockett's Tavern. His sandy hair fell in thick locks almost to his shoulders and was brushed back behind his ears. A straight nose, a wide, generous mouth, and merry blue eyes made up a countenance that was whimsical and engaging.

Drawing near, the boy hesitated for a moment, and then stepped up boldly to the tavern door. A young man was just coming out.

"Howdy," began the youth. "Might I be havin' a word with the tavern keeper?"

"He's yonder," returned the young man. "Is it a shake-down for the night you are lookin' for?"

"It is," said the boy, "and I can turn a hand to anythin'."

"None more welcome than you then," said the other heartily. "Step in. Supper will be on the table this minute."

The sandy-haired boy gratefully stepped inside, his sharp eyes roving the assembled company. There were several teamsters around the immense fireplace, smoking their pipes and cracking their rough jokes. The lad moved, unnoticed, into a corner, and sat watching the tavern keeper's wife and her daughters preparing supper. But a few minutes had passed before the table was ready, and all drew up for the evening meal. There was a stronger light around the table than had shone in the strange boy's corner; as he came forward and took his place one of the girls of the household caught sight of his face, and she studied it intently, as though struck by the features. As for the lad, as soon as he observed the girl's scrutiny, he blushed fiery red and dropped his eyes uneasily to the food before him.

"It's Davy, Mother!" shrieked the girl, running around the table and throwing her arms about the lad's stalwart shoulders. "It's my lost brother, come home again!" and she burst into happy tears.

"Davy!" cried the tavern keeper's wife, a weary, work-worn woman who had never known aught but hard times.

"Is it you, Davy lad?" She came closer and gazed into the embarrassed eyes of the wanderer.

"I'm that same Davy," he said, with a choking throat.

The old tavern keeper came in and slapped him on the back.

"Sit you down and give us the news," he said jovially. "It's nigh on two years since you gave me the slip, Davy," he added.

"We took you for dead," put in one of the girls. "Since Jim here came back with the news that you'd gone to Virginny, we heard never a word of what had become of you."

Davy was deeply touched. He had not realized that his parents and his brothers and sisters must have worried during his long absence; when he had thought of home he had visioned also the hickory stick with which his father had threatened him. Now, apparently, the long-deferred punishment was to be abandoned, and his heart swelled in gratitude at the warmth of his reception.

"Well, the vittles do be coolin'," announced his mother briskly, "time enough for tellin' tales after supper's done."

Davy, like all the rest of the company, was hungry enough to tackle beef on the hoof, and he was glad of the opportunity to devote himself exclusively to feeding. Everybody fell to with great gusto, and the boiled beef and "chicken fixin's" disappeared with unbelievable rapidity.

After supper Davy was the center of attraction. "Let's hear some o' yo're goin's on, me young buck," said one of the teamsters.

"Yes, Davy, me boy, let's hear what you've been doin' with yourself," his father joined in.

Davy was confused at being the target for their attention, and he tried to shrug it off.

"There warn't enough happened to me to shake a stick at," he declared.

But the assembly was not to be put off.

"That don't go," cried John Crockett. "Where'd you get to after you left Jesse Cheek?"

The brother who had accompanied Davy and their neighbor Cheek to Virginia, had returned shortly after and told of meeting Davy on the

road, hired out to another teamster, and bound for northern Virginia.

"We did a heap o' travelin'," Davy admitted. "We went along o' Mr. Cheek to more places than I know'd the name of—Blue Ridge Springs, Lynchburg, Orange Court House, and I don't know what all, to Front Royal on the Shenandoah. Mr. Cheek sold his drove there and I left with his brother to come back home.

"The brother was the orneriest varmint you'd see in a month's walk," he continued, getting warmed up at the recollection of his wrongs in that quarter. "He had a horse, and, thinks I, he'll be lettin' me ride part o' the way; but the mean critter took care to ride all the time, and never to tie, and in three days I got disgusted and told him to go ahead, and I would come when ready. I had about four dollars in my pocket and I took pains not to catch up with him again."

"Great snakes, boy!" cried one of the teamsters. "Yuh don't mean yuh cut loose like that in the middle o' the woods?"

"Oh, he'd done it before," put in John Crockett. "He tried comin' home alone from

half-way to Virginny when he warn't but twelve."

Davy was encouraged by this unwonted admiration.

"I was bound I wouldn't travel along o' such an ornery critter," he declared, "and before I know'd just how I'd get back, I met up with a jolly good fellow from Greenville, Tennessee. He had a wagon and was bound for Gerardstown, in Virginny, and he p'inted out that I might as well go along o' him, because he was comin' straight back to Tennessee afterward. I thought about it some, and he was such a jolly fellow that I decided to go with him. We journeyed on slowly, but merrily enough. I thought o' home often, and wished to be back, but I thought o' Dad here and I had the feelin' that his dander was up for sure, and his spite would be hangin' on to him like a turtle does to a fisherman's toe. So, thinks I, if I go back in a hurry he'll be givin' me the devil in three or four ways.

"It was while I was travelin' back with this fellow, by the name of Adam Myers, that Jim come along the road and urged me to come home, so pleadin' that I shed tears to hear

him, but the thought o' the promised whippin' came slap down on every thought o' home, and I determined that, hit or miss, make or break, I would just hang on to my journey. We went ahead, but when we got to Gerardstown, old Myers couldn't get a load back, and he concluded to wait and run his team back and forth between there and Baltimore. I got work with an old farmer, at plowin' and the like, and he gave me twenty-five cents a day, so that when spring come round I could get me some decent clothes.

"I was gettin' pretty perky about then, and I took it into my head to have a look at Baltimore, o' which I heard a good many tales, and I was wild to see the sort o' place it was, and the kind o' folks that lived there. I gave old Myers the balance of the money I had for safe keeping, which as I recollect, was about seven dollars, and started out with him on the load o' flour he was haulin'.

"We went along in a merry fashion, and pretty soon we got nearin' a place called Ellicott's Mills. I was minded not to be passin' the houses with my old, dirty, mud-spattered clothes on me, so I crept up among the flour

bar'ls to put on my new suit. But as bad luck would have it, while I was in there we were met by some wheel-barrow men, who were workin' on the road, and the horses took a scare and away they went, like they had seen a ghost. They made a sudden wheel around, and broke the wagon tongue slap, short off, as a pipe-stem; and snap went both of the axle-trees at the same time.

"Well, we put our load in another wagon and went on to Baltimore. When I saw all them big ships I wanted to go to London, but the wagoner wouldn't let me off. So I worked my way back.

"But I had my troubles afterward all right enough. I got down the valley between the Alleghany and the Blue Ridge until I come to Montgomery Court House, when I found my last cent was gone. Not bein' a beggar, I hired out to a man for five dollars for a month and when the time was out, I bound myself to a hatter by the name of Elijah Griffith. I agreed to work four years, but at the end of eighteen months I found myself out in the cold again, for the hatter's shop went to pieces for debt, and the shopkeeper left the

country. I was left, of course, without any money, for I had received nothing, and I had but few clothes, and them very indifferent ones. But I worked around again on farms until I could collect a little money and some clothes, and then I cut out again for home."

"You shore had a roundabout way o' gettin' back," observed John Crockett.

VI

DAVY TAKES A PARTNER

Adventure failed to find Davy Crockett for a year after he returned to his father's tavern. But he made good use of the respite to pay off a couple of John Crockett's debts, of which there were a-plenty, though the old man was honest at heart and sincerely desirous of meeting his obligations.

"Would you be wishful to go free, Davy?" he asked one day soon after the young man's return, meaning, would Davy like to be released from the obligation, in force at that time, to work for his father until the age of twenty-one, when he would be at liberty to strike out for himself and keep whatever wages he could earn.

"Because," the elder Crockett went on, "I'd be givin' you your freedom, if it might be that you'd be willin' to work out a note that that rascal of an Abe Wilson holds against me."

Davy knew of Abraham Wilson, an unprincipled, dissipated neighbor, at whose house there was constant drinking and gambling.

"How long would I stay?" he inquired.

"A matter o' six months; the note's for thirty-six dollars. Then you'd be free as the air," wheedled the father.

Davy was sorry for the old man, whose troubles had been more numerous than his years.

"I'll do that," he agreed, and immediately set out to fulfil the contract. So well did he succeed, that at the end of the six months, the dissolute Wilson tried his best to get him to remain as his helper.

"It's high wages," Davy reflected to himself, considering the offer. "But a heap o' bad company put in their time here. I should be gettin' a bad name if I stayed, as nobody could be respectable that would live here. I'd better be makin' tracks for home."

Next day he accepted his father's note, and set out for the little wayside tavern. Old John Crockett was mightily pleased when the paper which released him from Wilson's power was put into his hand, and he consented readily when Davy announced that he was going "to

cast an eye around among the neighbors for somethin' to turn a hand to."

His path led to the home of an old Quaker, by the name of John Kennedy, who had recently moved from North Carolina. The newcomer was kindly, as his rule of life bade him be.

"Thou'rt a strong young lad," he said, eyeing Davy's sturdy frame approvingly. "I'll warrant thy hand holds a steady ax. And these acres need just such a brawny caretaker."

"I'll be doin' whatever's needful for two shillin' a day," offered Davy. But the Quaker was cautious.

"I'll take thee for a week's trial," he agreed.

Taking up the offer light-heartedly, Davy worked industriously all the week, felling trees, caring for the livestock, and turning a hand to whatever was required of him. At the end of his probation, the Quaker came out one morning, and seating himself upon a tree which Davy had felled the day before, he observed:

"Thou'rt a good worker, lad, and thy father ought to take pride in his son. Now, I've an offer for thee. That same John Crockett

owes me a matter of forty dollars, and I hold his note for it. But I'd be willing to deliver it, if I had thee to work for me for six months."

Davy turned his eyes to the far horizon. He had his freedom, it was true; there was no need for him to discharge his father's debt. He was certain that, if he did work out the note, none of the money would be coming to him, for his father was so poor—so poor! That was it. Just because he was poor, and work-worn and discouraged—and his father, Davy decided he must help him.

"I'll take you up, Mr. Kennedy," he said.

Six months later, Davy Crockett rode up to the Crockett tavern, fifteen miles from the Kennedy homestead. The horse he rode was a borrowed steed, to be sure, but the rider was none the less merry-hearted for that.

"Howdy, Dad," he shouted in his hearty, rough voice, bursting into the little cabin, where the family was gathered around the fire. It was Sunday evening, and there were no guests at the tavern.

"Here's a bit of paper my old Quaker sent me to give you," said Davy, who had not been home for the whole six months.

John Crockett held out a trembling hand for the paper. His head drooped dejectedly; the lines and furrows in his face seemed to deepen.

"I can't pay it," he said. "I haven't got the money; I can't get it noways. I don't know what I c'n do."

"Hi, Dad! Riz up and flap your wings," cried Davy, slapping the old man on the shoulder. "The note's yours, a present from me. I paid it with six months' o' labor. An' if I know'd the first letter in the book I'd read the paper for you."

His father stared at him a moment, then the tears gathered in his eyes, and he faltered out his thanks.

"That's more'n I ever expected, Davy, you payin' this after I give you your freedom and all. I wisht I could pay you even a little bit o' the money; I shore do wish it. But I can't; I haven't any money at all."

Davy assured his father that he cared nothing for the money, and announced his intention of returning to the Quaker's home to earn enough to get him some new clothes.

"My last new suit was left with that old var-

mint, Adam Myers, when I ran away from him down Baltimore way, and that was nigh three year ago," he remarked.

Pretty Polly Finlay was a mirthful maiden of seventeen, who lived about fifteen miles away from the Quaker's home. Davy met her at a reaping frolic, and thereafter her warm gray eyes and tender smile haunted him. The courtship continued for many weeks, hindered by the girl's mother, helped by various accidental happenings, among which was a great wolf hunt.

Wolves roamed the forests in great numbers, and were a source of constant trouble to the settlers. In the winter, when the snow was hard, they hunted in huge packs, furious with hunger. Their howls filled the dark hours of the night; their stealthy footsteps followed travelers, seeking a chance to attack, for the wolf is a coward, and will not fight openly unless driven to it. Wolf hunts were common, when the neighbors would combine for miles in every direction, starting out at the same time to hunt through the woods, so that the wolves escaping one hunter, might be driven into

range of others scattered here and there.

David Crockett was ever ready for a hunt of any kind. When the wolf hunt was announced, therefore, he was on hand with his rifle, and plunged recklessly into the woods. The barking of the dogs which some of the settlers had brought with them died away gradually in the distance as the forest deepened about him. It was early winter; the trees were bare and the wind was sharp; a light snow had drifted down upon the fallen leaves. Davy strode along, confident, as he ever was when surrounded by his native wilds. But he was in a part of the woods he had never traversed before, and it had, apparently, no settlers. He walked briskly for a long time, hearing nothing, seeing nothing but forest sounds and sights. Meanwhile the sky had clouded; snow was in the air.

"Well, now, who'd expect an old wildcat like me to be gettin' lost?" he asked himself in surprise. "If there was sun, now, or even moon, I'd soon be findin' what direction I ought to travel. Let's see if I can glimpse a cabin, or a curl of smoke."

With that he selected a tall tree, and climbed nimbly high among the branches. His keen

eyes searched the distance, but there was no sign of a break in the forest; no curling smoke to indicate a settler's home.

"I reckon it's time I was stragglin' home," he murmured whimsically as he slid down the tree-trunk; and he started away in the direction that he thought most likely to lead home. For six or seven miles he trudged onward, growing more bewildered with every step, and casting anxious glances at the darkening sky, for night was coming on by this time. Suddenly he heard a crackling in the bushes, very faint, very far away. Instantly his rifle was in position; he was sure it was a wolf—the long sought wolf that had led him so many miles astray. But as his finger found the trigger, there flashed into Davy's mind the old admonition of his father: "Look mighty hard before you shoot; it may be a man you see, but you can always get a man." Davy looked mighty hard in the gathering gloom, and this second glance caused him to lower his weapon and with a sharp exclamation, plunge off into the bushes after the fleeing figure that he had recognized as a woman's. It was a hard chase for a minute; the flying figure was far ahead, and evidently believed

itself pursued by an enemy. When he was within hearing distance, Davy shouted:

"Hi—hi, there, Miss Greased Lightnin'!"

At the sound of his voice the woman turned, and waited for him to come up.

"David Crockett!" she shrieked joyously when his brawny figure strode from the bushes.

"Polly!" cried David, stiff with surprise.

Polly ran to him and clung to his arm. "I've been out in the woods all day," she cried, the tears starting again in her pretty eyes. "I went out to hunt one of father's horses, and I got lost. Oh, David, what would have become of me if you hadn't been here! Did you come out to look for me?"

"Not a bit of it," said David, honest in spite of his desire to tell the girl he had rescued her on purpose. "And what's more, I'm lost, too, and I nearly shot you for a wolf when I saw you streaking it along like all wrath."

With that he put an arm about the girl, his eyes full of the joy of being able to protect her and half carrying her thus, they continued their uncertain way through the woods. Presently they struck a path.

"I reckon this leads somewhere," observed David, and they set out to follow it. It did lead to a cabin home, and before the night had really set in, Polly and David had been welcomed by the settler and his wife who lived there, and had been offered refreshment and shelter, which were always open to any friend, known or unknown, in the wilderness. They learned that they were far from their respective homes; Polly was seven miles from hers, and David ten miles from the Kennedy home. When morning came the two parted to return to their own dwellings, but David was now head over heels in love with pretty Polly, and determined to win her for his wife. He had already bargained with the Quaker to work for six months in order to pay for a horse, for he felt that, before marriage, he should acquire some property, in order to give him more standing. That, he knew, was the reason for Polly's mother's opposition to the match—his penniless condition. But lack of money had never yet deterred him from whatever he wanted to do; he resolved that nothing in the world would keep him from getting Polly, barring Polly herself. Consequently he threw in his rifle, and

asked the old Quaker to call it square and deliver him his horse.

Rich though he felt himself with a fine horse to call his own, David found great difficulties in his way when he started preparations for his wedding. He went to his father's tavern, and made arrangements to have his bride received there. Then he rode gaily to the home of his intended wife, to ask her parents for her hand. Mrs. Finlay was not glad to see him; she had other plans for Polly, which included the hope of a richer husband—it would have been hard to find a poorer one than Davy! She promptly ordered the gallant suitor out of the house.

"You're willin' to take me, Polly?" asked David, furious at his reception, of the slim girl cowering in fear against the cabin wall. She nodded.

"Then I'll be comin' next Thursday," declared Davy, "and I'll bring a horse, saddle and bridle for you, and you must be ready to come along o' me. For we'll be married, Polly, but I won't be married in this house."

"Ye shan't get my girl," shrilled the mother after him, as he turned away from the door and mounted his horse.

"But I know I shall, if somebody else don't get her before Thursday," thought David to himself.

Sure enough, when Thursday dawned, a bright sun looked down upon a gay enough wedding party winding its way on horseback through the dim forest. It consisted of the intended bridegroom, his eldest brother and his wife, another brother and a sister, besides two other young men, neighbors of the Crocketts. This company proceeded to within two miles of the Finlay home, when it was met by a large crowd of folk from the surrounding country, who had heard of the approaching wedding and the opposition of the bride's mother. Davy was popular for miles around, because of his genial ways and generous nature, and was admired besides for his skill and daring in all the backwoods games and feats of strength. His friends wanted to lend him their support and sympathy, and also not to miss anything that might be going on. Some rode horseback, some were afoot, and all mingled together the imposing company swept up the road to Polly Finlay's humble home. Weddings were perhaps the most popular social events in the year

1804. Davy rode at the head. He clattered up to the cabin door, and without any attempt at dismounting, pushed it wide and shouted within:

"Are you ready, Polly?"

Poor Polly, who had had no chance to prepare a wedding gown even if it were possible for her to have one, falteringly answered, as she came forward:

"Yes, David."

"Then light on this horse I'm leadin'," commanded her determined fiancé, and the maiden meekly obeyed. With a shout of triumph David flicked his horse with the reins, and the whole party turned, preparatory to following the pair to the home of the justice of the peace. Mrs. Finlay stood abashed. She had supposed David would come alone, and she meant to give him such a tongue lashing as would prevent him from ever returning to her home. But the sight of so many neighbors had taken her aback. She knew their sympathies were not with her, and she dared not begin a tirade against the sturdy David with everyone looking on and listening. She was a woman of strong impulses, and after all, David was a likely

young fellow, even if he hadn't a penny to his name.

"Wait," she commanded suddenly, extending a hand to the departing couple. "I can't bear to see Polly goin' off to get married away from home," she explained; "she's the first child I ever had to marry, and I don't want to lose her. But get down and come in; I'll do the best I can for you."

With that, David, whose anger was quickly cooled, lifted his little bride from her horse, and sent off post-haste for his parson. The marriage was performed at once, and the bride and groom rode away to the Crockett cabin, amid the shouted good wishes of the assembled company.

"I've gotten my wife," exulted David. "I need nothing more in the whole world."

VII

DAVY GETS HIS DANDER UP

"Davy, Davy!" called Polly Crockett one morning, running out of a rather dilapidated cabin on the banks of a little stream.

"Whoa, there, Polly girl," returned Davy imperturbably, looking up from his leisurely preparation of some deerskins which he intended for tanning. "What's the disturbance? Old Sharpnose the b'ar got one o' the young 'uns?" Old Sharpnose was a bear that had been raiding neighboring pig-pens for several weeks past, and the surrounding region had been considerably worked up over his depredations.

"Davy," whispered Polly, who was now close beside him, "I just saw an Indian hiding in the bushes."

David was alert on the instant, though he refused to show excitement by look or word.

"Shucks, girl," he said, taking Polly's arm,

"a friendly Injun in the woods don't mean much."

He walked toward the cabin door, nevertheless, his mind busy with the tales that had been drifting through the border of late; tales of discontent among the Creeks; half-substantiated stories of plundered homes, stolen cattle and missing children.

David and Polly had been married now for several years; it was the year 1813, and David was nearly twenty-seven years old; there were two little boys in the household. The family lived far away from the old Crockett tavern, for Davy had found that, far from needing nothing more in the world when he had secured his wife, he needed more than he had ever dreamed necessary for his growing family; he had moved twice, therefore, farther and farther into the wilderness, in order that he might get a settler's title to some land, in a region where game was plentiful. He had finally chosen a site on a stream known as Bean's creek, ten miles below what is still Winchester, in Tennessee.

Scarcely had Davy and Polly reached the cabin door, when a lone figure appeared in the

clearing. It was not an Indian, but a traveler from Virginia, seeking new lands for home, and at the invitation of the Crocketts, he remained at their cabin for the night. He had heard vague rumors, in his travels, of discontent among the Creeks in Alabama, parties of whom occasionally strayed over the Tennessee border.

"Old Tecumseh's out for blood," the traveler declared, sitting on the cabin doorstep after supper. "He's one bad Indian too," he went on. "Have you-all heard that he's a British agent?"

"Well, I did hear some talk," acknowledged Davy.

"You see it's this-away," continued the visitor. "The British are leadin' our seamen a mighty lively dance on the ocean; takin' them off our ships and puttin' them into the King's service, they do say. There's got to be war; and the British are lookin' to this here Tecumseh to stir up the Indians ag'in us."

Davy and Polly were spellbound. Great events in the outside world had hitherto passed them by. They lived a life of their own; in the forest, of the forest. War seemed a remote

thing, despite the occasional mutterings of trouble that had come to their ears.

David Crockett was greatly impressed by the tale of the chance traveler, and a few weeks later his vague fears were confirmed. He had ridden the ten miles to Winchester, to trade some skins for household supplies, and he came upon an excited throng in the middle of the little settlement. Men, women and children were grouped about a tall man, who was talking loudly, with wild gestures.

"The red cut-throats!" he was shouting as Davy drew near. "Murderin' dogs, every mother's son o' them!"

"What's wrong, stranger?" inquired Davy, pushing his way through the throng.

"There's been a massacre at Fort Mims," returned the man. "More than five hundred white folk, mutilated or dead—mostly both. It was only a week ago, on August 30th."

Davy's heart sank; he knew nothing of warfare; brave though he was, he had never hunted anything but the wild animals of his native woods; he had lived among peaceful Indians, and the furious beat of the tom-tom and the war whoop of savages had been merely tales to

him, terrifying tales though they were.

"Let's hear the way of it, stranger," he invited.

Eagerly the center of attention, he began his story once more. It was a tale of horror and bloodshed.

A gasp of horror went up from the crowd surrounding the speaker, and many of the women wept openly at the picture of cruel warfare. Davy felt his hands clench, and the blood leave his face. But it was the pallor of rage, not of fear that overspread his features.

"Did you escape?" he asked the stranger.

"No, I was not even there, but I passed that way a short time after it was over. I fell in with a man who had been one of the unfortunates at the fort. He told me that not more than a dozen people escaped. It was he who led the few who got away out of the fort, by cutting a hole in the picketing. They had to run straight into the Indian lines, and it's a marvel how any of them came out alive. This Dr. Holmes, which is his name, ran like mad for the woods, with the bullets flying all around him. The savages pursued him, but he managed to hide in a hole left by a tree that had

been uprooted by a storm. When the Indians had given up the hunt for him, he stole away at night and wandered for a long time before he found anyone to take him in."

As he finished, David Crockett leaped into his saddle and with his right arm upraised, he cried to the bystanders:

"I've licked wildcats and killed bears but I've never split an Indian's head with his own tomahawk. That's what I'm goin' to do now, till this here right arm's mighty tired."

A cheer went up from the throng as he rode away, post-haste toward home with the terrible news.

Polly saw his excitement as soon as he came in sight.

"Whatever's the matter, Davy?" she asked, terror-stricken. He told her the story, and it lost nothing in the telling.

"There's a big war comin', Polly," he finished, "and I'll be goin' to it with the first."

"Oh, Davy!" cried his little wife, "it won't come to that?"

But it did. Only a few days later, a general meeting of the militia was called at Winchester, and volunteers were called for.

"I'm on my way to Winchester," said Davy, on the day of the meeting. "They'll be wantin' volunteers. It's a duty I owe my country. Buck up, Polly, there's my brave girl."

Poor Polly turned away to her spinning wheel, and began to weave. But her hands shook at her work, and the heavy tears blinded her so that she could hardly see. David bent over her for a moment, his arm around her shoulders. Then he went out into the autumn sunlight, mounted his horse, and rode away in the direction of Winchester.

VIII

A REDSKIN BEHIND EVERY TREE

"We've shore got 'em cooked to a cracklin' this time; the Indians in that there town are bound for another country."

David, with a handful of volunteers, was discussing a proposed attack on an Indian village eight miles away. The volunteer army, nine hundred strong, was encamped at Ten Islands, on the Coosa River, where a fort had been built. Several weeks had passed since the first Indian scare, and Andrew Jackson, by popular acclaim, had been chosen as the leader of the white men against the red. There had been as yet no real fighting, but plenty of hardship and near-starvation for the little army, which strengthened rather than lessened the determination of the volunteers to show the Indians their mettle. Now that they were on the verge of a real conflict, the talk ran wildly on the coming excitement. It was nearly daybreak; the start was about to be made.

"We'll give 'em what-for, eh, boys?" cried Davy as the order to march came. He was twenty-seven now, sturdy as one of the mighty trees around him, and had a full beard. He was yet to know fear.

The force included a party of friendly Cherokees, and two friendly Creeks who were to act as scouts. These Indians wore white feathers on their heads, and deer tails, in order to prevent them for being mistaken for the enemy. As the attacking party neared the town, the order was given to divide, so as to surround the place. Davy was with the cavalry, which went to the right of the line of march, while those on foot turned to the left. Both lines had passed around the town and met on the far side, completely enclosing it, without detection from those within, when a company of rangers was sent to bring on the affray. As they neared the town, the Indians saw them. In a long quivering cry, a yell burst from every red throat. Grasping their rifles, the savages ran at the handful of whites, whom they evidently believed to be the whole force with which they had to deal.

"Hold your fire!" cried David, to a fellow

beside him who was taking aim. "Wait till they are closer."

The other dropped his rifle and stood, shoulder to shoulder with Davy, watching as the rangers fell slowly back, decoying the Indians into the hands of the main line. Believing they had the rangers on the run, the Indians boldly pursued, until they were confronted with the sudden gleam of bristling rifles.

"Now!" cried Davy, and he and his companion took careful aim and fired, at the same moment that nearly every other rifle exploded on that side of the town. The aim of both men was true; two Indians toppled and fell headlong. The sound of their triumphant yell died away in a gurgle, as bullets spat around them in every direction. Many red men fell on the instant; the others fired one volley, and turning, fled for the shelter of their town. The mighty cordon of volunteers closed in swiftly, and the desperate firing of the Indians was of no avail. The advance of the paleface could not be stopped.

Davy, who was among the first to rush into the town, saw many a warrior throw down his weapon in token of surrender, while through

the hail of bullets rushed the squaws, crying for mercy. They seized the white men's coats, and hung on. These were taken prisoners, along with the warriors who surrendered.

Meanwhile Davy Crockett was counting. "Forty-three, forty-four, forty-five, forty-six!" he shouted excitedly. "Forty-six Injuns just ran into that house; come on, boys, let's get 'em!"

Like a flash he had a whole company on his heels as he led the way to the place of refuge. There was a squaw sitting in the door with a bow in her hand, and as they approached she braced it with her foot, slipped an arrow into place and let it fly. It struck a man whose name was Lieutenant Moore.

"Fire!" cried one of the men, enraged at his death, and a moment later the squaw rolled into the dust, her body riddled with twenty bullets. After that there was no mercy for the Indians; the white men shot them down like dogs, and someone set fire to the house containing the forty-six warriors.

When the count was taken, it was found that a hundred and eighty-six of the Indians had been killed or taken prisoners, while only five

of the white men had lost their lives. The army returned to their fort, which they called Fort Strother, and next day Davy was one of a party sent back to see if there was any food in the town, for the army had been for several days on half rations.

A few nights later, while the fort, still half-starved, was wrapped in slumber, the watch was startled by a voice from the forest:

"No shoot!" it cried. "Injun friend. No shoot!"

Permission was given for the "friend" to advance, the guard meanwhile watching the forest closely. But one Indian only appeared, and he begged to be sent to "Captain Jackson." As no information could be obtained otherwise, he was conducted to the general while the soldiers, awakened by the clamor, waited fearfully to hear of an approaching attack.

Instead, an order came in a few minutes. It was: "Prepare to march at once."

Within an hour the army was moving across the Coosa River and in the direction of the friendly Creek town of Talladega. Davy chanced to be near the runner, who had been supplied with a horse.

"What's the matter?" he asked him. "Red Sticks after you?"

The runner nodded. "Heap big army," he explained. "Won't let us have food—say we must come fight paleface."

From the talk that soon drifted through the ranks, Davy learned that a hundred and fifty friendly Creeks, living in the little town of Talladega, were being besieged by eleven hundred Red Sticks, who demanded that they join the war party against the whites. They had been given three days to surrender, and in the meantime the besiegers camped outside, believing that their victims would be starved out by that time. The runner who had reached Fort Strother had disguised himself as a hog, in order to escape through the lines of the Red Sticks.

Friendly Indians led the white men to the besieged fort, and by sun-up the forces were dividing as before, in order to surround the town and the besiegers as well.

"Not a Red Stick in sight," murmured David as he marched on. He took up his position with the rest, and watched while Major Russell, detached from the rest, was sent for-

ward with his company, along with Captain Evans, and another small group to bring on the attack. As these men passed the fort, the top of it was lined with the friendly Indians of the town, who stood crying:

"How-dy-do, brother? How-dy-do?"

The whites had just passed by the town, when the Indians on the palisade broke into a stream of words in their own tongue, pointing and gesticulating frantically. The officers, ignorant of their language, continued their way toward a high meadow that half encircled the town. As he watched, David saw two Indians jump from the palisade, and run to the horses of the leaders, pointing excitedly in the direction of this meadow. The party halted; next moment the Red Sticks were upon them, a thousand screams of fury filling the morning air as they rushed across the half-moon meadow, which was in reality the high bank of a stream. Beneath the shoulder of this bank, amid the heavy thickets, the savages had been in hiding. Armed with a few guns, and their own bows and arrows, the enraged Red Sticks charged on their foe. Their naked bodies seemed to be ablaze in the light of the

rising sun, smeared as they were with scarlet paint.

David, with his comrades beside him, pressed forward to meet the oncoming horde, as Russell and Evans, abandoning their horses, led their men swiftly inside the fort. The savages came on yelling at every step, until the crackle of a rifle effectively stopped a cry here and there. Confronted with a furious onslaught of lead many turned to flee, only to be met by another wall of shining barrels closing in on them from the rear. The cordon of foot and horse which had been thrown around the town was doing effective work; the savages fell like hail on a summer's day. At last, in a frenzy, the survivors charged upon a part of the line that was made up of drafted militia; it broke the ranks, and the Indians escaped. When the dead were counted, it was found that four hundred had fallen. Fifteen whites were carried off the battlefield and laid in one grave, and two more died of their wounds.

The army was pitiably small; there were less than a thousand whites, in addition to two hundred and fifty friendly Cherokees and Creeks, when Davy set out with a company of

spies to lead the way for the army through the treacherous forest.

They pushed their way to the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River.

"Indians!" cried Davy one morning, observing the print of a moccasin in the soft earth.

"Maybe it's just a hunter," suggested Jim Hart, who had elected to go with Davy.

"Maybe it's a hunter a-huntin' our scalps," returned Davy scornfully. A few feet further on his words were justified. Many traces of moccasins were still fresh along the river bank and there were the remains of a huge bonfire, with the bones of animals scattered about, showing where the Indians had feasted. The scouts turned their horses about, and rode swiftly back to warn the army.

Night had come on by the time the warning had been given, and it was decided to strike camp, though there was every prospect of an attack. Anxious straining into the darkness could avail nothing; it was best to take a rest when the opportunity offered.

Davy prepared to take his sleep with the others; he had ridden far, and, like all the army, he was but scantily nourished. The country

at large seemed indifferent to the war on the Alabama nations, and supplies for the army were impossible to obtain. The Red Sticks, on the other hand, were being furnished with firearms and ammunition by the British, for the War of 1812 was raging, and it was a British advantage when part of the Americans were occupied with local wars with the Indians.

As he wrapped himself in his blanket for the sleep that he felt certain would soon be disturbed, Davy cast a longing glance toward the great forest wall. But it presented only a black impenetrable front to his gaze, and the red men whom Davy felt near remained hidden in its mysterious depths.

Night was at its blackest, just before the approach of day, when the ominous note of the Indian war whoop struck into the consciousness of the sleeping soldiers. On the heels of the long-drawn cry came the crack of half a dozen rifles, as the Red Sticks took aim at the camp's sentinels. They rushed back, as the others, roused to action, sprang to their feet, rifles ready and eyes keen to pierce the darkness. The camp was made in the form of a hollow square; therefore the soldiers were be-

tween the fires and the forest. Hurriedly some of the men threw fresh logs across the glaring coals. "We'll catch sight of the Indians in the blaze," they said confidently. Crack! crack! went the report of many rifles. The whites dodged and fired into the woods; bullets buried themselves in the ground, sang about their ears. Davy and George Russell fought side by side, but they fought an invisible foe.

"Them Indians are mighty wary," observed Davy during a short lull. "I ain't caught sight o' one yet, have you, George?"

"Nary a one," replied George. "The varmints are pickin' us out pretty well though, by the light o' these fires." As he spoke, Davy heard the swish of a bullet, and a soft sigh. George threw up his hands and sank to the ground. With set teeth, Davy turned from his stricken friend and fired furiously into the darkness. He reloaded his gun with terrible swiftness and fired again and again, but no sound came from the forest, nothing to show that any of the bullets found their mark. All around him, his comrades dropped, but no bit of winged lead found Davy Crockett, and he fired gallantly on until the dawn reddened the

sky. Then like magic, the rain of bullets from the forest ceased, and the trees stood out gray and gaunt in the light of the coming day, but no painted warrior was to be seen, slinking through the underbrush. It was as if no battle had ever been, except for the wounded men. Four had been killed outright, and many had been hurt. George Russell was among the latter, and Davy embraced him rapturously when he found that the bullet which caught him had gone clean through his leg.

"You'll be peggin' away in no time, y' young wildcat, you," he told him confidently, and George smiled feebly in answer.

"Here, Davy," called one of the men, "give us a hand here with a shovel. We'll get these poor boys under ground afore the Injuns get a chance to scalp 'em."

Davy lent a willing hand, and soon there was a hole deep enough for the bodies of the four dead men. They covered them over with earth, and made a huge bonfire on top, so that the Indians might not guess where they were buried. Then they hastily set to work cutting down young trees, in order to make long, flexible poles. These they bound together with

ropes of deerskin, which they carried, rolled into balls, for just such a purpose. When a strong litter had thus been made, it was fastened between two horses, one at each end, and on this a wounded man could be fairly comfortable. The four were disposed of in this fashion, and the army began its retreat.

All this time the forest had been silent with a menacing calm. The men were now tired out with their hard fighting, and General Jackson hoped to get them away from the danger of attack before they should be surprised once more.

Davy rode over the rough, narrow way, jesting and telling funny stories for the benefit of George, who needed all the consolation he could get, in Davy's estimation.

"Yes," Davy was saying, "the major insisted that he'd seen two balls o' fire, right on the limb over our heads——"

Crack! Leaving his story unfinished, Davy whirled around in the direction of the creek he had just crossed. About half the army was safely across, but a horde of Indians had risen from behind stumps and trees, and fallen upon the rear guard with a heavy shower of lead.

Andrew Jackson

The scene was wildly confused. Major Russell, who had been left behind when the march started, in order to gather information about the movements of the Indians, was now visible, with his party of scouts, hotly pursued by a host of yelling savages. In one glance Davy took in the situation: the savages had chosen a perfect moment for their attack; the artillerymen were in an open field, surrounded by the forest; it was on these men that the Indians, themselves safe in the woods, began to direct their heaviest fire. With every crack of their rifles, almost, a white man fell prostrate, and to Davy's horror he saw that panic had seized the ranks of the whites. He saw two colonels fleeing for their lives with their men behind them, leaving the rear guard, only twenty-five men, under Colonel Carroll, surrounded by the howling savages. His eyes narrowed as he saw one of the colonels, crazed by fear, riding past General Jackson himself, and he saw the lunge that Jackson made at him with his sword, but missed him as he sped by.

Next instant Davy had thrown caution to the winds and, riding frantically, he threw himself in with Major Russell and his scouts,

who were rushing aross the stream to aid the rear guard. Meanwhile the artillerymen had succeeded in dragging their one six-pound cannon to the top of the hill which formed the bank of the creek.

"Ha, you red varmint!" exulted Davy, as a shot from his rifle laid low an oncoming savage. His exultation was premature. As the redskin's death cry quivered on the air, Davy turned to confront two more, hideously painted, with cold ferocity in their eyes. He took careful aim at the rude painting of a beaver on a savage breast, and the nearer of the two Indians fell forward on his face. But there was no time to reload, the second warrior was close, tomahawk upraised; another spring——

Davy whipped his own tomahawk from his belt, and before the savage could spring, he was upon him, fighting with the fury of a wildcat at bay. The Indian was too quick for the first blow that Davy aimed at his head; he jumped aside, and swung his tomahawk; Davy, furious that his first blow had been lost, put all his strength in a leap toward the Indian as the blow descended; his own head struck the

Indian's upraised arm, sending the hatchet whirling from his grasp; with blind rage Davy struck with his own tomahawk at the same time, hardly knowing where his blow fell; he gazed, stupefied with surprise, as the warrior's head rolled at his feet.

But there was no time to waste in idle wonder. Hastily reloading his rifle, Davy looked around for another foe. The sound of hailing grapeshot caught his attention, and he saw with satisfaction that the artillerymen had turned their cannon on the Indians below the high bank of the creek, spreading death and terror. They took to their heels and ran for the woods, and Davy with the other scouts pursued them, shooting at every step. When the Indian dead were counted, one hundred and eighty-nine were found on the scene of battle; twenty volunteers had been killed and seventy-five were wounded. The way was now clear for Jackson's retreat to the Coosa River, and he fell back without any further encounters.

IX

WRESTING A HOME FROM THE WILDERNESS

Several years had elapsed since the close of the Creek War, and Davy's return to his little family on Bean's Creek. He had lived with his wife and children happily for a couple of years, and a little girl had been added to the family circle, when Polly, the loyal little wife whom he loved so well, took sick and died. Davy struggled on a while with the aid of his brother, but he felt that his children needed a mother. So he chose the widow of a comrade who had served with him in the war, and together they founded a new home on Shoal Creek, in the extreme southern part of Tennessee, about eighty miles from the little cabin on Bean's Creek.

This place was a short way from the eastern boundary of a section which had recently been purchased from the Chickasaw Indians.

There was no law or order there when Davy

and his family arrived, but as more people moved out from other settlements, and many outlaws fled across the border, it became necessary to establish some system of law. So the people got together and appointed magistrates, for enforcing the restrictions that were necessary, and Davy Crockett was chosen to be a justice of the peace. Davy knew no law, but he had a keen sense of right and wrong; his decisions were always just, and his fellow settlers accepted them. Although he could not write well enough to sign his name when he was appointed, Davy practiced constantly until he was able to make a creditable showing.

He was elected colonel of a regiment by his admiring neighbors, and this was followed, in 1821, by election to the state legislature. On his return from Nashville, where the legislature met, Davy found his grist mill in ruins, because of a freshet, and decided to have a look at the Obion River region, which he had heard of as a place abounding in game. It was in this part of the country that Davy, Abram Henry, and Davy's son found themselves, after tramping a hundred and fifty miles through the wilderness.

One morning the exploring party were on their way at dawn.

"Look, Father," cried the boy, after they had proceeded for some time in silence. "There's a tree split in half, and each half is on a different side of that big hole."

"That's a queer thing, now," replied Davy. "I reckon that's the work o' some o' them earthquakes I've heard about; if it wa'nt the work o' the first one itself."

"What first one, Father?"

"Why, I reckon we're mighty near the heart o' that wild country they call the 'Shakes'," explained Davy. "Long about ten years ago, Tecumseh, chief o' the Shawnees, had a quarrel with some of the southern Indians, about goin' to war with the whites. That was the very war your dady was in," he told the boy. "Well, when Tecumseh went away, he said that he would stamp on the ground, and houses would fall. I don't know whether he stamped or not, but anyhow long about this time there were earthquakes along the Mississippi. A whole town disappeared—that was New Madrid, and the river overflowed its banks and made new lakes. Reelfoot Lake, which I reckon is fifty

miles or so from where we are now, appeared at that time. Where a great forest of pine had stood one day, there was a lake fifty miles long the next, and the tops o' some of the tallest trees were showin' above the water."

"Do they have earthquakes now?" asked the boy, regarding the landscape fearfully.

Davy was undisturbed. "Oh, now and then," he said. "But they don't do any damage to speak of now. These here harricanes lyin' everywhere about are the work o' these shakes."

Abram and the young boy could well believe it. The country through which they were now passing was almost impenetrable in spots, large forest trees lay twisted and tangled with each other, and covered with dense underbrush that had sprung up since the monarchs of the wilderness had been torn from the earth. The region was wilder than any Davy had ever seen, and he realized why the Indians feared to rear their wigwams there. For many years the region had been uninhabited, a fact which accounted for the great abundance of game which appeared as they made their way on and on through the underbrush.

"I hear as how the Indians are takin' up

this place as a huntin' ground again," observed Abram, "and I reckon it's a good huntin' ground—all o' that. Thar, Davy," he added, as they came into a somewhat open space, "thar's the very spot for yo're home."

Davy slapped Abram on the back. "'That's the spot!" he cried delightedly. The place which lay before them was indeed the embodiment of all that Davy had stipulated was necessary to his comfort. They were on a high bank, beneath which the Obion River wound a tortuous way; the little plateau would need but scant clearing, and the wilderness rose solidly at their backs.

After spending considerable time in admiration of the site, Davy announced that they'd best be making a call upon their neighbors. He knew that a family named Owens lived in the vicinity, and judged that their cabin was still about seven miles away, for he had been given directions before he left the settlement at Shoal Creek.

"Might as well hobble the horse out to graze until we get back," he announced, suiting the action to the word. Then securing a pole, he led the way to the river, for the Owens' cabin

was on the other side. It was late in spring, and the Obion was in flood; it had overflowed its banks for a half mile on both shores.

"Looks cold," said Davy, pausing on the brink, and stepping gingerly into the water. "It *is* cold," he added, "but I reckon we'll just have to take to it like so many beavers."

Thereupon he plunged ahead, feeling with his pole as he went, to get the depth, and the others followed. The going was extremely slippery and uncertain. Davy put his pole too far ahead, and the next instant he was standing in water up to his neck.

"Shucks, now," he cried, "who'd have thought there was a hole plumb in the middle of this meadow?"

He was more careful after that, and when they reached other sloughs, as they did many times after, he took his tomahawk and cut down small trees, which he laid across the hole, and used as bridges. Frequently the boy, being smaller than the other two, had to swim where his father and Abram were able to wade.

The first half mile accomplished, Davy perceived from the rush of the water that they were standing on the edge of the river's chan-

nel. A large tree had fallen into the water from the other side, but it did not reach across. However, there was another tree on the side of the travelers.

"I wonder if I can fell that, so's to reach the other?" asked Davy, eyeing the distance doubtfully.

"Well, Davy, I reckon if anybody can do that, you can," returned Abram, who had the greatest admiration for Davy's hardiness.

Thereupon they set to work with Davy's tomahawk at the tree trunk, taking turns at hacking away until it was nearly ready to fall. Then Davy took charge exclusively, and he made every blow of his ax tell. As good luck would have it, the tree fell in the right place, and formed just the bridge they needed to bring them to the other tree.

But they were not by any means out of the water when they reached the far side of the river channel. As on the opposite bank, the stream had overflowed, in many places to a great depth, and all the performance had to be gone over with. They tried for firm footing; they stumbled again and again; they waded when they could and swam when they had to,

and at last sighted dry land. It was as welcome as ever the coast to a mariner, after a long sea voyage.

Now they set off briskly along the old Indian trail that wound through the woods. It was not much further to the Owens' cabin, Davy was sure.

"Here, Sonny, take my hand," he said to the boy, as he climbed over a pile of brush, and turned back to aid his son, following in his footsteps. The boy did so, and Davy was startled to find the hand was burning hot. He glanced at him sharply, and found he was shaking with a chill.

"Now, now, this will never do," said Davy, in distress. "No time for fever now, Sonny." But his heart was very anxious, though the words were light, and it was with the greatest relief that he saw at last the Owens' home straight ahead. Mr. Owens, whom Davy knew, and several other men were just leaving the cabin. Upon seeing the three drenched and bedraggled wanderers, they stopped in surprise. When Davy was recognized, Mr. Owens welcomed him and his companions, and at once the whole party returned to the cabin.

Mrs. Owens bustled forward at their entrance.

"My, my!" she exclaimed, like the good, motherly soul she was, "whatever did you go and get your deaths of cold for? Heap up the fire, Father, and let's get these folks het up right away."

Overflowing with sympathy and kindness, she offered the men dry clothing and warm food, and took Davy's son completely under her wing. He was wrapped in blankets, plied with hot drinks, and fussed over until Davy's heart nearly burst with gratitude, for his oldest son was the apple of his eye.

"Your kindness to my little boy does me ten times as much good as anything you can do for me, ma'am," he told her, whole-heartedly.

The men with Mr. Owens, Davy discovered, were boatmen. They had brought a flat-bottomed boat up the Obion from the Mississippi, and were bound for McLemore's Bluff, a point a hundred miles further on the river, although only thirty by land, as the river was continually winding. The crew were to receive a bonus of five hundred dollars if they landed their boatload of articles for trade at this point, as it

was to be a proof that the river could be navigated that far. The whole party now hung around the cabin until after supper, when Davy and Abram went down to the boat to spend the night, leaving Davy's boy under the care of Mrs. Owens.

Morning found the river much lower than it had been the day before, and although the boat got along as far as the "harricane," Mr. Owens had mentioned, it was discovered that there was not sufficient water to float the boat across the great mass of trees that had blown down, choking the river from shore to shore.

"Can't get through here to-day, boys," observed Davy after several unsuccessful attempts to get by had been made. "Got to wait for rain now. You fellows might as well come down to my site and help me slap up a cabin."

The boatmen good-naturedly agreed to this, and Davy and Mr. Owens led the way to the little plateau seven miles down the river. While a couple of the men busied themselves with smoothing down a space of fifteen by twenty feet which would serve as the floor, the rest were in the forest, choosing straight-trunked trees, felling them with their sharp

axes and cutting them into logs of suitable length. They notched the logs at the ends, and dragging them to the selected spot, began to pile them up to make the walls. Mr. Owens had brought along his auger; with this holes were bored in the logs which had been cut through on one side of the cabin, in order to make a door. This space was about three feet wide, and split logs were fastened lengthwise against the cut ends by means of wooden pegs, hammered into the auger holes. The roof was soon in place; long poles were laid on top, and lashed in place with deerskin thongs. Over these split pieces of log and heavy bark were laid. A window was made in the same fashion as the door, and an opening at one end was left for the chimney. This was constructed last, of logs piled up outside; the fireplace inside was formed by slabs of stone laid at the sides and back. Cracks and openings were now chinked up with clay, and Davy's new home was complete. The men all returned to the boat, Davy with them, and he bargained to go with them to their landing place, in return for some supplies—four barrels of meal, one of salt, ten gallons of spirits, and a piece of bacon. With

these he stocked his cabin, and sent Abram and his son to stay there until he returned.

It rained a bit that night, and next morning the boatmen decided to try their luck once more. Armed with long poles, with which they pushed the boat along when it would have stopped in the sluggish stream, they reached the "harricane" again, and finding it still impassable, stopped for the night. At daylight Davy rose, announcing that he was going to kill a deer while they were waiting for a flood to carry them over the obstruction.

With his rifle in his hand, Davy set off in high spirits.

"This is sure a game country, anyways," he murmured to himself, as he brought down a splendid buck before he had gone many paces into the wilderness. He slung the deer across his shoulders and started back to the boat.

"Hello, a herd of elks!" he cried, stopping suddenly in his tracks. The trail was there, plain enough, evidently a whole herd had passed a short time before. Davy had never had much experience with elks; they had fled into deeper recesses long before he had learned to use the rifle in his early home. He promptly

hung his deer in a tree, where it would be safe from prowling animals, and set out on the elks' trail.

"Well, I'll be shot—this *is* a game country!" he commented under his breath a moment later, as two more very large and splendid bucks appeared before his eyes. He pulled the trigger, and one of the animals dropped where it stood. The other, apparently grief-stricken for the fate of its companion, refused to take to flight, but stood beside the lifeless form. Hastily reloading, Davy brought down the loyal creature. The two bodies he hung on a limb, as he had done the first one, and continued on the trail of the elks.

It was long after midday before he had a sight of the elks, but before he came within shooting distance, they dashed off. Undaunted, Davy kept up the chase until evening was coming on, when he discovered that he was almost faint from hunger.

"Halloa—halloa—halloa!" cried Davy into the twilight.

"Halloa!" echoed the woods in answer.

"The consarned flat-bottom's got off, and no mistake," cried Davy. He was very much

worn out, very hungry and exceedingly anxious to spend the night on board the boat, and not in the depths of the lonely forest. He fired his gun, and an answering report came back from the distance.

It was dark by this time, and Davy was almost too tired to move. But he set out to crawl along the "harricane," through briers and brambles and berry bushes, all growing over the fallen and half-submerged timber in a way that made it a torment to try to get along.

"No soundin's for me to-night," he told himself firmly. With that he raised his voice once more, and the boatmen, who were not far off, heard him and sent out a skiff to search for him. Guiding them with his voice, they soon located the torn and bruised hunter, and brought him back to the boat.

"I reckon I want sewin' up, all over," observed the weary deer-slayer, as he tried to swallow the food they brought him. "And I'm so tired I can hardly work my jaws."

He slept as soundly as man ever did that night.

X

DAVY PREPARES FOR CHRISTMAS

"Davy!" called Mrs. Crockett, "Davy!"

Striding along several paces ahead, with his rifle on his shoulder, and guiding a pack-horse with one hand, Davy was marching through the autumn woods, singing at the top of his voice. It took several repetitions of Mrs. Crockett's call before he heard her.

"Stop singing a minute, for mercy's sake, Davy!" she said then. "Anybody'd think you had something to sing for, to hear you. Come back here and fix this pack; it's slipping."

Abandoning his own horse to the care of one of the children, Davy retraced his steps along the narrow trail. His wife, who was leading the other pack-horse, added an unnecessary touch of color to the riotous woods, in her dress of homemade linsey, dyed bright scarlet.

Davy eyed her in great surprise.

"Why, Mother," he said, "you're not gettin' tired o' trampin', are you?"

"Oh, Davy, it's been a long, long way," she sighed. "I don't feel as if I could stand another night in the woods—especially if it rains. It looks cloudy, too."

"Well, now, you won't have to," returned Davy cheerfully. "We're within a couple of dozen paces of the house this minute," and as he adjusted the pack, he took his wife by the arm.

The hazy gold of the day was fading as the little procession reached its destination. The "couple of dozen paces" had stretched themselves out until even Davy's blithe spirit began to droop. A hundred and fifty miles through the wilderness, over hills and prairies and streams was not a journey to be attempted by the faint-hearted.

"Here we are, Mother!" cried Davy, who had taken the lead again. "See our golden ears a-wavin' in the breeze?" He seized the youngest child in his great arms and swung him above his head.

"Well, well, you've got a comfortable sight o' corn, Davy," remarked his wife. "It grew

better'n I'd think, with no care or anything."

"It's fine, rich soil," explained Davy. "After I'd helped those fellows with the boat to land their stuff up the river at McLemore's Bluff, one o' them came back with me and helped me clear the land. We just cut down the trees and set fire to the field, and then we got sharp sticks and made holes for the corn. It didn't take but mighty little time, and now you see we've got corn enough for the winter growing between the charred stumps."

Mrs. Crockett was glad of that. Starting life afresh in an unbroken country, many miles from the little settlement she had called home, was a difficult task at best.

"Here, Sonny, we'll lug this plunder inside first," said Davy to one of the boys when the tired horses stopped before the cabin door. The blankets, the few rough table utensils, some clothing, and the loom constituted the household "plunder" which the Crockett family had considered necessary to bring, and very little time was required to set the wheels of domestic machinery running. Davy and his boys went to work the following morning on furniture for the cabin. A table was a neces-

sity, but was provided easily enough after a few hours' labor. A good-sized tree was felled, and the trunk split into half. These halves were split again, lengthwise, so as to make two rough planks, which were laid side by side and fastened together with wooden pegs, driven through the two joined edges. Hickory stakes driven into holes made by an auger formed the legs, and completed what was a serviceable table, at least. Davy also went the length of providing a few chairs for his family, and fashioned a bedstead, making the frame of the hewn logs, and in place of the modern spring, roping in the open space with deerskin thongs. But further than this Davy would not go; the children of the family were provided with bearskins for couches, and indeed, they had never known any other fashion of "going to bed."

It was now late October, and for several weeks Davy, having gathered in his corn, devoted himself to providing his family with meat for the winter. Deer and bear were plentiful; in fact, the whole countryside swarmed with all kinds of wild animals, except buffaloes, which had departed further west.

As Christmas drew near, the Crockett family rejoiced in a plentiful larder of dried and jerked and salted meat, sufficient corn to last if used with care, and fine warm clothing of deerskin, fringed and brightly colored, or rough linsey, woven and fashioned by Mrs. Crockett herself. But Davy's stock of powder was running low.

"Here we are in the mouth o' Christmas," observed Davy one morning, "and I haven't enough powder to fire off my Christmas guns."

"It's a pity you didn't get that keg of powder your brother-in-law brought out with him," returned Mrs. Crockett, who was at work at her loom. The brother-in-law referred to had lately moved out to the same region, and built his home on the opposite side of the river, about six miles west of the Crockett cabin.

"It's never too late to mend," retorted Davy, "I'll go after it this very day."

"What! With the ground covered with snow, and the river flooded with slush? You'd have to walk a mile in icy water up to your waist, to get across."

Davy rose and went to the cabin door, where he stood looking out at the wintry scene.

"I've no powder to hunt with," he said, after a bit. "What's the good of living in a game country if you've no powder? Besides we'd starve without I kill more varmints. The dried stuff won't last all winter."

"Might as well starve as for you to get your death," answered his wife. "You'll freeze or get drowned, and where'll I be then, with all the children?"

"Shucks, Mother. I can take care o' myself," and Davy began to lace on a pair of deerskin moccasins. Making a bundle of some extra clothing, including shoes and stockings, he fastened his powder horn, with the remains of his powder, around his waist, picked up his rifle, and turned a bright smile of farewell upon his family.

"Take care o' yourselves," he bade them, "and when I get back we'll have a bang-up Christmas celebration."

Outside, Davy found that the snow was about four inches deep—just enough to make the going wet and cold. It was a quarter of a mile to the river, and Davy was not reassured when he saw it nearby.

"Looks like the ocean I saw down Baltimore

way," he thought, as he waded out. Over the channel of the river lay a huge log, which provided easy crossing, but at the other end Davy was forced to take to the water again. He waded on until he came to a deep slough, which he had known of before; it was wider than the river itself, and he had often crossed it on a log; now the log was nowhere in sight. But Davy knew where it must lie, because when the water was lower there was a little island close beside it, with a sapling growing there, and the sapling was still visible for about six feet.

"Now what shall I do?" he meditated, staring at the sapling, which was quite out of his reach. He had sounded the water with a pole and found that it was a dozen feet in depth.

"Never saw so many sloughs before in all my life," said Davy, whose pleasure in wading icy streams was vanishing with every step. "Now I wonder can I make that floating log?"

A floating log is a precarious foothold at any time; for a man already chilled to the bone, whose feet have become nerveless lumps, it is next to impossible to leap upon it and step lightly along its surface. But Davy was equal to mounting the bobbing log, although he could

not control its tendency to roll over. By the time he was well in the middle of the slough, with deep water all around him, the ancient tree trunk was listing badly. Next moment Davy found himself up to the neck in an ice-bath. With the instinct of the woodsman, he had flung up his arms, holding aloft his rifle and his extra clothing as he fell, and now he sputtered on for several yards, still with his hands high above his head. Without attempting to regain his footing on the treacherous log which had turned completely over, he struggled on until he found himself on safe ground at last, with no more water to cross.

"Five mile to go yet," thought Davy, his teeth knocking together and his dripping garments stiffening in the chilling air. With unbending fingers he started to pull off the wet clothes, his feet buried in the freezing snow, and a sharp wind cutting at his wet skin. It was with great difficulty that he managed to get himself into his dry clothing, and he hung the now frozen garments he had taken off on the limb of a tree, to be picked up again on his way home.

"Now for a good, stiff run to get the old

blood goin'," he thought confidently. But, to his surprise, he found that he could not run; the best he could do was to take a step of about six inches' length. Davy was more nearly frozen than he had ever been in his life. He had a dogged determination, however, and he continued to put one foot before the other, however slowly and painfully; despite the fact that his whole being cried out for rest—rest in the snow. On he made his way, his grim will battling with his nerveless body; over the unbroken snow, through the silent, whitened woods. Gradually the use of his limbs returned to him, and he went on a little faster; then a little faster still; but the five miles stretched interminably, and evening had come before there was any sign of a habitation. At last a faint light showed in the distance; Davy was not quite certain that his eyes were not deceiving him; then he made out the dark outlines of his brother's cabin, and the dim light filtering through the tiny window at the side. With the barrel of his rifle he rapped on the cabin door, in a final effort that left him swaying against the door jamb.

"Well, I'll be shot!" exclaimed his brother,

opening the door and just saving Davy from falling inside. He assisted him over the sill and to a seat at the fire. Seeing that Davy was exhausted, he busied himself for a while with bringing him round. Davy's wet shoes were pulled from his feet, and warm blankets were thrown around him. Supper was just ready, and after a few swallows of hot soup Davy's stupor began to lighten.

"What possessed you to go swimmin' a day like this?" inquired the owner of the house. "I never knew you were so all-fired fond o' baths, Davy."

Davy grinned in returning animation. In short phrases he sketched the day's experience for the family, explaining that he wanted powder to fire off his Christmas guns, and didn't feel as if it would be Christmas without that form of celebration. His brother was amazed at what he called Davy's foolhardiness, but as he talked he kept Davy's plate supplied with warm and savory food, and Davy cared little for anyone's opinion of his conduct.

Next morning, he woke to the music of an icy gale playing round the little lonely cabin. He lay and listened to the shrieks and moans

of the winter wind, snugly wrapped in bear-skins, with his feet to the glowing fire.

"Reckon that there bath didn't do me no harm," he observed later, rising from his comfortable bundle of fur. He stretched his tall frame and tossed one of the children above his head to prove it.

"Well, you can't be goin' home to-day," responded his brother. "Just put your nose outside that door and see how piercing cold it is."

It was bitterly cold, as Davy himself admitted.

"I might as well stay here for a day, and maybe the water'll be frozen over," he said. "But I'll take a turn in the woods, anyhow, if I can't go home. It's a long time since I had any powder to spare, and I'd kind o' like the feel o' shootin' somethin' to-day."

Despite the protests of his host, Davy departed, and was soon out of sight in the depth of the wind-swept forest. He returned in a couple of hours, bowed beneath the weight of two deer, and thoroughly satisfied with the day's work. That night the wind grew colder still; it whirled the snow about the little cabin,

and fiercely assaulted the well-chinked spaces between the logs.

"It would be plain foolishness for you to try to get out to-day," Davy's brother assured him in the morning. "The river'll be frozen over, but not hard enough to bear you."

Davy admitted the truth of that. He went out hunting again, and pursued a bear all day, but was not able to catch up with it. The following day blew in to the tune of a falling temperature, that impelled his host to beg Davy not to attempt departure in such bitter weather. But Davy's patience was at an end.

"I reckon I'll be goin', and all the blasts in creation won't stop me," he drawled. "My family's without meat, and I'll get home to 'em or die a-tryin'."

In vain the others pointed out that there must be sufficient dried meat at home to last for some days to come; that the water would be frozen solid in a few days, or fall back into its natural channel. Davy couldn't wait. With his keg of powder and his rifle, he departed as cheerfully as if no dangers lay in his path. His brother watched him go, with long, easy strides, until the forest wall shut him from sight.

From the top of a hill Davy saw the river below him, and it looked a sheet of ice as far as he could see. The five mile tramp through the forest, cold though it was, had only served to send his blood racing through his veins, for he was hardy through and through. Cautiously he stepped out on the frozen surface of the river, but he had gone only a few steps when the ice broke. Then for a while he tried breaking it with his tomahawk ahead of him, so that he could wade.

"It's a sight better than thinkin' I'm safe and then gettin' thrown in every other step," he assured himself. He waded on until he reached the treacherous log that had overturned with him on his former trip; now it was frozen tightly in place, and he could make use of it with impunity. All went well now, until he came to the deep slough where he had crossed on the submerged log. Here the current was swift, and the water could not freeze. Davy found the log, and crossed on it as before, balancing in several feet of icy water. He climbed the sapling against which he had lodged the forked tree trunk, and leaving his rifle in the tree, he crawled along the lodged

sapling with the keg of powder, and deposited it on the far side. Then he returned for his rifle, and crept back once more. By this time he was so nearly frozen that further effort seemed impossible; but he struggled through the rest of the water, keeping his gun high and his powder dry. His stiffened fingers could hardly unloosen his rifle when he at last reached the shelter of his own cabin.

"Mercy sakes, Davy!" cried his wife, when he opened the door. "We'd given you up for dead."

"I'm not quite dead, but mighty nigh it," returned Davy, speaking with difficulty, "but I've got my powder, and that's what I went for."

XI

BATTLING WITH THE MISSISSIPPI

"That makes thirty thousand staves we've got ready," said Davy to his helpers. All day they had been busy bundling up the split oak logs that were to load Davy's two boats, bound for New Orleans.

"We'll be able to get off in the morning, no doubt o' that," he added. He edged near to the blazing fire about which all hands were gathered, and lay contentedly staring up at the starry sky.

Davy was feeling prosperous. His proposed venture in lumber was about to turn out well, he believed; with the boats and their loads ready, and the broad river upon which to float them down to market, he felt that failure was out of the question. Many of the men who had helped to build the boats and cut the staves were determined to accompany Davy on his trip, and everybody was looking forward to a

good night's rest in preparation for the start next day.

"You're the greatest bear hunter in the country, ain't you, Davy?" observed one of the men presently. "How many bears 'd you-all kill this last year?"

"A hundred and five," said Davy promptly. "Killed forty-seven of 'em last month alone."

"Great snakes!" exclaimed the other. "That's some record. Tell us one o' your excitin' adventures, Davy. You must've had a heap."

Davy considered. "Well—there was one about a week after New Year's; that was some lively hunt. I'd just got home the week before, havin' killed fifteen bears right out this way. But a neighbor o' mine, whose name is McDaniel, was out o' meat and wanted me to go along back with him and hunt some more. So, not likin' to be done out o' any good bear fights, I went along," grinned Davy.

"I reckon there aren't many you miss," put in one of the listeners.

"Not if I can help it. Well, the first day out we got three. Next morning I left my son at the camp, for he had come along o' us,

and McDaniel and I started on toward the harricane. When we'd gone about a mile, we started a very large bear, but we got along mighty slow on account of the cracks in the earth occasioned by the earthquakes. We, however, made out to keep in hearing of the dogs for about three miles, and then we come to the harricane. Here we had to quit our horses, as Old Nick himself couldn't have got through it. By this time several of my dogs had got tired and come back; but we went ahead on foot for some little time in the harricane, when we met a bear comin' straight to us—not more'n twenty or thirty yards off. I started my tired dogs after him, and McDaniel went after them, while I went on to where my other dogs were. I had seen the track o' the bear they were after, and I know'd he was a screamer. I followed on to about the middle o' the harricane, but my dogs pursued him so close that they made him climb an old stump twenty feet high. I got in shootin' distance, and fired, but bein' in such a flutter from runnin', I couldn't hold steady; however, I broke his shoulder, and he fell. McDaniel come up just then havin' followed my trail, and I left

him to butcher the bear, and went after our horses, and brought them as near as the nature o' the case would allow. I got our bags, and after we'd skinned the bear, and fleeced off the fat, we carried it to the horses in several loads, and when we started back we had a heavy pack of it on each one. We went on till about sunset, when I thought we must be near our camp, so I hollered and my son answered me, and we moved in that direction. Just then I heard my dogs make a warm start again; I jumped off my horse and gave him to my friend, and said I'd follow them. He went on to camp and I went after my dogs, runnin' with all my might, until night come on. The woods were rough and hilly, and all covered over with cane.

"Now I had to go more slowly, and kept fallin' over logs and into the cracks made by earthquakes, so I was scared I'd break my gun. After three miles or so I came to a big creek, and waded it. It was knee-deep and mighty cold, but I was all wet with sweat from runnin', and didn't feel it much. On the other side I listened for my dogs, and found they were barkin' all the same in the one place,

so I know'd they must've treed him. I pushed on in the direction o' the noise, till I found a hill ahead too steep to climb, so I backed and went down the creek till I come to a hollow, and took up that hill I got to a place where I could climb the hill.

"I got to the dogs right after that, and found they'd treed a bear in a large forked poplar, and it was settin' in the fork. I could see the lump, but not plain enough to shoot good, as there was no moon, so I set to huntin' dry brush to make a light, but I could find none. But I could find that the ground was torn mightily to pieces by big cracks.

"Finally I thought I could shoot near enough by guess, so I pointed at the lump and fired away. But the bear clomb up higher, and got out on a limb. Then I loaded up and fired again, but the old fellow didn't move. While I was loadin' for a third shot, the first thing I know'd, the bear was down among my dogs, and they were fightin' all around me. I had my big butcher knife in my belt, and I had a pair o' dressed buckskin breeches on. So I stood determined to defend myself as well as I could. I stood there for some time, and now

and then I could see a white dog I had, but the rest of 'em, and the bear, I couldn't see at all. They kept on fightin', sometimes in three feet o' me, but at last the bear got down in one o' the cracks that the earthquake had made in the ground, about four feet deep, and I could tell the bitin' end o' him by the hollerin' o' my dogs. So I took my gun and pushed the muzzle about, till I thought I had it against the main part of his body, and fired; but it was only the fleshy part of his foreleg. With this, he jumped out o' the crack, and they all had another hard fight around me. Then the bear was forced into the crack again."

"Too bad it was so miserable dark," observed one of the audience.

"It was sure dark," continued Davy. "I had laid down my gun and now I started huntin' for it, and while huntin' I got hold of a pole, and decided to punch the bear with that. When I'd punch, the dogs'd jump in on him, but he'd bite, and they'd jump out. I concluded, as he was takin' punchin' so patiently, that he might lie still enough for me to get down in the crack, and feel around till I could get the right place to dig him with my butcher.

I jumped in, and my dogs got down before me, and the bear kept his head toward them. I got along up to him easy, and felt for his shoulder with my hand. Then I made a lunge with my long knife, and stuck him through the heart at which he just sank down, and I crawled out in a hurry. In a little while my dogs crawled out too and seemed satisfied, which was the way they've always had o' tellin' me they had finished him.

"By this time I was beginnin' to feel the cold, but I managed to get my bear out o' the crack after many hard trials, and I butchered him, and laid down to try to sleep. But my fire was very bad, and I couldn't find anything that would burn well; my leather breeches and everything else I had on were wet and frozen. Then I concluded I'd freeze if I didn't warm myself in some way. So I got up, and hollered awhile, and then I would just jump up and down with all my might, and throw myself in all sorts o' motions. But all this wouldn't do, and my blood was all the time gettin' colder, and the chills were comin' all over me. I was so tired I could hardly walk, but I thought I'd do the best I could to save my life, and then,

if I died, nobody would be to blame. So I went to a tree about two feet through, and not a limb on it for thirty feet, and I would climb up it to the limbs, and then lock my arms together around it, and slide down to the bottom again. This made the insides o' my arms feel mighty good and warm again. I kept it up till morning, and how often I clomb up and slid down my tree I don't know, but I reckon at least a hundred times. When I got back to camp McDaniel and my son were just givin' me up for lost."

"Sufferin' wildcats, Davy!" cried the man next to him, "I reckon I wouldn't gone down after that bear—not if I could get all the bears in the woods."

"Oh, well," replied Davy, "it's always been my way to go ahead once I get started on a thing."

It was now growing late, and everybody decided that the time for sleep had come. They wrapped themselves warmly in blankets and skins, and soon were asleep, and Davy, at least, dreamed rosy dreams of success on the morrow, when he would "go ahead" with his boats.

Early in the morning all hands were at work,

doing the last minor things that always have to be done, but everything was soon pronounced ready. The boats were built of strong timber, were caulked and pitched, and each was fitted with a small hatchway house over the entrance of the cabin underneath it. Each boat had a well, so that the water that leaked in could be baled out, and each was steered with a long oar, at the stern, sometimes assisted by poles.

"All ready, boys?" called Davy, when he had seen to all the details, and was waiting to push off.

"All ready," the joyful shout came back, and next moment the two boats were floating gently down the Obion.

"Clear sailin', eh, boys?" cried Davy, seeing himself already wealthy from the results of his project. It was not far to the place where the Obion joined the Mississippi, and soon the boats had turned into the great yellow flood, a mile wide, that rolled swiftly along in the exuberance of the early spring freshet. The great bare woods bordered the stream on either shore, broken here and there by gloomy, sodden swamps, and the woodsmen, who had had

little to do with water, were appalled at their situation, as they were called upon every minute to avoid islands and negotiate the various windings of the river.

"This is the first time I ever see such a river," muttered Davy, who with a pole in his hand was helping the crew to pass a particularly disagreeable island. Davy in truth had never seen the Mississippi before.

"There we go again!" cried one of the men, as he tried to keep his boat from bumping into the other, and failed, just as they had constantly failed to keep them apart. Davy was exasperated.

"Here, we'll lash 'em together," he shouted above the uproar of the waters and the bawling of the men.

Lashing made matters a little worse, if anything; the boats were now so unmanageable that steering was an impossibility. Everyone was stiff and sore and badly scared, but there was nothing to do but keep trying to guide the vessels down the river. Toward night they drew near to some boats from the Ohio, and when these landed for the night, Davy tried to

land his outfit too. But his boats refused to be brought to a stop.

"Better go on and run all night," shouted a man from one of the Ohio boats, and willy-nilly Davy took his advice, for he could do nothing else.

They were now floating sideways, he realized, and the boat he was in was behind the other. Suddenly there was a rush of feet on the deck above, and Davy could hear the men pulling with all their might; before he could dash to the companionway there was a crash, as the boat rammed into an island and lodged broadside in a large raft like drift or timber. As soon as the boat struck, Davy dashed for the hatchway which came right through the top of the boat, and was the only way of getting out of the cabin, except for a small hole in the side, which the men had used to put their arms through in order to dip up water, before the boats had been lashed together. As he reached the hatchway, Davy was hurled back by a torrent of water, pouring through with all the strength of the river behind it. Moreover, the boat had careened madly, and now the hatchway was turned down in such a way that it was

in vain that Davy strove to force his way against the raging torrent pouring headlong from above.

"The hole in the side!" was the thought that flashed into his mind in his great danger, and he struggled to reach that. But it was too small. In desperation he stuck both his arms through, the water rising around him and already above his waist.

"Pull me out or pull me in two!" he roared to some of the crew whom he could see just outside. It was neck or nothing, and there was not a minute to lose.

The men seized Davy's arms, and pulling with all the violence their sturdy frames could muster, they jerked him through the tiny aperture.

"Jumpin' painters!" he gasped, when he found himself sprawling on the driftwood with the rest of the crew, "I feel like a skinned rabbit."

Skinned he literally was; he had been wearing a shirt with no coat when the crash came, and both the shirt and most of the skin on his back had been torn off; furthermore he was barefooted, as were two of the others.

"There's nothin' to do but set here and wait for sunrise," one of the men observed presently, as they all settled themselves as comfortably as possible on the huge pile of driftwood which was edged against the little island. The boats, which had been riven apart from each other in the crash, now pursued their headlong way, undeterred by the water they had taken in, except for the fact that one at least was not floating rightside up. So much Davy saw dimly, as he sat and took stock of his numerous aches and smartings.

"Them was sure wild boats," remarked one of the men; "I'm mighty glad to be on somethin' that don't move."

"I reckon I am too," said Davy, "even if I do look like a pretty cracklin' ever to get to Congress." (He had hopes of reversing his previous defeat at the polls when another election day should come around.)

"We've lost all our loadin'," he mused later on, as they all sat waiting for the dawn, with the chill winds blowing over them. "We've lost all our clothes, too, 'cept what we've got on, but I've just had such a mighty marvelous escape that somehow I feel happier than I

ever did before, just a-settin' here on this drift; I feel prime."

As the sun rose they saw a boat coming down the river, and joyfully hailed her. One of the men stripped off his red shirt and waved it from a pole. The ship sent out a skiff and brought Davy and his men aboard, and carried them all down to Memphis. There Davy met a merchant whom he had known before, and this kind-hearted friend fitted out the whole party with hats, shoes, shirts and what money they needed. Thereupon the members of the crew parted, Davy and one of the men going to Natchez to see if they could learn anything of their runaway boats. They heard that one of them had been seen about fifty miles from where the crash occurred, and an effort had been made to land it, but without success.

"I'm not surprised, knowin' the hard-headedness o' them boats," declared Davy. "Furthermore, I haven't much mind to try any more boating."

Leaving the mystery of the wild craft unsolved, he went home to the little cabin on the Obion.

XII

OFF FOR TEXAS

Davy had not been misled by his dreams of a seat in Congress; the very summer after he had returned home in 1826, a failure at boating, he offered to run for Congress again and his nomination was accepted. Now, Davy had no money with which to conduct a campaign, but he had a light heart, and a good friend who advanced him the little he needed to go about the district and make friends. At that time the people in the West and South had grown restless under the legislation of what they called "silk stocking" men—men who had culture and refinement, rather than ability to make their way in the wilderness, as many of these southwestern people had had to do. Davy had been dubbed: "The man from the cane," and tales of his bear hunting, his fearless manner of expressing his opinions, and his poverty had gone through the whole nation, ever since

his reëlection to the state legislature from a district in which he was, at that time, practically unknown.

Davy caught the popular fancy. He had two opponents, Colonel Alexander, and General William Arnold. At one place where the rival candidates were to address a meeting, Davy had to speak first. Colonel Alexander followed him, and when General Arnold spoke he occupied his time in explaining why Colonel Alexander should not be elected, entirely ignoring the fact that Davy was also a candidate. While he was speaking a large flock of guinea-hens came along, and made so much noise that the general was obliged to ask someone to shoo them away. As soon as General Arnold finished speaking, Davy jumped up on the stump, and in his merry way addressed his opponent:

"Well, General, you are the first man I ever saw that knew the language of fowls. You had not the politeness even to allude to me in your speech. But when my little friends the guinea-hens came up, and began to holler: 'Crockett, Crockett, Crockett!' you were ungenerous enough to drive them all away."

At this the crowd burst into roars of laughter, for the guinea-hen's call does sound very much like "Crockett," and Davy knew that he had won the day. Repeated happenings of this sort won him the election, when the time came, for he beat his competitors by twenty-seven hundred votes.

His motto: "Be sure you're right, then go ahead," became quoted from one end of the country to the other.

Borrowing enough money to take him to Washington, Davy left behind him his native wilderness, and entered on a new life. The way of the politician he found highly enjoyable, and rude and untrained as he was, he had a splendid brain, and in his new surroundings he began to blossom out in unexpected mental powers. With his hearty good nature and generous ways, Davy could not help but be popular, though his manners so smacked of the backwoods that many funny tales at his expense went the rounds. One of them concerned his visit to President John Quincy Adams, and his subsequent attendance at a presidential dinner-party. A witty newspaperman printed an account of this affair,

which, it was claimed, was Davy's own story of the event. The article was reprinted in every newspaper in the United States, and Davy finally had to deny publicly that he had written any such story.

All this laughter at Davy's expense served to keep him before the public eye, however, and he was the most talked-of man in the country. When his term expired he was reëlected. Meanwhile a new president had taken the chair, Andrew Jackson, whom Davy had first admired, when he came, as State's Attorney, to the lonely tavern kept by old John Crockett. He had served under him in the Creek War, and now he was called upon to serve under him in political life. But Davy was not a man who would allow his own interests to influence his actions, and when the President urged the removal of the Indian tribes from the lands east of the Mississippi, where many still lingered, Davy refused to back the measure. Turning against Jackson was at that time considered almost traitorous, for the people were heart and soul for "Old Hickory." Davy felt the result of his opposition at the next election in 1830, for he was defeated and had to return

home. He spent the next two years on the Obion hunting bears, but political life still beckoned him, and he accepted the nomination and was again elected to Congress at the end of that time. He served from 1833 to 1835.

But Davy was a real woodsman, and the constant strain of life in Washington began to tell upon his health. His doctors advised him to take a trip, and in obedience to their wishes, and a desire of his own to see the North and East, he decided to make a tour of the cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York and wind up with a visit to New England. His journey was one of the bright spots in his career. Everywhere the people came out in great crowds to meet him and cheer for him, and visions of becoming president began to fill his brain.

The disappointment was all the keener then, when at the next election Davy found himself beaten out of his place in Congress. His rosy dreams toppled to the dust, and he returned to his little home. There he resumed his deer-skin hunting shirt, and took down "Old Betsey" from the wall. But hunting bears had lost its savor.

"My country no longer requires my services," he told his wife sadly, one day. "I have made up my mind to go to Texas. I have a new row to hoe, a long and rough one, but come what will, I'll go ahead."

Mrs. Crockett was grief-stricken.

"Texas!" she cried. "Full of Mexican cutthroats."

"I'll help to beat 'em back," returned Davy. "Texas ought to be free of Mexican rule—it's full o' fightin' men, ready to take a fightin' chance. I'll cut out and quit the States until honest men shall have a chance to work their way to the head of the heap."

Davy had made up his mind, and, as on many previous occasions, once he had decided to do a thing, that thing he would do. A few days later he stood in the doorway of his little cabin, wearing a clean hunting-shirt and a new fox-skin cap with the tail hanging down behind. In his hand he carried a new "Betsey," which had been presented to him as a gift from the Philadelphians when he was visiting that city.

It was a cold morning and a film of frost was smeared over the land around the little cabin.

Davy looked at his wife and children standing, a silent group behind him, and felt a sensation around his eyelids that he had never known since the long ago day when he returned, a lanky boy of fifteen, to his father's tavern after two years of wandering.

"It's freezin' outside," he said a trifle tremulously, "but I do believe there's some thawin' around my eyelids."

With that he was off, following the winding course of the Obion. His little girl ran after him and stood watching until he turned and seeing her, waved a last farewell. The next moment the forest had closed upon him, and the little girl ran into the cabin with the tears streaming down her face.

Traveling steadily southwestward, Davy found himself, after many weeks, on board a little steamboat writhing its way along the Red River, bound for Natchitoches, in Louisiana. No sooner were the paddle-wheels in motion than Davy observed a crowd of passengers eagerly gathered about something that he could not see, so he drew near to find out what was going on. Seated on a chest in the middle of the crowd was a tall, lanky fellow,

who was running a gambling game known as thimble-rig.

"Who'll bet he can name the thimble with the pea under it?" he was asking as Davy came up.

One of the bystanders promptly bet a shilling that he could, and the lanky one shuffled the thimbles and the pea for a moment and then called upon the man to choose his thimble. When the man who was running the game lifted the thimble, there was no pea there, although the one who had made the bet had seen it plainly disappear beneath that particular thimble. Davy watched a while longer, and shillings continued to be bet and lost with unabated zeal for some minutes. Finally Davy, who knew that the trick lay in the lanky fellow's sleight of hand, placed a bet himself, but insisted on lifting the thimble. Of course, the pea was there, and the whole crowd burst into wild shouts of laughter.

The disconsolate gambler, his occupation gone, sought out the man who had ruined his business. Davy, strongly opposed to gambling, seized the opportunity to give the stranger a piece of his mind.

"It's a burlesque on human nature," he told him, "that an able-bodied man with a full share of good sense should debase himself so. How can you stand bein' indebted to such a pitiful way o' makin' a livin'?"

"But what's to be done, Colonel?" said the gambler, who had learned from the other passengers that he had been exposed by no less a personage that Colonel Davy Crockett, ex-congressman.

"I'm in the slough of despond," he continued, "up to the very chin. A miry and slippery path to travel."

"Then hold your head up, before the slough reaches your lips."

"But what's the use?" answered the other. "It's utterly impossible for me to wade through; and even if I could, I should be in such dirty plight, that it would defy all the waters in the Mississippi to wash me clean again. No," he added, despairingly, "I should be like a live eel in a frying pan, Colonel, sort of out of my element, if I attempted to live like an honest man at this time of day."

"It's never too late to become honest," returned Davy warmly. "But even admit what

you say to be true—that you cannot live like an honest man—you have at least the next best thing in your power, and no one can say nay to it."

"And what is that?"

"Die like a brave one. Most men are remembered as they died, and not as they lived."

"You are right; but how is this to be done?"

"Come with me to Texas; cut aloof from your degrading habits and associates, and in fighting for freedom, regain your own."

The gambler was deeply moved. Putting his thimbles with which he had been playing into his pocket, he rose and walked up and down for a few minutes. Then he turned, his eyes full of a new fire, and seized Davy's hand.

"By heaven, I will try to be a man again! I will live honestly, or die bravely. I will go with you to Texas."

"Good for you, Thimblerig!" cried Davy, shaking his hand with hearty vigor.

A few days later the little steamer arrived at Natchitoches, and Davy and his new friend set about getting a couple of the tough little Mexican mustangs which were captured wild on the plains of Texas and sold very cheaply.

"These lowlands are said to produce forty bushels of frogs to the acre, every year," observed Thimblerig, as they walked along the river.

"There does seem to be plenty of 'em," answered Davy, endeavoring to keep from stepping upon them, as they hopped in all directions. Just then a clear and musical voice was raised in song, and looking toward the sound, the two travelers saw a graceful young man of about twenty-two, in a fringed hunting shirt, and carrying a rifle in his hand. Across his shoulders was slung a hunting pouch, and his face was burnt so darkly that he looked very much like an Indian.

"Howdy, Colonel Crockett," he called cheerfully as he drew near.

Davy was sure he had never seen him before.

"Howdy," he returned. "Looks like a close shootin' rifle you've got there."

"It is," replied the stranger, "and I know you're wondering who I might be. I've come all of ten days' journey to meet you here, for I'm going with you to Texas. I've heard you're half horse, half alligator, and a little touched with snapping turtle, and can wade

the Mississippi, leap the Ohio, ride a streak of lightning, and slide down a honey locust and not get scratched, so I figured I'd like to see you when your dander was up."

Davy burst into a loud laugh. "I'm that same Davy Crockett you've heard of," he cried, "and I'm right glad to meet you! Thimblerig here and I are goin' to start after the Mexican dogs as soon as we get horses."

Next day the three started for Nacogdoches, in Texas. The strange young man had by this time explained that he was a bee-hunter, a calling which was not unusual in that part of the country. The prairies were covered with flowers, and great swarms of bees were constantly at work, storing honey in the hollow trees of the forest. Both the honey and the wax could be sold to the Mexicans, who formed most of the population of Texas. The bee-hunter, of course, knew all the trails and paths by which it was possible to travel, so his addition to the party was considered most happy.

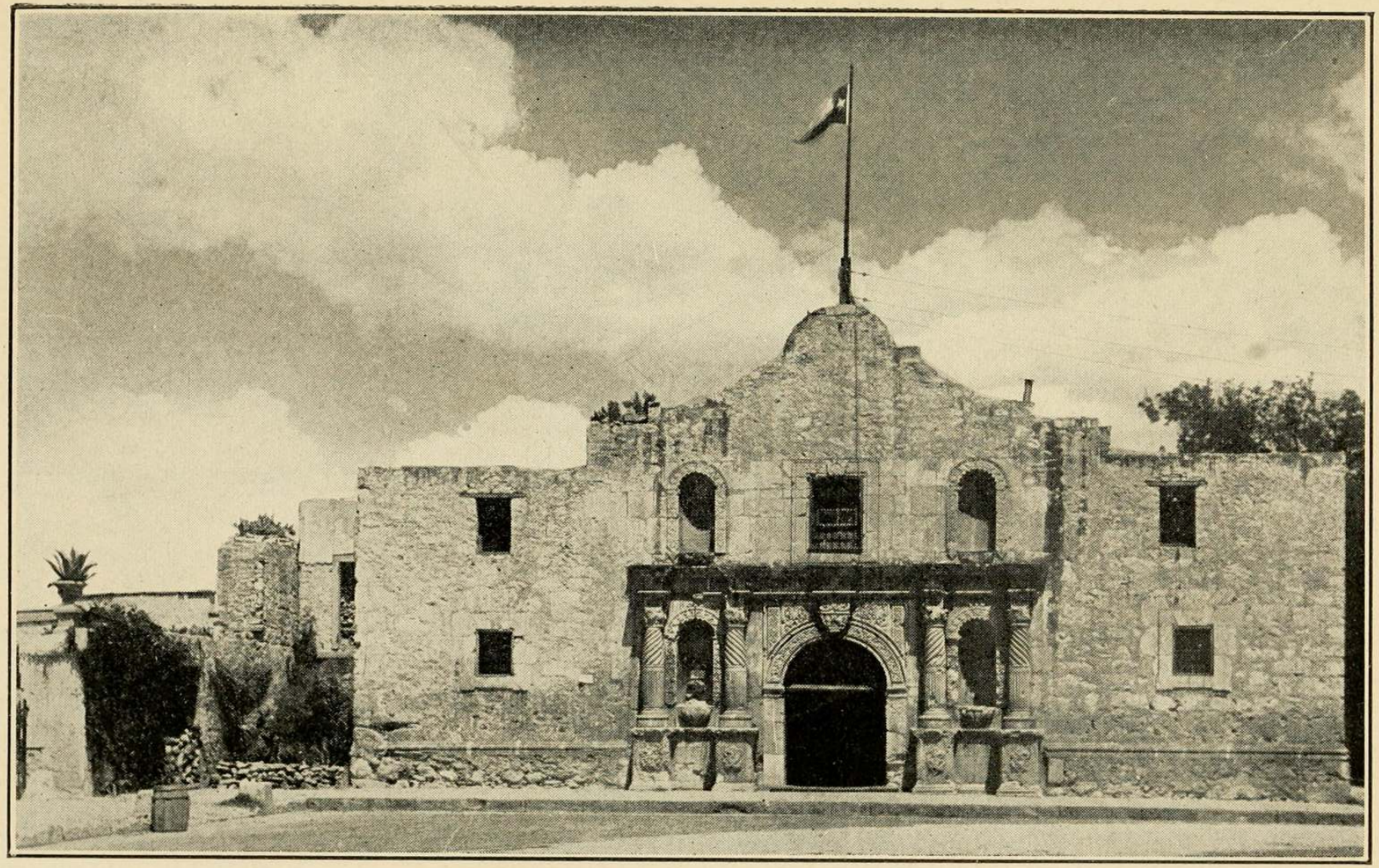
XIII

ADVENTURE A PLENTY

The route lay along a rough trail that frequently lost itself on the prairie, or was to be followed only by means of blazed trees. When they reached Nacogdoches, they stopped to procure fresh horses, for they had already traveled a hundred and twenty miles into Texas, and there were still two hundred miles ahead of them, before they should arrive at San Antonio, in the very heart of Texas, where the main body of Texans was located. Great news awaited the newcomers.

"The Alamo has been surrendered. Looks like an easy road to freedom, eh?" said one of the inhabitants to Davy.

The Alamo was on the San Antonio River, just outside of the town of San Antonio. It was a Mexican fortress, and had recently been garrisoned by several hundred Mexican soldiers, ignorant natives who insulted the col-



THE ALAMO, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Scene of the famous defense against the Mexican Army

onists who had come into this frontier land from Kentucky and Tennessee. Hatred between the men from the States and the Mexicans who claimed the soil had continued to grow over many years.

"Who captured the Alamo?" inquired Davy. Like all the men of the Southwest, he realized that it was only a question of time until Texas should come under American rule, but he knew, too, that considerable fighting would have to come before that happened. The Alamo had always been the center of fierce strife.

"General Burleson," replied the stranger, to Davy's question. "He led a handful of Texans against the Alamo and captured both the fortress and the town, San Antonio."

This news was the signal for much rejoicing among the three comrades, and they resolved to push on to the scene of victory early the next morning. They put up at the only inn the village afforded and were up almost with the sun. Standing before the door, with his head uncovered, Davy made a little speech:

"I will die, if I must, with my 'Betsey' in my arms," he said. "No. I will not die! I'll

grin down the walls of the Alamo, and we'll lick up the Mexicans like fine salt."

With these words ringing on the morning air, the three men leaped to the backs of their little ponies, and set out for the forest, their long legs almost touching the ground as they bestrode the stocky little beasts. The way led through vast canebrakes, where the slender reeds were thirty feet high, and bowed together to form a canopy under which they rode. The trail was so narrow that only one horse at a time could pass, and the cane forests were swarming with game, so that Davy found it very hard to keep on his way.

The second day out, a fierce storm came up just as they were preparing to rest for the night, and the bee-hunter urged them to stop at the cabin of a poor white woman whom he knew in the neighborhood. She made them welcome, though her means of entertainment were scanty, and the three were outside securing their horses for the night when Davy heard the sound of someone approaching.

"Who's there?" he cried into the darkness, reaching for his rifle, which stood against the cabin wall.

"Two rangers bound for the front," drawled a voice with a merry lilt to it. They wore hunting knives, and in the light from the cabin door he perceived that one of them was an Indian, clad in deerskin, and that the other wore a sailor's round jacket and tarpaulin hat. But it was his face which riveted Davy's attention. It was heavily bewhiskered, so that very little showed except his nose and his eyes, and across his forehead there was a deep scar, apparently from a sword-cut. A similar scar was on the back of one of his hands, and altogether he was the most sinister-looking creature that Davy had ever seen.

"So you're bound for the front?" inquired the bee-hunter. "We're headed that way ourselves, and we'll be glad enough of an addition to our party."

"Suits me," returned the sailor, "here, Jack, we'll invite the folks to supper," and he seized the bag which the Indian carried and turning it upside down, produced a brace of rabbits. This was a welcome sight to Davy's hungry-eyed party, and soon supper was prepared, consisting of fried bacon and rabbit, with onions.

"Old Whiskers has been a pirate, I reckon," the bee-hunter whispered to Davy while preparations were going on, and Davy was quite ready to believe it.

"Somehow, I don't relish sitting down to a meal with that party," observed Thimblerig, in an undertone, indicating the alleged pirate with his thumb. But he miscalculated the pirate's hearing ability. That terrifying looking individual drew his long hunting knife from its sheath, and laying it beside his plate, remarked gently:

"Stranger, I think you had better take a seat and have some supper."

Thimblerig glanced at the knife, and then at the pirate's impassive and partly hidden countenance, and quietly seated himself at the table.

Next morning the whole party set out, the two strangers going afoot. The prairie was almost treeless, and was abloom with flowers. During the early hours the men shot a couple of turkeys, and by noon the three horsemen, who had already left the pedestrians behind, were ready for a good meal. With a hot fire blazing before them, they were all seated on the grass while their turkeys broiled, when

they were startled to see the bee-hunter gaze intently upward, apparently at nothing.

"What is it?" cried Davy.

Without a word, the bee-hunter sprang to his feet and ran off at top speed, steering a zig-zag course across the prairie.

"Must be a bee," observed Thimblerig. "These bee-hunters get mighty skillful in chasing 'em to their hives."

The little party around the fire watched until the running figure grew small as a rabbit in the distance, and finally faded from sight. Then they turned their attention to their dinner, and soon made a meal that as Thimblerig said, was "worthy of bigger men."

"Hark," said Davy, suddenly. "Is that thunder?"

There was indeed a distant rumbling on the air, but it was continuous, and the sky was cloudless. The camp fire had been built on the top of a little rise on the prairie, for they were in a rolling country and not on the open plain. Soon a huge black cloud became visible in the distance, very close to the ground, and sweeping onward with tremendous speed. Even as they first saw it, the men began to perceive

that a cloud of dust accompanied the blacker cloud, and the rumbling became louder with every second that passed.

"What can that all mean?" cried Davy.

"Burn my old shoes if I know," replied Thimblerig, jumping to his feet.

"Look at the horses scared plumb to death," said Davy, and sure enough, the tough little mustangs were shivering as though with a chill. Davy and Thimblerig rushed to their aid, and striking off their hobbles, brought them up into the little grove at the top of their eminence. Now the black cloud was almost upon them.

"Buffaloes!" shouted Davy, who had never seen a whole herd in all his life. There were hundreds of them, which had been stampeded by something probably miles away, and now they were rushing headlong, blindly following their leader, and rending the air with their bellowing.

Davy's heart stood still for a second. He saw that the buffaloes were not to be stopped in their wild flight.

"Not while they've got a leader, anyways," he thought. "I've heard that somewhere," and

he raised his rifle and aimed at the great black bull who was a few feet ahead of the rest.

Crack! A spurt of flame and smoke, a roar from the bull, and in a second he had swerved sharply around the foot of the little hill on which the men were standing, and darted off, wounded and roaring, with the whole herd thundering behind him.

For a moment Davy was astonished at the result of his stratagem. Then he hastily reloaded, and leaping to his horse's back, he gave chase over the uplands of the prairie.

At the end of an hour Davy found that spur him as he would, he could not make his horse gain upon the buffaloes, and he decided to return to his friends. Disdaining to follow the buffalo tracks back over the way he had come, he turned his mustang to the west and proceeded at a steady trot for an hour longer. Then he discovered that he was lost.

"Poor Thimblerig!" he muttered, " he won't know how to take care of himself at all."

Disturbed by this thought, he continued to ride on, until his attention was attracted by a herd of a hundred wild horses, grazing on the prairie. Rousing the racing instinct of his own

animal, only recently captured from its wild mates, Davy led off in a long chase that only ceased when the last of the herd disappeared on the horizon. Then, observing that his mustang was about to drop, apparently from exhaustion, he slipped to the ground, and allowed the poor creature to roll at ease on the grass.

Night was now approaching, and Davy cast around for a place to spend the night. There was a large tree, blown down by the side of a stream, and its top branches were closely entwined.

"That might make a good, snug little nest for me," he thought, working his way along the tree trunk to the top. A low growl brought him to a halt.

"That means, 'Stranger, these apartments are already taken,' I reckon," said Davy aloud. In a flash he had his rifle leveled on a pair of brilliant eyes that pierced the gloom. The report of the gun was followed by a low growl, and Davy was dismayed to find that his shot had glanced off the forehead of an immense panther. Davy began a judicious retreat, but the panther, doubly enraged at the rifle shot, sprang through the air like a whirlwind before

Davy had gone back three steps. Davy struck out with the barrel of his rifle, but the panther cared nothing for that, and wheeling around, sprang again. Now Davy had his hunting knife in his hand, having thrown his useless gun away, and as the panther seized on his left arm, he buried the knife in its side, just as the animal sank his fangs into the flesh of his arm. The panther loosed his hold for an instant, then, smarting with his wounds, he pressed onto Davy again. Davy's attempt to blind him with the knife resulted in merely scratching the panther's nose, and served to increase his fury. He shook his head, growled, and, showing his teeth, sprang again, just as Davy's foot caught in a vine, and he sprawled on the ground. Instantly the panther was on his fallen foe; he seized Davy's right thigh in his teeth, and seemed to care little for the knife, pressing into his ribs, or for Davy's twisting his tail as hard as he could, with his left hand.

"My leg's a goner," thought he, struggling to hurl the animal down the bank into the stream, for their scuffling had brought them to the edge of the bank. He stuck his knife

as deeply as he could into the creature's side, and summoned all his strength to throw him over. But the panther sensed his intention and resisted fiercely, all the while tearing at his leg. At last the fight had been pushed so close to the edge that the panther lost his balance, and rolled over and over down the bank. In the fall, he dragged Davy with him, but fortunately the latter fell on top, with the panther's neck a fair mark for his knife. Without waiting to draw a breath, he aimed one desperate blow at the animal's neck, and as the knife sank deep, the great creature struggled for a minute or two and then died.

Davy was exhausted from the fight and his injuries, but he crawled back to the tree-top, possession of which had cost him so dearly, and soon he had fashioned a snug nest for himself among the branches, with the dry moss which had festooned the boughs of the tree for softness, and his horse blanket wrapped around him for warmth.

The sun was high in the heavens when he awakened, stiff and sore from his wounds, and hungry as he had a right to be. He peered over the bank and saw the panther lying dead,

and felt a thrill of gratitude that he had conquered the beast, instead of being conquered himself. Then he began to look about for his pony, but to his surprise it was nowhere to be found.

"The consarned critter's disappeared without leaving trace of hair or hide," he muttered after an extended search, and he set out to get his breakfast. Soon his eyes were gladdened by the sight of a flock of wild geese, on the bank of the little river, and he shot a fine fat gander, stripped him of his feathers, built a fire and had his prize roasting in the least time possible. He had brought along a little tin cup, and a package of ground coffee, in the small pack which he had fortunately removed from his horse before he had turned it loose for the night, and with these aids, he was soon making a hearty breakfast.

His meal over, Davy began to follow the stream.

"Maybe it'll lead me to a trail," he thought, mentally consigning his runaway pony to an unhappy end.

"Now what?" he added, a moment later, as the sound of horses' hoofs came faintly, but in

great numbers, over the plain. He was not long in doubt. Off on the horizon he perceived a band of mounted Indians, and as they drew nearer he saw that they were painted and decked with plumes, and all riding at top speed, with their spears glittering in the sunlight, and their long hair streaming to the wind as they rode.

Davy stood still on the bank of the stream. He was more astounded than frightened, for he had never seen such an array of Indians. The Comanches were splendid horsemen, and when mounted, they controlled their steeds so perfectly that it was hard to distinguish between animal and man.

The whole band swept up like a whirlwind, and dividing into two semicircles, had surrounded Davy before he quite knew what they intended to do. Instinctively he grasped his rifle, then realizing that he could not resist he lowered it, while the chief springing from his horse advanced to meet him.

"He's got his eye on my rifle," Davy thought, observing the direction of his eyes, and at once a plan to save it from confiscation leaped into his mind. The Comanches, though

warlike, had been friendly with the white men, and had mingled with them freely.

"Is your nation at war with the Americans?" asked Davy.

"No," said the chief, "they are our friends."

"Where," said Davy, "do you get your spear-heads, your blankets and your knives?"

"From our friends the white men."

"Well," said Davy, "do you think that if you were passing through their country, as I am passing through yours, they would rob you of your property?"

"No," replied the chief, "they would feed and protect me. And the Comanche will do the same by his white brother."

Davy drew a breath of relief. He was not to be forced into an unequal struggle to retain his beautiful rifle.

Meanwhile, a couple of warriors had discovered the dead panther, and now came up, chattering in Spanish. From their gestures Davy knew they were talking about the many knife wounds the animal bore, and he hastened to give an account of the fight the night before, brandishing his hunting-knife, leveling his rifle, and showing the lacerations in his own

flesh to make the Indians understand what had happened. The chief was surprised and delighted.

"Brave hunter, brave man!" he cried repeatedly. "Brave hunter—be Indian's brother."

Davy at first did not understand what was meant, but finally the chief made it clear that he was inviting him to become a son of the tribe, an honor which Davy politely refused. He explained the circumstances which led to his present situation in the desert, and the chief chuckled when Davy explained that he had thought his horse so exhausted that he probably would not last through the night, and he had not thought it necessary to hobble him. The mustang, the Indian explained, is a wily animal, and doubtless Davy's horse had been shamming fatigue and had seized the first opportunity to run wild.

Despite his disappointment at Davy's refusal to join the tribe, the chief offered to escort him as far as the Colorado River, and providing him with a fresh horse, the whole party set off across the prairie with Davy in their midst.

The Colorado was reached on the second day, and they followed the course of the stream, looking for the place where the San Antonio trail crossed. As they rode along, they saw in the distance a thin spiral of smoke showing above the trees, and as they drew near they spread out in a circle and with loud whoops closed in on the spot from which the smoke was ascending. Davy, who was riding beside the chief, was astonished to see his old friend the gambler, sitting by his solitary fire, engaged in playing with his thimbles, on the crown of his hat. When he looked up, at the first yell, he staggered to his feet, trembling from head to foot, and too terrified to speak a word. Davy rode forward, and jumping to the ground, seized him by the hand.

"Thimblerig!" he shouted joyfully, "I was afraid you must've perished, all by yourself."

Thimblerig gave a frightened glance at Davy's warlike escort.

"It's all right," cried Davy. "The chief has been a good friend to me," and he described how he had been rescued from the depths of the prairie, where he was wandering, without a horse, and stiff from the panther wounds.

The spot where the gambler had been found was close to the San Antonio trail, so, as Davy no longer needed a guide, the Comanches said farewell, and with Davy's words of gratitude ringing in their ears, they wheeled and rode away over the plain.

Shortly afterward, the bee-hunter returned with a plump turkey, and the reunited friends were joyously cooking their supper when they heard the neighing of a horse.

"The Comanches!" exclaimed Thimblerig, who had not gotten entirely over his scare.

"No," said Davy, who had keen eyesight. "It's the pirate and his Indian."

Sure enough, the two rode up in another moment, and seeing their former companions, they offered to join them for the rest of the way.

Next morning the five crossed the river, and pushed on rapidly toward the Alamo. They were within twenty miles of San Antonio when they observed a party of fifteen armed horsemen, riding furiously toward them.

"These fellows are goin' to have something to say," said Davy, "or I reckon they wouldn't be ridin' at such top speed. We're kind of out-

numbered, and it looks as if we'll have to fix up some fortifications."

He led the example, by slipping from his horse, and using the animal as a rampart. The others followed, just as the Mexicans reined in their steeds.

"Surrender!" cried the leader, in Spanish.

"They're ordering us to surrender," explained the pirate, who knew Spanish. "We'll have to have a brush with those blackguards. Let each one single out his man for the first fire. They are greater fools than I take them for, if they give us a chance for a second shot. Colonel, just settle the business with that talking fellow with the red feather. He's worth any three of the party."

"Surrender, or we fire!" repeated the leader, in his native tongue.

"Fire away!" shouted the pirate, also in Spanish.

Next moment there was a terrific report, as the fifteen horsemen fired simultaneously, and before the smoke had cleared away the five travelers, behind their horses, had each selected his man and fired. The ranks of the fifteen scattered like straw before the wind, and leap-

ing to their horses, the fighting men pursued them as they disappeared in a cloud of dust. Several of the mustangs were to be seen running wild, and Davy was sure that some of their bullets had taken effect. The chase was not abandoned until the battlements of the Alamo were in sight, flying an immense flag of thirteen stripes, with a large white star of five points, surrounded by the letters "Texas"—the independent flag which the Texan rangers had unfurled after they succeeded in driving the Mexicans from the fort.

As Davy and his companions rode up to the gates, they were challenged by the sentinel.

"I'm that same Davy Crockett," explained the colonel, "come to give the Texans a helpin' hand on the high road to freedom."

Instantly the gates swung open, while the news flew like wildfire from man to man within the fortress.

"Three cheers for Davy Crockett! Three cheers for Crockett and his scouts!" cried the determined rangers, and Davy's heart warmed to hear them.

XIV

THE CONQUEST OF THE ALAMO

"Somethin's stirrin', boys," observed Davy Crockett, who, with a dozen of the rough riders from the Alamo, were watching from a nearby hill for signs of approaching Mexicans. It was Washington's birthday, in 1836, several weeks after Davy's triumphant entry into the Texan stronghold, and the intervening days had been passed in anxious waiting for an attack by Santa Anna, leader of the Mexicans, and his men.

"That's a mighty swift moving cloud of dust," agreed the bee-hunter, who was one of the party. "I wouldn't be surprised—yes, there they are—" he broke off excitedly as the flash of bayonets, gleaming in the morning sunlight, suddenly burst through the rolling dust-cloud that had been moving among the hills. At the same time faint, but bold bugle notes were wafted to the straining ears of the watchers.

"They're not more than twenty miles away,"

cried Davy, whirling his horse around and using his heel on the animal's ribs. Instantly the others were after him, and they tore along the trail to the fortress at top speed.

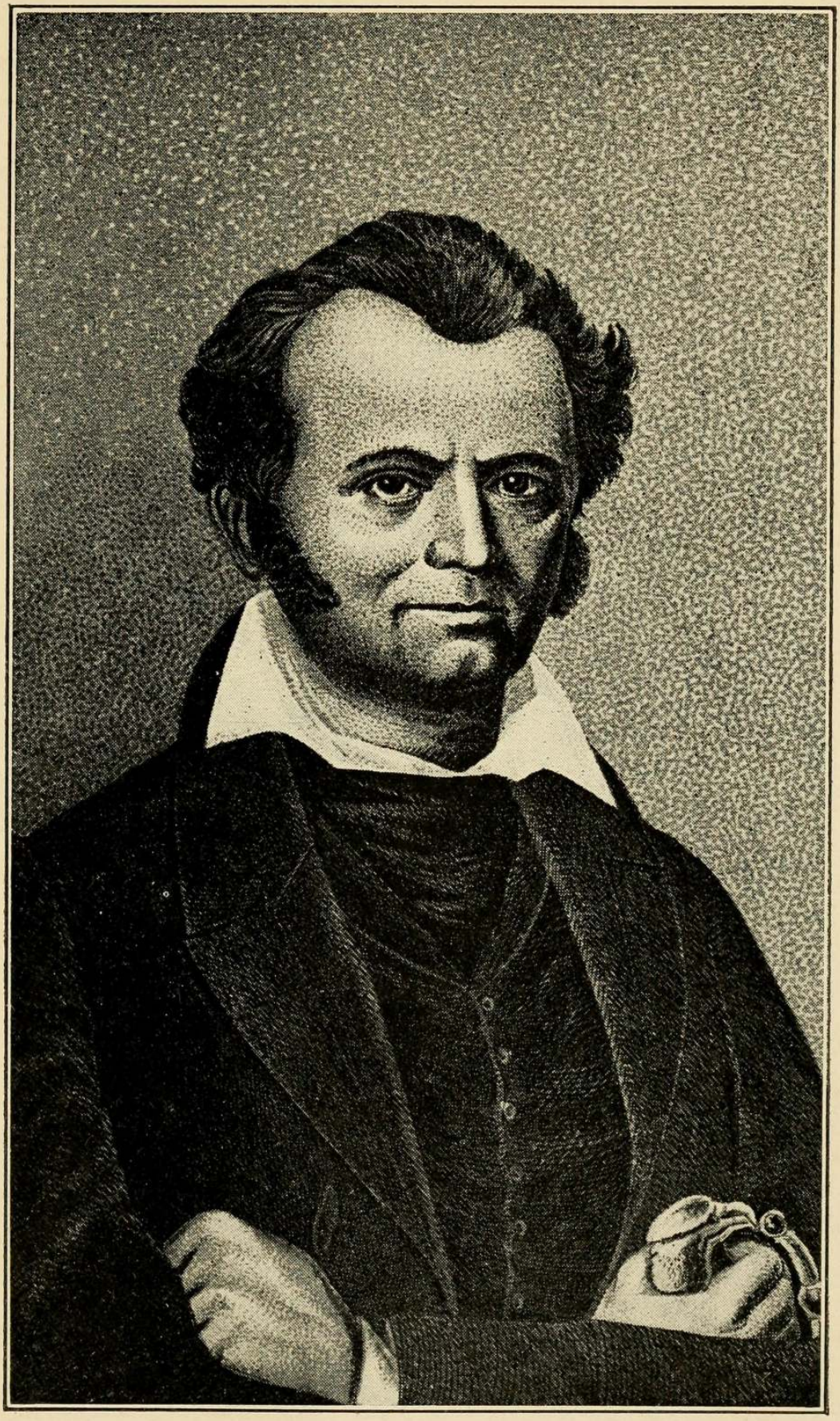
"The Mexicans are coming, the Mexicans are coming!" they cried, as they dashed through the gates. Colonel Travis, who commanded the Texan forces, and Colonel Bowie, after whom the famous bowie knife was named, were at the gates to receive the tidings.

"It's war—and no quarter," said Travis. "No use trying to hold on to the town, we'll be overwhelmed with numbers. But we'll defend the Alamo to the last extremity."

"Liberty—or death!" shouted Davy's little band of scouts, waving their hats in the air.

Immediately orders were issued for the defenders of the fortress to gather within its gates, and hastily the Texans and their sympathizers quitted the town. Altogether there were not more than two hundred, including a few women and children, who filed into the Alamo, determined to withstand the whole Mexican army.

"You still have time to escape," Travis told them, as they gathered together in a little



JAMES BOWIE

Famous pioneer fighter; one of the defenders of the Alamo

knot, just within the gates. "Now is your chance, boys. Who will stand by me to the last?"

One man only turned away; the others stood firm, with lifted heads and eyes flashing courage, and the colonel knew that he could rely upon his little garrison to the very end. The gates were barred, the surplus supplies of food and ammunition which had been carried to the fortress a few days before were looked over, and then the flag of Texas was raised to the battlements. As the white star in its blue field gleamed out from the thirteen stripes, red and white, the whole company stood with bared heads and tingling blood while the bee-hunter sang a song of his own composition—a tribute to Texas and her defenders:

"Up with your banner, Freedom,
Thy champions cling to thee;
They'll follow where'er you lead them,
To death, or victory!"

Three cheers by the whole garrison followed, and drums and trumpets joined in to carry their note of defiance to the approaching foe.

Meanwhile, the Mexicans, the hosts of Santa

Anna, had drawn near, and now, with eagle-topped banners flying and drums rolling, they entered the town of San Antonio, sixteen hundred strong, infantry, artillery and cavalry. At once a blood-red banner was raised over the town, and the Texans, undaunted though they were, knew in their hearts that their peril was very great. Soon a demand came to Colonel Travis.

"Surrender," it read, "without condition, or we will put every man to the sword."

For reply, the gallant colonel sent a cannon-shot into the town. War was on in earnest—and there was but little food and ammunition at the Alamo. The firing began that very afternoon, but the Texans kept under cover and no damage was done. At night Colonel Travis sent an appeal for aid to Colonel Fannin, who was believed to be in camp about a hundred miles away. The old pirate volunteered to go on this journey, and Davy and his friends watched him slip away into the darkness with mingled feelings.

"I was never one to sit around waitin'," observed Davy wistfully. "I'd like to be out there, a-dodgin' the Mexican serpents. But

I'm needed right here—I know that," and he sought his quarters for the night.

Early next morning the fort was awakened by the noise of a new battery, stationed on the river bank not more than three hundred and fifty yards from the wall. The cannon roared all day, breaking a piece off the parapet, here and there, more often burying the deadly shot safely within the thick adobe walls. The Texans had fourteen cannon distributed at various points around the fort, but it was believed that the rifles could be used to greater advantage, and with less waste of powder, as well as with less danger to the men, from the wild shots sent by the Mexicans from behind every protecting tree and shrub. So all day long the long American rifles cracked, and the Mexican cannon boomed—but it was the riflemen who found their mark.

"Seems to me them greasers are wastin' a lot o' good ammunition," drawled Davy, strolling over to Thimblerig, who was engaged in his game of thimbles.

"They sure are," returned Thimblerig. "I'm thinkin' o' doin' a little work myself, in a min-

ute. I've just been restin' my muscles a bit with a little diversion."

"I laid off for ten minutes or so," said Davy. "I hate like p'isen to let any of that black-hearted gang get away, but I was gettin' cramped."

Thimblerig's reply was a groan. A three-ounce ball had glanced from the parapet and struck him on the breast. Davy tore open his shirt and rapidly ran his fingers over the wound.

"You're not dead yet, by a long shot," he told his friend, "but I reckon it hurts some, eh? Hold still a minute."

Whipping out his long hunting knife, Davy proceeded to do a bit of surgery. His work was far from painless, but highly effective. A moment later the leaden ball lay in Thimblerig's hand.

"Drill a hole through it, and carry it for a watch seal," recommended Davy, cheerfully.

"No!" responded Thimblerig, wrathfully. "May I be shot six times if I do. That would be makin' a bauble for an idle boast. No, Colonel, lead is gettin' scarce, and I'll lend it out at compound interest."

Next morning Davy was awakened before daylight by the sound of a rifle occasionally popping over the place where he was sleeping. Through the gloom he could just make out the figure of Thimblerig, mounted alone on the battlement.

"What are you doin' there?" shouted Davy, amazed at this early activity.

"Payin' my debts," returned Thimblerig calmly, "interest and all."

"And how do you make that out?"

"I've nearly got through; stop a minute, Colonel, and I'll close the account," and the marksman clapped his rifle to his shoulder and blazed away into the gloom. Next moment he had jumped down from the wall.

"That account's settled," he remarked with satisfaction. "Them chaps will let me play out my game in quiet next time. Look over the wall, Colonel, and you'll see how I've been payin' my debts."

Davy climbed up, and gazed over the battlements, and discovered four Mexicans lying dead on the plain outside.

"That's how I paid my debts," explained Thimblerig. "I run that grape-shot they sent

me into four rifle balls, and I was up bright and early so's to get a chance to pick off the stragglers."

"I reckon you gave 'em more than you owed 'em for that shot in the chest," Davy chuckled as the two went off in search of something to eat.

"You're a good shot, Thimblerig," remarked Davy on the way, "but that bee-hunter is about the quickest on the trigger, and the best rifle shot we have in the fort."

"Barrin' yourself, Colonel," answered the other.

"Why, I've seen him bring down eleven of the enemy," Davy went on, "and at such a distance that we all thought it would be a waste of ammunition to attempt it."

Day by day the shooting went on; the Mexicans fell steadily under the well-aimed fire from the Alamo, and their return shots took no toll from the besieged. But food was growing scarce, and escape from the garrison was out of the question. The Texans waited hopefully for relief from Colonel Fannin, but it failed to come. Davy, who was keeping a diary of events, wrote one day:

"Last night our hunters brought in some corn, and had a brush with a scout from the enemy beyond gunshot of the fort. They put the scout to flight, and got in without injury. They bring accounts that the settlers are flying in all quarters in dismay, leaving their possessions to the mercy of the ruthless invader, who is literally engaged in a war of extermination more brutal than the untutored savage of the desert could be guilty of. Slaughter is indiscriminate, sparing neither age, sex nor condition. Buildings have been burnt down, farms laid waste, and Santa Anna appears determined to verify his threat, and convert the blooming paradise into a howling wilderness. For just one fair crack at that rascal, even at a hundred yards' distance, I would bargain to break my 'Betsey,' and never pull trigger again. My name's not Crockett if I wouldn't get glory enough to appease my stomach for the remainder of my life."

February waned and March blew in—still the Texans, entrenched in their stronghold, continued to pick off the enemy. Three hundred were killed in one week. But new men arrived to take their places, and it was evident

that Santa Anna had enough material at his disposal to wear out a much larger American garrison. Meanwhile, Colonel Bowie had fallen ill of typhoid fever and was lying helpless in his bed.

Yet while starvation stalked them grimly and sickness hovered in its wake, the little band of patriots turned in, night after night, always hopeful that the morrow would see help advancing to the Alamo, and when morning dawned and the daily round of shot and shell began again, they fought painstakingly, guarding themselves, making every ball tell.

"Had a little sport this morning," remarked Davy one morning at breakfast. "The enemy got a piece of ordnance planted within gunshot o' the fort last night, and the first thing this mornin' they commenced a brisk cannonade, point-blank against the spot where I was snorin'. I turned out pretty smart, and mounted the rampart. The gun was charged again, and a fellow stepped out to touch her off, but before he could use the match I let him have it, and he kneeled over. A second stepped up, snatched the match from the hand of the dyin' man, but Thimblerig here handed

me his rifle and the next instant the second Mexican was stretched beside the first. A third came up to the cannon, and Thimberlig handed me another gun, so I fixed him off in like manner. A fourth, and then a fifth seized the match, and I used 'em both the same way, and then the whole party gave it up as a bad job, and rushed off to the camp, leavin' the cannon ready charged where they had planted it. Then I came down to eat."

"That place where you were firin' is one o' the snuggest stands in the whole fort," declared Thimblerig. "I never fail to pick off two or three stragglers before breakfast, when I'm perched up there."

"Yes, I've seen you up there mighty regular," returned Davy, as they reached for their rifles and started back to their posts.

All day they aimed with care, and their rifles blazed defiantly whenever a Mexican showed himself from behind a tree or a fence. At sunset Davy stood at an angle of the parapet; the cannon, after a day of spluttering, were silent, and the plain lay peacefully awaiting the dusk. Suddenly there was the sound of horses' hoofs, and Davy strained his eyes

in the direction of a man running desperately, followed at a little distance by a dozen of the Mexican cavalry.

"The pirate!" he cried, pointing with his gun. Thimblerig, the bee-hunter, and the Indian hunter had recognized the running figure almost at the same time; together they rushed to the gate of the stockade, threw it open, and ran to the aid of the old man. They could see that the Mexicans were pressing him close; then, to their surprise, he stopped suddenly, and raising his rifle, shot in the midst of his pursuers. One of the enemy fell from his horse. Turning, the pirate made again for the fort, but the others were on his heels, and evidently enraged, he suddenly clubbed his gun and rushed forward, striking right and left. The Mexicans were plainly astonished and fled like sparrows, just as the detachment of rescuers came running up. They promptly gave chase to the fleeing enemy, too excited in the heat of the moment to be cautious; another second, and their retreat was cut off by a second detachment of Mexican cavalry. Davy rose to the occasion.

"Nothing is to be done but to fight our way through!" he cried. "Go ahead!"

"Go ahead, Colonel!" shouted his companions in unison, and they dashed against the horsemen. It was a bloody conflict. There were about twenty Mexicans, who held their ground for five minutes; then a rescuing band was seen emerging from the gate of the fort and the Mexicans wheeled around and fled. Eight of their comrades lay dead upon the field, but their deaths were not cheaply bought. The pirate and the bee-hunter were both mortally wounded, and Davy had received a saber cut on his forehead.

The little band was helped within the fortress gates, where the old pirate breathed his last without speaking a word. The bee-hunter died at midnight.

The next day was the fifth of March. No relief had come; none was now expected. "In case the enemy should carry the fort, fight to the last gasp, and render their victory even more serious to them than to us," said Colonel Travis, in a last exhortation to his men. He was answered by three cheers.

"Well, the long wait is nearly over," said Davy, that afternoon, to Thimblerig.

"What do you mean?" cried that spirited fighter.

"Haven't you seen the proclamation?" demanded Davy. "Someone over in the city has just sent a Comanche arrow into the fort, carrying a copy of the order issued by the Mexican general to attack us. Santa Anna will command the attack in person."

Thimblerig smiled grimly. "Yes, it's nearly over, Davy," he said softly. Then the two men, like all the others in the garrison, went about the last tasks of seeing that the stockades were safe, the cannon loaded, powder horns filled and bullets made ready. There was little talking; but the silence rang with the unspoken word—resistance.

That night the Texans slept but little, and their sentries watched intently through all the hours of darkness. It was still moonlight, and not yet three o'clock in the morning, when the word came that the Mexican camp was astir. The Americans, waiting, listening, heard the tramp of many horses' feet; then they saw the gleam of bristling bayonets. The enemy was

drawn up before the fort, and only awaited the signal to attack.

Morning dawned; Sunday morning, March 6, 1836, glorious with the promise of spring. Davy took his place upon the wall, and looked to his powder and his bullets. Every other American did the same. And as they looked they heard the note of the bugle that was to let loose the enemy upon them; heard the hoarse cries of commanding officers, and raised their rifles as the combined forces of Santa Anna, two thousand five hundred strong, swept across the plain, urged on by the fierce martial music of the army bands.

Under the first fire of the defenders the Mexicans, advancing in three columns on the north, east and west, fell back. The rain of bullets and the hail of grape was too hot to be borne for a moment or two. Then reënforcements came up behind the men who first charged the fort, and then more came and more. Steadily those in front were pushed outward—outward, until at last they had reached the shelter of the Alamo walls. Here they had a little protection from the cannon above their heads, but they provided a splendid

mark for the rifles. Already nearly three hundred had fallen, and the firing went on, seemingly without a pause. Never had men loaded and fired, loaded and fired, so swiftly, so accurately, so desperately. The assaulters tried to scale the walls; they were too high. Only on the north, the side of the stockade, where the walls were lower, was there a hope of climbing over. The ladders were brought. Still, the Texans fired on. Davy, bringing down a Mexican with almost every shot, heard a groan, and saw something fall from the nearby corner of the parapet. Here Colonel Travis had been commanding a cannon, above a small breach which had been made. Davy gave a quick glance below. Travis lay dead; there was no one to take his place; every man was doing his utmost. Another moment and the Mexicans swarmed over the wall.

Now there was no longer time to load and fire. Swinging their rifles like clubs, the Americans fell back, fighting at every step, dropping, one by one, as the countless sword thrusts went home. The Mexicans pressed on, crowding them into the barracks. It was here that Colonel Bowie lay, too ill to rise from

his bed. A throng of bloodthirsty Mexicans, hurtling into the room, were met by a blast from the colonel's rifle, then his pistol, as he lifted his feverish hands in a last effort. Daunted, the enemy paused at the door, and fired on the gallant American from that point of vantage. Then with a cry of triumph they dashed in, to gloat over his body collapsed upon the bed. Bowie was dying but not dead. His weakened fingers touched the handle of his famous knife; the touch sent a sudden strength into his veins. With a final rush of fury he whipped the knife into the air and sank it into the breast of the Mexican who had reached him first, and fell back—dead.

Meanwhile the remaining handful of Americans were fighting with their backs to the walls, their hunting knives in their hands, aiming deadly blows even as they fell to the ground. Davy Crockett was one of the last alive. He stood in a corner of the fort, fighting like a wounded tiger. In one hand he grasped the remnants of his beloved "Betsey," and in the other his hunting knife, now red to the hilt. At his feet lay a pile of Mexicans—twenty in number—some dead, some dying. Nearby lay

also poor Thimblerig, his knife buried in the throat of a Mexican, whose hair he clutched in his left hand. He had fought beside Davy till a bullet had found his heart.

But Davy's work was done. Blood was streaming from the great saber cut in his forehead, and he was swaying from weakness, as a new force of Mexicans closed in upon him. He struck out; a rain of sword-cuts fell upon his tired body; he dropped in his tracks. The furious cowards mangled his face and limbs as he lay, but he did not care; his indomitable heart was still. On his brow was a frown, but his lips were curled in a smile of scorn. He had "gone ahead" all his life, he was still "going ahead," when his life ended.

The rising sun saw the triumphant Mexican tri-color floating above the Alamo, but it saw, too, five hundred Mexicans dead within the fort, their bodies mingled with the one hundred and sixty-six Americans who had avenged themselves manyfold as they fell.

Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library