

## ARMED WITH THE BIBLE.

David F— is a very aged citizen of Western North Carolina. Ten or fifteen years ago he determined to travel through the trackless wilds of the great and sparsely inhabited West. His route lay along the borders of Missouri and Nevada, infested at that time with more numerous clans of highway robbers than at present. He knew all this very well; and, although urged by his neighbors to procure a couple of repeaters to defend himself, he only took his pocket Bible, and, armed thus, set out on the perilous journey. He had passed some of the clans on the Northern border of Missouri, and was nearing the residence of one of the most formidable ones, headed by a notorious desperado, Jim Stevens, when he met a gentleman who, by some *coup d'état*, had escaped the vigilant eye of the robber captain. The first question that he propounded to old David was :

"Are you armed?"

"Yes," was the aged Christian's reply, as he produced his pocket Bible.

The gentleman, who was almost weighed down with bowie knives and pistols, laughed outright at what he considered the old man's folly, and with considerable ridicule in his tone, remarked :

"If that is all the weapon you have, you had better be saying your prayers. The den of Jim Stevens is about ten miles further on, just where you will get by night, and he cares as little for Bibles as a rattlesnake."

They exchanged names, and each went his own way : the one surprised at the other's apparent folly and recklessness ; the other undismayed, and his faith in the protecting power of his Bible undiminished.

Night had thrown her dark mantle around the earth, and the chilling blasts had begun to pierce the somewhat feeble frame of old David, when he descried a light far down in a glen a short distance from the road. He was sure that it proceeded from a robber-den ; but he must have shelter, and, impelled by almost boundless faith, he directed his course thither. He halted when within a few paces of the door, and being coarsely greeted by some uncouth, mean-looking men, was invited to alight. When he entered the humble habitation he saw significant looks pass between the inmates, and each chuckled to himself, and he knew that he was at the headquarters of a road committee, among a desperate, relentless, and murderous clan of banditti. Nothing daunted, he occupied the proffered seat. Having partaken of a rough meal, which they furnished him at his request, he began conversation, which was continued till far in the night, when it was interrupted by the return of the captain, Jim Stevens, and a couple of his *confères* in crime, from a plundering raid. Stevens, advancing within a few feet of him, asked jeeringly :

"Old man, aren't you afraid to travel in this section among the robbers, alone and unarmed?"

"No," was old David's bold and fearless reply, as he again produced his Bible, continuing, "This is my weapon of defence. I always read a chapter, and pray, too, before I retire. I know you are robbers, but I shall read and pray here to-night, and you must join with me."

The roof of the shabby hut shook with loud taunting peals of laughter at this expression of the old man ; but, nothing dismayed, he began to read. Gradually all became silent, and, when he knelt to pray, every knee was bowed. That was a strange sight—murderers and plunderers of their fellow-men kneeling and attentively listening to a prayer ! Long and fervently the humble servant of God prayed ; nor did their interest in the solemn scene and supplications abate. When he had finished, he was conducted to a hard pallet, where he slept the live-long night undisturbed, and even free from haunting fears.

He arose very early in the morning, and read and prayed before breakfast. They refused to receive aught for his entertainment during the night, and instead, cordially thanked him for the interest which he had manifested in