

For Texas and Freedom

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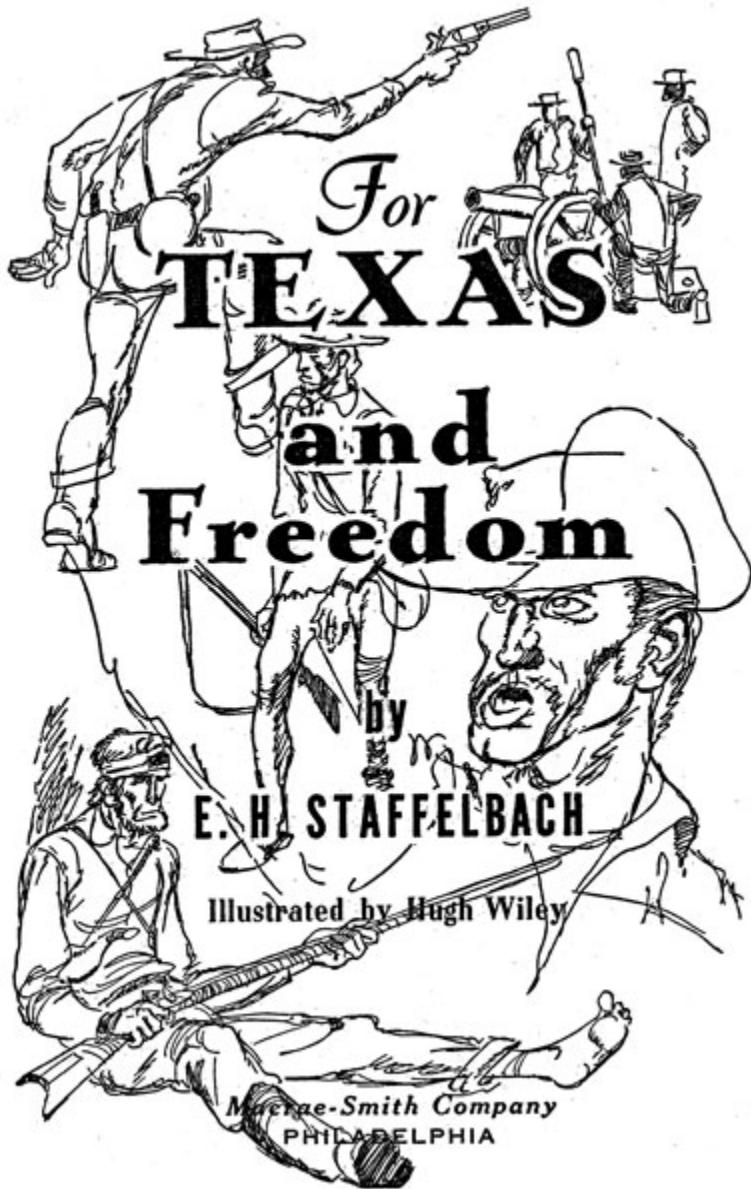
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Long Rifle Vanguard

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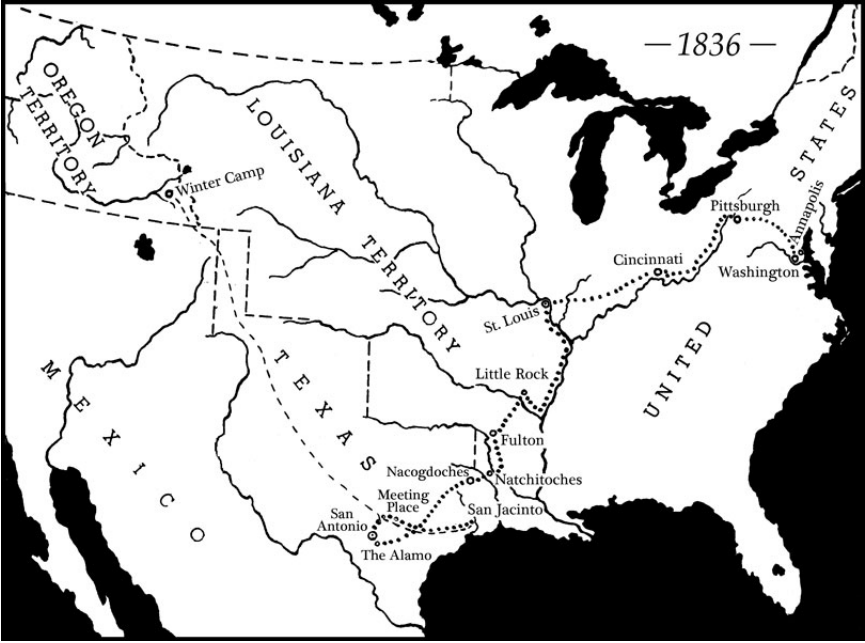
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To the five Indians,
with affection—and some fear of reprisals

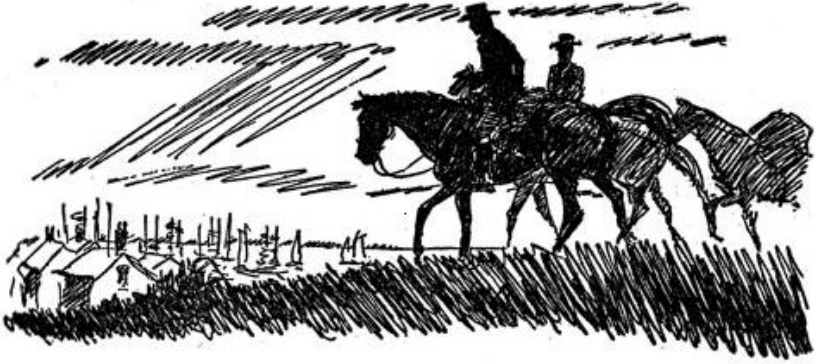


“Tell Sam Houston that,”
President Andrew Jackson said; “tell him,
‘Everything for Texas and freedom.’ . . .”



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1. The Fugitives

A HORSEMAN warily edged his black stallion through scrub trees toward the Cherbourg Road. The horse, as if sensing some stealthy purpose of his rider, trod the green turf softly. Within two strides of the highway, where he could view the road in both directions without being easily visible himself, the horseman drew rein.

A quick glance of his keen dark eyes told him that the road was deserted. He lifted a signaling hand, and a second rider came out of the thicket behind him, followed by a third horse trailing on a lead rope. The second horseman drew up beside the powerful black stallion.

“So far, so good,” was the first rider’s comment. “Maybe we have thrown them off.”

“Ugh! Him come, mebbe,” was the reply of the other.

“If they take the false trail we laid to the east, we’ll be all right. For a time, at least.”

“Ugh!”

To the first rider this gruntlike response seemed to express doubt. The tone of his voice became slightly argumentative.

“I know we were in too much of a hurry to make a good job of it. But the false trail may fool them for a while. Remember, they are not trackers like you, Buckeye.” The first rider smiled. “I wouldn’t give much for our chances if *you* were back there doing the tracking.”

Though in size little less than an average man, the speaker was a boy in his late “teens.” Yet there was something in his sun-

browned face which spoke of the courage of a man. His eyes were dark and piercing, his jaw set, his lips firm.

“I wish we could have disguised ourselves,” the boy went on, more to himself, it seemed, than to his companion. “But there was no time for that.”

He glanced ruefully down at his own apparel. He was dressed in the style of the French court at that time, not gaudily but tastefully—almost daintily. In all but his western manner of riding with lengthened stirrups, and his open, manly countenance, he was much like a young French noble.

He lifted his eyes to inspect his companion, and his rueful look changed to one of chagrined but humorous resignation. The next instant he was grinning broadly.

“You’d be a hard man to disguise, Buckeye. There’s probably not another Indian in all of France—outside a circus.”

The second rider bore out the boy’s comment. Dressed as he was in the garb of a stable servant, he might from a distance have been thought a groom out for a ride with his master; but a near observer would never have mistaken him for a Frenchman. His bronzed face, darker even than his companion’s, his high cheekbones, the two braids of coal-black hair showing in loops beneath the wide brim of his hat, all proclaimed him to be not a white man, but an American Indian.

A troubled expression drove the grin from the boy’s face. “We have to get out of France,” he said, again speaking as if to himself. “And Cherbourg is probably our best chance. That means a ride of over a hundred kilometers. And since secrecy is impossible, we’ll have to depend on speed.”

Acting upon his own words, the boy spoke to his mount, and the little cavalcade filed down the embankment and onto the highway.

The afternoon sun, hardly an hour above the horizon, cast long shadows behind them as they advanced. By sunset they had covered nearly fifteen kilometers. Yet they rode, not at a mad gallop, but as men used to the saddle, wise with knowledge of what horses can endure. When twilight drew on, their mounts seemed still fresh and ready for a dash if sudden speed should be required of them.

As they eased the horses into a walk up a short, steep slope in the road, the boy critically eyed each animal. Both riders were su-

perbly mounted. The black stallion seemed almost as fresh as if he had just been taken from the stable. Even the led animal was slender-limbed and deep-chested, a creature made for speed. In spite of the pack which it carried strapped to its saddle, it would have gladdened the eye of any racing fan—even one of that period, when the “sport of kings” had, after the discouragements of the revolution, again become the craze of high and low alike who sought gaiety rather than happiness, and who shunned work for amusement.

“I don’t think we’ve been seen so far,” the boy told his companion. “Darkness will cover us during the night, and we ought to reach Cherbourg early tomorrow morning. We’ll save the horses as much as we can, in case we have to make a run for it.

“We will stick together if possible,” he went on as if, during the hour of riding, he had been laying plans. “But if we *should* get separated, make for the coast. If Cherbourg is too closely guarded, then try Le Havre, or one of the channel ports.

“There is a sack of gold coins in your saddlebag, Buckeye. I have a similar sack in mine.” He smiled in the growing darkness as he added, “Gold is a good friend.”

The Indian had drawn abreast of the speaker. His only reply was a characteristic grunt. His companion watched him with a feeling of admiration. The red man’s face was thrust a little forward, as if his eyes were capable of seeing through the gathering darkness. That face, the younger man knew, was wrinkled; yet the compact body of the man yielded to every motion of his horse with a resilience like that of youth, effortless and untiring.

“I don’t think we’ll have any trouble at all, if we can find a ship at Cherbourg without too much delay,” the younger rider went on.

This hopeful comment drew a reply from the Indian.

“Him come mebbe.” Buckeye turned his head toward the youth on the black stallion. “Him come, then Pierre go, mebbe.” He pointed ahead through the darkness. “Buckeye wait, mebbe.”

The Indian’s hand touched the rifle which hung strapped close beside his knee.

From the boy came a quick protest. “No, no, Buckeye! If they come up with us, we’ll both go, or both stay. We’ll have no shooting, whatever happens.”

After a momentary silence, came the Indian’s grim response: “Him no ketchum Buckeye!”

“Listen, Buckeye!” The boy, whom the Indian had addressed as Pierre, leaned toward his companion, his voice deeply earnest. “The men following us are not our enemies. They are the police—servants of the King. Their duty is to take us if they can. We must not harm them for trying to do their duty.”

The Indian rode on in stolid silence.

“The man you struck with your knife died this afternoon, Buckeye,” Pierre continued. “That is what the girl came to tell me. The King has ordered your arrest.”

“Buckeye killum coyote!”

“I know, Buckeye. The man was a—a coyote, as you say, and hired to cripple my horse before the race.” The boy patted the sleek neck of the stallion. “But when the others came, they found only *your* knife. They swore that there was no other knife.”

“Him *all* coyote!”

Pierre nodded. His voice became patiently urgent. “They were all in the plot, most likely. But we must not fight the officers who are following us.”

“Ugh!”

This reply by no means satisfied the boy. But he said nothing further at the time, and at the top of the hill they put their horses into a fast trot.

Pierre had been trained to think things out, to act in important matters only after careful deliberation, just as he had been trained to respect authority and to obey the law. But this time there had been no chance for calm thinking. One moment he had been peacefully at home, untroubled by fears; the next, it seemed, he had found himself in the saddle with the police at his heels.

His mind was more troubled than he was willing to admit. The police wanted his companion, rather than himself. Had he done right in helping the Indian to escape arrest?

Mentally he went back over the long chain of events which led up to his presence there on the Cherbourg road.

Though of noble French lineage, Pierre had been born in New Orleans, and had spent most of his life in a backwoods region of Missouri with two elderly men—his grandfather and another—who had told him that his name was Pierre Garonne. The education given him by the two men had fitted him for life on the frontier as well as for life at the court of France. Shooting, fencing and riding

had each been a part of his daily training. But the two old men had also taught him in addition correct English, French, Spanish, Latin, mathematics, history and, most important of all, the courtesy and good manners which are expected of a gentleman wherever he may be found.

Buckeye, his companion, was a Delaware Indian, one of a group of his tribesmen who had been recruited as hunters and trappers by Captain Bonneville at the time the latter started upon his western explorations.

By a combination of extraordinary events growing out of the murder of his grandfather and his grandfather's friend, Pierre had also joined the expedition of Captain Bonneville. Among his other adventures in the western wilds he had, on one occasion, saved the life of Buckeye. As a result of this incident, the Delaware had adopted Pierre, by the blood ceremony, as his "brother."

After more than a year in the Great West, Pierre had been sent back to Washington with secret papers from Bonneville to President Andrew Jackson. In Washington, Pierre had learned that the newly crowned French king, Louis Philippe, desired to return to him the family estates which had been taken from Pierre's grandfather at the time the Bourbon monarchy was restored after the downfall of Napoleon.

At the request of President Jackson, though half against his own wishes, Pierre had made the voyage to France. Buckeye had refused to be left behind. And because he fully expected to return to America within a short time, Pierre had allowed the Indian to go along.

In France, where they had now been for a little more than a year, Pierre had found himself not only the owner of vast estates, but also an important member of the French nobility. Instead, however, of throwing himself into a life of ease and gaiety along with other young noblemen, he had chosen to spend much of his time studying at a college in Paris. But he had longed to return to America, for his true allegiance was to the land of his birth. However, being a boy, he was legally a ward of the King, subject to the King's complete authority. And to gain the kindly monarch's consent to cross the ocean had not been easy.

Then, suddenly, had come the turn of events which had led to his flight with the Indian.