

A Man for the Ages

A Story of the Builders of Democracy

By Irving Bacheller

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CHAPTER II.

Wherein is a Brief Account of Sundry Curious Characters Met on the Road

At Utica they bought provisions and a tin trumpet for Joe, and a doll with a real porcelain face for Betsey, and turned into the great main thoroughfare of the North leading eastward to Boston and westward to a shore of the midland seas. This road was once the great trail of the Iroquois, by them called the Long House, because it had reached from the Hudson to Lake Erie, and in their day had been well roofed with foliage.

Soon they came in view of the famous Erie canal, hard by the road. Through it the grain of the Far West had just begun moving eastward in a tide that was flowing from April to December. Big barges, drawn by mules and horses on its shore, were cutting the still waters of the canal. They stopped and looked at the barges and the long tow ropes and the tugging animals.

"There is a real artificial river, hundreds o' miles long, hand made of the best material, water tight, no snags or rocks or other imperfections, durability guaranteed," said Samson. "It has made the name of DeWitt Clinton known everywhere."

"I wonder what next!" Sarah exclaimed. They met many teams and passed other movers going west, and some prosperous farms on a road wider and smoother than any they had traveled. They camped that night, close by the river, with a Connecticut family on its way to Ohio with a great load of household furniture on one wagon and seven children in another.

So they fared along through Canandaigua and across the Genesee to the village of Rochester and on through Lewiston and up the Niagara river to the falls, and camped where they could see the great water flood and hear its muffled thunder. When nearing the latter they overtook a family of poor Irish emigrants, of the name of Flanagan, who shared their camp site at the falls. The Flanagans were on their way to Michigan and had come from the old country three years before and settled in Broome county, New York. They, too, were on their way to a land of better promise. Among them was a rugged, freckled, red-headed lad, well along in his teens, of the name of Dennis, who wore a tall beaver hat, tilted sanely on one side of his head, and a ragged blue coat with brass buttons, as he walked beside the oxen, whip in hand, with trousers tucked in the tops of his big cowhide boots. There was also a handsome young man in this party of the name of John McNeill, who wore a ruffled shirt and swallow-tail coat, now much soiled by the journey. He listened to Samson's account of the Sangamon country and said that he thought he would go there.

Sarah gave the Irish family a good supply of cookies and jerked venison before she had them good-by.

When our travelers left, next morning, they stopped for a last look at the great falls.

"Children," said Samson, "I want you to take a good look at that. It's the most wonderful thing in the world and maybe you'll never see it again."

"The Indians used to think that the Great Spirit was in this river," said Sarah. "Kind o' seems to me they were right," Samson remarked thoughtfully. "Kind o' seems as if the great spirit of America was in that water. It moves on in the way it wills and nothing can stop it. Everything in its current goes along with it."

"And only the strong can stand the journey," said Sarah. These words were no doubt inspired by an ache in her bones. A hard seat and the ceaseless jolting of the wagon through long, hot, dusty days had wearied them. Even their hearts were getting sore as they thought of the endless reaches of the roads ahead. Samson stuffed a sack with straw and put it under her and the children on the seat. At a word of complaint he was wont to say:

"I know it's awful tiresome, but we got to have patience. We're goin' to get used to it and have a wonderful lot of fun. The time'll pass quick—you see." Then he would sing and get them all laughing with some curious bit of drollery. They spent the night of July third at a tavern in Buffalo, then a busy, crude and rapid growing center for the shipping east and west.

There were emigrants on their way to the Far West in the crowd—men, women and children and



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babies in arms—Irish, English, Germans and Yankees. There were also well-dressed, handsome young men from the colleges of New England going out to be missionaries "between the desert and the sown."

Buffalo, on the edge of the midland seas, had the flavor of the rank, new soil in it those days—and especially that day, when it was thronged with rough coated and rougher tongued, swearing men on a holiday, stevedores and boatmen off the lakes and rivers of the middle border—some of whom had had their training on the Ohio and Mississippi. There was much drunkenness and fighting in the crowded streets. Some of the carriers and handlers of American commerce vented their enthusiasm in song.

They had the lake view and its cool breeze on their way to Silver Creek, Dunkirk and Erie, and a rough way it was in those days.

Enough has been written of this long and wearisome journey, but the worst of it was ahead of them—much the worst of it—in the swamp flats of Ohio and Indiana. In one of the former a wagon wheel broke down, and that day Sarah began to shake with ague and burn with fever. Samson built a rude camp by the road side, put Sarah into bed under its cover and started for the nearest village on Colonel's back.

"I shall never forget that day spent in a lonely part of the woods," the good woman wrote to her brother. "It endeared the children to me more than any day I can remember. They brought water from the creek, a great quantity, and told me stories and cheered me in every way they could. My faith in God's protection was perfect and in spite of my misery the children were a great comfort. In the middle of the afternoon Samson returned with a doctor and some tools and a stick of seasoned timber. How good he looked when he came and knelt by my bed and kissed me! This is a hard journey, but a woman can bear anything with such a man. The doctor said I would be all right in three days, and I was."

"Late that afternoon it began to rain. Samson was singing as he worked on his wheel. A traveler came along on horseback and saw our plight. He was a young missionary going west. Samson began to joke with him.

"You're a happy man for one in so much trouble," said the stranger. "Then I heard Samson say: 'Well sir, I'm in a fix where happiness is absolutely necessary. It's like grass on the wagon wheels—we couldn't go on without it. When we need anything we make it if we can. My wife is sick and the wagon is broke and it's raining and night is near in a lone country, and it ain't a real good time for me to be down in the mouth—is it, now? We haven't broke any bones or had an earthquake or been scalped by Indians, so there's some room for happiness."

"Look here, stranger—I like you," said the man. "If there's anything I can do to help ye, I'll stop a while!" He spent the night with them and helped mend the felly and set the tire.

The fever and ague passed from one to another and all were sick before the journey ended, although Samson kept the reins in hand through his misery. There were many breaks to mend, but Samson's ingenuity was always equal to the task.

One day, near nightfall, they were overtaken by a tall, handsome Yankee lad riding a pony. His pony stopped beside the wagon and looked toward the travelers as if appealing for help. The boy was pointing toward the horizon and muttering. Sarah saw at once that his mind was wandering in the delirium of fever. She got out of the wagon and took his hand. The moment she did so he began crying like a child.

"This boy is sick," she said to Samson, who came and helped him off his horse. They camped for the night and put the boy to bed and gave him medicine and tender care. He was

too sick to travel next day. The Traylor stayed with him and nursed the lad until he was able to go on. He was from Niagara county, New York, and his name was Harry Needles. His mother had died when he was ten and his father had married again. He had not been happy in his home after that and his father had given him a pony and a hundred dollars and sent him away to seek his own fortune. Homesick and lonely and ill, and just going west with a sublime faith that the West would somehow provide for him, he might even have perished on the way if he had not fallen in with friendly people. His story had touched the heart of Sarah and Samson. He was a big, green, gentle-hearted country boy who had set out filled with hope and the love of adventure. Sarah found pleasure in mothering the poor lad, and so it happened that he became one of their little party. He was helpful and good-natured and had sundry arts that pleased the children. The man and the woman liked the big, honest lad.

One day he said to Samson: "I hope you won't mind if I go along with you, sir."

"Glad to have you with us," said Samson. "We've talked it over. If you want to, you can come along with us and our home shall be yours and I'll do what's right by you."

They fared along through Indiana and over the wide savannas of Illinois, and on the ninety-seventh day of their journey they drove through rolling, grassy, flowering prairies and up a long, hard hill to the small log cabin settlement of New Salem, Illinois, on the shore of the Sangamon. They halted about noon in the middle of this little prairie village, opposite its small clapboard house. A sign hung over its door which bore the rudely lettered words: "Rutledge's Tavern."

A long, slim, stoop-shouldered young man sat in the shade of an oak tree that stood near a corner of the tavern, with a number of children playing around him. He sat leaning against the tree trunk reading a book. He had risen as they came near and stood looking at them, with the book under his arm. Samson says in his diary that he looked like "an untrimmed yearling colt about sixteen hands high. He got up slow and kept rising till his bush of black tousel hair was six feet four above the ground. Then he put on an old straw hat without any hand on it. He reminded me of Philemon Baker's fish rod, he was that rarer. For humbleness I'd match him against the world. His hide was kind o' yaller and leathery. I could see he was still in the gristle—a little over twenty—but his face was marked up by worry and weather like a man's. I never saw anybody so long between joints. Don't hardly see how he could tell when his feet got cold."

He wore a hickory shirt without a collar or coat or jacket. One suspender held up his coarse, linsey trousers, the legs of which fitted closely and came only to a blue yarn zone above his heavy cowhide shoes. Samson writes that he "fetched a sneeze and wiped his big nose with a red handkerchief" as he stood surveying them in silence, while Dr. John Allen, who had sat on the door-step reading a paper—a kindly faced man of middle age with a short white beard under his chin—greeted them cheerfully.

"Where do you hail from?" the doctor asked. "Vermont," said Samson. "All the way in that wagon?" "Yes, sir."

"I guess you're made o' the right stuff," said the Doctor. "Where ye bound?" "Don't know exactly. Going to take a claim somewhere."

"There's no better country than right here. This is the Canaan of America. We need people like you. Unhitch your team and have some dinner and we'll talk things over after you're rested. I'm the doctor here and I ride all over this part o' the country. I reckon I know it pretty well."

A woman in a neat calico dress came out of the door—a strong-built and rather well-flavored woman with blonde hair and dark eyes. "Mrs. Rutledge, these are travelers

pole under which she had just passed. Keeping guard below was the faithful dog.

"Fortunately, our apartment house has all the conveniences of the Hippodrome. We thought instantly of the expert snake charmer, Kadiana, who lives in the next flat.

"Certainly, I will get the snake," said Kadiana, calmly, when awakened. And then ensued one of the earliest fights it has ever been my fortune to witness. At this unearthly hour in a New York apartment house Kadiana battled with the snake.

"He bit her four times on the hand and shoulder, but finally she got him by the neck and the worst was over.

"Then she told us the snake's history. For five days he had been wandering about the apartment house, having glided away from his fellows and from Kadiana, who, intending to add some new specimens to her list of pets, had ordered several samples sent to her.

"Apparently he had hidden in the basement and finally reached our apartment in some way unknown."

The snake was a Texas bull. It ate voraciously when returned to its box, Mr. Shallarb said.

"Adventure? Why leave New York for it?" queries he. Well, why?

"from the East," said the Doctor. "Give 'em some dinner, and if they can't pay for it, I can. They've come all the way from Vermont."

"Good land! Come right in an' rest yourselves. Abe, you show the gentleman where to put his horses an' lend him a hand."

Abe extended his long arm toward Samson and said "Howdy" as they shook hands.

"When his big hand got hold of mine, I kind o' felt his timber," Samson writes. "I says to myself, 'There's a man it would be hard to tip over in a rassle.'"

"What's yer name? How long ye been travelin'? My conscience! Ain't ye wore out?" the hospitable Mrs. Rutledge was asking as she went into the house with Sarah and the children. "You go and mix up with the little ones and let yer mother rest while I git dinner," she said to Joe and Betsey, and added as she took Sarah's shawl and bonnet: "You lop down an' rest yerself while I'm flyin' around the fire."

"Come all the way from Vermont?" Abe asked as he and Samson were unhitching.

"Yes, sir."

"By Jing!" the slim giant exclaimed. "I reckon you feel like throwin' off yer harness an' takin' a roll in the grass."

(To be continued.)

Willard Marks of Albany, A. H. Parrish of Rodaville and M. I. Shanks of Lebanon have been appointed by the governor to supervise the expenditure of \$800 appropriated by the legislature for the improvement of Soda Spring and grounds.

NEW YORK OFFERS PRIZE SNAKE STORY

Fourteen-Foot Texas Reptile Wanders About House for Four Days Before Capture.

New York.—Volstead or no Volstead, the snake story season is on! Dillon Shallarb, singer, starts the ball rolling with what he calls a thrilling episode at Central Singing studio.

"It was 1 a. m. and pitch dark," says he, "when we were awakened by the excited barking of our big black dog in an adjoining room. Mrs. Shallarb got up to investigate, and when her voice failed to quiet the agitated animal, she crossed the room to turn on the light.

"Imagine her horror when upon looking about the room she saw a 14-foot snake coiled around the curtain



Finally Got Him by the Neck.

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