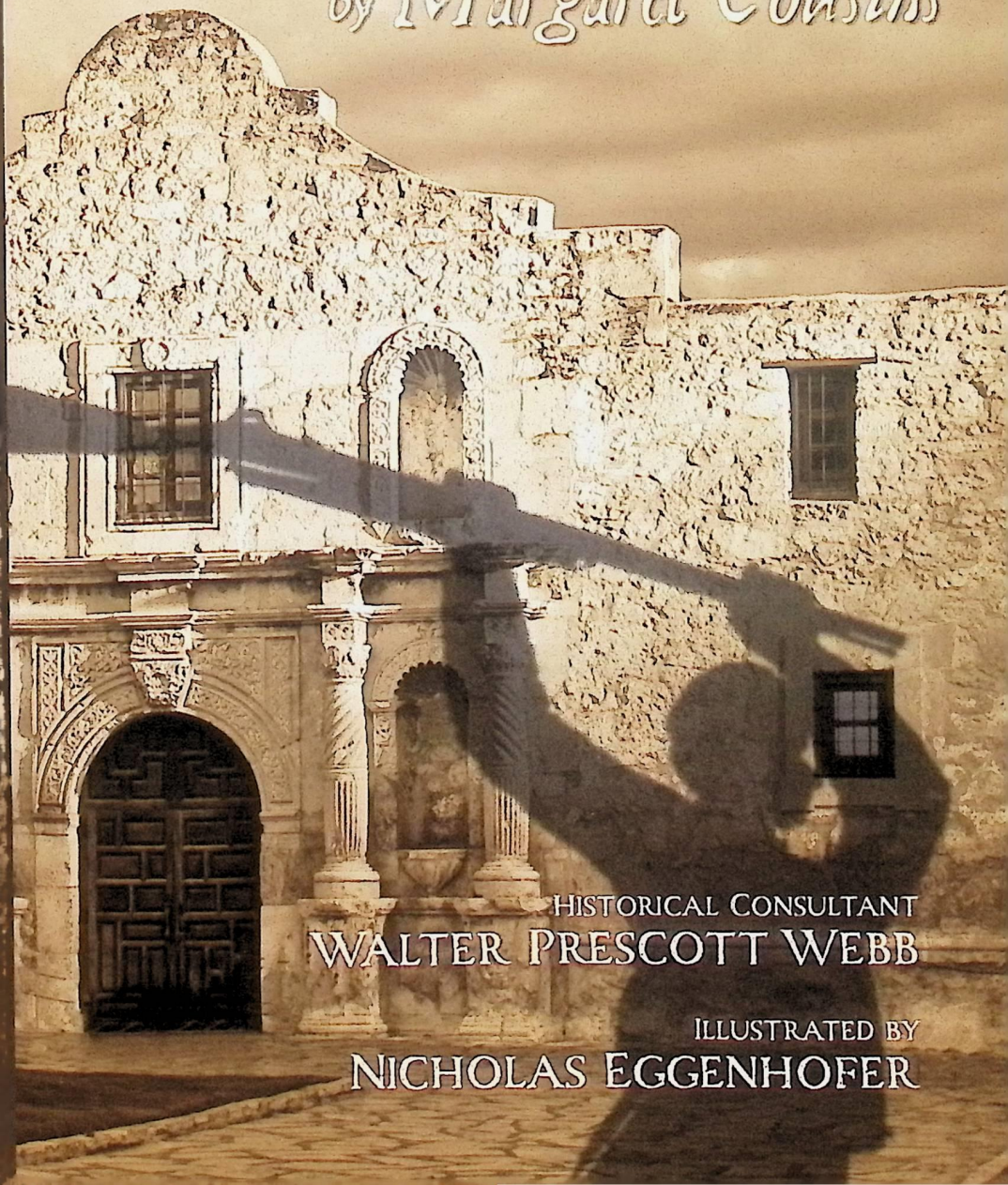


THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

by Margaret Cousins

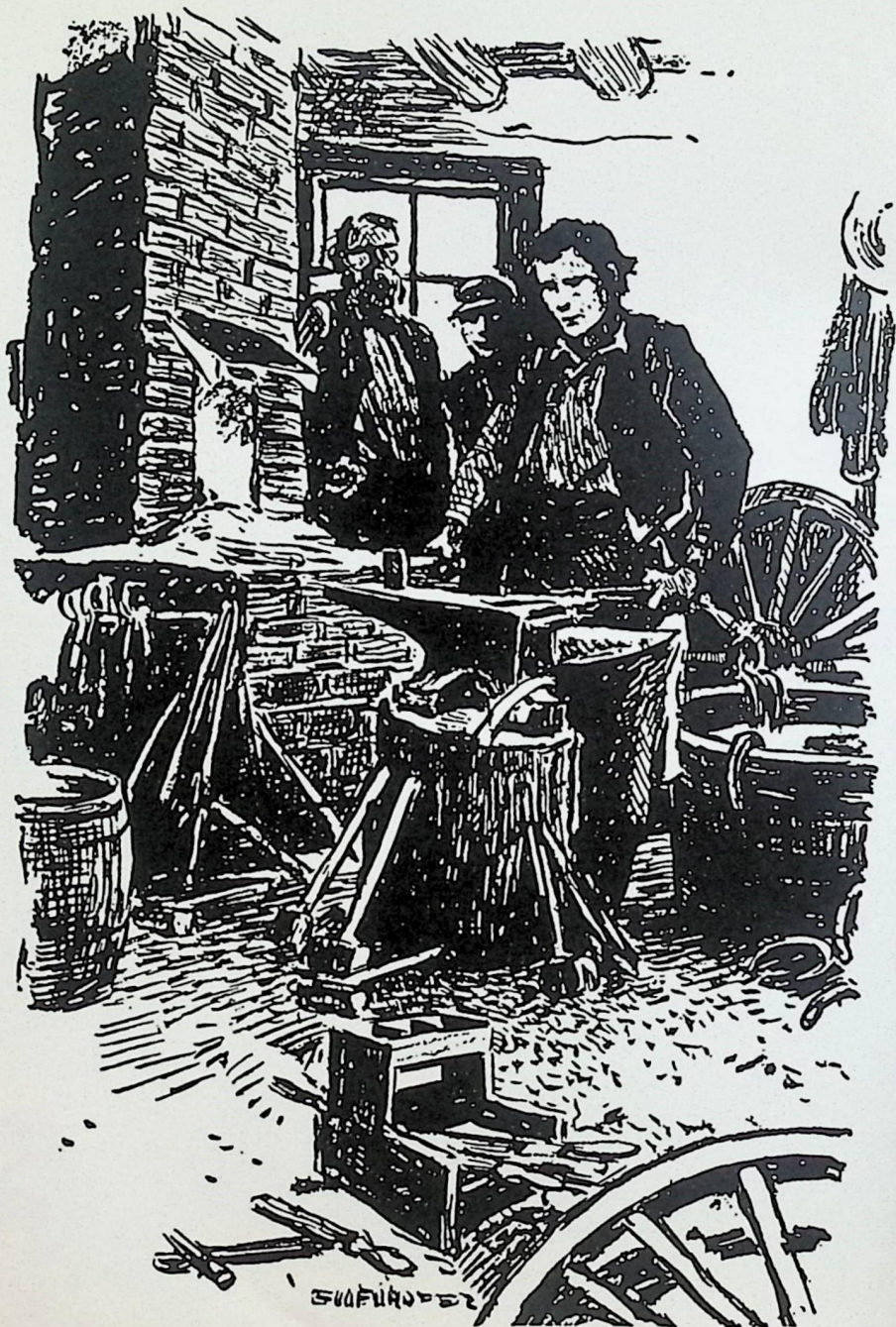


HISTORICAL CONSULTANT
WALTER PRESCOTT WEBB

ILLUSTRATED BY
NICHOLAS EGGENHOFER

Contents

CHAPTER		
I	Colonel Crockett Calls	3
II	Off to the Alamo!	14
III	I Join the Volunteers	27
IV	We Ride into the Fort	46
V	Guadalupe	63
VI	We Wait	73
VII	Colonel Travis Writes a Letter	84
VIII	The Siege Continues	92
IX	Colonel Travis Draws the Line	104
X	The Battle	120
XI	All Is Lost!	131
XII	General Santa Anna	141
XIII	Off to Gonzales	153
XIV	"Remember the Alamo!"	164
XV	Home Again	172



"I'm going to join the army!" Buck said

CHAPTER ONE

Colonel Crockett Calls

IT WAS a cold day in January and Aunt Elvira had sent me out to bring in another load of wood. I went into the blacksmith shop because the blazing fire on the forge felt good.

My brother Buck was standing at the anvil banging on a piece of metal as if he was bound and determined to beat the stuffing out of it.

“What you doing, Buck?” I asked him.

Buck didn't say a word.

Uncle Todd was sorting out horseshoe nails. He looked at Buck and grinned. “Just because Sarah Ellen Payne ran off and got herself married to an-

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

other fellow is no reason for you to take out your spite on that helpless piece of iron," Uncle Todd said.

Buck gritted his teeth. "I'm making me a knife," he hollered. "What's Sarah Ellen Payne got to do with it?"

"I hope you're not planning to scalp the bridegroom," Uncle Todd joshed him.

"I aim to get away from here," Buck muttered. "Go adventuring."

I thought for a minute he was going to cry, except Buck was too old for that. He was seventeen. Anyway, he never did cry.

"Hey, Buck," I said, "lemme see. Hey, can I go with you?"

"Course not," Buck said. "You're just a tadpole."

I felt my heart drop. I always went everywhere with Buck. Buck was my family, ever since Mamma died of the consumption and Papa fell in the fight with the Comanches, and we came to Nacogdoches to live with Uncle Todd and Aunt Elvira.

COLONEL CROCKETT CALLS

"I'm twelve," I said. "Going on thirteen."

"You'd be scared to death out there in the big woods," Buck said, hammering on his knife. "You'd get to bellowing like a lost calf."

"Who's scared?" I yelled at him. "Don't you call me any coward."

"Don't pester him, Will," Uncle Todd said. "He's got his dander up this morning over that little yellow-haired girl."

"I'm going to ride off," Buck said, stubborn. "I'm going to join the Army!"

"You'd best stay here and learn blacksmithing," Uncle Todd said. "Useful business in a new country like Texas. A land has to be forged."

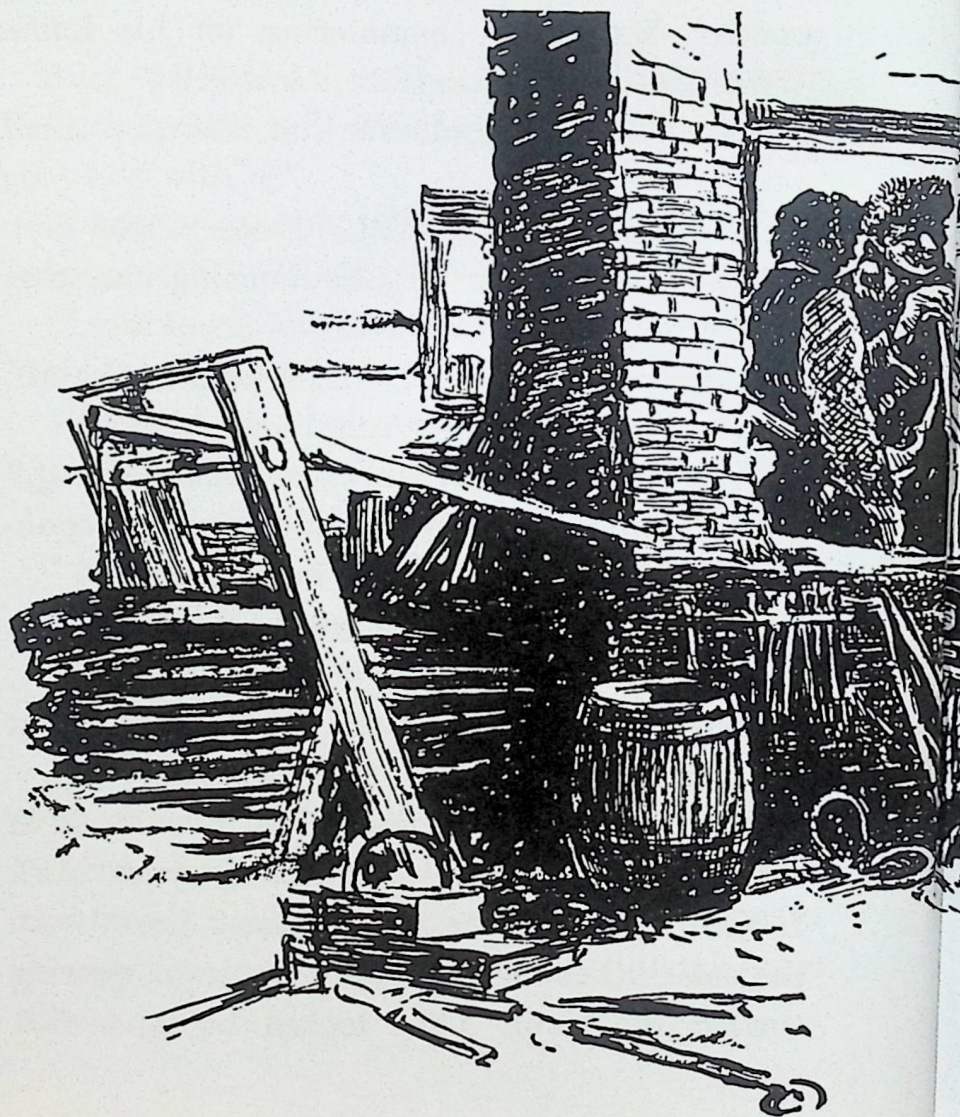
"I'm going with you," I said to Buck. "You're my brother."

"No," said Buck. "Where I'm going it might be dangerous."

I turned my back on him and went and stood in the door of the shop. My feelings were hurt. It was then I saw the five horsemen break from the oak thicket and ride slowly across the clearing toward the shop. They looked big and dark

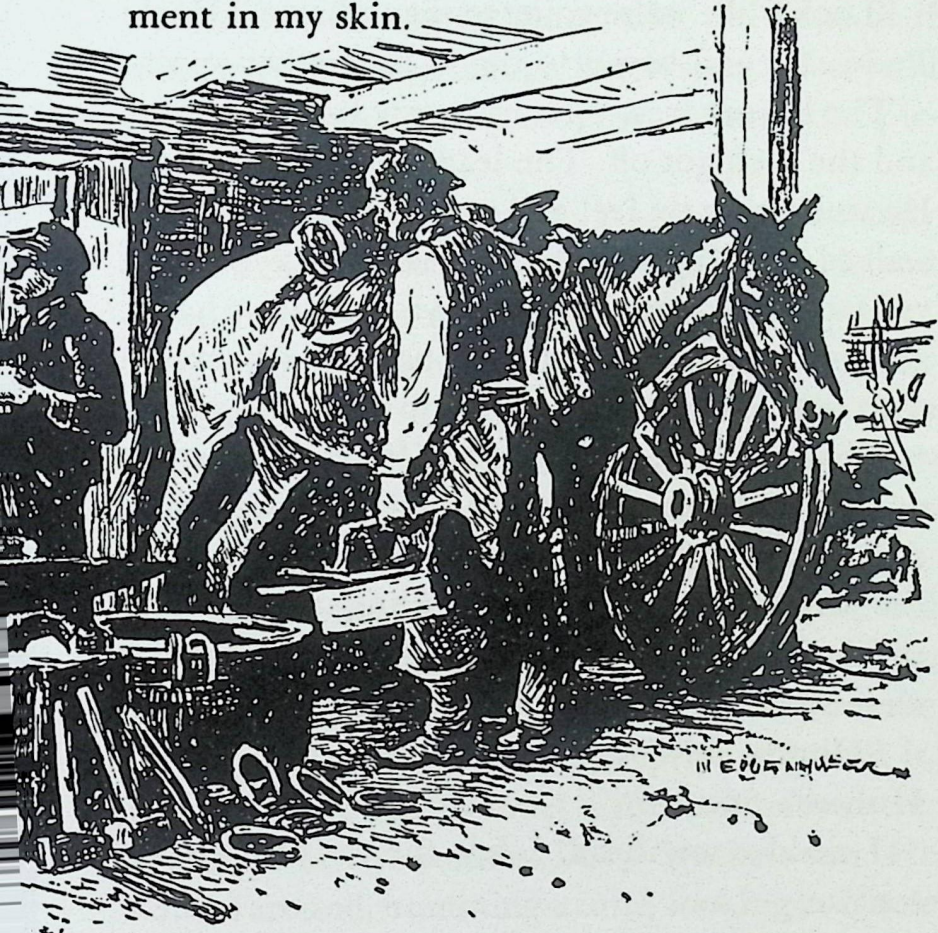
THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

against the sky, which was pale blue, like the milk in Aunt Elvira's crocks after she had



COLONEL CROCKETT CALLS

skimmed off the cream. As they drew nearer I saw they were strangers. I felt a prickle of excitement in my skin.



“Somebody’s coming!” I yelled out. When you saw strangers in Texas you always yelled out. No telling who they might be.

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

Uncle Todd hustled over to the door, and Buck stopped beating the hot iron and came too.

"Look's like we're going to shoe a horse," Uncle Todd said and began to tie on his leather apron.

The horses drew up a little way from the shop, and the men got off. The leader was big and tall. He stood over six feet and was heavy-built, but he walked easy, like a puma. He had blue eyes and a red face with square bones and a nose like a hawk, and his hair was brown. He had on a buckskin shirt and pants and a coon cap with the ringed tail hanging down his back. His voice was soft when he said good morning, and there was something about him that drew you to him, the way the magnet picks up the steel filings in the blacksmith shop. I looked around at Buck, and his eyes were shining.

"Howdy, boy," the tall man said to me. "Is this Hunter's Smithy?"

I nodded my head. I felt the cat had got my tongue.

"It is that," Uncle Todd said, coming forward. "Todd Hunter, at your service."

COLONEL CROCKETT CALLS

"I'm Davy Crockett," the stranger said. "My Traveler has gone and flung off his shoe."

"Colonel Crockett!" Buck said, the same as if somebody had given him a big present. "I should know you from hearing about you! I saw your picture once, too!"

"Well, now, it's hard to forget such an ugly cuss," Colonel Crockett said, laughing loud, and called to the men to bring over the horse.

The other four moseyed over to the shop, leading Davy's horse. One was short and fat. That was Thimblorig. The tall, dark fellow, real good-looking, with sunburned skin and brown eyes, was Ned Johnson, the Bee Hunter. The swarthy one, wearing an old blue sailor suit, was the Pirate, and the dark, silent one was the Indian. Davy made us known, and Uncle Todd and Buck went about the shoeing. But Buck couldn't keep his mind on it. His eyes followed Colonel Crockett everywhere.

He was always restless, Davy Crockett was. He walked around, humming a tune, looking at Uncle Todd's muskets and homemade knives on the wall, whistling, switching his head.

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

"I h-h-heard about your fights with the Indians," Buck said, stuttering the way he did when he got excited.

"Yeah," said Davy, "that was a while back."

"Papa was an Indian fighter," I put in. "Only I was too little to remember it."

"My brother-in-law fell to a Comanche war party," said Uncle Todd. "Couldn't make him see sense."

"There is some fightin' that has to be done," Davy said. "No getting out of it."

"I hope you're aiming to settle in Texas, Colonel," Uncle Todd said. "There's good land hereabouts."

"I am that," said Davy. "But first I have to make a little journey."

"Is that so?" Uncle Todd said, making polite talk.

"I'm riding to Bexar," Crockett said, "as fast as I can get there. There won't be much settling down for anybody until Texas is free."

Uncle Todd didn't say anything, but Buck's hammer clattered to the floor.

COLONEL CROCKETT CALLS

"The garrison there is in need of reinforcements," Colonel Crockett said. "I am looking for volunteers."

I looked at Buck and I knew what was coming.

"Colonel Crockett," Buck said, drawing himself up. "Can I ride with you?"

"Have you ever done any soldiering?" Davy asked.

"No, I haven't," Buck said. "But I was born in Texas. It's my country. I can fight."

"I wish I had that Sarah Ellen by the scruff of her neck!" Uncle Todd said. "You're not but seventeen, Buck. You've got no call to be honing for battle. You don't know a thing about it. Why can't you stay where you belong and help me to cast the cannon?"

"Give me liberty or give me death!" Buck said. He'd read that in one of our school books.

"You'd best look to your uncle for common sense," Crockett said. "I am known far and wide for not having any."

"Will you take me as a volunteer?" Buck asked.

"I can't promise you anything but hunger and

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

cold and danger," Colone! Crockett said. "It's not all bugle calls and flashing swords and flags flying, the way it's cracked up to be. It's mud and pain and being scared way down in the bottom of your stomach."

When he said that I felt my heart pinch and I shivered. It sounded awful and I don't know why, but in spite of how it sounded, I wanted to go with him too.

"Will you take me?" Buck asked again.

Crockett laughed. "I'll take you," he said. "You're man enough to make up your own mind!" He put out his hand, and Buck shook it.

Uncle Todd was beating a tattoo on the iron shoe.

"When do you go?" he asked.

"We ride tomorrow," Crockett said.

"You'd best stay the night," Uncle Todd said. "You, Will, go tell your Aunt Elvira we've got company."

"That's mighty kind of you," Crockett said. "A taste of hot food would be welcome."

When I went to the house and told Aunt Elvira,

COLONEL CROCKETT CALLS

she put her apron over her face and sat down in the rocker and rocked back and forth. "Oh, Billy, what will we do without Buck?"

When you see womenfolks cry it is better to get out. I did not know what to say to her. I couldn't tell her that I was going with him. I couldn't tell anybody that.

I went out and brought her in a great big load of wood, and drew two buckets of water.

CHAPTER TWO

Off to the Alamo!

THAT night we had a rousing feast—put the big pot in the little one. Colonel Crockett had a way with him, so that even Aunt Elvira perked up after he made such a fuss about the spareribs and lye hominy and buttermilk biscuits she had cooked. She even got down the mustang grape jelly she saved for the preacher's visits. In spite of Uncle Todd and Aunt Elvira being so solemn about Buck leaving, Colonel Crockett had everybody laughing at his jokes and tales.

"That was a real spread, ma'am," Colonel Crockett said to Aunt Elvira when supper was over.

OFF TO THE ALAMO!

"Hunger makes good sauce," Aunt Elvira said, prim-like.

"That it does," Colonel Crockett answered. "I mind the time I was riding with General Jackson and we got plumb out of provisions. The men were so hungry they gnawed on acorns. There wasn't any game. Finally I drew a bead on a little bitty squirrel. I wouldn't have looked at him any other time. I shot him, but he ran into a hole in the tree. I climbed that tree, thirty feet up without a limb on it, and pulled him out by the tail!"

The only person that was fidgeting was Buck. You could see he couldn't wait to get started.

When we were going to bed, I said to Buck, "Please take me with you," but he said, "No," very short, and wouldn't look at me.

"I won't be any trouble to you," I said.

"This is man's business," Buck said. "I don't want to hear any more about it."

I lay down, but I couldn't sleep. I kept thinking about what I could do.

They rode off before day, and there were six of them. Buck was there on his little buckskin

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

pony. I didn't know whether I wanted to cry or say bad words. I just stood there, already lonesome. I would have followed them *then*, but I didn't have a horse.

Just before they went out of sight, Buck turned around and waved to me. "I'll see you," he hollered.

"You will that," I swore under my breath. I already knew then what I was going to do.

The stagecoach came through Nacogdoches on Thursday. It was Thursday. I meant to be on that stage. I didn't know how, but I meant to be on it. I wasn't even sure where the stage went, but I knew it went south.

I felt bad about leaving Aunt Elvira and Uncle Todd. I spent the day laying in wood and kindling and doing chores, so as to have everything as shipshape as I could. Usually Aunt Elvira had to nag me to do things. I was always hanging around the forge instead of tending to chores. But that Thursday I pitched into it. I guess she thought it was because I was missing Buck.

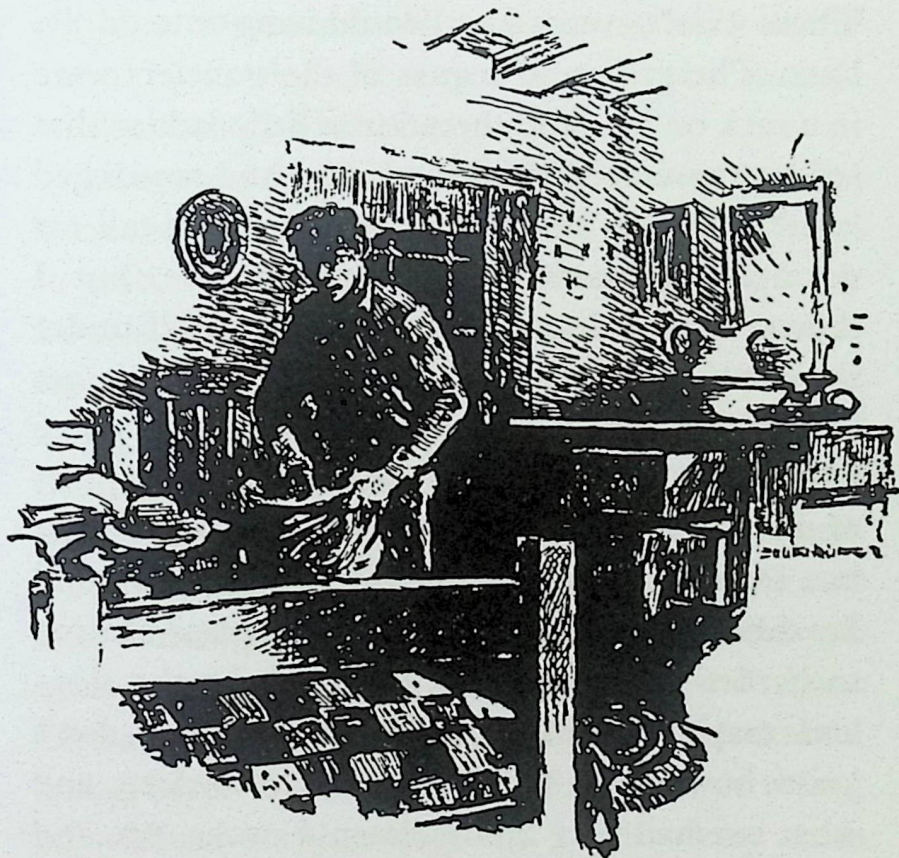
That night after everybody had gone to bed, I

OFF TO THE ALAMO!

rolled up my things in a flour sack, and I wrote on a school slate I had:

*Dear Aunt Elvira and Uncle Todd, I have gone to Bexar.
Don't think hard of me.*

I signed it *Billy* because that's what she called me, though I hated it for a baby name.



THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

Then I went out the door and started for the coaching inn. The stage stopped in Nacogdoches for supper. The horses were hitched to the railing when I got there, and there was nobody about, because it had begun to rain. I looked all over the coach for a place to hide, but there wasn't any. There wasn't even a spot I could hang onto on the back. The grips and trunks of the travelers were in a rack on top, and there was a little ladder that led up there. I climbed the ladder and scrounged myself between two leather trunks. I was tall for my age and there wasn't room for me, but I shoved the trunks apart and worked myself under the rope that held them on, so I wouldn't get thrown if we went around a curve.

It was raining and cold, and there was a piece of dirty canvas over the trunks. I pulled that over me, so you couldn't see me from the ground, and lay there as still as I could. My heart was beating so hard that I thought it would shake the stage and maybe somebody would notice it. I don't know how long I waited, for I went to sleep, and what seemed like hours later I woke up and heard people.

OFF TO THE ALAMO!

Three gentlemen got in the coach, laughing and talking, and the driver and his helper climbed up on the box. I could hear the jingling of the harness and the driver speaking to the horses.

I was stiff from being so cramped, but I was afraid to move a muscle for fear somebody would know I was there. I stayed as still as a mouse, hardly daring to breathe.

All at once the driver cracked his whip, and the horses reared and plunged toward the road. I had to grab the handle of one of the trunks to keep from sliding off into space. The trunks jostled around a little and jammed into me. We went along at a fast clip, and I could hear the shoes of the horses hitting the red gravelly road and see the sparks fly up and smell tobacco being smoked. The rain kept coming down, and I was cold and wet. I thought of our cabin and the patchwork quilt on my bed and the lamplight and Aunt Elvira calling me Billy, and I thought what am I doing here? But then I thought of Buck riding off without me that way, and I gritted my teeth and held on.

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

The road got rougher, and we went into the dark pine woods, and I could hear an old coyote howling. They make a lonesome sound—like a woman crying. I knew it was a coyote, but I didn't like to hear it wailing. Once an old gray timber wolf slunk across the side of the road, and I could see his yellow eyes shining in the dark like lamps. I saw a possum too. I had never been up so late at night, but I was wide awake. I was afraid if I went to sleep I would fall off the stage.

Also, I had to think what would happen in the morning, if they should find me there. I didn't know what they might do with me for riding free, without a by-your-leave. I didn't know how I was going to eat either. I hadn't planned that far. I had brought along a dirk, a knife Buck had made for me for my birthday, and my collection of rattlesnake rattlers. I thought I might trade them for food.

That was the longest night I ever remember. The rain stopped and the stars came out and the north wind whistled around. There wasn't a sound from inside the stage except once in a while a real loud snore. When we slowed down for some

OFF TO THE ALAMO!

boggy ground and forded a little river, I inched up to the front edge of the roof and looked over. The driver was clucking to the horses, and his partner was sitting by him with a shotgun over his knees. When we got over the creek, the partner took out his tobacco and rolled two cigarettes, and they smoked. They were talking about the war in Texas.

"It could be they went off half-cocked," the driver said. "Stormed Bexar before everything was ready, and now Dr. Grant and Colonel Johnson have run off with the Army to Matamoros. Dr. Grant has it in mind to get back his silver mines the Mexicans captured. Looks like the Texian Army couldn't be quite big enough to divide up, yet!"

"I hear General Houston is as mad as hops," the other man said. "He thought *he* was commander in chief, but now it looks like several other people are, including Colonel Fannin."

"I can't say I would blame him," the driver said. "An army has to have one boss. Houston is a good soldier."

"These Texians are all so high and mighty,"

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

the other fellow said. He had a lazy voice that came out slow and soft. "They are all such a bunch of spitfires they are liable to make a hash of this here war. I figure Santa Anna won't take this Bexar thing without rearing up on his hind legs."

That made me mad. He wasn't a Texian, for sure, or he wouldn't be talking that way. But it made me scared too.

"They may find out they have got a wildcat by the tail they can't skin," he went on. "There's just a handful at Bexar. Those Mexicans have got thousands!"

I wanted to lean over the edge and say: "You wait until Davy Crockett gets there!" but I held my tongue.

"I reckon you don't understand the real nature of our men, Oliver," the driver said. He sounded huffy. "You can't figure a Texian like an ordinary fellow. Now you take James Bowie."

"*He's* from Louisiana," the helper said.

"*Was,*" said the driver. "He's a Texian now, and that knife of his has the strength of ten. Here,

OFF TO THE ALAMO!

spell me at the reins, I'm going to take a siesta."

I slid back between the trunks and lay there. My head felt all mixed up. After a while I guess I went to sleep myself, because when I remember again, the sun was red in the sky. The stage had stopped jouncing and was standing still, and the driver was standing on the ladder, with his fur hat pushed back and looking at me.

"What in tunket?" he said.

I didn't say anything. I just looked at him, and my teeth began to chatter.

He started to untie the rope and take off one of the valises.

"We got a stowaway," he said to the gentleman who was standing on the ground. "Young 'un. Where'd you come from, boy?"

"Nacogdoches," I said.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"I'm going to Bexar," I said. "To find Buck."

"Who's Buck?"

"Buck—that's my brother. He's one of Davy Crockett's Volunteers." I couldn't help feeling proud when I said it.

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

"What's your name?" the driver said.

"William Campbell, sir," I said. "I aim to join the Texas Army."

They all laughed. That really made me mad. I didn't see anything funny about it.

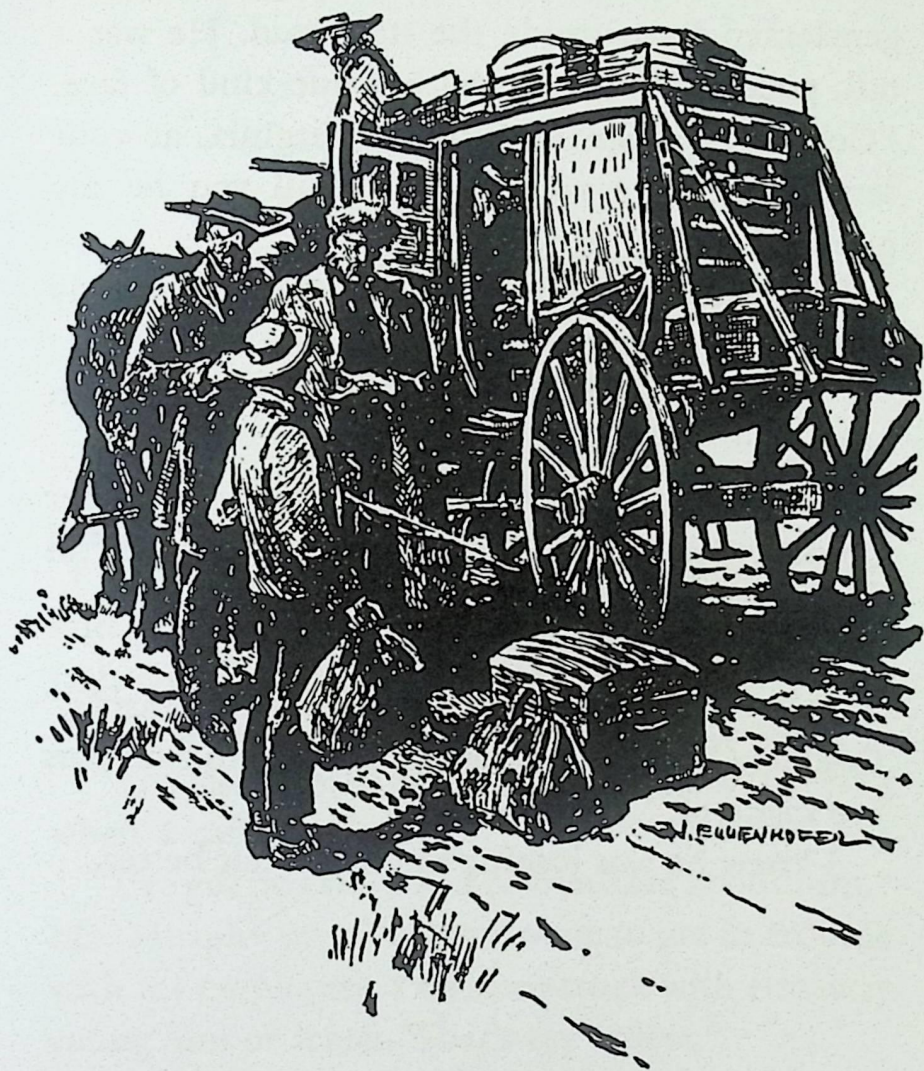
"Reckon they may need even you," the driver said.

"You going to put me off?" I asked, fearful. We were at a wide place in the road, and it was a road I never saw before. There was a log cabin over to one side, with smoke coming out of the mud-daubed chimney. The thought of a fire warmed me. I was about frozen and stiff as a board from lying one way all night.

"I'll have to study the situation," the driver said.

"Please let me go on," I begged him. "I got a dirk knife Buck made me, and I'll swap you for the fare."

"Stowaways are against the law. May have to put you in the calaboose when we come to one," the driver said. He was a big red-faced man, and everybody called him Murphy.



"Stowaways are against the law," the driver said

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

"Not until after breakfast, Murphy," one of the gentlemen from inside the stage said. He was a tall, good-looking man, with a fine kind of face. "Colonel William F. Gray, of Virginia, at your service, sir," he said to me. "Will you be my guest?"

I looked at him dumb. I didn't expect anybody to be kind to me.

"I'm powerful hungry," I said. "Much obliged."

"Courage always pleases me," I remember Colonel Gray said. "Have you been up there all night?"

I told him I had.

"My teeth are loose and I've been *inside*," Colonel Gray said. "I see you are the stuff soldiers are made of."

I knew he was joshing me, but I felt better.

CHAPTER THREE

I Join the Volunteers

WE WENT into the log cabin. Colonel Gray said I should wash my face and then have breakfast. I went to wash, and I figure he took up my case with Mr. Murphy, the driver of the stage.

"You can't leave the lad here," he was saying when I came back.

"I've got no call to feel responsible about him," Mr. Murphy said. "I don't want to get in trouble with my employers. I have no truck with runaway young 'uns or slaves. That's my orders."

"It would be worse to turn him into the forest," Colonel Gray said.

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

"How do I know he will find his brother? Bexar is in a state of siege."

"It is a risk we must take."

"Besides, he is dead broke except for his dirk knife."

"I could help with the horses," I put in, "earn my way!"

Mr. Murphy looked at me. "I don't know how far I can get along the Camino Real," he said. "May have to stop short of Bexar to keep from getting mixed up with the battle. Then where'd you be?"

"I could walk," I told him, stubborn as a mule.

"I'm heading for Washington-on-the-Brazos now," Mr. Murphy said. "These folks in the stage are needed for the Texas Convention. Don't know where I'll have to turn back after that."

"If you'll let me go as far as you go, I'll be beholden to you," I said. "I'll pay it back. You can trust me."

Mr. Murphy shook his head. It was then Colonel Gray put his hand inside his big coat and took out his money purse.

I JOIN THE VOLUNTEERS

"A patriot must not be stopped," he said. "I will pay the boy's way as far as you go."

"All right," said Mr. Murphy. "In that case it's no business of mine."

"Thank you, sir," I said to Colonel Gray, and handed him my knife.

"Keep your weapon by you," he told me. "I am afraid you may need it."

"It's all I've got but the rattlesnake rattles," I told him. "They are not much."

I took out my kerchief with the rattles knotted in one corner.

"I'll take them," he said. "I know a boy who would be pleased to have them."

An Indian woman brought us in mush and milk, and we fell to. After breakfast was over, Mr. Murphy said: "You, Billy, go stand by the horses' heads."

Colonel Gray and the other gentlemen got into the coach, and I untied the team from the hitching rack and jumped on the front seat between Mr. Murphy and his partner, whose name was Oliver. We trotted off down the rutted road. The

THE BOY IN THE ALAMO

sun had come up bright and shining, and it was a clear, cool winter morning. I felt good. A doe deer came out of the woods and stood there with her spotted fawn staring at the stage. "I am on my way," I thought. "How surprised Buck will be!"

Along toward the late afternoon, Mr. Murphy let me take the reins, and I drove the team. Oliver taught me how to gee and haw the horses, and when we pulled up for the night I took off the harness and led them to water. It was Indian country, and we did not travel by night through there.

The next day it warmed up and began raining again. When Oliver drove, I held his gun over my knees. It was a long rifle, and he let me aim it. I took a shot at a crow flying over but did not bring it down.

The rain kept up all day, and when we came to a river it was in flood.

"It's too deep to ford," Mr. Murphy said. "I'm afraid we'll have to wait for it to run down. I don't like to drive into this."

It held us up a day.

"A war always brings on a rainy season," Colo-

THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY

THE BEST CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT THE ALAMO EVER WRITTEN. I KNOW IT WAS THE FIRST BOOK WITH WHICH I FELL IN LOVE. IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE OF MY ELEMENTARY READING, IT RANKED THIRD BEHIND THE BIBLE AND HUCKLEBERRY FINN. WITH SURE STROKES, COUSINS SKETCHES BOTH THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL REALITIES OF TEXAS IN 1836. WITH WALTER PRESCOTT WEBB AS HISTORICAL CONSULTANT, THE HISTORY IS UNSHAKEABLE.

MOST IMPORTANT, THE EVOLUTION OF BILLY CAMPBELL, THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD PROTAGONIST, FROM A TAG-ALONG KID BROTHER TO A YOUNG MAN, IS A GEM OF CHARACTERIZATION. THE YOUNG READER IS SWEEPED ALONG THE TRAIL FROM THE PAIN OF DEFEAT TO VICTORY AND HOPE.

BRYCE MILLIGAN
SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS



ISBN 978-1-951200-68-8



9 781951 200688