

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

A Pioneer Story

By WALTER WILCOX

One hundred years ago a young couple left Virginia, crossed the Allegheny mountains and settled in Henderson county, Ky. It was a wild country in those days, but very beautiful, nature seeming to tempt the pioneer with its virgin scenery, its immense trees, its profusion of wild flowers. And such temptation was necessary. The settler never knew at what moment the yell of the savage would break the stillness of the wilderness or when he and his family might be cut down by a tomahawk without even a whisper of warning. These were the inducements and the drawbacks to settlers in the new country, though there is a fascination in danger that drew the fearless.

John Aborn and his wife Mary journeyed to their new home down the Ohio river on the only means of inland navigation known at that time, a flatboat, and on reaching their destination went ashore, "entered" a quarter section of land, built a log cabin and proceeded to make a living by the cultivation of the soil and hunting. Children were born to them. As more room was needed their cabin was extended, and within a few years the location assumed the semblance of civilization.

Aborn brought with him to Kentucky a few slaves and bought others from time to time. For we must remember that in those days the only hands a farmer could obtain were his own negroes. The community lived on game, of which there was abundance near at hand; the grain they raised and nuts and berries, which grew plentifully on tree and bush. Each family was a unit bound together by the strongest ties.

But after a time the game was not so plentiful as the settlements on the river bank, and the hunters were obliged to go farther inland to provide meat for their families. Then it was that the Aborns' troubles commenced. In the wilderness still inhabited by the deer and the wild turkey were many dangers. Besides the Indian, there was the wolf, and there were desperadoes, who, whenever a new country is settled, on account of the absence of government find it a fine field for their lawless operations. Nevertheless every autumn John Aborn was obliged to go into the unsettled regions in order to bring back a supply of meat for the winter consumption. Sometimes he would go with a party of his neighbors, sometimes with a single friend and sometimes alone.

One October morning he set out on his annual hunting tour in company with Alexander Swift, the neighbor with whom he was most intimate. When Aborn embraced his wife and children before departing they clung to him with unusual reluctance to let him go. Whether this was due to a presentiment that evil might happen to him or that he must now go farther and remain longer than ever before, the fact remains that he and his family were loath to part. Finally, tearing himself away from them, he sprang into the wilderness with his friend.

When it came time for the husband and father's return his wife and children watched for him eagerly. He had usually been away two weeks, but on this trip he purported to be gone three. This was because with the settling of the country he was obliged to go farther from home. He had set out on a Monday and had promised to be back on Saturday, two days before the third Monday following. All that day his wife and children watched for him, but he did not come. The next and the next day they felt sure would bring him, but he disappointed them. The wife and mother began to be troubled, but concealed her anxiety as well as she was able from her children. When another week had passed and neither Aborn nor his companion returned Mrs. Aborn felt sure that both had met with misfortune. The most reasonable supposition was that they had been killed by Indians.

A month passed, and still neither Aborn nor his companion returned. Then the other hunters of that region organized a band to go and look for the missing men. A week later they returned, reporting that they had come upon the body of Alexander Swift pierced with arrows and scalped. They had found no trace whatever of Aborn. It seemed probable that the two men had been killed and Aborn captured, in which event he must have met a worse fate than his companion. The rains had washed out the trail of the Redskins as well as that of their captive.

The party before their return debated what report to make to Mrs. Aborn as to the probable fate of her husband and agreed that it would be best to tell her that her husband had doubtless been killed by the Indians, not mentioning that he had been first tortured.

As the Aborn family had increased the father, who at times had been troubled with insomnia, had slept in a room by himself. Mrs. Aborn, who did not relinquish all hope that he would return, kept this room always ready for him. But she kept it locked and never mentioned it or to whom it had belonged. After her husband's capture by the Indians she sold most of her ne-

groes, feeling that she could not afford to keep them, buying a strong woman who would serve all domestic purposes. To this woman the bedroom that was never opened was a mystery. She once mentioned the room to her mistress, asking why it was kept locked, but received no satisfaction. After that she speculated a great deal about the room, telling the field hands that she "spected Missy Aborn had a ha'nt locked up in dat room." The settlers, or, rather, their wives, who knew of the closing of this room pitied the poor woman, whose husband had doubtless been tortured and burned at the stake by the savages and would never return. They assumed that she hoped her husband would come back to her and she wished him to find his room ready for his occupation.

Two years passed, during which Mrs. Aborn worked her farm as well as she could, and her neighbors on their return from their hunting expeditions always supplied her with meat for the coming winter and spring. But it was a forlorn country in which to bring up children, and she was often tempted to remove to Indiana or Ohio, where she would have facilities for giving them an education. Finally she resolved one autumn that if no tidings came from her husband during the winter she would sell her plantation and her negroes, keeping her horses, and, mounting her children and herself on them, would go to some point on the river bank opposite Ohio, cross the river and make a home in one of the villages of that state.

The winter passed without the return of her husband or any news of him. Friendly Indians came and went to and from the settlement, and the widow never failed to inquire if any of them had knowledge of a white man she described to them. But none of them could give her any news of him. In the spring she began her preparations for removal.

One night when she had put her children to bed she concluded to ride over to the house of a neighbor to whom she hoped to sell her plantation. It was a stormy night, but she was anxious to get an offer for the property and was not deterred by the weather. During the evening a band of friendly Indians came into the settlement and were soon wandering about in search of what they could steal. One of them appeared at the kitchen, where Martha, Mrs. Aborn's maid of all work, was at work, and, turning, she saw him standing in the doorway. She was wiping a plate, which she straightway dropped on the floor, and it broke in pieces. The savage in a guttural tone peculiar to the Indian said:

"Me want bed. Me good Indian. Me no hurt anybody."

Martha got up enough courage to tell the Redskins that every room but one was occupied by the children and that was locked. The Indian horrified her by walking into the kitchen, taking up a tallow dip and proceeding to examine the house. Seeing the children sound asleep in their beds, he held the candle over each one of them in turn, giving a grunt of satisfaction at the sight of their rosy faces. Martha followed him at a distance, her complexion wearing the sickly light yellow of a frightened negro. She saw him go into her mistress' bedroom, and when he came out he had a key in his hand. Going to the empty chamber, he unlocked the door and said to the woman: "Me sleep here. You no tell."

He accompanied his words with a savage look that tied her tongue completely. She wished to tell of the Indian who had gone into the only vacant room, but did not dare. He would surely know that she had told and would tomahawk her. When her mistress returned it was evident that the negro had experienced a great scare; but, though Mrs. Aborn tried to induce her to tell what had frightened her, her efforts resulted in failure. As soon as Mrs. Aborn had gone to her room Martha went out and reported the Indian's presence in the house. But she was either not believed or those she told, considering that the group of red men who had come to the village were friendly, did not think the matter worthy of their attention, especially as the Aborn house was closed for the night.

Slumber finally reigned over the settlement. Martha slept in one of the negro cabins and early in the morning returned to the mother's abode, dreading to find both her and her children murdered. Entering the kitchen, she went from there into the other portions of the house, and, finding everything quiet, the older children asleep in their beds and her mistress slumbering with the smaller ones, she made up her mind that the savage was less murderous than she had supposed him to be and set about getting breakfast.

Presently she heard a cry. Terrified lest the Indian, after all, was about to tomahawk her mistress, she ran out of the kitchen into a passageway. There she saw Mrs. Aborn in the arms of the Indian, whose face had lost its coppery hue during the night. Mrs. Aborn's head was banging limp on the Indian's arm, it being evident that she had fainted. Martha, supposing it to have been from fright, sought support against the wall to avoid collapsing herself.

The Indian was none other than John Aborn. And this was his story: He and his companion huntsman had been set upon by Indians. Swift had been killed and Aborn made a prisoner. He was taken far to the south and adopted into the tribe. No opportunity had occurred for some time to return north, and even then he had been obliged to delay going to his home. Those with whom he had entered the settlement were ignorant that he was a white man, and he did not wish them to know it. He remained concealed till they had left.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson XII.—First Quarter, For March 25, 1917.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, John xiv, 1-14.—A Quarterly Review—Golden Text, John xiv, 6.—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

LESSON I.—Jesus the life and light of men, John 1, 1-14. Golden Text, John 1, 4, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The opening words of the lesson are away beyond us, high as heaven—what can we do? (Job xi, 8.) But in verse 14 He comes near to us, becomes one of us and reveals unto us the Father, and, seeing and knowing Him, we see and know the Father (chapter xiv, 9).

LESSON II.—John the Baptist and Jesus, John 1, 19-34. Golden Text, John 1, 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." John was to Jesus at His first coming what the real Elijah will be at His second coming in glory, for the great and dreadful day of the Lord is still future, and Mal. iv, 5, stands, according to Matt. xvii, 11.

LESSON III.—First disciples of the Lord Jesus, John 1, 43. "Jesus saith unto Him, Follow Me." John's second testimony turned men away from him to Jesus, and that was his aim, as it should be ours. Andrew and the unnamed other one, having spent the day with Jesus, quickly brought their brothers to the Messiah, whom they had found, and Philip brought Nathanael, who confessed Christ as Son of God and King of Israel.

LESSON IV.—Reverence of Jesus for His Father's house, John 11, 13-22. Golden Text, Matt. xxi, 13, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." By no means omit the marriage and the water changed to wine and the marriage of the Lamb which will precede the kingdom. Then shall follow Israel's great cleansing, according to Ez. xxxvi, 25.

LESSON V.—Jesus the Saviour of the world, John 11, 1-12. Golden Text, John 11, 16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Even the most religious and moral man cannot see or enter the kingdom unless he is born again by receiving the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him. But there is life for a look for all bitten ones, and they shall share the bridegroom's joy in the morning (verse 29).

LESSON VI.—Jesus and the woman of Samaria, John 4, 1-29. Golden Text, 1 Tim. 1, 15, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." A religious moral man must be born again, and a poor, immoral outcast may be born again, for He came to seek and to save the lost. The latter became a

better witness than the former and brought many souls to Him. In such service He delighted and invites us to join Him, that we may rejoice together.

LESSON VII.—Jesus heals a nobleman's son, John xiv, 43-54. Golden Text, Matt. viii, 13, "As thou hast believed so be it done unto thee." At Cana He had shadowed forth the glory of His own marriage, and now from Cana He sent life to a whole household. After the marriage what blessing there will be to multitudes! May the childlike faith of the nobleman be ours, for he believed the word that Jesus had spoken and went his way.

LESSON VIII.—Jesus at the pool of Bethesda, John v, 1-15. Golden Text, John 5, 4, "It was Jesus who had made him whole." A truly helpless pool for really helpless people, but there is a fountain which is better than all pools, and He gives life to all who hear His word and believe on Him—that is, receive Him. There is no book like the Scriptures, and by Scripture we learn of Him, but unless we come to Him of whom they tell we cannot obtain life (1 John v, 12).

LESSON IX.—Jesus feeds the five thousand, John vi, 1-21. Golden Text, Matt. vi, 11, "Give us this day our daily bread." Feasts of the Lord had become mere feasts of the Jews, and the multitudes were perishing. Today the public worship of God is largely mere formalities, stones for bread, and our Lord is still saying, "Give ye them to eat." He is ready to take what we have that is real bread and increase it as needed.

LESSON X.—Jesus the bread of life, John vi, 22-40. Golden Text, John vi, 35, "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life." Living Bread from heaven, and yet people despise it, even as Israel loathed the manna in the wilderness and in their hearts turned back to the food of Egypt. See these men disputing and arguing instead of eating. And so it is still, just as in the invitation to the marriage feast they all made light of it, each preferring his own way. One of the most manifest delusions of the devil is the way in which men despise the love and grace of God.

LESSON XI.—Jesus saves from sin, John viii, 12, 28-37, 56-59. Golden Text, John viii, 36, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." He had no stones for penitent sinners, and no one else has any right to throw any, for He is the only one without sin. He came not to condemn, but to save. He is saying to all thirty ones, "Come unto Me and drink." He says just as plainly that all who will not come shall die in their sins and, preferring the devil to God, shall have to take the devil's portion.

Fine Excuse.—The Heavy—I hear that your interpretation of Hamlet was hissed at the High Forehead theater last night. The Lead—Ah, yes! The performance was billed as a Shakespearean revival and I suspect some partisans of Bacon resented it.—Puck.

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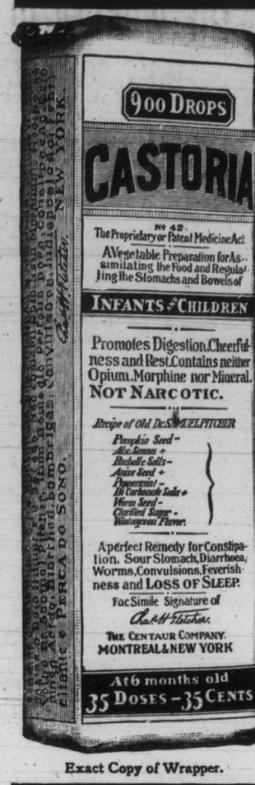
Albert Lea, Minn.—"For about a year I had sharp pains across my back and hips and was hardly able to move around the house. My head would ache and I was dizzy and had no appetite. After taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Liver Pills, I am feeling stronger than for years. I have a little boy eight months old and am doing my work all alone. I would not be without your remedies in the house as there are none like them."—Mrs. F. E. YOST, 611 Water St., Albert Lea, Minn.

Three Doctors Gave Her Up.

Pittsburg, Penn.—"Your medicine has helped me wonderfully. When I was a girl 18 years old I was always sickly and delicate and suffered from irregularities. Three doctors gave me up and said I would go into consumption. I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and with the third bottle began to feel better. I soon became regular and I got strong and shortly after I was married. Now I have two nice stout healthy children and am able to work hard every day."—Mrs. CLEMENTINA DERRING, 34 Gardner St., Troy Hill, Pittsburg, Penn.



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After the trees are felled the construction work begins. He works chiefly by night, for he is a nocturnal prowler. The moon is his lantern, the quiet of the night his inspiration, his sharp teeth are his hatchet and chisel, and his little paws are his means of conveyance, his spade, his hammer and his trowel. His hard, flat hairless and scaly tail is a propeller when swimming and a balance when he is cutting timber, for he stands on his hind legs while gnawing down trees.

The beaver is a strict vegetarian, and his diet consists chiefly of barks, tender shoots and water plants. To flood low grounds the beaver sometimes have to build a dam exceeding fifty feet in length. They usually lay it out with the curve facing upstream. The foundation is built of poles four or five feet long by an inch or two thick. These they lay crosswise, filling all crevices with mud. The beaver digs up mud with his fore feet, then holds it close to his breast with his fore legs, swims to where he has started his dam, and having deposited it in its proper place beats the mud down with his paws—not with his tail, as has been believed.—St. Nicholas.

Henley and Stevenson. W. E. Henley once met Robert Louis Stevenson and found his friend distressed because he was not a Voltaire or a Dumas, though he had an equipment which ought to have made him their peer. Stevenson put his "failure" down to the weakness of his lungs. "Perhaps you are right, Louis," said Henley. "I've always felt that if I had not been a blessed cripple I could have taken the earth in my hand and hurled it into the sun."

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