

but he smiled at them kindly and told them to divide it amongst the weak. He looked at me as I sat with my feet crossed on the stump.

"I will follow Davy's example," said he.

At length the canoes were finished and we crossed the river, swimming over the few miserable skeletons of the French ponies we had brought along. We came to a sugar camp, and beyond it, stretching between us and Vincennes, was a sea of water. Here we made our camp, if camp it could be called. There was no fire, no food, and the water seeped out of the ground on which we lay. Some of those even who had not yet spoken now openly said that we could go no farther. For the wind had shifted into the northwest, and, for the first time since we had left Kaskaskia we saw the stars gleaming like scattered diamonds in the sky. Bit by bit the ground hardened, and if by chance we dozed we stuck to it. Morning found the men huddled like sheep, their hunting shirts hard as boards, and long before Hamilton's gun we were up and stamping. Antoine poked the butt of his rifle through the ice of the lake in front of us.

"I think we not get to Vincennes this day," he said.

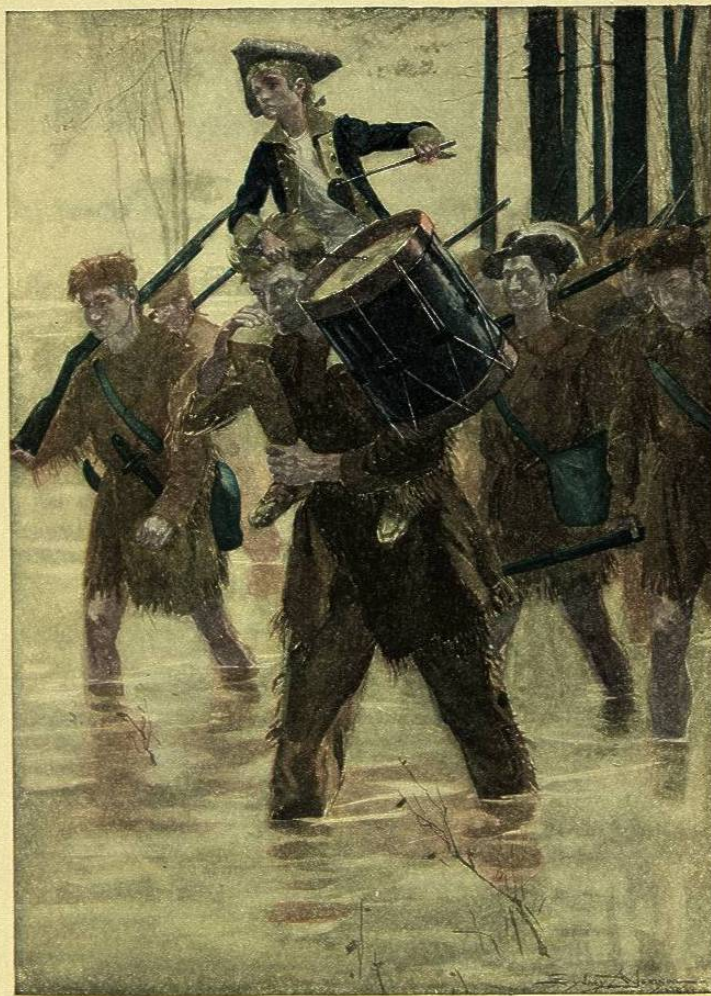
Colonel Clark, who heard him, turned to me.

"Fetch McChesney here, Davy," he said. Tom came.

"McChesney," said he, "when I give the word, take Davy and his drum on your shoulders and follow me. And Davy, do you think you can sing that song you gave us the other night?"

"Oh, yes, sir," I answered.

Without more ado the Colonel broke the skim of ice, and, taking some of the water in his hand, poured powder from his flask into it and rubbed it on his face until he was the color of an Indian. Stepping back, he raised his sword high in the air, and, shouting the Shawanee war-whoop, took a flying leap up to his thighs in the water. Tom swung me instantly to his shoulder and followed, I beating the charge with all my might, though my hands were so numb that I could scarce hold the sticks. Strangest of all, to a man they came shouting after us.



"BEATING THE CHARGE WITH ALL MY MIGHT."

"Now, Davy!" said the Colonel.

"I've faught on land, I've faught at sea,
At hame I faught my aunty, O;
But I met the deevil and Dundee
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

I piped it at the top of my voice, and sure enough the regiment took up the chorus, for it had a famous swing.

"An' ye had been where I had been,
Ye wad na be sae cantie, O;
An' ye had seen what I ha'e seen
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O."

When their breath was gone we heard Cowan shout that he had found a path under his feet, — a path that was on dry land in the summer-time. We followed it, feeling carefully, and at length, when we had suffered all that we could bear, we stumbled on to a dry ridge. Here we spent another night of torture, with a second backwater facing us coated with a full inch of ice.

And still there was nothing to eat.