

A Man for the Ages

A Story of the Builders of Democracy

By Irving Bacheller

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CHAPTER IV.

Which Presents Other Log-Cabin Folk and the First Steps in the Making of a New Home and Certain Capacities and Incapacities of Abe.

Next morning at daylight two parties went out in the woods to cut timber for the home of the newcomers. In one party were Harry Needles carrying two axes and a well-filled lunch-pail; Samson with a saw in his hand and the boy Joe on his back; Abe with a saw and ax and a small jug of root beer and a book tied in a big red handkerchief and slung around his neck. When they reached the woods Abe cut a pole for the small boy and carried him on his shoulder to the creek and said:

"Now you sit down here and keep order in this little frog city. If you hear a frog say anything improper you fetch him a whack. Don't allow any nonsense. We'll make you mayor of Frog City."

The men fell to with axes and saws while Harry limbed the logs and looked after the mayor. Their huge muscles flung the sharp axes into the timber and gnawed through it with the saw. Many big trees fell before noon time when they stopped for lunch. While they were eating Abe said:

"I reckon we better saw out a few boards this afternoon. Need 'em for the doors. We'll tote a couple of logs up on the side o' that knoll, put 'em on skids an' whip 'em up into boards with the saw."

Samson took hold of the middle of one of the logs and raised it from the ground.

"I guess we can carry 'em," he said. "Can ye shoulder it?" Abe asked.

"Easy," said Samson as he raised an end of the log, stepped beneath it and, resting its weight on his back, soon got his shoulder near its center and swung it clear of the ground and walked with it to the knollside where he let it fall with a resounding thump that shook the ground. Abe stopped eating and watched every move in this



Watched Every Move in This Remarkable Performance.

remarkable performance. The ease with which the big Vermonter had so defied the law of gravitation with that unwieldy stick amazed him.

"That thing'll weigh from seven to eight hundred pounds," said he. "I reckon you're the stoniest man in this part o' the state an' I'm quite a man myself. I've lifted a barrel o' whisky and put my mouth to the bung hole. I never drink it."

"Say," he added as he sat down and began eating a doughnut. "If you ever hit anybody take a sledge hammer or a crowbar. It wouldn't be decent to use your fist."

They heaved a flat surface on opposite sides of the log which Samson had carried and peeled it and raised its lower end on a cross timber. Then they marked it with a chalk line and sliced it into inch boards with a whip saw, Abe standing on top of the log and Samson beneath it. Suddenly the saw stopped. A clear, beautiful voice flung the music of "Sweet Nightingale" into the timbered hollow. It halted the workers and set the woodland ringing. The men stood silent like those hearing a benediction. The singing ceased. Still they listened for half a moment. It was as if a spirit had passed and touched them.

"It's Bim—the little vixen!" said Abe tenderly. "She's an odd child and as pretty as a spotted fawn, and about as wild. She's a kind of a first cousin to the bobolink."

When they were getting ready to go home that afternoon Joe got into a great hurry to see his mother. It seemed to him that ages had elapsed since he had seen her—a conviction which led to noisy tears.

Abe knelt before him and comforted the boy. Then he wrapped him in his jacket and swung him in the air and started for home with Joe astride his neck.

Samson says in his diary: "His tender play with the little lad gave me another look at the man Lincoln."

"Some one proposed once that we should call that stream the Minnehaha," said Abe as he walked along. "After this Joe and I are going to call it the Minneboohoo."

The women of the little village had met at a quilting party at ten o'clock with Mrs. Martin Waddell. There Sarah had had a stat at the frame and heard all the gossip of the countryside. The nimble-fingered Ann Rutledge—a daughter of the tavern folk—had sat beside her. Ann was a slender, good-looking girl of seventeen with blue eyes and a rich crown of auburn hair and a fair skin well browned by the sunlight. She was the most dexterous needle worker in New Salem.

John McNeil, whom the Traylor had met on the road near Niagara Falls and who had shared their camp with them, arrived on the stage that evening. He was dressed in a new butternut suit and clean linen and looked very handsome. Samson writes that he resembled the pictures of Robert Emmet. With fine, dark eyes, a smooth skin, well-moulded features and black hair neatly brushed on a shapely head he was not at all like the rugged Abe. In a low tone and very modestly, with a slight brogue on his tongue he told of his adventures on the long shore road to Michigan. Ann sat listening and looking into his face as he talked. Abe came in, soon after eight o'clock, and was introduced to the stranger. All noted the contrast between the two young men as they greeted each other. Abe sat down for a few minutes and looked sadly into the fire but said nothing. He rose presently, excused himself and went away.

The logs for the new house were ready two days after the cutting began. Martin Waddell and Samuel Hill sent teams to haul them. John Cameron and Peter Lukins had brought the window sash and some clapboards from Beardstown in a small flatboat. Then came the day of the raising—a clear, warm day early in September. All the men from the village and the near farms gathered to help make a home for the newcomers. Samson and Jack Kelso went out for a hunt after the cutting and brought in a fat buck and many grouse for the bee dinner, to which every woman of the neighborhood made a contribution of cake or pie or cookies or doughnuts.

"What will be my part?" Samson had inquired of Kelso.

"Nothing but a jug of whisky and a kind word and a house warming," Kelso had answered.

They notched and bored the logs and made pins to bind them and cut those that were to go around the fireplace and window spaces. Strong, willing and well-trained hands heaved and fitted the logs together. Alexander Ferguson lined the fireplace with a curious mortar made of clay in which he mixed grass for a binder. This mortar he rolled into layers called "cats," each eight inches long and three inches thick. Then he laid them against the logs and held them in place with a woven network of sticks. The first fire—a slow one—baked the clay into a rigid stone-like sheath inside the logs and presently the sticks were burned away. The women had cooked the meats by an open fire and spread the dinner on a table of rough boards resting on poles set in crotches. At noon one of them sounded a conch shell. Then with shouts of joy the men hurried to the fireside and for a moment there was a great spluttering over the wash basins. Before they ate, every man except Abe and Samson "took a pull at the jug—long or short"—to quote a phrase of the time.

It was a cheerful company that sat down upon the grass around the table with loaded plates. Their food had its extra seasoning of merry jests and loud laughter. Sarah was a little shocked at the forthright directness of their eating, no knives or forks or napkins being needed in that process. Having eaten, washed and packed away their dishes the women went home at two. Before they had gone Samson's ears caught a thunder of horses' feet in the distance. Looking in its direction he saw a cloud of dust in the road and a band of horsemen riding toward them at full speed. At came to him and said:

"I see the boys from Clary's Grove are coming. If they get mean, let 'em deal with 'em. It's my responsibility. I wouldn't wonder if they had some of Offut's whisky with 'em."

The boys arrived in a cloud of dust and a chorus of Indian whoops and dismounted and hobbled their horses. They came toward the workers, led by burly Jack Armstrong, a stalwart, hard-faced blacksmith of about twenty-two with broad, heavy

shoulders, whose name has gone into history. They had been drinking some but no one of them was in the least degree off his balance. They scuffled around the jug for a moment in perfect good nature and then Abe and Mrs. Waddell provided them with the best remnants of the dinner. They were rather noisy. Soon they went up on the roof to help with the rafters and the clapping. They worked well a few minutes and suddenly they came scrambling down for another pull at the jug. They were out for a spree and Abe knew it and knew further that they had reached the limit of discretion.

"Boys, there are ladies here and we've got to be careful," he said. "Let's stick to the job till four o'clock. Then we'll knock off for refreshments."

The young revelers gathered in a group and began to whisper together. Samson writes that it became evident then they were going to make trouble and says:

"We had left the children at Rutledge's in the care of Ann. I went to Sarah and told her she had better go on and see if they were all right."

"Don't you get in any fight," she said, which shows that the women knew what was in the air.

"Sarah led the way and the others followed her."

Those big, brawny fellows from the Grove when they got merry were looking always for a chance to get mad at some man and turn him into a plaything. A chance had come to get mad and they were going to make the most of it. They began to growl with resentment. Some were wiggling their leader, Jack Armstrong, to fight Abe. One of them ran to his horse and brought a bottle from his saddle bag. It began passing from mouth to mouth. Jack Armstrong got the bottle before it was half emptied, drained it and flung it high in the air. Another called him a hog and grappled him around the waist and there was a desperate struggle which ended quickly. Armstrong got a hold on the neck of his assailant and choked him until he let go. This was not enough for the sturdy bully of Clary's Grove. He seized his follower and flung him so roughly on the ground that the latter lay for a moment stunned. Armstrong had got his blood warm and was now ready for action. With a wild whoop he threw off his coat, unbuttoned his right shirt-sleeve and rolled it to the shoulder and declared in a loud voice, as he swung his arm in the air, that he could "out jump, out hop, out run, throw down, drag out an' lick any man in New Salem."

In a letter to his father Samson writes:

"Abe was working at my elbow. I saw him drop his hammer and get up and make for the ladder. I knew something was going to happen and I followed him. In a minute everyone was off the roof and out of the building. I guess they knew what was coming. The big lad stood there swinging his arm and yelling like an Injun. It was a big arm and muscled and corded up some, but I guess if I'd shoved the calico off mine and held it up he'd pulled down his sleeve. I didn't know just how good a man Abe was and I was kind o' scared for a minute. I never found it so hard work to do nothin' as I did then. Honest, my hands kind o' ached. I wanted to go an' cuff that feller's ears an' grab hold o' him an' toss him over the ridge pole. Abe went right up to him an' said:

"Jack, you ain't half so bad or half so corny as ye think ye are. You say you can throw down any man here. I reckon I'll have to show ye that you're mistaken. I'll rattle with ye. We're friends an' we won't talk about lickin' each other. Let's have a friendly rattle."

"In a second the two men were locked together. Armstrong had lunged at Abe with a yell. There was no friendship in the way he took hold. He was going to do all the damage he could in any way he could. Half drunk, Jack is a man who would bite your ear off. It was no rattle; it was a fight. Abe moved like lightning. He acted awful limber an' well greased. In a second he had got hold of the feller's neck with his big right hand and hooked his left into the cloth on his hip. In that way he held him off and shook him as you've seen our dog shake a woodchuck. Abe's blood was hot. If the whole crowd had piled on him I guess he would have come out all right, for when he's roused there's something in Abe more than bones and muscles. I suppose it's what I feel when he speaks a piece. It's a kind of lightning. I guess it's what our minister used to call the power of the spirit."

"A friend of the bully jumped in and tried to trip Abe. Harry Needles stood beside me. Before I could move he dashed forward and hit that feller in the middle of his forehead and knocked him flat. Harry had hit Bap McNoll, the cock fighter. I got up next to the kettle then and took the scum off it. Fetched one of them devils a slap with the side of my hand that took the skin off his face and colled him over and over. When I looked again Armstrong was going limp. His mouth was open and his tongue out. With one hand fastened to his right leg and the other on the top of his neck Abe lifted him at a length and gave him a toss in the air. Armstrong fell about ten feet from where Abe stood and lay there for a minute. The fight was all

out of him and he was kind of dazed and sick. Abe stood up like a giant and his face looked awful solemn.

"Boys, if there's any more o' you that want trouble you can have some off the same piece," he said.

"They hung their heads and not one of them made a move or said a word.



"When He's Roused There's Something in Abe."

Abe went to Armstrong and helped him up.

"Jack, I'm sorry that I had to hurt you," he said. "You get on to your horse and go home."

"Abe, you're a better man than me," said the bully, as he offered his hand to Abe. "I'll do anything you say."

So the Clary's Grove gang was conquered. They were to make more trouble but not again were they to imperil the foundations of law and order in the little community of New Salem. As they were starting away Bap McNoll turned to Harry Needles and shouted: "I'll git even with you yet—your slab-sided son o' a dog."

That is not exactly what he said but it is near enough.

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 168,000,000 people, and in 1995, 672,000,000. Wealth, power, science, literature, all follow in the train of light and numbers. The causes which moved the sceptre of civilization from the Euphrates to western 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 years 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. "Abe, have ye learned 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'?"

"Not yet. It's a heavy hog to hold but I'll get a grip on an ear and a hind leg and lift it out o' 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 bell ringing ev-

ery time I get a minute's leisure. I'm nigh 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 steed for a light load under the saddle, but he's too warm blooded for the harness. He was for the day of the plumed 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 stride 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 sat near him when 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 lively 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 feller—straight and sound and good 'niber. 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'll not 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 pane 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 wildness, 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—no 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 couldn'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 hobbled their horses. There were five of them who crowded into the cabin with McNoll in the lead.

"Now, you young rooster, you're

coln' to git what's comin' to you," he growled.

The boy faced them bravely and armed them away with his sickle. They were prepared for such emergencies. One of them drew a bag of bird 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



He Staggered Against the Wall.

you. If one o' you touches him he's coin' to die."

He saw Bim Kelso at the window with her gun leveled at the head of McNoll. Her face was red with anger, her eyes glowing. As he looked a tear rolled from one of them and trailed down the scarlet surface of her cheek. McNoll turned without a word and walked sulkily out of the back door. The others crowded after him. They an 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 melted 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 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."

(To be continued.)

RIDS RADIO OF BIG BUGBEAR

Marconi Succeeds in Sending Wireless Message Without Interference by Static Disturbances.

London.—Guglielmo Marconi, who has just returned to London, announces that for the last few weeks he has been testing a new method of wireless telegraph reception whereby he was enabled to receive messages from the United States continuously without interference by static disturbances.

Sig. Marconi regards this as an advance of the greatest importance, enabling wireless service to be conducted despite atmospheric disturbances for the entire period of 24 hours, at high speed most of the time.

It is not surprising when a calf brings 60 on the farm and 60c in the restaurant that the farmer is taking steps to see what can be done toward improving the marketing of the things he raises—Lebanon Express.

Dream Lovers.

To dream you see a flag flying in the wind denotes trouble. To carry one yourself foretells a change in your affairs, generally for the better. To see one at half mast denotes trouble.