SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Samson and Sarah Traylor, with their two children, Josiah and Betsey, travel by wagon from their home in Vergennes, Vt., to the West, the land of plenty. Their destination is the Country of the Sangamon, in Illinois.

CHAPTER II.—At Niagara Falls they meet a party of immigrants, among them a youth named John McNeil, who also decides to go to the Sangamon country. All of the party suffer from fever and ague. Sarah's ministrations save the life of a youth, Harry Needles, in the last stages of fever, and he accompanies the Traylors. They reach New Salem, Illinois, and are welcomed by young "Abe" Lincoln.

CHAPTER III.—Among the Traylors' first acquaintances are Lincoln's friends, Jack Kelso and his pretty daughter Bim, 16 years of age.

CHAPTER IV.—Samson decides to locate at New Salem, and begins building his house. Led by Jack Armstrong, rowdies attempt to break up the proceedings. Lincoln thrashes Armstrong. Young Harry Needles strikes Bap McNoll, of the Armstrong crowd, and McNoll threatens vengeance.

CHAPTER V.

In Which the Character of Bim Kelso Flashes Out in a Strange Adventure That Begins the Weaving of a Long Thread of Romance.

The shell of the cabin was finished that day. Its puncheon floor was in place but its upper floor was to be laid when the boards were ready. Its two doors were yet to be made and hung, its five windows to be fitted and made fast, its walls to be chinked with clay mortar. Samson and Harry stayed that evening after the rest were gone, smoothing the puncheon floor. They made a few nails at the forge after supper and went over to Abe's store about nine. Two of the Clary's Grove gang who had tarried in the village sat in the gloom of its little veranda apparently asleep. Doctor Allen, Jack Kelso, Alexander Ferguson and Martin Waddell were sitting by its fireside while Abe sat on the counter with his legs hanging off.

"I'm sorry we had to have trouble," Samson remarked. "It's the only spot on the day. I'll never forget the kindness of the people of New Salem."

"The raising bee is a most significant thing," said Kelso. "Democracy tends to universal friendship—each works for the crowd and the crowd for each, and there are no favorites. Every community is like the thousand friends of Thebes. Most of its units stand together for the common good—for justice, law and honor. The schools are spinning strands of democracy out of all this European wool. Railroads are to pick them up and weave them into one great fabric. By and by we shall see the ten million friends of America standing together as did the thousand friends of Thebes."

"It's a great thought," said Abe.

"No man can estimate the size of that mighty phalanx of friendship all trained in one school," Kelso went on. "Two years ago the Encyclopedia Britannica figured that the population of the United States in 1905 would be 108,000,000 people, and in 1906, 672,000,000. Wealth, power, science, literature, all follow in the train of light and numbers. The causes which moved the seat of civilization from the Euphrates to eastern Europe will carry it from the latter to the new world."

"They say that electricity and the development of the steam engine are going to make all men think alike," said Abe. "If that's so democracy and liberty will spread over the earth. I reckon we are near the greatest year in history. It is a privilege to be alive."

"And young," Doctor Allen added.

"Young! What a God's blessed thing is that!" said Kelso. "Also have ye learned 'The Clarion's Saturday Night?'"

"Not yet. It's a heavy log to roll but I'll get a grip on an ear and a hind leg and fill it out of the pen before long. You see."

"Don't fail to do that. It will be help and joy to ye."

"Old Kirkham is a hard master," said Abe. "I hear his hail rattling every time I get a minute's leisure. I'm high through with him. Now I want to study rhetoric."

"Only schoolmasters study rhetoric," Kelso declared. "A real poet or a real orator is born with all the rhetoric he needs. Rhetoric is a stool for a light load under the saddle, but how too warm blooded for the harness. He was for the day of the inlaid knight—not for these times. No man of sense would use a prancing horse on a plow or a stone boat. A good plow horse is a beautiful thing. The play of his muscles, the power of his strode are poetry to me, but when he tries to put on style he is ridiculous. That suggests what rhetoric is apt to do to the untrained intellect. If you've anything to say or write, head straight across the field and keep your eye on the furrow."

In the last diary of Samson Henry Traylor is this entry:

"I went to Gettysburg with the President today and at most he also then he spoke. Mr. Everett addressed the crowd for an hour or so. As Kelso would say 'He rode the prancing steed of Rhetoric.' My old friend went straight across the field. When he finished, the field, plowed and harrowed and fertilized by war, had been sowed for all time. The spring's work was done and well done."

At a quarter of ten the doctor rose and said:

"We're keeping Abe from his sleep and wearing the night away with philosophy. I'm going home."

"I came over to see if you could find a man to help me tomorrow," Samson said to Abe. "Harry is going over to do the chinking alone. I want a man to help me on the whipsaw while I cut some boards for the upper flooring."

"I'll help you myself," Abe proposed. "I reckon I'll close the store tomorrow unless Jack will tend it."

"You can count on me," said Jack. "I'm short of sleep anyhow and a day of rest will do me good."

Abe went with his friends to the door beyond which the two boys from Clary's Grove sat as if sound asleep. It is probable, however, that they had heard what Samson had said to Abe.

Next morning Abe and Samson set out for the woods soon after daylight.

"I like that boy Harry," said Abe. "I reckon he's got good stuff in him. The way he landed on Bap McNoll was a caution. I like to see a feller come right up to the scratch, without an invitation just in the nick o' time, as he did. That boy is a likely young colt—strong and limber and well put together and broad between the eyes."

"An' gentle as a kitten," Samson added. "There never was a better face on a boy or a better heart behind it. We like him."

"Yes, sir. He's a well topped young tree—straight and sound and good timber. Looks as if that little girl o' Jack's was terribly took up with him. I don't wonder."

"What kind of a girl is she?" Samson asked.

"Awful shy since the arrow hit her. She don't know what it means yet. She'll get used to that, I reckon. She's a good girl and smart as a steel trap."

Harry Needles went whistling up the road toward the new house with sickle, hoe and trowel. As he passed the Kelso cabin he whistled the tune of "Sweet Nightingale." It had haunted his mind since he had heard it in the woods. He whistled as loudly as ever he could and looked at the windows. Before he had passed, Bim's face looked out at him with a smile and her hand flickered back of the panes and he waved his to her. His heart beat fast as he hurried along.

"I'm not so very young," he said to himself. "I wish I hadn't put on these old clothes. Mrs. Traylor is an awful nice woman but she's determined to make me look like a plow horse. I don't see why she couldn't let me wear decent clothes."

Sarah had enjoyed mothering the boy. His health had returned. His cheeks were ruddy, his dark eyes clear and bright, his tall form erect and sturdy.

He had helped Alexander Ferguson with the making of the fireplace and knew how to mix the mortar. He worked with a will, for his heart was in the new home. It was a fine September morning. The far reaches of the great, grassy plain were dimmed with haze. It was a vast flowery wilderness, waving and murmuring in the breeze like an ocean. How long those acres, sown by the winds of heaven, had waited for the plowman now arrived!

Harry felt the beauty of the scene but saw and enjoyed more the face of Bim Kelso as he worked and planned his own house—his cabin, but a mansion like that of Judge Harper in the village near his old home. He had filled every crevice in the rear wall and was working on the front when he heard the thunder of running horses and saw figures, dim in a cloud of dust, flying up the road again. He thought of the threat of Bap McNoll. It occurred to him that he would be in a bad way alone with those ruffians if they were coming for revenge. He thought of running toward the grove, which was a few rods from the rear door of the house, and hiding there. He wouldn't bear to run. Bim and all the rest of them would hear of it. So with the sickle in his right hand he stood waiting inside the house and hoping they wouldn't stop. They rode up to the door and dismounted quietly and hitched their horses. There were five of them who crowded into the cabin with McNoll in the lead.

"Now, you young rooster, you're goin' to get what's comin' to you," he growled.

The boy faced them bravely and aimed them away with his sickle. They were prepared for such emergencies. One of them drew a bag of shot from his pocket and hurled it at Harry's head. It hit him full in the face and he staggered against the wall stunned by the blow. They rushed upon the boy and disarmed and bore him to the floor. For a little time he knew not what was passing. When he came to, his hands and feet were tied and the men stood near cursing and laughing, while their leader, McNoll, was draining a bottle. Suddenly he heard a voice trembling with excitement and wet with tears saying:

"You go 'way from here or I'll kill you dead. So help me God I'll kill you. If one o' you touches him he's goin' to die."

He Staggered Against the Wall.

He saw Bim Kelso at the window with her gun leveled at the head of McNoll. Her face was red with anger. Her eyes glowed. As he looked a tear welled from one of them and trailed down the scarlet surface of her cheek. McNoll turned without a word and walked sullenly out of the back door. The others crowded after him. They ran as soon as they had got out of the door. She left the window. In a moment the young men were galloping away.

Bim came into the house sobbing with emotion but with her head erect. She stood her gun in a corner and knelt by the helpless boy. He was crying also. Her hair fell upon his face as she looked at the spot of deep scarlet color made by the shot bag. She kissed it and held her cheek against his and whispered: "Don't cry. It's all over now. I'm going to cut these ropes."

It was as if she had known and loved him always. She was like a young mother with her first child. Tenderly she wiped his tears away with her blond, silken hair. She cut his bonds and he rose and stood before her. Her face changed like magic.

"Oh what a fool I've been!" she exclaimed.

"Why so?" he asked.

"I cried and I kissed you and we never have been introduced to each other."

She covered her eyes with her hair and with bent head went out of the door.

"I'll never forget that kiss as long as I live," said the boy as he followed her. "I'll never forget your help or your crying either."

"Go away from me—I won't speak to you," she said. "Go back to your work. I'll stay here and keep watch."

The boy returned to his task pointing up the inside walls but his mind and heart were out in the sunlight talking with Bim. Once he looked out of the door and saw her leaning against the neck of the pony, her face hidden in his mane. When the sun was low she came to the door and said:

"You had better stop now and go home."

She looked down at the ground and added:

"Please, please, don't tell on me."

"Of course not," he answered. "But I hope you won't be afraid of me any more."

She looked up at him with a little smile. "Do you think I'm afraid of you?" she asked as if it were too absurd to be thought of. She unhitched and mounted her pony but did not go.

"I do wish you could raise a mustache," she said, looking wistfully into his face. "I can't bear to see you look so terribly young; you get worse and worse every time I see you. I want you to be a regular man right quick."

He wondered what he ought to say and presently stammered: "I—I—intend to. I guess I'm more of a man than anybody would think to look at me."

"You're too young to ever fall in love, I reckon."

"No, I'm not," he answered with decision.

"Have you got a razor?" she asked.

"No."

"I reckon it would be a powerful help. You put soap on your lip and mow it off with a razor. My father says it makes the grass grow."

There was a moment of silence during which she brushed the mane of her pony. Then she asked thoughtfully: "Do you like yellow hair?"

"Yes, if it looks like yours."

"If you don't mind I'll put a mustache on you just—just to look at every time I think of you."

"When I think of you I put violets in your hair," he said.

He took a step toward her as he spoke and as he did so she started her pony. A little way off she checked him and said:

"I'm sorry. There are no violets now."

She rode away slowly waving her hand and singing with the joy of a lilt in the springtime.

That evening when Harry was helping Samson with the horses he said:

"I'm going to tell you a secret. I wish you wouldn't say anything about it."

Samson stood pulling the hair out of his card and looking very stern as he listened while Harry told of the assault upon him and how Bim had arrived and driven the roughs away with her gun but he said not a word of her demonstration of tender sympathy. To him, that had clothed the whole adventure with a kind of sanctity so that he could not bear to have it talked about.

Samson's eyes glowed with anger. They searched the face of the boy. His voice was deep and solemn when he said:

"This is a serious matter. Why do you wish to keep it a secret?"

The boy blushed. For a moment he knew not what to say. Then he spoke: "It ain't me so much—it's her," he managed to say. "She wouldn't stand it to be talked about and I don't either."

Samson began to understand. "She's quite a girl, I guess," he said thoughtfully. "She must have the nerve of a man—I declare she must."

"You-a-re! They'd a' got hurt if they hadn't gone away, that's sure," said Harry.

"We'll look out for them after this," Samson rejoined. "The first time I meet that man McNoll he'll have to settle with me and he'll pay cash on the nail."

Bim, having heard of Harry's part in Abe's fight and of the fact that he was to be working alone all day at the new house, had ridden out through the woods to the open prairie and hunted in sight of the new cabin that afternoon. Unwilling to confess her extreme interest in the boy she had said not a word of her brave act. It was not shame; it was partly a kind of rebellion against the tyranny of youthful ardor; it was partly the fear of ridicule.

So it happened that the adventure of Harry Needles made scarcely a ripple on the sensitive surface of the village life. It will be seen, however, that it had started strong undercurrents likely, in time, to make themselves felt.

The house and barn were finished, whereupon Samson and Harry drove to Springfield—a muddy, crude and growing village with thick woods on its north side—and bought furniture. Their wagon was loaded and they were ready to start for home. They were walking on the main street when Harry touched Samson's arm and whispered:

"There's McNoll and Callyhan."

The pair were walking a few steps ahead of Samson and Harry. In a second Samson's big hand was on McNoll's shoulder.

"This is Mr. McNoll, I believe," said Samson.

The other turned with a scared look.

"What do you want o' me?" he demanded.

Samson threw him to the ground with a jerk so strong and violent that it rent the sleeve from his shoulder. McNoll's companion, who had felt the weight of Samson's hand and had had enough of it, turned and ran.

"What do ye want o' me?" McNoll asked again as he struggled to free himself.

"What do I want o' you—you puny little coward," said Samson, as he lifted the bully to his feet and gave him a toss and swung him in the air and continued to address him. "I'm just goin' to mum you up proper. If you don't say you're sorry and mean it I'll put a tow string on your neck and give you to some one that wants a dog."

"I'm Just Goin' to Mum You Up Proper."

"I'm sorry," said McNoll. "Honest I am! I was drunk when I done it."

Samson released his prisoner. A number in the crowd which had gathered around them clapped their hands and shouted, "Hurrah for the stranger!"

A constable took Samson's hand and said: "You deserve a vote of thanks. That man and his friends have made me more trouble than all the rest of the drinking men put together."

"And I am making trouble for myself," said Samson. "I have made myself ashamed. I am no fighting man. I was never in such a mess as this in public street before and with God's help it will never happen again."

"Where do you live?" the officer asked.

"In New Salem."

"I wish I was here. We need men like you."

Samson wrote in his diary:

"On the way home my heart was sore. I prayed in silence that God would forgive me for my bad example to the boy. I promised that I would use again whatever strength He has given me (in my old home I would have been disgraced by it. The minister would have preached of the depravity—sin—that follows the violent man to put him down; the people would have looked askance at me. Deacon Somers would have called me aside to look into my soul, and Judge Grandy and his wife would not have invited me to their parties. Here it's different. A chap who can take the law in his hands and bring the evil man to his senses, even if he has to hit him over the head, is looked up to. It's a reckless country. You feel it as soon as you get here. In time, I fear, I shall be as heedless as the rest of them. Some way the news of my act has got here from Springfield. Sarah was kind of cut up. Jack Kelso has nicknamed me 'The man with the iron arms,' and Abe, who is a better man every way, laughs at my embarrassment and says I ought to feel honored. For one thing Jack Armstrong has become a good citizen. His wife has foxed a pair of breeches for Abe. They say McNoll has left the country. There has been no devilry here since that day. I guess the gang is broken up—too much iron in its way."

Sarah enjoyed fixing up the cabin. Jack Kelso had given her some deer and buffalo skins to lay on the floors. The upper room, reached by a stick ladder, had its two beds, one of which Harry occupied. The children slept below in a trundle bed that was pushed under the larger one when it was made up in the morning.

"Some time I'm going to put in a windlestraw and get rid o' that stick ladder," Samson had said.

Sarah had all the arts of the New England home maker. Under her hand the cabin, in color, atmosphere and general neatness, would have delighted a higher grade than was to be found on the prairies, save in the brain of Kelso, who really had some acquaintance with beauty. To be sure the bed was in one corner, spread with its upper cover knit of gray yarn harmonizing in color with the bark of the log walls. A handsome dark brown buffalo robe lay beside it. The rifle and powder horn were hung above the mantel. The fireplace had its crane of wrought iron.

Every one in the little village came to the house warming. The people were in their best clothes. The women wore dresses of new calico—save Mrs. Doctor Allen, who wore a black silk dress which had come with her from her late home in Lexington. Bim Kelso came in a dress of red muslin trimmed with white lace. Ann Rutledge also wore a red dress and came with Abe. The latter was rather grotesque in his new linsey trousers, of a better length than the former pair, but still too short.

"It isn't fair to blame the trousers on the tailor," he had said when he had tried them on. "My legs are so long that the imagination of the tailor is sure to fall short if the cloth don't. Next time I'll have 'em made to measure with a ten-foot pole instead of a yardstick. If they're too long I can roll 'em up and let out a link or two when they shrink. Ever since I was a boy I have been troubled with shrinking pants."

Abe wore a blue swallow-tail coat with brass buttons, the tails of which were so short as to be well above the danger of pressure when he sat down. His cowhide shoes had been well blackened; the blue yarn of his socks showed above them. "These darned socks of mine are rather proud and conceited," he used to say. "They like to show off."

He wore a shirt of white, unbleached cotton, a starched collar and black tie.

In speaking of his collar to Samson, he said that he felt like a wild horse in a box stall.

Mentor Graham, the schoolmaster, was there—a smooth-faced man with a large head, sandy hair and a small mustache, who spoke by note, as it were. Kelso called him the great articulator and said that he walked in the valley of the shadow of Lindley Murray. He seemed to keep a watchful eye on his words, as if they were a lot of schoolboys not to be trusted. They came out with a kind of self-conscious rectitude.

The children's games had begun and the little house rang with their songs and laughter, while their elders sat by the fire and along the walls talking. Ann Rutledge and Bim Kelso and Harry Needles and John McNeil played with them. In one of the dances all joined in singing the verses:

I won't have none o' yer weevily wheat,
I won't have none o' yer barley,
I won't have none o' yer weevily wheat,
To make a rake for Charley.

Charley is a fine young man,
Charley is a dandy,
Charley likes to kiss the girls,
Whenever it comes handy.

When a victim was caught in the flying scrimmage at the end of a paragraph in the game of Prisoners, he or she was brought before the blindfolded judge:

"Heavy, heavy hangs over your head," said the constable.

"Fine or superfine?" the judge inquired.

"Fine," said the constable, which meant that the victim was a boy. Then the sentence was pronounced and generally it was this:

"Go low to the wittiest, kneel to the prettiest and kiss the one that you love best."

Harry was the first prisoner. He went straight to Bim Kelso and bowed and knelt, and when he had risen she turned and ran like a scared deer around the chairs and the crowd of onlookers, some assisting and some checking her flight, before the ultimate touch. Hard pressed, she ran out of the open door, with a merry laugh, and just beyond the steps Harry caught and kissed her, and her cheeks had the color of roses when he let her back.

John McNeil kissed Ann Rutledge that evening and was most attentive to her, and the women were saying that the two had fallen in love with each other.

"See how she looks at him," one of them whispered.

"Well, it's just the way he looks at

Continued on Page Five)

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