



A Q u i e t S o u t h e r n T o w n

DAYLIGHT CAME, BUT WE CONTINUED TO TRAVEL. IT WAS THE FIRST time that Jim and I had traveled during the daytime. After breakfast, the king sat on a corner of the raft, took off his shoes, rolled up his trousers, and let his legs hang in the water. When he was nicely comfortable, he began to read Shakespeare's play, "Romeo and Juliet." He was learning certain speeches and when he could say them without looking at the book, the duke began to practice with him. The duke told the king exactly how his voice should sound when saying the speeches, how he should stand, and the motions he should make with his hands.

Next, they practiced fighting with long swords which the duke had made from pieces of wood. The duke called himself King Richard III and taught the king the noble art of sword fighting. They practiced until the king tripped and fell into the river.

After dinner, the duke said, "We'll want this to be a good show, so we'll need to add one more scene. Why don't we do a scene from 'Hamlet?'" Then he stood in a most noble manner, with one leg slightly forward, his arms stretched high, and his head back and looking up

at the sky. He began to speak in a loud voice, making long, loud, sad cries, his arms waving wildly and his chest swelling out. It was the best acting that I had ever seen.

The king said that he liked the speech and soon was able to act it as well as the duke. As soon as we came to a small town, we stopped and the duke located a printer and had announcements printed. The following few days, as we traveled down the river, the raft became a very lively place. The king and duke were sword fighting or practicing their speeches all the time.

One morning we came in sight of a small town in the state of Arkansas. We hid the raft in a small stream and left Jim with our supplies. The king, the duke, and I rowed the canoe into town to learn if there was a possibility that we could perform our show here.

We were lucky. A traveling show had arrived that morning and people from the surrounding country were already coming in to see it. That show was to be performed in the afternoon, and the people might stay to see our show if we gave it later.

We nailed our printed signs onto trees throughout the town. They read like this:

Scenes from Shakespeare
 Wonderful Show
 One Night Only
 World Famous Actors
 David Garrick, the Younger, of Drury
 Lane Theatre, London, England
 Edmund Kean, the Elder, of Royal Hay
 Market Theatre, London, England
 in scenes from
 "Romeo and Juliet"
 "Richard III"
 "Hamlet"
 Has been performed 300 times in Paris!
 Charge: Adults — 25 cents Children — 10 cents

When we had no more signs to put on the trees, we walked around the town. All the stores and houses were old and hadn't been painted in years. No flowers or grass grew in the yards, which were filled with broken bottles, old shoes, and dirty pots and pans. Pigs, instead of being kept in pens, wandered through the yards.

A few stores were along one street. Men sat on empty boxes in front of these stores, smoking tobacco, talking about nothing important, half asleep. They seemed to care about little, and had nothing else to do all day long. No one worked.

The streets were simply mud—black mud, as much as a foot deep in some places. A mother pig with a dozen baby pigs could be seen lying in the mud in the middle of the main street.

People were beginning to come into the town to see the show. They rode in wagons pulled by horses. Many were eating their lunches on the backs of their wagons. Many of the men were drinking whiskey and fighting with each other.

Soon someone shouted, "Here comes old Boggs—in from the country to get drunk. Here he comes, boys!"

All the men sitting on the boxes in front of the stores suddenly looked happy. One of them said, "I wonder whom he'll threaten this time. If he killed all the men that he has threatened to kill, there would be few men left alive in this town."

Boggs came riding on his horse, shouting and calling in a loud voice, "Get out of my way! I plan to shoot someone!"

He was very drunk and nearly fell off his horse. Everyone called loudly to him, and he shouted back to them and said he would shoot them later. But first he had come to town to kill old Colonel Sherburn. When he saw me, he said, "Where did you come from, boy? Are you prepared to die?"

I was frightened, but a man standing near me said, "He doesn't mean what he says. He talks that way only because he's drunk. He's one of the nicest men in the state of Arkansas. He never hurt anyone."

Boggs rode to the largest store in the town, and shouted, "Come out here, Sherburn! Come out and meet the man whose money you

stole. You're the man I want to see so that I can shoot you."

He called Sherburn every disrespectful name that he could think of. The crowd on the street listened and laughed until a well dressed man, about 55 years old, walked out of the store. The crowd stepped back to give him space. The man spoke to Boggs in a calm, slow voice, "I'm tired of your talk but will listen to it until one o'clock—until one o'clock and no longer. If you say one more word against me after that time, I'll kill you."

Then he turned and went inside the store. The crowd was now quiet and serious. Nobody moved, and there was no more laughing. Boggs continued riding up and down the street shouting to Sherburn. Some men crowded around him and attempted to get him to be quiet, but he refused. He continued to call Sherburn every disrespectful name that he could think of. Several men told him that it would soon be one o'clock and they tried to force him to go home.

A man shouted, "Someone run to get his daughter—quick! Get his daughter, please. Sometimes he'll listen to her. Perhaps she can make him stop the shouting." And I watched two men run off down the street.

All was quiet for awhile. In five or ten minutes I saw Boggs again, but not on his horse. He was walking down the street toward me, with a friend on each side of him holding his arms and hurrying him along. He was quiet and unhappy.

Suddenly, a man called out, "Boggs!" I looked to see who had shouted, and I saw Colonel Sherburn standing perfectly still in the street, with a small gun in his right hand—not aiming it, but holding it pointed up toward the sky. At that same instant, I saw a young girl and two men running toward Boggs.

When Boggs heard his name called, he turned to see who had spoken to him. When the two men holding Boggs saw the gun, they jumped away from him. Sherburn slowly lowered the gun and aimed at Boggs.

"Don't shoot!" Boggs cried, just as the first shot was fired. Boggs fell back as a second shot was heard. Boggs now lay on the ground with his arms spread out. The young girl screamed and came running. She

threw herself on top of her father and kept crying, "He killed him! He killed him!"

The crowd made a tight circle around the two, with people in the back stretching their necks to see what was happening. Colonel Sherburn threw his gun onto the ground and turned and walked away.

Several men carried Boggs to a nearby store. I followed and could watch what was happening through the store window. They lay Boggs on the floor and put a large Bible under his head. He breathed a few times and then lay quietly. He was dead. The men pulled his daughter away from him screaming and crying, and led her away. Soon all the people of the town were pushing toward the window to look through at Boggs. I decided to leave, fearing that there might be trouble. Everyone who had seen the shooting was telling how it happened.

One tall, thin man wearing a tall, white fur hat marked the places on the ground where Boggs had stood and where Sherburn had stood. The people watched closely, shaking their heads to let him know that they understood. Finally, the man stood straight and stiff where Sherburn had stood, and called out, "Boggs!" and lifted his walking stick as though to aim it and shouted, "Bang!" Then he called out "Bang!" a second time and fell backwards onto the ground. The people watching him said that he did it perfectly; they said it was exactly the way that it all happened. Then at least a dozen people took out their bottles of whiskey and gave him drinks.

Soon, someone shouted that Sherburn ought to be hanged. Then everyone was saying it. The crowd soon went mad, yelling and getting every piece of rope they could find to do the hanging with.