

Erskine Dale Pioneer

by John Fox, Jr.

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—To the Kentucky wilderness outpost commanded by Jerome Sanders, in the time immediately preceding the Revolution, comes a white boy fleeing from a tribe of Shawnees by whom he had been captured and adopted as a son of the chief, Kah-too. He is given shelter and attracts the favorable attention of Dave Vandell, a leader among the settlers.

CHAPTER II.—The boy warns his new friends of the coming of a Shawnee war party. The fort is attacked, and only saved by the timely appearance of a party of Virginians. The leader of these is fatally wounded, but in his dying moments recognizes the fugitive youth as his son.

CHAPTER III.—At Red Oaks plantation on the James river, Virginia, Colonel Dale's home, the boy appears with a message for the school, who after reading it introduces the bearer to his daughter Barbara as her cousin, Erskine Dale.

CHAPTER IV.—Erskine meets two other cousins, Harry Dale and Hugh Willoughby.

CHAPTER V.—Dueling rapers on a wall at Red Oaks attract Erskine's attention. He takes his first fencing lesson from Hugh, Dave Vandell, at Williamsburg on business, visits Red Oaks.

CHAPTER VI.—At the county fair at Williamsburg Erskine meets a youth, Dane Grey, and there arises a distinct antagonism between them. Grey, in liquor, insults Erskine, and the latter, for the moment, all Indian, draws his knife. Yarns discuss him. A brief view of his conduct in the affair with Grey. Erskine leaves Red Oaks that night, to return to the wilderness. Vandell, with Harry and Hugh, who have been permitted to visit the Sanders fort, overtake him. At the plantation the boy had left a note in which he gave the property, which is his as the son of Colonel Dale's older brother, to Barbara.

CHAPTER VII.—The party is met by three Shawnees, who bring news to Erskine (whose Indian name is White Arrow) that his foster father, Kah-too, is dying and desires him to come to the tribe and become its chief. After a brief visit to the fort Erskine goes to the tribe. He finds there a white woman and her half-bred daughter, Early Morn, and saves the woman from death. He tells Kah-too he is with the Americans against the British. An enemy, Crooked Lightning, overhears him.

CHAPTER VIII.—Kah-too sends Erskine to a council where British envoys meet Indian chiefs. Dane Grey is there, and the latter feeling intimidated, Crooked Lightning denounces Erskine as a traitor and friend of the Americans. The youth escapes death by flight.

CHAPTER IX.—Reaching his tribe, Erskine finds his enemies have the upper hand. He is held as a prisoner, waiting only for the arrival of Crooked Lightning to be burned at the stake. Early Morn releases him and he reaches Jerome Sanders' fort safely.

CHAPTER X.—The Revolution spreads. George Rogers Clark visits the fort. Erskine resolves to join Clark's expedition to the Northwest. At Red Oaks he finds Dane Grey apparently on more than friendly terms with Barbara.

CHAPTER XI.—Erskine and Grey engage in a duel with rapers, though the former knows nothing of fencing. The fight is stopped by Colonel Dale.

CHAPTER XII.—Barbara and Erskine arrive at a sort of mutual understanding, though the boy has little hope of winning her love.

CHAPTER XIII.—Erskine accompanies the Clark expedition to Kaskaskia, which is captured. The Indians in the expedition attempt to overthrow Clark, but largely through Erskine the plot fails. The boy accompanies his foster father, Kah-too, back to the tribe. Early Morn avows her love for him.

CHAPTER XIV

Erskine had given Black Wolf his life, and the young brave had accepted the debt and fretted under it sorely. And when Erskine had begun to show some heed to Early Morn a fierce jealousy seized the savage, and his old hatred was reborn a thousandfold more strong—and that, too, Erskine now knew. Morn ran low and a hunting party went abroad. Game was scarce and only after the second day was there a kill. Erskine had sighted a huge buck, had fired quickly and at close range. Wounded, the buck had charged. Erskine's knife was twisted in his belt, and the buck was upon him before he could get it out. He tried to dart for a tree, stumbled, turned, and caught the infuriated beast by the horns. He uttered no cry, but the angry bellow of the stag reached the ears of Black Wolf through the woods, and he darted toward the sound. And he came none too soon. Erskine heard the crack of a rifle, the stag toppled over, and he saw Black Wolf standing over him with a curiously triumphant look on his saturnine face. In Erskine, when he rose, the white man was predominant, and he thrust out his hand, but Black Wolf ignored it.

"White Arrow gave Black Wolf his life. The debt is paid."

Erskine looked at his enemy, nodded, and the two bore the stag away. Instantly a marked change was plain in Black Wolf. He told the story of the fight with the buck to all. Boldly he threw off the mantle of shame, stalked laughingly through the village, and went back to open enmity with Erskine. At dusk a day or two later, when he was coming down the path from the white woman's wigwam, Black Wolf confronted him, scowling.

"Early Morn shall belong to Black Wolf," he said insolently. Erskine met his hateful, half-drunken eyes scornfully.

wearily, "until you come again." Erskine nodded and went for his horse. Black Wolf watched him with malignant satisfaction, but said nothing—nor did Crooked Lightning. Erskine turned once as he rode away. His mother was standing outside her wigwam. Mournfully she waved her hand. Behind her and within the tent he could see Early Morn with both hands at her breast.

CHAPTER XV

Dawned 1781. The war was coming into Virginia at length. Virginia falling would thrust a great wedge through the center of the confederacy, feed the British armies and end the fight. Cornwallis was to drive the wedge, and never had the opening seemed easier. Virginia was drained of her fighting men, and south of the mountains was protected only by a militia, for the most part, of old men and boys. North and south ran despair. The soldiers had no pay, little food, and only old worn-out coats, tattered linen overalls, and one blanket between three men, to protect them from drifting snow and icy wind.

Even the great Washington was near despair, and in foreign help his sole hope lay. Already the traitor, Arnold, had taken Richmond, burned warehouses, and returned, but little harassed, to Portsmouth.

Cornwallis was coming on. Tarleton's white rangers were bedeviling the land, and it was at this time that Erskine Dale once more rode firefly to the river James.

The boy had been two years in the wilds. When he left the Shawnee camp winter was setting in, that terrible winter of '79—of deep snow and longer and colder. When he reached Kaskaskia, Captain Clark had gone to Kentucky, and Erskine found bad news. Hamilton and Hay had taken Vincennes. There Captain Helm's Creoles, as soon as they saw the red coats, slipped away from him to surrender their arms to the British, and thus deserted by all, he and the two or three Americans with him had to give up the fort. The French swore allegiance to Britain. Hamilton confiscated their liquor and broke up their billiard tables. He let his Indians scatter to their villages, and with his regulars, volunteers, white Indian leaders and red auxiliaries went into winter quarters. One band of Shawnees he sent to Ohio to scout and take scalps in the settlements. In the spring he would sweep Kentucky and destroy all the settlements west of the Alleghenies. So Erskine and Dave went for Clark; and that trip neither ever forgot. Storms had followed each other since late November and the snow lay deep. Cattle and horses perished, deer and elk were found dead in the woods, and buffalo came at nightfall to old Jerome Sanders' fort for food and companionship with his starving herd. There was no salt or vegetable food; nothing but the flesh of lean wild game. Yet, while the frontiersmen remained crowded in the stockades and the men hunted and the women made clothes of tanned deer hides, buffalo-wool cloth, and nettle-bark linen, and both hollowed "log-cabin" out of the knot of a tree, Clark made his amazing march to Vincennes, recaptured it by the end of February, and sent Hamilton to Williamsburg a prisoner. Erskine pleaded to be allowed to take him there, but Clark would not let him go. Permanent garrisons were placed at Vincennes and Cahokia, and at Kaskaskia. Erskine stayed to help make peace with the Indians, punish marauders and hunting bands, so that by the end of the year Clark might sit at the falls of the Ohio as a shield for the West and a sure guarantee that the whites would never be forced to abandon wild Kentucky.

The two years in the wilderness had left their mark on Erskine. He was tall, lean, swarthy, gaunt, and



The Two Years in the Wilderness Had Left Their Mark on Erskine.

yet he was not all woodsman, for his born inheritance as gentleman had been more than emphasized by his association with Clark and certain Creole officers in the Northwest, who had improved his French and gratified one pet wish of his life since his last visit to the James—they had taught him to fence. His mother he had not seen again, but he had learned that she was alive and not yet blind. Of Early Morn he had heard nothing at all.

Once a traveling had brought word of Dane Grey, Erskine was in Philadelphia and prominent in the gay doings of that city. He had taken part in a brilliant pageant called "Miscellaneous," which was staged by Andre, and was reported a close friend of that ill-fated young gentleman.

After the fight at Piqua, with Clark Erskine put forth for old Jerome Sanders' fort. He found the hard days of want over. There was not only corn in plenty but wheat, potatoes, pumpkins, turnips, melons. Game was plentiful, and cattle, horses, and hogs had multiplied on cane and buffalo clover. Indeed, it was a comparatively peaceful fall, and though Clark pleaded with him, Erskine stubbornly set his face for Virginia.

At Williamsburg Erskine learned many things. Colonel Dale, now a general, was still with Washington and Harry was with him. Hugh was with the Virginia militia and Dave with Lafayette.

Tarleton's legion of rangers in their white uniforms were scourging Virginia as they had scourged the Carolinas. Through the James River country they had gone with fire and sword, burning houses, carrying off horses, destroying crops, burning grain in the mills, laying plantations to waste. Barbara's mother was dead. Her neighbors had moved to safety, but Barbara, he heard, still lived with old Mammy and Ephraim at Red Oaks, unless that, too, had been recently put to the torch. Where, then, would he find her?

Down the river Erskine rode with a sad heart. At the place where he had fought with Grey he pulled firefly to a sudden halt. There was the boundary of Red Oaks and there started a desolation that ran as far as his eye could reach. Red Oaks had not been spared, and he put firefly to a fast gallop, with eyes strained far ahead and his heart beating with agonized foreboding and savage rage. Soon over a distant clump of trees he could see the chimneys of Barbara's home—his home, he thought helplessly—and perhaps those chimneys were all that was left. And then he saw the roof and the upper windows and the cap of the big columns unharmed, untouched, and he pulled firefly in again, with overwhelming relief, and wondered at the miracle. Again he started and again pulled in when he caught sight of three horses hitched near the stables. Turning quickly from the road, he hid firefly in the underbrush. Very quietly he slipped along the path by the river, and, pushing aside through the rose bushes, lay down where un-

seen he could peer through the closely matted hedge. He had not long to wait. A white uniform issued from the great hall door and another and another—and after them Barbara—smiling. The boy's blood ran hot—smiling at her enemies. Two officers bowed, Barbara courtesied, and they wheeled on their heels and descended the steps. The third stayed behind a moment, bowed over her hand and kissed it. The watcher's blood turned then to liquid fire. Great God, at what price was that noble old house left standing? Grimly, swiftly Erskine turned, sliding through the bushes like a snake to the edge of the road along which they must pass. He would fight the three, for his life was worth nothing now. He heard them laughing, talking at the stables. He heard them speak Barbara's name, and two seemed to be bantering the third, whose answering laugh seemed acquiescent and triumphant. They were coming now. The boy had his pistols out, primed and cocked. He was rising on his knees, just about to leap to his feet and out into the road, when he fell back into a startled, paralyzed, inactive heap. Glimped through an opening in the bushes, the leading trooper in the uniform of Tarleton's legion was none other than Dane Grey, and Erskine's brain had worked quicker than his angry heart. This was a mystery that must be solved before his pistols spoke. He rose crouching as the troopers rode away. If Tarleton's men were around he would better leave firefly where he was in the woods for a while. A startled gasp behind him made him wheel, pistol once more in hand, to find a negro, mouth wide open and staring at him from the road.

"Marse Erskine!" he gasped. It was Ephraim, the boy who had led Barbara's white ponies out long, long ago, now a tall, muscular lad with an ebony face and dazzling teeth. "What you doin' 'yeh, suh? Whar' yo' boss? Gawd, I'se sut'ly glad to see yuh." Erskine pointed to an oak.

"Right by that tree. Put him in the stable and feed him."

The negro shook his head.

"No, suh. I'll take de feed down to him. Too many redcoats messin' round heah. You bettah go in de back day—dey might see yuh."

"Wasn't one of those soldiers who just rode away Mr. Dane Grey?"

The negro hesitated.

"Yassuh."

"What's he doing in a British uniform?"

The boy shifted his great shoulders uneasily and looked aside.

"I don't know, suh—I don't know nuttin'."

Erskine knew he was lying, but respected his loyalty.

"Go tell Miss Barbara I'm here and then feed my horse."

"Yassuh."

(To be continued)

DEDICATION OF UNION CHURCH

(Continued from Page Two)

scas of the world. A dream? I state the sober fact of the future, if we are true.

"I have set before thee a door opened which none can shut," a door of opportunity for the widespread proclamation, for the increasing personal appropriation, and for the social application of the Gospel of impartial love.

"It was not until 1379-90, A.D., when jealousy divided the Christian powers that Philadelphia fell before the united forces of the Byzantine, (Christian) emperor and the Turkish Sultan." Then the door was shut.

No man can shut the door which stands open to us today. If thru pride of place, thru lust of power, thru emphasis upon non-essentials, there arise jealousies and rancor and animosities, he who holds wide for us the door will shut it in our face.

Men and women, well did John Fee say, "We can be united on Christ, or opinions we cannot."

Let us enter the door which the Master flings wide today. Does it mean courage?

"When the strife is fierce, the warfare long, Steals on the ear the distant triumph song, And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong."

Does it mean patience? Hear again the words of our early leader: "Often trials will come, friends fail, and the heavens above appear as brass and the earth beneath as iron, yet if you will hold on with Jacob, or stand still with Moses, you will see the face of God; the Red Sea of difficulties will open before you, and you will walk thru dry-shod."

Today are fulfilled the dreams, the hopes, the prophecies of brave men and trustful women. We enter a church planned and built with sacrifice and loving skill. We enter a door of opportunity flung open wide by Him who is the First and the Last and the Living One. Let us press on, holding fast to our hearts the word of God's impartial love, loyal to the name which is above every name. And this day, when we dedicate the Fee Memorial, shall be to us a memorable day—a day when a great effectual door opens which none shall shut.

AFTERNOON SERVICE

Fifteen Sunday Schools Represented

The Union Sunday-school rally, under the direction of Asher B. Strong, principal of the model school on Scaffold Cane, was an inspiring meeting. Fifteen Sunday Schools were represented and each answered to the roll call with a report giving the number of officers and teachers, the average attendance, and the number present at this service. In addition to the reports given by the Sunday schools some schools from out of town came prepared to entertain with short programs. Blue Lick was handicapped owing to the fact that one of their wagons broke down and a part of the Sunday school was delayed. Those present representing Blue Lick sang "The Church in the Wilderness" and another delightful song which Mr. Christopher introduced as "The Jewell." Scaffold Cane School sang "Since Jesus Came into My Heart;" and Silver Creek sang, "Come Join Our Sunday School," a song which has been put to the tune of The Battle Hymn of the Republic and adopted by the State Sunday School Association.

After the children's exercises President Frost made a brief address, first to the children, and then to the parents, with this outline of thought:

The forty-fifth psalm is a marriage song, and the sixteenth verse shows how people come into the world in groups. All the while we are letting go hands with our grandparents, and reaching on to take the hands of our grandchildren. This is the order of life and of history. This is what the psalmist says, as he looks at the changes of life, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children."

Why are children so happy? They have not so many mistakes to mourn over. And they trust their parents better than we trust God! And God loves to bestow happiness. He arranges that the most wretched people in the world shall have happy hours in childhood.

Children, remember five things.

1. You are loved. You know something of mother's love, and father's love. But did you know how much your teachers, in school and Sunday-school, love you? And the State of Kentucky loves you, for it has made roads for you to travel over, and school-houses. And George Washington and all our country's patriots loved you. They all labored, as we say, for posterity. Posterity means children. You are posterity!

And God's people loved you, for they prepared meeting houses for you. And this meeting house is for you. Whenever we want to gather at some central place, here is a place. And we plan to have many other gatherings here in which you will have good times. God has no pleas-

ure in a church house except when it is full of people!

2. Now you are going to pay back this love by honoring your parents, serving your country, and working for church and Sunday-school all your lives.

3. Your chief business now is to grow—in body and in mind. You cannot earn as much as a man, but you can learn more and faster than a man. Do you measure how tall you are? Do you measure how smart you are? Can you count a hundred? Can you dress a chicken? Can you keep a promise? Can you tend a garden? Can you keep on working when you are tired? Can you be honest when you have a chance to cheat? Are you growing in power to do fine things?

4. Don't be in a hurry to quit school, and leave home, and get married. Be in a hurry to get ready for these things. It is an awful thing to be 21 years old and only have the mind and education of a child of 10. Get ready to be grown up, and before you know it, you will be.

5. How old should one be to become a Christian? Old enough to love and help your mother. The very small child only loves his mother as he loves his milk-bottle. But when he can understand his mother a little, and help her, then he is old enough to love and serve God. A young Christian is not like an old Christian any more than a lamb is like a sheep. You do not have to be old to be a real Christian.

Now let me speak to the older people.

1. Our children are our teachers. Many a man who would not sign the temperance pledge of himself will sign it for the sake of his children. And from our feeling toward our children we learn God's feeling toward us.

2. You can do more for your children than any school can do. You can show them what to love and what to desire and what to hate. The schools seldom do much except for the children that have been started right by their parents.

3. You owe something to all children. If there is a sorry family near you, don't try to shut them out, but befriend them and bring them in. God cares as much for the child of a horse-thief as for the child of a preacher.

4. Learn afresh today what this Union Church stands for. If you do not all belong to the Union Church, nevertheless the Union Church belongs to you. We shall have entertainments here for your young people, and hospitality for neighbors when they come to town. We can be of help to all the people for miles around. That is what these spacious community rooms are for—they are not for us but for you.

Please understand us. All who are so led we are glad to welcome into our membership; but we do not aim to steal sheep from other folds. We hope to benefit those who are members of other churches, and of no church. Whoever you are, this Union Church house is here for your use—it belongs to you.

And please understand the Union platform. The churches of the New Testament were all Union Churches. Paul explains in Rom. XIV that differences of opinion should not divide the followers of Christ. In almost exactly his words this church says, "We receive all followers of Christ and work with all who work with Him." Denominationalism came in later. We heard a dear and eloquent brother say there were 200 different denominations in the world and only one of them could be right. How can he prove that? They may all be wrong. Better than that, they may all be right! Whenever a company of Christians in one place unite to serve Him, and are visited by His spirit, that company, no matter how many faults and fads they may have, is a true church.

The Union Church takes in all that is best in every denomination. We are Methodists—we mention John Wesley as often as any Methodist church. We are all Presbyterians—we keep tab on their work and send money to their missions every year. We are all Baptists, believing in independence, and sending our best members to help the Baptist work thru all this region. And we follow Alex. Campbell in prayer for Christian union.

And we are not as lonesome as we used to be. Union churches are springing up everywhere, and nearly all Christians now agree that in mission fields all churches must be union. The heathen must not see Christians divided.

3. Finally, brethren, the time for bringing up children, for helping neighbors, for serving the Lord on earth, is short. This church house may be here 100 years—but we shall not be here very long. Let us drop everything but what is of most importance.

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