CHARLES HAVEN LADD JOHNSTON

THE TRUE TALES OF THE MOST FAMOUS FRONTIERSMEN

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THE FRONTIERSMAN

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He stood ’neath the whispering pines, by his cabin,
Lanky and gaunt, his face seamed and scarred,
Knotted his hands and blackened with toiling,
Bronzed well his face; his palms rough and hard.
Strangely he gazed in the dim, filmy distance,
Gazed, as the smoke from the fire curled and swayed,
Rapt was his look, for a voice from the forest
Spoke—and in accents disquieting—said:

Come! freeman! come! to the swirl of the river,
Come! where the wild bison ranges and roams,
Come! where the coyote and timber wolves whimper,
Come! where the prairie dogs build their rough homes.
Come to the hills where the blossoms are swaying,
Come to the glades where the elk shrills his cry,
Come—for the wild canyon echoes are saying,
Come—only come—climb my peaks to the sky.

A thrill shook the frame of the woodsman and trapper,
A strange light of yearning came to his eye,
Restless and roving by nature—this wanderer,
Shuddered and paled at the wild, hidden cry;
Trembling he turned towards the hut in the shadow,
Shaking he strode to the low, darkened door,

Then stopped—as sounded the voice from the meadow,
Mutt’ring the challenge—o’er and o’er.

Come, will you come, where the brown ouzel nestles,
Come, where the waterfall dashes and plays,
Come, where the spike-horn rollicks and wrestles,
On a carpet of moss, in the warm Autumn haze;
The cloud banks are blowing o’er Leidy and Glenrock,
On Wessex and Cassa the sun hides its head,
Come, will you come, where the trout leaps in splendor,
Come, only come, let the veldt be your bed.

By the rough, oaken chair lay the grim, shining rifle,
On a nail o’er the fire swung the curled powder-horn,
With a smiling grimace he seized on these weapons,
Wild emblems of conquest—storm-battered and worn.
“Stay,” whirred the loom, as it stood in the shadow,
“Stay,” purred the cat, as it lay near the stove,
“Stay where the woodbine and iris are trailing,
Stay, only stay, calm this spirit to rove.”

But, “come” shrilled the voice on the dim, distant prairie,
“Come, where the Cheyennes are roving and free,
Where the beavers are damming the wild, rushing ice stream,
Where the lean puma snarls in the shaggy, pine tree.
Come—for the call of the wild is resounding,

From Laramie’s peaks rolls the smoke of the fire.
Lighted by scouts, where the herds are abounding,
Fattened and sleek, for the red man’s desire.”

.....

Thus came the call, and thus trekked the plainsman,
Westward, yet westward his grim step led on,
By the wide, sedgy steppes, where the Platte curled and whispered,
By the brackish salt lake, stretching gray ’neath the sun,
Where the purple, red flowers in clusters lay glist’ning,
Where the wild kestrel whirled o’er the precipice sheer,
He conquered the wild, while the grizzly stood list’ning,
And growled, as the white canvased wagons drew near.

COLONEL BENJAMIN LOGAN:

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THE INTREPID FIGHTER OF THE KENTUCKY FRONTIER

“MOTHER, I know that the law allows me to have all of the property which my father left, but I do not want it. You can have your share, and to my brothers and sisters I give the remainder. I, myself, will move further West, into the wilderness.”

The youth who spoke was about twenty-one years of age; tall, slender, and graceful. His face was open, frank, and expressive. As he ceased, he waved his hand towards the West and left the room in which his parent was sitting upon an old-fashioned horse-hair sofa. His name was Benjamin Logan.

Although the old English law of primogeniture prevailed in Virginia at this time, which gave the farm, horses, and farming utensils to young Logan (upon the death of his father) he refused to accept them. Instead of this, he nobly partitioned the estate between his mother, his three brothers, and two sisters, and removed to the Holston River. Then he began to farm a rough piece of ground, only part of which had been cleared of timber.

About this time the Indians upon the Ohio frontier became very troublesome, and Logan enlisted as a private in the army of Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia. Marching into the Indian country was a rough experience, but the youth enjoyed it, and when the red men signed articles of peace at Chillicothe, Ohio, the stout Virginian was among

those who stood near the chiefs and saw them put their names to the agreement. Kentucky was now fairly peaceable. So the energetic young man moved his family to Harrodsburg, where a stockade had been erected called Logan's Fort.

"You must look out for the redskins," said a comrade to him. "Although they have signed an agreement to let us alone, my friends report that there are many of them in the vicinity, and they are all daubed up with paint, because they are upon the war-path."

"I will be on my guard," replied the young pioneer. "We must all run to the fort if there is danger of attack." The test was to come sooner than he expected.

Upon a balmy day in May, when the women were milking their cows near the gate of Fort Logan, and a few men were standing by, in order to assist them, a small band of redskins appeared at the edge of a thicket. *Crash*, a volley woke the stillness, and one of the frontiersmen fell dead while two staggered behind the log breastwork, with mortal wounds. A third—a stout fellow called Harrison—was unable to reach the gate, and dragged himself along to the shelter of some bushes.

Within the fort, all gazed with sorrow at the wounded pioneer, who, although in range of the Indian rifles, was so protected that the balls could not quite reach him. Those in the fort kept up a fusillade in the direction of the red men, making them get below cover, and thus the battle continued; the leaden balls zipping and whizzing across the place, where Harrison lay partially concealed. The man's family, in the fort, seemed to be in an agony of distress at

his terrible condition. To save him would require great nerve and heroism. There were but fifteen men in the stockade; two were badly wounded. Should they sacrifice any of this small number in the endeavor to rescue a man, who, even should he be retaken, would be unable to fight in defense of the fortification? This question confronted the beleaguered pioneers, and it was a serious one.

At this moment young Logan stepped forward and said:

“Who will go with me to the rescue of this poor fellow?”

It was strange to see the effect of these words upon the besieged frontiersmen. At first every one refused.

“I’m not a fast runner,” said one, “and know that they will easily catch me on the return trip, even if I am not shot before I reach the wounded man.”

A second—a fellow of giant build—quavered: “I am a weakly chap. I never was no good, nohow, on liftin’. Perhaps you’d better git ernother stouter feller than I be.”

Still a third remarked that, “he wuz plum onlucky with Injin bullets, an’ never wuz known tew git amongst ’em in the open without havin’ one uv ’em nick him.”

Ben Logan could not help smiling at this.

“What, are you all afraid to follow me?” said he.

At this, a trapper called John Martin stepped towards him, and said:

“I will go with you, for I can only die once and I am as ready now to go to my Maker, as I ever will be. Come on! To the rescue!”

“You are a man after my own heart,” answered the bold pioneer, grasping him warmly by the hand. “We will start at once.”

Throwing open the gates to the stockade, both dashed towards the prostrate frontiersman. They had proceeded about five yards from the fort when Harrison made an effort to rise. As he got to his hands and knees, Martin turned and fled to the stockade.

“This is fine treatment,” mused Logan, but he kept on under a veritable shower of bullets from the redskins. Fortune favored him; he was not hit, and reaching the wounded frontiersman in safety, clasped him in his arms, and began to lug him back to the fort. The deed was a noble one.

Bullets from the red men fairly poured around the struggling backwoodsman, as he staggered towards the stockade of logs. His hat was pierced by a ball; one even penetrated his hunting-shirt, but, in spite of this, he finally reached the doorway. Hurrah! As he deposited the body of the wounded man safely upon the ground a mighty cheer welled from the throats of all. Hurrah! Hurrah, for Benjamin Logan!

“BEGAN TO LUG HIM BACK TO THE FORT.”

Even the Hercules who had complained of being “a weakly fellow” threw up his hat in the air.

“Well, by Gum! Logan,” said he, “if yew ain’t th’ plum luckiest feller I ever knowed. I believe that yew be charmed, so ez an Injun bullet can’t hit yew. Ez fer me? Why, I would hev been struck er dozen times in thet hazardous journey. Huzzah! says I. Here’s tew yer!”

But all danger was not yet over by any means. The red men were in numbers, and besieged the fort with a tenacity that made matters take a decidedly ugly look, for the few men of the garrison were not able to put up a very stiff fire against the increasing bands of Indians. Another danger also threatened, for the supply of ammunition became exhausted. How was more to be obtained?

Distant, about a hundred miles, was the frontier settlement on the Holston River, to which Logan had first moved when he left his farm in Virginia. Here was

ammunition in abundance, and also supplies of food and clothing. Would any one have nerve enough to creep through and relieve the beleaguered garrison? This required the greatest judgment and unbounded courage, for the intervening country was swarming with savages, all upon the war-path. It was a region full of deep ravines, tangled thickets, and treacherous swampland.

Again all were asked to undertake the journey, but there were as many excuses as before. Again Benjamin Logan stepped into the breach and offered to bring relief. That night he clambered to the top of the stockade, dropped softly to the ground outside, and soon his form was lost in the shadows of the encircling forest. He passed through the Indian lines in safety, and, by daybreak, was headed for the post at Holston. His last words to the garrison were: “Hold fast! Hold on! I will be sure to return within a fortnight and you will all be saved!”

For several days the garrison returned the fire of the Indians with spirit, but, as the hours fled by, a terrible feeling of despair came over them. Their water began to give out; their ammunition was so low that they had to use it sparingly, and the food supply was in such a condition that there was danger of starvation if help did not soon arrive. Logan, meanwhile, was toiling upon his way through by-paths, swamps and cane brakes, having deserted the beaten trail through Cumberland Gap. Fortune favored him. He met with no prowling red men, and, within six days, had covered the distance to the frontier post.

The intrepid pioneer now procured ammunition, food, and a company of backwoodsmen. With these, he hastened

onwards towards his beleaguered companions, and, upon the tenth day after his departure, suddenly appeared before the stockade. There were not twenty rounds of ammunition left in the fortress. Gaunt and hollow cheeks were here. Noble women upheld the fainting spirits of the men, but now, with little hope of succor, it was with difficulty that they kept up their fire upon the redskins, and put out the flaming brands which they kept throwing into the stockade. A wild and exultant cheer greeted their leader as he ran across the clearing to the door of the side wall. “At last you have come!” they shouted. “We had given you up for dead!”

A few days later Colonel Bowman arrived, with a large body of men, at which the Indians raised the siege and fled. But they had not gone for good. On the contrary, they fairly swarmed over the borders of Kentucky and their marauding parties committed some frightful outrages. There was nothing now to be done but to defeat them in a battle and burn their villages, if the white settlers were to have peace.

It was the year 1779. The Revolution was over. England had lost her colonies to her own sons. Now the Colonists were beginning the great struggle to free themselves from the curse of Indian invasion. An expedition was therefore organized to invade the Shawnee territory and to raze to the ground the famous town of Chillicothe. Benjamin Logan—now Colonel Logan—was second in command. Bowman, who had come to the rescue at Logan’s Fort, was to lead the expedition; which was to consist of one hundred and sixty men. They advanced in the heat of July, and marched with such precaution that they reached the neighborhood of the Indian town without having been discovered by the enemy.

A plan for assaulting the village was now decided upon. It was very simple, for the force was to be divided into two parts; one, under Logan, was to march to the left: the other, under Bowman, was to march to the right. The men were to spread out in single rank, and when the leading files of the two columns had met, then, they were to attack. It was dark when the backwoods soldiers began the advance. Logan's men quite encircled the town, but where was Bowman? All through the night the leader of the left flank waited for the coming of the other column, but not a man in buckskin appeared. Hour after hour passed away and the darkness gave way to dawn. Still Bowman was strangely missing.

"Had you not better attack?" whispered one of his men. "The Shawnees will soon be awake and will discover our whereabouts."

"Let us wait another hour or two," answered the courageous leader. "I believe that the advance of Bowman's column will soon be here."

Logan's men were secreted in ambush. Here they remained until an Indian dog began to bark, arousing his master, who came out of his tepee in order to see what was the matter. An imprudent trapper had exposed his head above the underbrush, and the keen eyes of the redskin quickly discerned an enemy. He raised a loud war-whoop.

As he did this, a gun went off on Bowman's side of the village, and, seeing that further concealment was useless, Colonel Logan cried out to his men:

"Charge into the village, my boys. You must drive the redskins through the town, for Colonel Bowman will surely support you."

His buckskin-clad rangers defiled quickly into the village, and, advancing from cabin to cabin, soon had reached a large building in the centre. The Indians fled swiftly before them, but later, recovering from their surprise, endeavored to turn the right flank of the Kentuckians, whom they perceived to be in small numbers. Where was Colonel Bowman?

The Shawnees had now seized their own rifles and were pouring in a hot fire upon the advancing frontiersmen, who tore the heavy doors from the Indian cabins, formed a breastwork, and protected themselves from the whizzing balls. They were holding their own and were making progress towards the Indian citadel, where most of the braves had collected, when an order came from Colonel Bowman to retreat. His ranking officer had spoken, so there was nothing for Logan to do but to obey.

As soon as the men were told that they must go to the rear, a tumultuous scene commenced. Dispirited and disheartened by the order to turn their backs upon the enemy, they rushed away from the tomahawks and balls of the savages, as best they were able. The Indians were astonished and jubilant over the turn which matters had taken and pursued the rangers with wild and exultant yelping. The frontiersmen scattered in every direction, dodging and twisting in order to avoid the balls which whistled around them, and ran from cabin to cabin, in confusion. Suddenly they collided with Bowman’s soldiers, who, because of some panic of their commander, had stood stock still near the spot where Logan had left them the night

before. The redskins soon surrounded them on all sides, and kept up a hot fire.

What was the matter with Bowman? He sat upon his horse like a pillar of stone; gave no orders; and was in an apparently helpless mental condition. His men paid no attention to him, but swarmed to the protection of trees and stumps, took aim at the yelping red men, and soon held them at a safe distance. When they seemed to be quieted, the frontiersmen resumed their march. The Indians, however, came back to the attack, but were beaten off. They followed, and made an assault every half mile, or so. Their tenacity was due to the fact that they expected reinforcements and hoped to annihilate the whites.

“Keep together, my brave men,” shouted Colonel Logan, at this juncture. “Do not let these redskins stampede you, for then you will all be massacred.”

The crisis was a terrible one. The retreat would become a rout, unless the soldiers were kept together.

At this juncture Colonel Logan and a few of the boldest souls, dashed into the brush, on horseback, and cut down some of the nearest red men. As they performed this bold feat, the savages held back, and thus allowed the fleeing soldiers to get away. Only nine Kentuckians were killed, a few were wounded, and the rest escaped to the settlements. As for Colonel Logan, his gallant conduct, when under stress and fire, greatly increased his reputation, and at the next gathering of the Kentucky troops he was unanimously elected to lead them against the red men, when again they should need chastising.

The Indians remained quiescent until the summer of 1788. Then the frontier was again attacked by marauding bands, and so destructive was their advance that the pioneer militia had to be called out. Colonel Logan was asked to lead the troops against the enemy.

“Boys, I shall be delighted to do so,” said he. “But this time there must be perfect discipline and no retreating. If you break in the same way that you did in our attack upon the Shawnee town I will not answer for your scalps. Let us have order, or we will never succeed.”

“Lead on, Colonel,” cried many. “You have the right idea, and none of us will go back on you.”

The advance through the wilderness was most successful. Eight towns were burned, twenty warriors were killed, and seventy-five prisoners were taken. The son of a chief named Moluntha was carried off as a prisoner, and because of his brightness and promise was kept in Colonel Logan’s family. He was called Logan, after his distinguished captor, and grew to be a majestic-looking man, six feet in height.

As for the Colonel, he returned to his farm after this campaign fully satisfied with his work, and determined to lead a quiet existence. This he was well able to do, for the red men had been so signally chastised that they no longer attempted to rob, burn, and plunder upon the border. His namesake, however, came to an untimely end.

During one of the campaigns by General Harrison against the Maumee Indians, Logan—the redskin—was dispatched by his superior officer upon a scouting expedition with several companions. They met a large force of hostile

Indians and were driven in to their own camp, where one of the white officers was heard to remark:

“Logan is a treacherous scoundrel. I believe that he will desert to those of his own color at any moment.”

This was heard by the red man and he was stung to the quick.

“I shall prove this to be a falsehood,” said he. “I am true to my white brothers.”

Next morning he started towards the enemy with some companions and had not gone far when he found himself in an ambuscade, formed by the famous chieftain called Winnemac. Logan had the same cool courage which distinguished his white namesake.

“We are deserting to our enemies, the British,” said he. “We no longer care to fight with the Americans. We are at heart your brothers.”

Chief Winnemac grunted, but kept a watchful eye upon his captives as he carried them away. After the first day, however, he decided to return the rifles and other arms to the prisoners. He had counted too much upon the words of the savage, for Logan had determined upon escape.

“We will attack our captors to-night,” he whispered to his two companions, Bright Horn and Captain Johnny. “There are seven. We will wait until some leave and will then gain our liberty.”

As he had expected, after the camp-fires had been lighted, four of the British sympathizers left, in order to collect fire-wood. They had not been gone over five minutes before the three captives had fired upon those left behind, killing all three. They reloaded, as the others came running

to the camp, fired upon them, and forced them to take refuge behind some trees. As they stood confronting each other, one of the most wiry and skillful crept around to the rear of the American red men, pointed his rifle, and shot Logan in the shoulder. He fell forward, badly wounded.

Lifting him to the back of a pony, his friends carried him to the American camp, where he was placed upon a litter. Captain Johnny, who had left them upon the return trip, arrived next morning, bringing with him the scalp of Chief Winnemac. Logan lingered for a few days, and then succumbed to his wound. “I have removed all suspicion upon my honor,” said he. “Now I am willing to die. My two sons must be educated by the people of Kentucky.”

Thus perished the namesake of the noble-hearted Colonel Logan, who helped to clear Kentucky of the savage tribes, and who soon afterwards rounded out his life of splendid activity, and died universally lamented. To such pioneers the state owes a deep debt of gratitude.

GEORGE ROGERS CLARKE:

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FAMOUS LEADER OF THE BORDERLAND OF KENTUCKY

ONE of the foremost of the pioneers: one of the noblest of men: one of the most daring of fighters: such was George Rogers Clarke of Virginia. Like Daniel Boone of Kentucky, Clarke was not only a brave warrior in the rough and ready armies of the Middle West, but was also a potent factor in the destinies of the American people.

Born in Albemarle County, Virginia, he early made his way to Kentucky. At twenty-three we find him engaged as a surveyor in this virgin land, and as he was a large and powerful man like George Washington, he could easily contend with the difficulties of his profession. So inspiring, in fact, was his appearance, that he was entrusted with the command of the militia upon his first visit to the border. He had a soldierly bearing and a grave and thoughtful mien.

After remaining for a time in Kentucky, this noble borderer returned to Virginia in order to settle up his affairs. He saw that a conflict would soon take place for the possession of the Middle West between the Americans, the French, the English—who had a chain of forts extending down the Mississippi from Detroit, Michigan, to Vincennes, Indiana—and the redskins. Which party would win? That remained to be yet settled. Clarke, of course, sided with the American pioneers who were pressing westward from Virginia and Tennessee.

GEORGE ROGERS CLARKE.

“The Indians,” said he, “are incited to burning, scalping, and murdering our peaceful settlers upon the border, by the tongues of the British soldiers, who, supplying them with food from their forts, are continually egging them on to rapine and murder. Our only salvation, as settlers, lies in organization and military training. We must equip ourselves with arms and ammunition and must press against them before they grow so strong that they can crush us.”

He suggested that the Kentuckians assemble in convention, and that there they should discuss the affairs most dear to the hearts of all. To this the people readily assented, and at this meeting chose Clarke, himself, and a man named Jones, as delegates to the Virginia Assembly. They were to go to the older state and were to ask for five

hundred pounds of gunpowder for purposes of defense against the redskins.

When they expressed their wants they were met with a cold reception.

“We will *lend* you this important supply,” they were told by those in authority. “But you must guarantee its repayment and must defray all expenses connected with its carriage across the mountains.”

Clarke was indignant at these terms.

“This is not the treatment that brave borderers deserve,” he said. “This should be a free offering to the men who stand as a breastwork between you yourselves and the redskins. If you allow your outlying posts to be swept away by the British and Indians, then the tide of warfare will roll over your own settlements, and you will realize—too late—the folly of your refusal.”

To this remonstrance the council replied that they could not better their offer.

But Clarke was a fighter.

“You do not realize the dangers of your position,” he again stated to them. “We apply to you for aid because you are nearest and dearest to us. But—if you refuse us—we can go to New York and there obtain our supplies. We have pushed into this country. We have settled it. We are of your own blood. We claim it. A country which is not worth defending is not worth claiming.”

This was the way to talk to the hard-headed Virginians. After an earnest debate it was decided to recall Clarke and to comply with his request. An order for five hundred pounds of powder was given to him. It was to be delivered

at Pittsburgh, subject to his demand, and for use by the borderers of Kentucky.

“I am deeply grateful to you, my brothers,” said Clarke. “This gift will be well used and my people will be very thankful to you for it. God bless the noble settlers of Virginia!”

With a small force of seven men, the daring pioneer now went to Fort Pitt for the powder, and carrying it in canoes, safely transported it to a place called Limestone, Kentucky. Indians were thick in this country, and all were hostile. But he came safely through the wild places and carefully secreted the powder at various points, where it could be found by the borderers when needed.

Daniel Boone was now an old man and was so modest that he refused to thrust himself forward and become a leader around whom the settlers could rally. All eyes, therefore, turned to Clarke, whose merits were now recognized as a gallant fighter and able commander. The borderers saw that they here had an unselfish fellow who had their own interests in view, and who had obtained well-needed assistance for them. They knew that, without powder, they must be swept back before the storm of Indian invasion. The time for a leader had now come, and destiny had sent to the Kentuckians George Rogers Clarke—the brave and the noble.

This soldier now addressed the settlers upon several occasions and in several different places. He told them that they must assume an aggressive attitude and must attack the Indian villages, destroy their crops, burn their habitations, and teach them the horrors of invasion.

“We must not wait to be attacked ourselves,” said he. “We must do the attacking. We must strike before we are struck, and must hit hard.”

The Kentuckians were stirred by these speeches of Clarke and swore to follow him to the death.

“Lead on! Lead on!” cried they. “We will follow and will do our best to clear the land of our red enemies.”

This pleased the leader of the borderers, for he saw that his own spirit animated his men. He therefore wrote to the Governor of Virginia, telling him of his plans for border warfare, and requesting aid. Men and ammunition were sent him. An expedition was speedily organized at Louisville—then called the Falls of the Ohio—and the border soldiers started down the stream in boats. At the mouth of the Tennessee River a party of hunters were met with. From them Clarke learned that the garrisons at Kaskaskia and Kahokia were fully aware of his coming and were quite ready to give his men a hot reception.

“The greater portion of the French,” said the guides, “prefer American to English rule. You will find no difficulty in winning them over to your cause.”

These men were taken along as scouts, and, creeping quietly through the wilderness, they surrounded and captured Kaskaskia without shedding a drop of blood. So kind were Clarke’s followers to the inhabitants that many accompanied them on the march to Kahokia—a town just opposite St. Louis, Missouri. Both places were populated mainly by people of French extraction who adhered to the cause of France in America.

Clarke was a diplomat. Some one has said that “he eked out the courage of a lion with the cunning of a fox.” At any rate, he knew enough to make a firm friend of the parish priest, Monsieur Gerbault, who consented to go to Vincennes—in the absence of the British commander, who had gone to Detroit—and induce the garrison there to embrace the cause of the Kentuckians. He was successful. After a lengthy harangue the fort went over to the Americans and its command was given to a Captain Helm, one of Clarke’s Lieutenants.

Clarke had accomplished what was thought to be the impossible. Without any difficulty whatsoever he had captured three forts and had persuaded all the inhabitants to join his standard. But these were the French. There were still the redskinned devils who would soon be burning, plundering, and massacring upon the borders. Clarke needed more men. So he promptly organized the French into militia companies with which to garrison the captured fort, appointed French officers to command them, and was thus able to use all of his Kentucky backwoodsmen in dealing with the redskins.

The French and Spaniards never asked for peace from the Indians but always harshly demanded whatever they might desire. Clarke determined to adopt their course. This kind of diplomacy is that which usually wins with the American Indian, for the red man could never comprehend why the whites would offer peace if they felt at all certain that they could accomplish their purpose by means of war. The Indians never made treaties unless they had met with a reverse and were in the presence of a superior enemy.

When Clarke *demanded* like a warrior it suited their ideas much better than if he had *asked* like a squaw.

We now come to the most extraordinary event in his career: an event which marks him as a man of courage and capacity. When things were going against him he managed to turn the tide in his own favor with remarkable ability.

Braving great dangers and privations, he met the redskins in their own villages and conferred with them. Two attempts were made upon his life, but he escaped all harm and managed to secure a treaty of peace upon terms which the red men had first spurned. The treaty was signed and Clarke’s eyes looked hungrily at Detroit—the great stronghold of the British. He had not sufficient men to take it.

Two detachments from his small army captured a British post on the upper Wabash, garrisoned by forty men. This aroused the British to greater activity. The Kentuckians and French were coming too near for either pleasure or safety. Besides this, the savages had begun to waver in their allegiance to the British flag as they saw the success of the pioneers from across the Ohio River.

Vincennes, as you know, had gone over to the Americans, and there was but a small force there of French militia. Two Americans were in charge: a Captain Helm and a Mr. Henry. On the fifteenth day of December, 1778, the English Governor of Detroit appeared before the town with a large body of rangers and demanded its surrender. The French militiamen immediately ran up a white flag.

Hamilton approached the fort, and as he neared it, was surprised to find himself confronted by a cannon, behind

which stood Captain Helm with a lighted match in his hand.

"Halt!" cried Hamilton. "My foolish fellow, I demand your instant surrender!"

"I'll never surrender," answered Helm, "until you settle upon the terms with me."

"You'll be allowed to march out with all the honors of war," said the British Governor. "And you will be held a prisoner until exchanged. The militia will be disarmed and paroled."

"All right," answered Captain Helm. "These terms suit me exactly."

Imagine the feelings of the good, old Governor. Instead of seeing a great body of men debouch from the fort, preceded by a brilliant staff, out marched a few ragged militiamen headed by Captain Helm, with one solitary private. It is said that the noble soldier could not help laughing. At any rate, he felt so well over the affair that he did not attempt the reduction of Kaskaskia and Kahokia—as he should have done—but was content to send parties of his men on forays against the settlements along the Ohio River. News was soon brought to Clarke of the capture of Vincennes. The old war-dog was much disconcerted. Hamilton in possession of Vincennes! It was almost past belief, yet runners soon came to him from the frontier, who confirmed the ill tidings. What was he to do? He had only two hundred men. Hamilton had three or four times that number. It was the middle of winter and he was short of all manner of supplies. The entire country was flooded. He had a single flat-bottomed batteau. Should he wait to be attacked, or should he attempt the seemingly impossible and endeavor to re-take Vincennes?

He answered the question by turning, one day, to his compatriots, and saying:

“Whether I stay here or march against Hamilton—if I don’t take him, he will take me. By Heaven, I’ll take him!”

And to this his men cried:

“Lead on! Where you go we will follow!”

Now was such a march as the world had seldom seen before. The brave and valiant Arnold, who took his rangers through the depths of the Maine forest to the attack on Quebec at the outbreak of the American Revolution, was such a one as this lion-hearted pioneer. Arnold lost a great many men: Clarke did not lose any; but the difficulties of the journey were severe. Through the cold of winter, the chilling rain, the mud and icy water—the latter often three feet deep—marched the Kentucky rangers. They reached a miserable country called “the drowned lands,” and for miles were waist-deep in the water. The way was full of crevasses and mud-holes into which some of the men sank up to their necks. Clarke was always in the front, sharing the hardships of his followers, and outdoing them in the contempt for peril and suffering. An occasional spot of dry ground—a few yards in extent—was a welcome sight to the half-drowned rangers. Still they pressed onward upon their mission.

“On, boys!” said George Rogers Clarke. “We will take this post or die in the attempt!”

Splashing forward, the scouts and rangers soon reached the two branches of the Wabash River. Ordinarily three miles of solid ground lay between the two streams. Now there was a continuous sheet of water before their eyes. The command stopped, amazed. They had come to an

apparently unsurmountable obstacle. But there were no obstacles to George Rogers Clarke.

Striding to the front, and holding his rifle aloft in order to keep the priming dry, he dashed into the stream. The rest followed with songs and with cheers. But the chilling water soon made these cease, for it became an irksome task to breathe. They staggered with fatigue, but their leader never faltered, and there was not a man who would have deserted him. On the seventeenth day of February they reached the eastern shore of the Wabash and came to the lowlands of the Embarrass River. It was nine miles to their goal: the fortress of Vincennes. Every foot of the way was covered with deep water.

The situation seemed to be desperate. Clarke, however, was not the one to despair. Taking a canoe, he made soundings to see if some path might not be discovered through this inland sea. There seemed to be none—the water everywhere reached to his neck. The men were alarmed. Their faces looked blanched and pale. Was their march of untold hardships to end in death by cold and starvation?

A surprising thing now took place. Whispering to those nearest to him to follow his example, Clarke poured some powder into his hand, wet it with water and blackened his face as a sign that he would succeed, or die in the attempt. Then—uttering a loud whoop—he dashed into the water. The frontiersmen gazed wonderingly at him. Then they broke into song, rushed after him, and made for a ridge of high ground, which was followed until an island was reached. Here they camped, but next morning the ice had formed to

the thickness of three-quarters of an inch. You can well imagine what were their prospects!

But Clarke was never daunted or dismayed. Making a speech to his half-starved and half-frozen command, he again plunged into the water.

“We must do or die!” said he. “On to Vincennes!”

With a rousing cheer his followers dashed in after him—pushed through the broken ice—and waded ahead. The water became more and more deep. Clarke feared, therefore, that the weaker members of the party would be drowned. Luckily he had a few canoeists with him, and these picked up the fainting ones and carried them to hillocks of dry land. The strongest were sent forward with instructions to pass the word back that the water was getting shallow, and they were told to cry “Land! Land!” when they got near the woods.

This cheered the drooping spirits of the faint-hearted. The water *never* did get shallow. Woodland was certainly ahead, but when the men reached it water was up to their shoulders and they had to hang to the trees, bushes and logs, until rescued by the canoes. Some gained the shore in safety, some were so exhausted when they reached a small island that they could not climb up the bank and lay half in and half out of the water. Luck was with them, for a canoe came down the river in which were some Indian squaws and their children. They were captured, and with them was some buffalo meat, tallow, corn, and cooking utensils. Oh, lucky find! The weak were now rejuvenated by a hearty meal.

They were upon an island of ten acres. It was truly an Eden for these half-drowned frontiersmen. A long rest soon