

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS

"DAVY, take care of my Tom," cried Polly Ann.

I can see her now, standing among the women by the great hewn gateposts, with little Tom in her arms, holding him out to us as we filed by. And the vision of his little, round face haunted Tom and me for many weary miles of our tramp through the wilderness. I have often thought since that that march of the volunteer company to join Clark at the Falls of the Ohio was a superb example of confidence in one man, and scarce to be equalled in history.

In less than a week we of Captain Harrod's little company stood on a forest-clad bank, gazing spellbound at the troubled waters of a mighty river. That river was the Ohio, and it divided us from the strange north country whence the savages came. From below, the angry voice of the Great Falls cried out to us unceasingly. Smoke rose through the tree-tops of the island opposite, and through the new gaps of its forest cabins could be seen. And presently, at a signal from us, a big flatboat left its shore, swung out and circled on the polished current, and grounded at length in the mud below us. A dozen tall boatmen, buckskin-clad, dropped the big oars and leaped out on the bank with a yell of greeting. At the head of them was a man of huge frame, and long, light hair falling down over the collar of his hunting shirt. He wrung Captain Harrod's hand.

"That there's Simon Kenton, Davy," said Cowan, as we stood watching them.

I ran forward for a better look at the backwoods Hercules, the tales of whose prowess had helped to while

away many a winter's night in Harrodstown Station. Big-featured and stern, yet he had the kindly eye of the most indomitable of frontier fighters, and I doubted not the truth of what was said of him — that he could kill any redskin hand-to-hand.

"Clark's thar," he was saying to Captain Harrod. "God knows what his pluck is. He ain't said a word."

"He doesn't say whar he's going?" said Harrod.

"Not a notion," answered Kenton. "He's the greatest man to keep his mouth shut I ever saw. He kept at the governor of Virginny till he gave him twelve hundred pounds in Continentals and power to raise troops. Then Clark fetched a circle for Fort Pitt, raised some troops thar and in Virginny and some about Red Stone, and come down the Ohio here with 'em in a lot of flatboats. Now that ye've got here the Kentucky boys is all in. I come over with Montgomery, and Dillard's here from the Holston country with a company."

"Well," said Captain Harrod, "I reckon we'll report."

I went among the first boat-load, and as the men strained against the current, Kenton explained that Colonel Clark had brought a number of emigrants down the river with him; that he purposed to leave them on this island with a little force, that they might raise corn and provisions during the summer; and that he had called the place Corn Island.

"Sure, there's the Colonel himself," cried Terence McCann, who was in the bow, and indeed I could pick out the familiar figure among the hundred frontiersmen that gathered among the stumps at the landing-place. As our keel scraped they gave a shout that rattled in the forest behind them, and Clark came down to the water-side.

"I knew that Harrodstown wouldn't fail me," he said, and called every man by name as we waded ashore. When I came splashing along after Tom he pulled me from the water with his two hands.

"Colonel," said Terence McCann, "we've brought ye a dhrummer b'y."



"We'd have no luck at all without him," said Cowan, and the men laughed.

"Can you walk an hundred miles without food, Davy?" asked Colonel Clark, eyeing me gravely.

"Faith he's lean as a wolf, and no stomach to hinder him," said Terence, seeing me look troubled. "I'll not be missing the bit of food the likes of him would eat."

"And as for the heft of him," added Cowan, "Mac and I'll not feel it."

Colonel Clark laughed. "Well, boys," he said, "if you must have him, you must. His Excellency gave me no instructions about a drummer, but we'll take you, Davy."

In those days he was a man that wasted no time, was Colonel Clark, and within the hour our little detachment had joined the others, felling trees and shaping the log-ends for the cabins. That night, as Tom and Cowan and McCann and James Ray lay around their fire, taking a well-earned rest, a man broke excitedly into the light with a kettle-shaped object balanced on his head, which he set down in front of us. The man proved to be Swein Poulsson, and the object a big drum, and he straightway began to beat upon it a tattoo with improvised drumsticks.

"A Red Stone man," he cried, "a Red Stone man, he have it in the flatboat. It is for Tavy."

"The saints be good to us," said Terence, "if it isn't the King's own drum he has." And sure enough, on the head of it gleamed the royal arms of England, and on the other side, as we turned it over, the device of a regiment. They flung the sling about my neck, and the next day, when the little army drew up for parade among the stumps, there I was at the end of the line, and prouder than any man in the ranks. And Colonel Clark coming to my end of the line paused and smiled and patted me kindly on the cheek.

"Have you put this man on the roll, Harrod?" says he.

"No, Colonel," answers Captain Harrod, amid the laughter of the men at my end.

"What!" says the Colonel, "what an oversight! From this day he is drummer boy and orderly to the Commander-in-chief. Beat the retreat, my man."

I did my best, and as the men broke ranks they crowded around me, laughing and joking, and Cowan picked me up, drum and all, and carried me off, I rapping furiously the while.

And so I became a kind of handy boy for the whole regiment from the Colonel down, for I was willing and glad to work. I cooked the Colonel's meals, roasting the turkey breasts and saddles of venison that the hunters brought in from the mainland, and even made him journey-cake, a trick which Polly Ann had taught me. And when I went about the island, if a man were loafing, he would seize his axe and cry, "Here's Davy, he'll tell the Colonel on me." Thanks to the jokes of Terence McCann, I gained an owl-like reputation for wisdom amongst these superstitious backwoodsmen, and they came verily to believe that upon my existence depended the success of the campaign. But day after day passed, and no sign from Colonel Clark of his intentions.

"There's a good lad," said Terence. "He'll be telling us where we're going."

I was asked the same question by a score or more, but Colonel Clark kept his own counsel. He himself was everywhere during the days that followed, superintending the work on the blockhouse we were building, and eyeing the men. Rumor had it that he was sorting out the sheep from the goats, silently choosing those who were to remain on the island and those who were to take part in the campaign.

At length the blockhouse stood finished amid the yellow stumps of the great trees, the trunks of which were in its walls. And suddenly the order went forth for the men to draw up in front of it by companies, with the families of the emigrants behind them. It was a picture to fix itself in a boy's mind, and one that I have never forgotten. The line of backwoodsmen, as fine a lot of men as I ever wish to see, bronzed by the June sun, strong and



tireless as the wild animals of the forest, stood expectant with rifles grounded. And beside the tallest, at the end of the line, was a diminutive figure with a drum hung in front of it. The early summer wind rustled in the forest, and the never ending song of the Great Falls sounded from afar. Apart, square-shouldered and indomitable, stood a young man of twenty-six.

"My friends and neighbors," he said in a firm voice, "there is scarce a man standing among you to-day who has not suffered at the hands of savages. Some of you have seen wives and children killed before your eyes—or dragged into captivity. None of you can to-day call the home for which he has risked so much his own. And who, I ask you, is to blame for this hideous war? Whose gold is it that buys guns and powder and lead to send the Shawnee and the Iroquois and Algonquin on the war-path?"

He paused, and a hoarse murmur of anger ran along the ranks.

"Whose gold but George's, by the grace of God King of Great Britain and Ireland? And what minions distribute it? Abbott at Kaskaskia, for one, and Hamilton at Detroit, the Hair Buyer, for another!"

When he spoke Hamilton's name his voice was nearly drowned by imprecations.

"Silence!" cried Clark, sternly, and they were silent. "My friends, the best way for a man to defend himself is to maim his enemy. One year since, when you did me the honor to choose me Commander-in-chief of your militia in Kentucky, I sent two scouts to Kaskaskia. A dozen years ago the French owned that place, and St. Vincent, and Detroit, and the people there are still French. My men brought back word that the French feared the Long Knives, as the Indians call us. On the first of October I went to Virginia, and some of you thought again that I had deserted you. I went to Williamsburg and wrestled with Governor Patrick Henry and his council, with Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Mason and Mr. Wythe. Virginia had no troops to send us, and her men were fighting barefoot with

Washington against the armies of the British king. But the governor gave me twelve hundred pounds in paper, and with it I have raised the little force that we have here. And with it we will carry the war into Hamilton's country. On the swift waters of this great river which flows past us have come tidings to-day, and God Himself has sent them. To-morrow would have been too late. The ships and armies of the French king are on their way across the ocean to help us fight the tyrant, and this is the news that we bear to the Kaskaskias. When they hear this, the French of those towns will not fight against us. My friends, we are going to conquer an empire for liberty, and I can look onward," he cried in a burst of inspired eloquence, sweeping his arm to the northward toward the forests on the far side of the Ohio, "I can look onward to the day when these lands will be filled with the cities of a Great Republic. And who among you will falter at such a call?"

There was a brief silence, and then a shout went up from the ranks that drowned the noise of the Falls, and many fell into antics, some throwing their coonskin hats in the air, and others cursing and scalping Hamilton in mockery, while I pounded on the drum with all my might. But when we had broken ranks the rumor was whispered about that the Holston company had not cheered; and indeed the rest of the day these men went about plainly morose and discontented,—some saying openly (and with much justice, though we failed to see it then) that they had their own families and settlements to defend from the Southern Indians and Chickamauga bandits, and could not undertake Kentucky's fight at that time. And when the enthusiasm had burned away a little the disaffection spread, and some even of the Kentuckians began to murmur against Clark, for faith or genius was needful to inspire men to his plan. One of the malcontents from Boonesboro came to our fire to argue.

"He's mad as a medicine man, is Clark, to go into that country with less than two hundred rifles. And he'll force us, will he? I'd as lief have the King for a master."



He brought every man in our circle to his feet, — Ray, McCann, Cowan, and Tom. But Tom was nearest, and words not coming easily to him he fell on the Boonesboro man instead, and they fought it out for ten minutes in the firelight with half the regiment around them. At the end of it, when the malcontents were carrying their champion away, they were stopped suddenly at the sight of one bursting through the circle into the light, and a hush fell upon the quarrel. It was Colonel Clark.

"Are you hurt, McChesney?" he demanded.

"I reckon not much, Colonel," said Tom, grinning, as he wiped his face.

"If any man deserts this camp to-night," cried Colonel Clark, swinging around, "I swear by God to have him chased and brought back and punished as he deserves. Captain Harrod, set a guard."

I pass quickly over the rest of the incident. How the Holston men and some others escaped in the night in spite of our guard, and swam the river on logs. How at dawn we found them gone, and Kenton and Harrod and brave Captain Montgomery set out in pursuit, with Cowan and Tom and Ray. All day they rode, relentless, and the next evening returned with but eight weary and sullen fugitives of all those who had deserted.

The next day the sun rose on a smiling world, the polished reaches of the river golden mirrors reflecting the forest's green. And we were astir with the light, preparing for our journey into the unknown country. At seven we embarked by companies in the flatboats, waving a farewell to those who were to be left behind. Some stayed through inclination and disaffection: others because Colonel Clark did not deem them equal to the task. But Swein Poulsson came. With tears in his little blue eyes he had begged the Colonel to take him, and I remember him well on that June morning, his red face perspiring under the white bristles of his hair as he strained at the big oar. For we must needs pull a mile up the stream ere we could reach the passage in which to shoot downward to the Falls. Suddenly Poul-

son dropped his handle, causing the boat to swing round in the stream, while the men damned him. Paying them no attention, he stood pointing into the blinding disk of the sun. Across the edge of it a piece was bitten out in blackness.

"Mein Gott!" he cried, "the world is being ended just now."

"The holy saints remember us this day!" said McCann, missing a stroke to cross himself. "Will ye pull, ye damned Dutchman? Or we'll be the first to slide into hell. This is no kind of a place at all at all."

By this time the men all along the line of boats had seen it, and many faltered. Clark's voice could be heard across the waters urging them to pull, while the bows swept across the current. They obeyed him, but steadily the blackness ate out the light, and a weird gloaming overspread the scene. River and forest became stern, the men silent. The more ignorant were in fear of a cataclysm, the others taking it for an omen.

"Shucks!" said Tom, when appealed to, "I've seed it afore, and it come all right again."

Clark's boat rounded the shoal: next our turn came, and then the whole line was gliding down the river, the rising roar of the angry waters with which we were soon to grapple coming to us with an added grimness. And now but a faint rim of light saved us from utter darkness. Big Bill Cowan, undaunted in war, stared at me with fright written on his face.

"And what 'll ye think of it, Davy?" he said.

I glanced at the figure of our commander in the boat ahead, and took courage.

"It's Hamilton's scalp hanging by a lock," I answered, pointing to what was left of the sun. "Soon it will be off, and then we'll have light again."

To my surprise he snatched me from the thwart and held me up with a shout, and I saw Colonel Clark turn and look back.

"Davy says the Ha'r Buyer's sculp hangs by the lock, boys," he shouted, pointing at the sun.



The word was cried from boat to boat, and we could see the men pointing upwards and laughing. And then, as the light began to grow, we were in the midst of the tumbling waters, the steersmen straining now right, now left, to keep the prows in the smooth reaches between rock and bar. We gained the still pools below, the sun came out once more and smiled on the landscape, and the spirits of the men, reviving, burst all bounds.

Thus I earned my reputation as a prophet.

Four days and nights we rowed down the great river, our oars double-manned, for fear that our coming might be heralded to the French towns. We made our first camp on a green little island at the mouth of the Cherokee, as we then called the Tennessee, and there I set about cooking a turkey for Colonel Clark, which Ray had shot. Chancing to look up, I saw the Colonel himself watching me.

"How is this, Davy?" said he. "I hear that you have saved my army for me before we have met the enemy."

"I did not know it, sir," I answered.

"Well," said he, "if you have learned to turn an evil omen into a good sign, you know more than some generals. What ails you now?"

"There's a pirogue, sir," I cried, staring and pointing.

"Where?" said he, alert all at once. "Here, McChesney, take a crew and put out after them."

He had scarcely spoken ere Tom and his men were rowing into the sunset, the whole of our little army watching from the bank. Presently the other boat was seen coming back with ours, and five strange woodsmen stepped ashore, our men pressing around them. But Clark flew to the spot, the men giving back.

"Who's the leader here?" he demanded.

A tall man stepped forward.

"I am," said he, bewildered but defiant.

"Your name?"

"John Duff," he answered, as though against his will.

"Your business?"

"Hunters," said Duff; "and I reckon we're in our rights."

"I'll judge of that," said our Colonel. "Where are you from?"

"That's no secret, neither. Kaskasky, ten days gone."

At that there was a murmur of surprise from our companies. Clark turned.

"Get your men back," he said to the captains, who stood about them. And all of them not moving: "Get your men back, I say. I'll have it known who's in command here."

At that the men retired. "Who commands at Kaskaskia?" he demanded of Duff.

"Monseer Rocheblave, a Frenchy holding a British commission," said Duff. "And the British Governor Abbott has left Post St. Vincent and gone to Detroit. Who be you?" he added suspiciously. "Be you Rebels?"

"Colonel Clark is my name, and I am in the service of the Commonwealth of Virginia."

Duff uttered an exclamatory oath and his manner changed. "Be you Clark?" he said with respect. "And you're going after Kaskasky? Wal, the militiy is prime, and the Injun scouts is keeping a good lookout. But, Colonel, I'll tell ye something: the Frenchies is etarnal afeard of the Long Knives. My God! they've got the notion that if you ketch 'em you'll burn and scalp 'em same as the Red Sticks."

"Good," was all that Clark answered.

"I reckon I don't know much about what the Rebels is fighting for," said John Duff; "but I like your looks, Colonel, and wherever you're going there'll be a fight. Me and my boys would kinder like to go along."

Clark did not answer at once, but looked John Duff and his men over carefully.

"Will you take the oath of allegiance to Virginia and the Continental Congress?" he asked at length.

"I reckon it won't pizen us," said John Duff.

"Hold up your hands," said Clark, and they took the oath. "Now, my men," said he, "you will be assigned to companies. Does any one among you know the old French trail from Massacre to Kaskaskia?"



"Why," exclaimed John Duff, "why, Johnny Saunders here can tread it in the dark like the road to the grog-shop."

John Saunders, loose-limbed, grinning sheepishly, shuffled forward, and Clark shot a dozen questions at him one after another. Yes, the trail had been blazed the Lord knew how long ago by the French, and given up when they left Massacre.

"Look you," said Clark to him, "I am not a man to stand trifling. If there is any deception in this, you will be shot without mercy."

"And good riddance," said John Duff. "Boys, we're Rebels now. Steer clear of the Ha'r Buyer."

## CHAPTER XIII

## KASKASKIA

FOR one more day we floated downward on the face of the waters between the forest walls of the wilderness, and at length we landed in a little gully on the north shore of the river, and there we hid our boats.

"Davy," said Colonel Clark, "let's walk about a bit. Tell me where you learned to be so silent?"

"My father did not like to be talked to," I answered, "except when he was drinking."

He gave me a strange look. Many the stroll I took with him afterwards, when he sought to relax himself from the cares which the campaign had put upon him. This night was still and clear, the west all yellow with the departing light, and the mists coming on the river. And presently, as we strayed down the shore we came upon a strange sight, the same being a huge fort rising from the waterside, all overgrown with brush and saplings and tall weeds. The palisades that held its earthenwork were rotten and crumbling, and the mighty bastions of its corners sliding away. Behind the fort, at the end farthest from the river, we came upon gravelled walks hidden by the rank growth, where the soldiers of his most Christian Majesty once paraded. Lost in thought, Clark stood on the parapet, watching the water gliding by until the darkness hid it, — nay, until the stars came and made golden dimples upon its surface. But as we went back to the camp again he told me how the French had tried once to conquer this vast country and failed, leaving to the Spaniards the endless stretch beyond the Mississippi called Louisiana, and this part to the English. And he told me likewise that this fort in the days of its glory had been called *Massacre*, from