

20. Last Frontier

UP and down, northward and westward, Daniel Boone ranged tirelessly with his traps and his rifle in those last years. The price of beaver pelts was between two and a half and eight or nine dollars apiece at times. An honest man who had left debts behind him in Kentucky could do something in a country like this, where even the taxes were payable in deer-skins.

The fur traders at St. Charles gave bad prices. To get better ones meant a trip sixty miles down river to St. Louis. The scattered farmers along the Missouri's banks got used to seeing Boone's huge canoe, with housing built over the cargo in the middle, a sure sign of furs aboard, come down the Missouri every year, the white-haired old trapper in the stern, on his way to sell the proceeds of his winter hunt. Travelers passing his daughter's house could often see the veteran in the yard, playing with otter and beaver that he had caught young and brought home to tame.

He had begun trapping almost as soon as he reached Missouri. A receipt in French, dated March 14, 1801, testifies that Daniel Boone, "saindic de l'établissement de la Femme Osage" had delivered sixty-two beaver skins, two otter skins, and forty-two deerskins. He kept it up when he was past eighty, even though his family and friends opposed any more expeditions. Rebecca, he used to explain, needed little delicacies and "re-

freshment" like coffee now and then. Trapping was the way to get them. A good winter on the trapline would yield four hundred to eight hundred dollars in furs alone.

There were Indians of course, mostly Osages. The tribe was new to Dan'l, but Injuns were Injuns, and he felt entirely capable of coping with them. Were they really quite up to the Shawnee standard of wiliness and terror? There were times when something seemed lacking.

Once a wandering band of Osages caught the old trapper on one of his expeditions and made ready for a little quiet robbery. There was only an old man and a negro boy, the latter of no particular use in the lively few minutes that followed. Boone had been robbed three times by Indians in his early Kentucky years and at least once in Missouri. Another robbery was distinctly too much. He picked up his rifle, and this early share-the-wealth movement came to an abrupt and violent end as the Indians fled.

Somehow, one's sympathy perversely goes out to those astounded Osages who—anticipating nothing but a little harmless fun with an elderly and apparently helpless trapper—suddenly found that they had blundered on the fiercest, most experienced Indian fighter in the world, a man who had been the terror of their red brethren farther east for twenty years! Blackfish or Moluntha or many another Shawnee brave could have warned them how rash it was to trifle with Sheltowee. But Blackfish and Moluntha were only whitening bones now, somewhere along the Ohio.

This little skirmish did not end Daniel Boone's Indian adventures. He paddled his canoe up the Grand River from the Missouri one winter and made a secret camp in a little cove sheltered by high bluffs. He was not being obtrusive that year, for the northwestern Indians were troublesome and he was in or near Iowa, close enough to their country to make safety-first

a wise policy. A little hunting provided food for the cold months that lay ahead, when furs would be at their best, and then Boone settled down to his trapping. But the trapline was hardly laid when a fair-sized band of Indian hunters appeared alarmingly close at hand.

The only escape was by canoe down the open river, and that meant certain discovery, even if it was still possible to get through the ice. Boone withdrew to his hidden camp and lay quiet, hoping against hope that no red hunter would stumble on the trapline and suspect a white man's presence. Such a discovery meant a thorough search of the entire country, which he could hardly hope to evade. There were no canebrakes to hide in this time.

That night there was a heavy snowfall. The traps were safe now, and so was Boone. If he strayed from camp, his tracks in the snow would reveal him as they had at the salt-camp in 1778. But that was an elementary error which Daniel Boone took good care not to commit. Why stir? The traps were safe and so was he. He lay snug in his camp, cooking only at night to conceal the smoke, as he and Squire had done in Kentucky thirty-odd years before. Why worry? Plenty of venison to eat, thanks to those hunting trips at the beginning of the season. The furs would be safe enough, frozen in the traps. Stay quiet and be safe.

It was all exhilaratingly like earlier days. Old, was he? He'd show them redskins—or rather, he would show them not a trace. A pity, too—they would never know how badly he had fooled them. But the old trapper confessed later "that he never felt so much anxiety in his life for so long a period." The Shawnees had been a good deal closer back in Kentucky, when Kentucky was really wild. He had hidden from them, all alone, for three whole months in the spring of '70. But this time he had had the misfortune to go into winter quarters close to a semi-perma-

ment Indian hunting camp. He lived nearly next-door to the Indians for three whole weeks.

All went well. By the time the snow melted and revealed his traps, the Indians were gone. Daniel placidly went about his business. They would not be back. Indians knew enough to keep away from an area that had been thoroughly hunted.

As the Indians had been quiet during the first few months at Boonesborough, so as the War of 1812 approached there was the same lull before the storm. In Missouri it lasted longer than it had in Kentucky, but at last the British began to stir up the tribes. Tecumseh and his brother the Prophet roused the Indians and brought them down upon the settlements. Alarms were frequent from 1811 to 1815. Missouri escaped the full fury of the storm, which was directed farther east, but there were enough hairbreadth escapes near La Charette to make Daniel Boone feel completely at home. Twice he and Nathan had to race four miles in the dead of night with their families to reach the strong local fort at the home of Daniel Morgan Boone. It was the way the Boones had "forted up" again and again since those early days on the Yadkin.

Daniel Boone himself volunteered as a soldier, but to his disgust was rejected as too old for active service. Only seventy-eight and yet they wouldn't take him! What an army! His sons joined up instead.

Though not by any means up to Kentucky standards it was a savage little frontier war, with some thrilling incidents. Some were amusing as well as thrilling. The blockhouse at Côte sans Dessen, in Callaway County, was desperately defended and saved only by an indecorous expedient which caused a good deal of ribald laughter later on. Time after time the Indians set fire to the fort, until the last drop of water was exhausted. At the next critical moment one of the women brought out a gallon of milk. Again the Indians set the fort on fire—but at

this instant a Frenchwoman appeared, carrying "a vessel familiar in all bed-chambers, that contained a fluid more valuable now than gold." The fire was put out, and the Indians retired—though not from modesty.

While both his sons saw action and his grandson James Callaway was killed, Daniel Boone himself was not personally engaged in any very active Indian fighting, though he was out with his rifle and ready for them. But he did come to the rescue of his neighbors after one of the most dreadful raids; and there was an exciting skirmish at the home of his kinsman Jonathan Bryan within sight of the Boone doorstep.

It began with an attack on the neighbors—rather close neighbors, since they lived only fifteen or twenty miles away. One of the very last outlying settlements toward the dangerous West was that of a certain Aleck McKinney, a frequent hunting companion. His position was so exposed that the militia officers kept one of their armed rangers living there constantly, ready to lend a hand in defense.

One May morning, while McKinney was plowing and the militia guard was placidly engaged in shooting squirrels, the dogs became greatly excited, running into the wheat field, barking, and then dashing out again with their hair bristling. McKinney stopped plowing, called the ranger, and searched the field. They found nothing, but McKinney decided that it would be well to prepare for attack and retreated to the farmhouse. Later, a more thorough search revealed the spot where six Indians had lain watching the house.

The wandering raiders coming in from the West had reconnoitered the first settlement they reached; had been disturbed by the dogs; and had gone on to the settlement of Robert Ramsey. They attacked about sunrise. Mrs. Ramsey was milking, with her husband near and several children playing about. The first warning they had was the uneasiness of the cattle, which

shook their horns, snuffed, and bellowed. Before the Ramseys could get away the warriors were upon them, rushing out of the woods waving their tomahawks.

Mrs. Ramsey reached the house safely. Her husband, having a wooden leg, was slower and was badly wounded just as he reached the door. But as he fell he reached for the long tin trumpet that was kept to give the alarm, and blew a blast which frightened the Indians, who knew the signal would bring the rangers down on them. Before retreating, they tomahawked three children. A fourth child squatted like a frightened animal in the weeds near a fence and escaped. The son of Jonathan Bryan, Boone's neighbor, had been sent to the Ramsey home on an errand that morning but had just left. Another lad, hunting his father's horses near the Ramsey farm, stumbled on the tracks of the raiders just as the sound of yelling, and firing burst out at the farmhouse. He ran off to give the alarm, and by eight o'clock a band of rangers were on the trail. A messenger found the veteran Daniel already out and waiting for Indians, meantime walking quietly back and forth in front of the stockade with his rifle on his shoulder, softly whistling to himself after his usual habit. It was exactly the way he had waited for Indians outside Boonesborough in '78.

The old man was not needed for the pursuit, but the Ramsey family were in dire need of his rough-and-ready medical skill. An eye-witness describes the scene at the Ramseys' that morning: two children lying on the floor, blood and brains oozing as they struggled for breath; a third child with only a fighting chance for life; Mrs. Ramsey groaning in agony in premature delivery in another room; her husband lying on a bed while Boone composedly probed for the bullet, which had passed through the groin and come up close to the surface. "The old pioneer was quiet and unexcited, as usual, but his lips were compressed and a fire gleamed in his eyes."

Exaggerated reports spread of a band of eight hundred to a thousand Indians, and Flanders Callaway decided to abandon his farm, the result being the total loss of Boone's second and only authentic biography. Urged by his friends, he had for some time been writing or dictating his own narrative in his own inimitable style. His manuscript, with various other articles, was placed in a canoe and taken down river toward Boone's fort, while Daniel himself traveled overland. The canoe struck a snag and capsized. Callaway barely escaped with his life. His cargo was lost. Boone found the labor of writing so tedious that he never tried again, though he did dictate some reminiscences to members of his family. He hoped to make a little money by publishing these, but never finished; and after his death the manuscripts were lost.

Though the fort at La Charette was not itself attacked, there was a savage though fruitless raid on the home of Jonathan Bryan. After the attack on the Ramseys, most of the settlers were drawn off in pursuit. The women and children were left almost unprotected. No one supposed that the Indians would strike twice in the same place. The next day, however, Mrs. Jonathan Bryan and her negro woman were startled by the screams of a negro boy. They looked up to see a warrior who had climbed over the fence into the yard and was running toward them, tomahawk in hand. They got to the house in safety, mainly because the Indian was afraid to use his rifle for fear of alarming the Boones not far away. He was so close behind the fleeing women, however, that before they could slam the door shut, he was halfway through. The heavy door caught the luckless redskin with his body outside and his head and right arm within the cabin. While Mrs. Bryan held the door shut with all her might, the negress pulled the tomahawk out of the warrior's hand and brained him.

At that moment the negro boy screamed again. The women

looked out to see another Indian only a few feet from the house. Mrs. Bryan snatched the still-loaded rifle of the dead warrior and shot his comrade. The bodies were buried near a sandstone boulder in the "horse lot" behind the house. The Bryan family ever afterward spoke of the dead warriors with a curious gentleness as "strangers who died while traveling that way."

No one knows just how far Daniel Boone wandered in these last years, both before the War of 1812 and after. He always liked to see the country—it was a taste he had indulged even in his Kentucky days—and now he had very little else to do. In Missouri he is said rarely to have trapped the same grounds two winters in succession. Ordinarily he did not travel far beyond the western boundary of modern Missouri, but he got into Kansas and also to the headwaters of the Arkansas River.

Officers at Fort Osage, near modern Kansas City, were astonished to see him plodding in when he was eighty-two. He wore "the dress of the roughest, poorest hunter." One of them wrote home to the papers:

We have been honored by a visit from col. BOONE, the first settler of Kentucky; he lately spent two weeks with us. . . . The colonel cannot live without being in the woods. He goes a hunting twice a year to the remotest wilderness he can reach; and hires a man to go with him, whom he binds in written articles to take care of him, and bring him home, dead or alive. He left this for the River Platt, some distance above.

The old man had heard tales of Salt Lake, perhaps from Kit Carson, who is said to have been a kinsman of the Boones. He was busily planning an expedition these wonders to behold.

"I intend by next autumn," he announced, ". . . to take two or three whites and a party of Osage Indians, and visit the

salt mountains, lakes and ponds, and see the natural curiosities of the country along the [Rocky] mountains. The salt-mountain is but 5 or 600 miles west of this place." With all his romantic wanderings, Dan'l always had an eye to business. He may have suspected that there was an honest living to be made out of a land where salt was plentiful. From his early Kentucky days he still remembered how valuable salt could be, and how perilous it had once been to make. He discovered a number of salt springs in Missouri, some of which were worked for decades afterward. His sons set up a salt works at Boone's Lick, where they did a business large enough to supply salt to far-away New Orleans.

There is a story, plausible enough, that he reached the Yellowstone—wild, grand, innocent of tourists—and for a season or two trapped there, along the Rockies. If he really did carry out his intention to explore five or six hundred miles westward, he must have followed the River Platte, which would take him almost to the Yellowstone country. He had announced his intention of going to "the mountains," and Dan'l had a way of seeing what he went out to see. Where other Missouri trappers were already going, Daniel Boone was not likely to be far behind. Men who knew Boone told their descendants they had made the journey with him.

Threatened by Indians on one of these trips, the colonel showed his companions his favorite Kentucky trick of lying outside his own camp, ready to waylay possible assailants. At least once he was in danger from Indians as the boats came down the Platte or the Missouri. He escaped by pretending to camp and then slipping away when a thunderstorm came up during the night.

Death might come any time, now. A man couldn't live forever, though a tough old pioneer could come as near it as anybody. But no redskin was going to collect the scalp that Daniel

had borne triumphantly against all the wiles of Girty, McKee, Caldwell, DeQuindre, Blackfish, Moluntha, Saucy Jack, Captain Will, and Captain Johnny!

The wild young people of 1818 indulged in a few gibes, not all in the best of taste, at the legendary man's expense. As Kentucky had filled with settlers before, so now Missouri, too, was filling up. "Old Col. Boone," observed a writer in *Niles's Register*, might yet "be driven to the Rocky Mountains, and even there be disturbed in 8 or 10 years, if he lives so long."

His love of solitude had become an American proverb, almost a part of folklore. Boone, said one traveler, was "a recluse by choice, and trains up his sons in the same path." After his death the story kept up. In Europe my lord Byron, elegantly amused, wrote some verses about it:

'Tis true he shrank from men even of his nation,
When they built up unto his darling trees,—
He moved some hundred miles off, for a station
Where there were fewer houses and more ease.

"The late celebrated Colonel Boone," said another traveler, "always wished to live remote from society." Washington Irving remarked that Boone "kept always in the advance of civilization and on the borders of the wilderness, still leading a hunter's life."

The old man was mildly annoyed by the things they said about him. He told a visitor that "nothing embitters my old age but the circulation of the absurd and ridiculous stories that I retire as civilization advances, that I shun the white man and seek the Indians." And he added: "You know all this to be false."

False or exaggerated, perhaps, but really Dan'l's own fault. He had always been fond of that little joke about elbow-room and being crowded. He had made it even on the Yadkin. "I

think it time to remove," he once remarked, "when I can no longer fall a tree for fuel so that its top will lie within a few yards of my cabin." One day not long before he left Kentucky, a new settler came by with his son. Boone asked where he was living. It was, said the traveler, about seventy miles away. Dan'l turned to Rebecca:

"Old woman, we must move they are crowding us."

Later on he indulged in the same jest on the wharf at Cincinnati. Arriving in Missouri, he still retailed the good old joke with gusto, and then was much annoyed when people thought him misanthropic. Again asked why he had left Kentucky, he replied: "They crowded me too much, I would not stand it & wanted to go on where I could not be crowded so much by neighbors;—I am too much crowded now where I live in Missouri." Except for the Bryans, his nearest neighbor at the moment was fifteen or twenty miles distant.

Is it any wonder people began to believe him?

He also resented *The Mountain Muse*, a would-be epic treatment of his Kentucky adventures by one of his wife's relatives. The tale was epic, but the verse was not. Daniel, discussing the author with a visitor, emphatically regretted "that he could not sue him for slander." Such productions, he added, "ought to be left till the person was put in the ground."

But no matter how much he resented this sort of thing, the old pioneer was delighted with the alleged autobiography which appeared in 1784. John Filson, a backwoods school teacher, had secured a good deal of information from interviews with him. He wrote this out in the first person, as if it were Boone's own work. Comparison of Filson's orotund, pseudo-Johnsonian style with the blunt, simple, and vigorous language of Dan'l's illiterate but salty letters and official reports reveals the pious fraud at once.

Boone, however, had no objection to ghost-writing. He was

enchanted. Like other backwoods heroes, he took an innocent joy in being written up—in such elaborate language, too. Why, the thing was literature, real book language, nearly as good as *Gulliver's Travels*, which he had carried in the wilderness.

It was published as an appendix to Filson's book *Kentucke* and Boone joined with Levi Todd and James Harrod in an endorsement quite in the modern tone:

WE the Subscribers, inhabitants of Kentucke, and well acquainted with the country from its first settlement, at the request of the author of this book, and map, have carefully revised them, and recommend them to the public, as exceeding good performances, containing as accurate a description of our country as we think can possibly be given; much preferable to any in our knowledge extant; and think it will be of great utility to the publick. Witness our hands this 12th day of May, Anno Domini 1784,

DANIEL BOON,
LEVI TODD,
JAMES HARROD

Boone even commended the biography's accuracy to a chance visitor at his Missouri retreat and talked as if he had really written it. He liked to hear it read aloud.

"All true! Every word true!" he would exclaim delightedly. "Not a lie in it!"

As a matter of fact, there are a good many lies in it. Filson mixes up dates badly, represents Boone's hasty estimates of Indian forces as if they were exact calculations, and blunders in describing incidents. His errors can be shown easily enough from contemporary documents and from the reminiscences of contemporaries. But at least, republished in England and translated on the Continent, Filson's *Kentucke* spread the fame of Daniel Boone far and wide in America and abroad.

Despite inaccuracies, Boone was more fortunate in his biogra-

pher than was his old friend Simon Kenton. The early exponent of "novelized biography" who wrote up Kenton made the fatal mistake of inventing dialogue. He caused the fiery Simon to reply to a question by his Shawnee captors with a respectful "No, sir." Simon was infuriated. He might have been a prisoner, but "I never said 'sir' to an Ingin in my life; I scarcely ever say it to a white man." The unfortunate quotation always roused the old man's ire.

Simon had a temper. Once he tripped over a wagon tongue. Someone laughed. Simon scrambled to his feet, raised his rifle, and pulled the trigger. The lock clicked harmlessly. His fall had knocked the priming out of the pan. In an instant Simon had recovered himself and apologized, but for that one savage moment he had meant murder. These literary fellows! Just as well the inexact biographer was not about at such a moment, though apparently Kenton liked to hear his own biography read aloud as much as Daniel Boone did.

Daniel Boone had become a kind of patriarch, not merely to Missouri but to the whole United States. His name was known abroad, and traveling foreigners wanted to know all about him. Adlard Welby, a visiting Englishman, inquired after him as he journeyed: "From another party which passed, I learned that the well-known Colonel Boon is still alive in the Missouri country; though the journals laterly gave a circumstantial account of his death."

Welby had read the false and famous story which spread through the country about 1818 and was copied in one newspaper after another. The old hunter had been found dead at a deer lick. He was kneeling by a stump, his cocked rifle resting in his hands across it, in the very act of firing. Boone smiled tolerantly when they told him the story. He had been reported dead so often that the novelty of the thing had quite worn off. Besides, as he remarked, the thing was impossible. His eyes

were not keen enough for hunting now. Even with white paper on the sights, he was no longer the infallible marksman of the old days. No more hunting. A man could still trap, though.

Voyagers to the Far West passed up the Missouri, bound for remote lands, the other rim of the continent, which Boone would never see. Lewis and Clark went by on their way to Oregon in May of 1804. In July of 1806 came Zebulon M. Pike and his explorers, working their way up the Missouri to explore the Far West and putting in at La Charette "at a little after the dusk of the evening," meeting there the expedition's medical officer, Indians, and interpreter.

In April of 1811, John Bradbury, member of a scientific expedition, was so excited when the old pioneer was pointed out to him that he leaped ashore, preferring to overtake his boat on foot rather than miss a chance of talking to Daniel Boone:

On leaving Charette, Mr. Hunt pointed out to me an old man standing on the bank, who, he informed me, was Daniel Boone, the discoverer of Kentucky. As I had a letter to him, from his nephew Colonel Israel Grant, I went ashore to speak to him, and requested that the boat might go on, as I intended to walk until evening.

The conversation seems to have lacked brilliance. The colonel told him that he was eighty-four years old; that "he had spent a considerable portion of his time alone in the backwoods [which was not exactly news], and had lately returned from his spring hunt with nearly sixty beaver skins." Bradbury trudged off after his boat feeling well repaid.

After about a decade in Missouri, Boone's bitterness toward Kentucky had slowly faded, and he made at least two trips back. At first, however, he cherished his resentment and not even the offer of support for life could tempt him back. Not many years after he reached Missouri, a letter had come from the oddly

named Green Clay, a prominent Kentuckian, asking him to return as witness in a land suit. Clay was prodigal in his offers:

You & your old lady (who I hope is well) are both old & in a new country where there will of course be many hardships to encounter & could you believe that you are able to travel back to Kentucky, & will come & shew the lines, or the corners, or one or two corners & lines of Jacob's two claims, or either of them, I will provide for the support of yourself and your lady all your lives afterwards; and a handsome legacy for to leave to your children I will either let you have negroes, or stock, or cash, whichever will be your choice to accept, & which you may think will be agreeable to you two. . . . I know you were very ill treated by many persons for whom you did business, & I also know the great difficulties you labored under, & the great distress you suffered by doing business for people who gave you no thanks for your trouble—nor even paid you your just due. These people ought to suffer. I have but a small part in these two tracts of land, & I would willingly divide my interest with you, to come at my rights,

Boone replied that he preferred laying his head on the block to "stepping" his foot on Kentucky soil again. The lawsuit had to get on without him.

He seems, however, to have visited Kentucky about 1810, while on a visit to his brother Squire, then living on the Indiana shore of the Ohio River. It was probably on this trip that Boone met Audubon, a ne'er-do-well, a very unsuccessful frontier store-keeper, a shiftless creature who was always in the woods drawing pictures of birds when he should have been making a success of life. It was obvious that the fellow could come to no good end. But he and the old colonel took a fancy to each other and had a famous ramble together. Old as he was, Dan'l took his new friend out and demonstrated "barking off squirrels," which Audubon thought "delightful sport."

We walked out together, and followed the rocky margins of the Kentucky River [he wrote] until we reached a piece of flat land thickly covered with black walnuts, oaks and hickories. As the general mast was a good one that year, squirrels were seen gambolling on every tree around us. My companion, a stout, hale, and athletic man, dressed in a homespun hunting-shirt, bare-legged and moccasined, carried a long and heavy rifle, which, as he was loading it, he said had proved efficient in all his former undertakings, and which he hoped would not fail on this occasion, as he felt proud to show me his skill. The gun was wiped, the powder measured, the ball patched with a six-hundred-thread linen, and the charge sent home with a hickory rod. We moved not a step from the place, for the squirrels were so numerous that it was unnecessary to go after them. Boon pointed to one of these animals which had observed us, and was crouched on a branch about fifty paces distant, and bade me mark well the spot where the ball should hit. He raised his piece gradually, until the *bead* (that being the name given by the Kentuckians to the *sight*) of the barrel was brought to a line with the spot which he intended to hit. The whip-like report resounded through the woods and along the hills in repeated echoes. Judge of my surprise, when I perceived that the ball had hit the piece of bark immediately beneath the squirrel, and shivered it into splinters, the concussion produced by which had killed the animal and sent it whirling through the air, as if it had been blown up by the explosion of a powder magazine. Boon kept up his firing, and before many hours had elapsed, we had procured as many squirrels as we wished; for you must know, that to load a rifle requires only a moment, and that if it is wiped once after each shot, it will do duty for hours.

Boone also told Audubon the story of a fourth Indian captivity not otherwise recorded. At least, the account which Audubon gives does not agree with the known accounts of the two times when Captain Will took Boone prisoner or the captivity in Blackfish's camp:

Daniel Boon, or, as he was usually called in the Western Country, Colonel Boon, happened to spend a night with me under the same roof, more than twenty years ago. We had returned from a shooting excursion, in the course of which his extraordinary skill in the management of the rifle had been fully displayed. On retiring to the room appropriated to that remarkable individual and myself for the night, I felt anxious to know more of his exploits and adventures than I did, and accordingly took the liberty of proposing numerous questions to him. The stature and general appearance of this wanderer of the western forests approached the gigantic. His chest was broad and prominent; his muscular powers displayed themselves in every limb; his countenance gave indication of his great courage, enterprise and perseverance; and when he spoke, the very motion of his lips brought the impression that whatever he uttered could not be otherwise than strictly true. I undressed, whilst he merely took off his hunting shirt, and arranged a few folds of blankets on the floor, choosing rather to lie there, as he observed, than on the softest bed. When we had both disposed of ourselves, each after his own fashion, he related to me the following account of his powers of memory, which I lay before you, kind reader, in his own words, hoping that the simplicity of his style may prove interesting to you.

"I was once," said he, "on a hunting expedition on the banks of the Green River, when the lower parts of this State (Kentucky) were still in the hands of nature, and none but the sons of the soil were looked upon as its lawful proprietors. We Virginians had for some time been waging a war of intrusion upon them, and I, amongst the rest, rambled through the woods in pursuit of their race, as I now would follow the tracks of any ravenous animal. The Indians outwitted me one dark night, and I was as unexpectedly as suddenly made a prisoner by them. The trick had been managed with great skill; for no sooner had I extinguished the fire of my camp, and laid me down to rest, in full security, as I thought, than I felt myself seized by an indistinguishable number of hands, and was immediately pinioned, as if about to be led to the scaffold for execution. To have attempted to be refractory, would have

proved useless and dangerous to my life; and I suffered myself to be removed from my camp to theirs, a few miles distant, without uttering even a word of complaint. You are aware, I dare say, that to act in this manner was the best policy, as you understand that by so doing, I proved to the Indians at once, that I was born and bred as fearless of death as any of themselves.

“When we reached the camp, great rejoicings were exhibited. Two squaws and a few papooses appeared particularly delighted at the sight of me, and I was assured, by very unequivocal gestures and words, that, on the morrow, the mortal enemy of the Red-skins would cease to live. I never opened my lips, but was busy contriving some scheme which might enable me to give the rascals the slip before dawn. The women immediately fell a searching about my hunting-shirt for whatever they might think valuable, and, fortunately for me, soon found my flask filled with *monongahela* (that is, reader, strong whisky). A terrific grin was exhibited on their murderous countenances, while my heart throbbed with joy at the anticipation of their intoxication. The crew immediately began to beat their bellies and sing, as they passed the bottle from mouth to mouth. How often did I wish the flask ten times its size, and filled with aqua-fortis! I observed that the squaws drank more freely than the warriors, and again my spirits were about to be depressed, when the report of a gun was heard at a distance. The Indians all jumped on their feet. The singing and drinking were both brought to a stand, and I saw, with inexpressible joy, the men walk off to some distance and talk to the squaws. I knew that they were consulting about me, and I foresaw that in a few moments the warriors would go to discover the cause of the gun having been fired so near their camp. I expected that the squaws would be left to guard me. Well, Sir, it was just so. They returned; the men took up their guns, and walked away. The squaws sat down again, and in less than five minutes had my bottle up to their dirty mouths, gurgling down their throats the remains of the whisky.

“With what pleasure did I see them becoming more and more drunk, until the liquor took such hold of them that it

was quite impossible for these women to be of any service. They tumbled down, rolled about, and began to snore: when I, having no other chance of freeing myself from the cords that fastened me, rolled over and over towards the fire, and, after a short time, burned them asunder. I rose to my feet, stretched my stiffened sinews, snatched up my rifle, and, for once in my life, spared that of Indians. I now recollect how desirous I once or twice felt to lay open the skulls of the wretches with my tomahawk; but when I again thought upon killing beings unprepared and unable to defend themselves, it looked like murder without need, and I gave up the idea.

"But, Sir, I felt determined to mark the spot, and walking to a thrifty ash sapling, I cut out of it three large chips, and ran off. I soon reached the river, soon crossed it, and threw myself deep into the cane-brakes, imitating the tracks of an Indian with my feet, so that no chance might be left for those from whom I had escaped to overtake me.

"It is now nearly twenty years since this happened, and more than five since I left the Whites' settlements, which I might probably never have visited again, had I not been called on as a witness in a law-suit that was pending in Kentucky, and which I really believe would never have been settled, had I not come forward, and established the beginning of a certain boundary line. This is the story, Sir.

"Mr — moved from Old Virginia into Kentucky, and having a large tract granted to him in the new State, laid claim to a certain parcel of land adjoining Green River, and as chance would have it, took for one of his corners the very Ash tree on which I had made my mark, and finished his survey of some thousands of acres, beginning, as it is expressed in the deed, 'at an Ash marked by three distinct notches of the tomahawk of a white man.'

"The tree had grown much, and the bark had covered the marks; but somehow or other, Mr — heard from someone all that I have already said to you, and thinking that I might remember the spot alluded to in the deed, but which was no longer discoverable, wrote for me to come and try at least to find the place or the tree. His letter mentioned that all my

expenses should be paid, and not caring much about . . . going back to Kentucky, I started and met Mr —. After some conversation, the affair with the Indians came to my recollection. I considered for a while, and began to think that after all I could find the very spot, as well as the tree, if it was yet standing.

“Mr — and I mounted our horses, and off we went to the Green River Bottoms. After some difficulties, for you must be aware, Sir, that great changes have taken place in those woods, I found at last the spot where I had crossed the river, and waiting for the moon to rise, made for the course in which I thought the Ash tree grew. On approaching the place, I felt as if the Indians were there still, and as if I was still a prisoner among them. Mr — and I camped near what I conceived the spot, and waited until the return of day.

“At the rising of the sun, I was on foot, and after a good deal of musing, thought that an Ash tree then in sight must be the very one on which I had made my mark. I felt as if there could be no doubt of it, and mentioned my thought to Mr —. ‘Well, Colonel Boon,’ said he, ‘if you think so, I hope it may prove true, but we must have some witnesses; do you stay here about, and I will go and bring some of the settlers whom I know.’ I agreed. Mr — trotted off, and I, to pass the time, rambled about to see if a deer was still living in the land. But ah! Sir, what a wonderful difference thirty years makes in the country! Why, at the time when I was caught by the Indians, you would not have walked out in any direction for more than a mile without shooting a buck or a bear. There were then thousands of buffaloes on the hills in Kentucky; the land looked as if it never would become poor; and to hunt in those days was a pleasure indeed. But when I was left to myself on the banks of Green River, I dare say for the last time in my life, a few *signs* only of deer were to be seen, and, as to a deer itself, I saw none.

“Mr — returned, accompanied by three gentlemen. They looked upon me as if I had been WASHINGTON himself, and walked to the Ash tree, which I now called my own, as if in quest of a long lost treasure. I took an axe from one of them, and cut a few chips off the bark. Still no signs were to be seen.

So I cut again until I thought it was time to be cautious, and I scraped and worked away with my butcher knife, until I *did* come to where my tomahawk had left an impression in the wood. We now went regularly to work, and scraped at the tree with care, until three hacks as plain as any three notches ever were, could be seen. Mr — and the other gentlemen were astonished, and, I must allow, I was as much surprised as pleased myself. I made affidavit of this remarkable occurrence in presence of these gentlemen. Mr — gained his cause. I left Green River for ever, and came to where we now are; and, Sir, I wish you a good night."

The famous story of another whisky bottle also probably belongs to this period. Boone is said to have returned to Kentucky to settle a land dispute, a service which he had resolutely refused to perform during his earlier years in Missouri. The case turned upon the identity of a particular tree. Boone testified that he had hidden an empty whisky bottle there. A little chopping soon revealed it, now surrounded by the growth of wood.

Probably at some time between his two trips, Daniel is said to have lent a hand in the construction of the stone house, the finest in Missouri, which his son Nathan built. It is said to have taken eight years to complete, the plaster being set aside one whole winter to "ripen," while the blue limestone was taken out of a hillside on the farm and painfully cut into blocks. There were three rooms downstairs (in one of which Daniel Boone was to die) and four rooms upstairs, with wide halls between. The house still stands. The thick beams show marks of the adze, and the woodwork is fitted together with walnut pegs. The seven carved mantelpieces are said to be the work of Daniel Boone himself; and some years ago when an earlier owner tore out some of the plaster—because he thought it a useful medicine for sick cows!—fine handmade laths of pine were revealed. Boone is said to have built his own little cabin a short distance from the big house.

There were innumerable grandchildren by this time, who, as children always did, adored the old man. Never was there a grandfather with such tales to tell—always in the low, gentle voice typical of the woodsman who has spent his life moving silently in the forests. One little girl remembered afterward: "The pleased attentions of such a man irresistibly won the confidence and love of a child, and I am not conscious of feeling a greater degree of safety here in my parlor than I did sixty years ago when borne on the shoulders of Boone over the hills, or than when he was paddling me in a canoe, or on logs across the Missouri. Of the Boones neither father nor son [Daniel Morgan Boone] were ever rude or boisterous, but both were mild, gentle and pleasing." Next to the children, the old man probably got most amusement out of the otter and beaver cubs he brought home to tame.

He made another trip in 1817. Judge Montgomery of Greensburg, Kentucky, wrote to Missouri inviting the old man to visit him while he was selling his property and preparing to move west. Daniel arrived in July, 1817, coming so quietly that practically no one noticed him. Much had been forgotten and forgiven during the intervening years. The word went round that Daniel Boone was back. Everyone wanted to see him.

During his flatboat journey to Missouri the old lion paused at Maysville where he had once kept store. They gave a dinner for him, and afterward he went—with a rather wry face—to a reception in his honor. Gray old pioneers like himself, men who had fought by his side, gathered to do him honor; and with them came youngsters eager to see the veteran. Old Dan'll spun them a few yarns of the old days. It was all very flattering, but the guest of honor muttered to a young man near him: "I dislike to be in a crowd where I have to receive so much attention." Eventually he slipped away. Farther down river, at Cin-

cinnati, he met Simon Kenton for the last time. That was a meeting!

Boone paid off, probably on this trip, every creditor who still had a claim against him. It was a proud moment. The old man's bookkeeping was rather shaky, though some of his government accounts are models of precision. He was not sure exactly what his obligations were. With characteristic simplicity and directness, he inquired of each man what he owed him, and paid the sum that each man said was due. He had, after all, been bred a Quaker. According to tradition, he had only half a dollar left when he reached Missouri again.

John M. Peck, the itinerant parson, who knew many of the Boone family, and who saw and talked with Daniel himself many times, records the old trapper's comment on his return:

Now I am ready and willing to die. I am relieved from a burden that has long oppressed me. I have paid all my debts, and no one will say, when I am gone, "Boone was a dishonest man." I am perfectly willing to die.

It is a pity that all the early biographers, who had a chance to quote directly, preferred to elaborate the old man's simple utterances into their own dreadful rhetoric. The unctuous tone of the cleric is apparent enough here. Old Daniel's observations, even the pious ones, were livelier than that. But even through the edifying haze cast, with the best of intentions, by the Reverend John M. Peck, one glimpses plain, old-fashioned, uncommon honesty, grim, uncompromising, resolute, up-standing. The Quaker blood again.

Once, on a hunting trip, Boone thought that death had come for him at last. He was camping on the Osage with a pack train, his only companion the negro boy whom he often took along as camp-keeper, to get the fire going, gather wood, skin game, and cook. Daniel laid in winter supplies as usual, and then

was taken ill. For days he lay there. It was desperate. Daniel Boone was really ill, this time; a new experience.

But with a stick he could still hobble. He took the scared little black boy to the top of a hill. Always in love with "high, far-seeing places" was Daniel, had been ever since he scrambled up the mountains from the Yadkin to look across into his promised land, or since he had stood on Pilot Knob and looked on a new empire. He instructed the little black camp-keeper. He must wash Boone's body carefully and lay it out decently. He must wrap it in the cleanest blanket. He would be able to drag it to the grave. Boone showed him where. It wasn't far. He must make a shovel for himself, and a hatchet would be a great help in digging. Daniel Boone always had a great head for details.

As for the grave, there must be a post at head and foot—his friends would want to find the place—and poles would have to be laid side by side across it. Wild animals would try to dig. (Did he remember James Boone's grave in 1773? They always covered bodies with logs in the Kentucky woods. Did he remember Israel and the Blue Licks graves?) Also, he remembered, the little slave must blaze the trees to help people find the grave.

When that was over, the black boy must catch the horses, pack up the pelts, and take them home to Femme Osage. Special care of the old rifle and a few messages to friends—all as calmly delivered, the boy said afterward, as any other instructions for the day's work.

It was all needless. Boone got well. The tough old woodsman took a lot of killing. But he did decide that perhaps he had had enough hunting for one winter and came home without his usual stock of peltry.

Boone wanted Christian burial for those old bones. He bought himself a fine coffin of the best black walnut. The wood

was not much admired in those days, but Daniel liked it. He insisted on the best work the settlement carpenter could do. Some say he made it himself. To the dismay of his grandchildren, he kept it under his bed or in the cabin loft. A little gruesome, maybe, but Daniel Boone had seen too many men dead in battle or worse to trouble over a macabre touch or two. He used to lie down and try the coffin now and then, to make sure the size was right.

Eventually the old man decided it was a bad fit after all. He had a tendency to get fat as he grew old, though his weight fell off again in the very last years. Life was getting too easy there in the settlement. His relatives conspired to keep him from arduous hunting and trapping. He didn't have to live on parched corn and jerked venison these days, and he had a hopeless partiality for sweet potatoes—starchy food, very bad for a pioneer's figure.

Boone had always been generous anyway. A neighbor died suddenly. He gave his cherished coffin away and had another made. Cherrywood, this time. He kept it about the cabin, too. They used that one eventually, and it turned out not to be a very good coffin after all. When they dug into Daniel Boone's grave a couple of decades later, it had moldered quite away.

Rebecca died at Jemima's house March 18, 1813, while the war with the British was raging. She had just spent a month in camp making maple sugar, and was ill only a week. Most of her seventy-three years, she and Daniel had lived together—except, of course, when Daniel was off adventuring. She had been only a slip of a girl when they were married. A good rifle, a good horse, a good wife. The good wife was gone now. He hadn't much chance to use the rifle these last few years, nor much occasion to ride the good horse.

Daniel picked a place on a mound overlooking the Missouri. It looked a little as if the Indians had built it—there were lots

of Indian mounds in that country. Boone told them to lay him there, too, when the time came. He had land of his own now. The United States said so—or would, as soon as they could get the bill through Congress. The United States said it was his, and he had helped to win their independence; they wouldn't take this land away from him.

The sturdy old man was growing old. He had recovered from the sudden illness in his hunting camp, but he had had a number of others. Once a skin disease forced him to rent a house in St. Charles, then a town of about a thousand inhabitants, and submit to medical treatment for about two months. Except for rheumatism, he had enjoyed nearly perfect health for more than seventy years, but he was well over eighty. After all, one cannot hope to escape all the ills that flesh is heir to. His eyesight was failing. Toward the end he even gave up trapping. According to one account, his last hunt was in 1816, when he was eighty-two. According to another, he went hunting with James Boone, a grandson, in the winter following his eighty-third birthday, highly elated to be out again. His later hunting trips had not been very strenuous and he often stayed about camp, preparing skins, while the others stalked game or followed the trapline.

On this particular trip he suffered a great deal from the cold, had to stop and build a fire, and eventually sought shelter in a settler's cabin at Loutre Lick. He was too weak to be moved and word was sent back to Nathan Boone that his father was dying. By the time he reached his father's bedside, however, the old colonel was a great deal stronger. A physician, happening to pass that way at the critical moment, had saved him. He rode home on horseback and severely criticized the coffin that Nathan in his alarm had hastily ordered. It was, he said, a great deal too rough. Probably this dissatisfaction caused him

to order a coffin of his own ahead of time, but the exact chronology is far from clear. The incident may have happened just after he had given away his black-walnut coffin.

Old Dan'l's mind was clear as ever. He loved to think back over his lifetime of adventures and to talk of them to visitors. When trappers began to penetrate the Rocky Mountains, whose foothills at least Boone may have seen himself, he was intensely interested in the adventurous plans of younger men. He extolled the joys of trapping, hunting, exploring as a career, urging them on to new exploits, dilating sometimes on the wonderful climate of California. He was amazingly well informed about the Pacific coast, probably from talking with Indians who had been there.

One lad of nineteen or twenty spent the last winter of Boone's life listening to the old man's tales by the fireside. Wild with enthusiasm for such a life, he was soon off to California with Kit Carson. Toward the end, however, these tales were denied to chance arrivals. Boone kept them for his friends, and as his hearing failed, used to take his cane and slip off to avoid strangers. He had had a paralytic stroke in 1818 from which he never fully recovered.

In spite of illness, the old age that closed this stormy and adventurous career was peaceful as a twilight sky.

That which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,

he had in abundance. Eventually he left the settlement of Flanders Callaway and Jemima at La Charette, and though he sometimes visited them, made his permanent home with his son Jesse. Respectful clergymen with biographical ambitions came to listen to his stories as his grandchildren had been listening for years.

Though he could be silent enough in the perilous forests,

Daniel Boone by the fireside at home was a sociable soul, who loved cheerful talk and could spin amazing yarns. "Grandfather was not taciturn by any means, but on the contrary delighted in conversation."

He was never boastful—he didn't have to be: the facts were startling enough. But woe betide the luckless listener who expressed incredulity. A mere suggestion of doubt and the old man froze up. Not another word would he utter until the man who had questioned his tale was gone. People who wanted to hear more stories usually shooed the poor wretch away.

His hair was now completely white, but still so thick and long that a dutiful granddaughter "used to comb and plait his silver locks in his old age." Plaiting the hair had been the old frontier fashion on the Yadkin. New ways might be coming in, but Daniel Boone clung to the old ones.

He scraped powder-horns to translucent thinness, through which the powder was visible, in the style the old woodsmen admired—carved them, cut his name on them, then gave them away. He liked to talk about the hunting he was still going to do. In 1818 a visitor at a granddaughter's cabin found the colonel rather indisposed but exceedingly vivacious. He picked up a piece of glass and commenced scraping a powder-horn, remarking that he would need it for his fall hunt. Soon he laid it aside and forgot about it. The master of the household quietly whispered to the visitor that the old hunter had been working for a long time on the same powder-horn, for a fall hunt that never happened. In the winter of the same year, a visitor found him, dressed in neat homespun, "as interesting a gentleman as I ever conversed with"—still talking about hunting.

To the end of his days Boone loathed the "New Style" modern calendar, and still reckoned the date of his birth in the old way. "I was 84 years old on the 22 day of October last," he told his visitor, "and if I had not over heated myself by run-

ning after my horse, a short time Ago when he got loose from me and took A bad cold I now would of been out in the woods A hunting."

These winter hunts remained pretty strenuous almost to the end. Returning from one of them when he must have been nearly seventy-five, he fell through the ice in the Missouri River. But Boone and his sons were all carrying long poles as a precaution against that very accident. The old man scrambled out unaided, shouting to the other two to keep back lest they, too, break through. One of them got a fire going while his father was still in the icy water. They warmed him up and dried him out when he reached shore, none the worse except for a cold.

One of his last visitors—just in time, for the old colonel was getting a bit feeble these days—was Chester Harding, a wandering artist sent by St. Louis admirers to paint his portrait. Missouri was filling up with newcomers who knew little about the old days, and Harding had some trouble finding where Boone lived. The story, as he tells it in the *Egotistigraphy* that he wrote for his family's edification, is hard to improve:

In June of this year, I made a trip of one hundred miles for the purpose of painting the portrait of old Colonel Daniel Boone. I had much trouble in finding him. He was living, some miles from the main road, in one of the cabins of an old block-house, which was built for the protection of the settlers against the incursions of the Indians. I found that the nearer I got to his dwelling, the less was known of him. When within two miles of his house, I asked a man to tell me where Colonel Boone lived. He said he did not know any such man. "Why, yes, you do," said his wife. "It is that white-headed old man who lives on the bottom, near the river." A good illustration of the proverb, that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country.

I found the object of my search engaged in cooking his

dinner. He was lying in his bunk, near the fire, and had a long strip of venison wound around his ramrod, and was busy turning it before a brisk blaze, and using salt and pepper to season his meat. I at once told him the object of my visit. I found that he hardly knew what I meant. I explained the matter to him and he agreed to sit. He was ninety years old, and rather infirm; his memory of passing events was much impaired, yet he would amuse me every day by his anecdotes of his earlier life. I asked him one day, just after his description of one of his long hunts, if he never got lost, having no compass. "No," he said, "I can't say as ever I was lost, but I was *bewildered* once for three days."

He was much astonished at seeing the likeness. He had a very large progeny; one grand-daughter had eighteen children, all at home near the old man's cabin: *they* were even more astonished at the picture than was the old man himself.

Harding, however, left out the best part of the story. The colonel either could not, or would not, hold his head still. He had had a fever and was still weak. A friend had to stand behind him and hold his head steady while the artist worked.

When the end came, it was quick and merciful. He was taken ill while visiting Flanders Callaway. Attended by a physician who had married one of his granddaughters, he soon felt better, and in spite of warnings insisted on mounting his horse, Old Roan, and riding off to Nathan's house with only a negro as companion. Here he was taken ill again. It was acute indigestion, apparently brought on by too many sweet potatoes. His illness was probably helped along by his adoring grandchildren, who clustered around him bringing too many other delicacies.

In the little room just inside the front door of the new stone house he lay in bed three days. Then he "passed off gently, after a short illness, almost without pain or suffering." The Missouri Legislature adjourned in his honor and wore mourning badges for twenty days. In the Happy Hunting Grounds that night, Blackfish and Moluntha grunted, held out their

hands, buried their tomahawks, and lit the peace pipe. Shelto-wee had joined the tribe at last.

The coffin he had cherished so long was needed now. They laid the old fighting Quaker by his Rebecca on the little knoll looking down to the river through the trees, and left him there in peace on his last frontier.

But not for long. After twenty-five years, there were stirrings in Kentucky. The state he had made wanted its hero back. Missouri consented.

A highly official delegation came to get the bodies of Daniel and Rebecca. The indignant owner of the land where they lay, finding that excavation was in progress, hastily stopped it. Only when he had ascertained the willingness of all the surviving relatives he could interview did he let them go on.

This time the Kentuckians did not take his land away from Daniel Boone. They took his body away from his last bit of land instead, meaning to do him honor. There was more elbow-room, the elbow-room that Dan'l had always craved, out on that silent knoll in Missouri. But no one thought of that. Kentucky brought the old pioneer home—home with his Rebecca. No more separation. No more anxious, solitary years or months in the cabin with the children—and Daniel God knew where.

There was not really much left of Daniel Boone, but Kentucky did the best it could with what it found in the grave. A medical man arranged the bones in proper order in a fine new coffin. They made a cast of his skull.

Kentucky, which had driven him out, received him back with splendor. Nearly every county was represented, and there were a lot more counties in Kentucky now than Daniel Boone had ever heard of. Four white horses drew the hearse and the pall-bearers who followed it were noted pioneers from all parts of the state. There was an orator to celebrate to the crowd in winged words and ringing periods the virtues of the solitary

silent Daniel, who hated crowds. It was the Honorable John J. Crittenden, a senator, an attorney-general, no less.

There was a "brilliant military procession." The Kentucky militia of Lieutenant-Colonel Boone's day had been more remarkable for straight, fast, and deadly shooting than for brilliant uniforms; but the militia had not been wearing homespun hunting shirts for a good many years now.

The Kentucky militia was burying its Lieutenant-Colonel in the land he found and fought for, and they did the thing in style. The soldiers stood at a rigid present arms. (If anyone ever stood at present arms with a Kentucky rifle, it is not in history.) Their arms were very bright now. Their steel was burnished, their leather was immaculate, their buttons glittered. (It wouldn't have done in the woods, you know; too easy for the Injuns to see you.) The rifles crashed their salute across the grave. (There wasn't much of that sort of thing in old Kaintuck' as Dan'l had known it; though they did fire a salute—a rather ragged one—the day Henderson's party rode into Boonesborough in '75.) The swords flashed. (Dan'l knew something about swords. Hadn't he owned the only one in the whole Kentucky militia? Colonel Todd borrowed it before the fight at the Blue Licks, and lost it in the river—but they got it back in the end.)

Once in his life, once in his death, Lieutenant-Colonel Boone received the military honors due his rank. (The Spaniards had received him formally in St. Louis.) But a Kentucky Colonel in Daniel Boone's day didn't worry much about salutes; he was lucky if he could get his orders obeyed—sometimes.

Then taps. The bugle, thin and piercing sweet. That long-drawn, plaintive call. Gently melancholy but never wholly sad, not even by a new-made grave. The only exquisite thing a soldier hears. (Bugles—yes, De Quindre brought a bugle along when he attacked Boonesborough and tried to fool them with

it. It hadn't done him much good, or Blackfish either. But they were good fighting men, them two, that redskin and that Frenchman.)

It was over.

From the Happy Hunting Grounds—where the buffalo never fail, where the deer always come to the lick, where the immortal beaver are strangely incautious about traps, but where there are still a few Indians about, just enough to do a bit of sniping and lend a little zest to existence—from the Paradise where all good hunters go, there was borne on the wings of the west wind a faint, sardonic chuckle.

It is to be feared that the ghost of Dan'l winked at the ghost of Rebecca. Back to Kaintuck' at last, eh?

Well, there was plenty of elbow-room up here.