

**IN TEXAS WITH  
DAVY CROCKETT**

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**THE RIFLE RANG OUT**

# **In Texas With Davy Crockett**

# CHAPTER I

## DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI

THE towering stacks of the steamboat "Mediterranean" sent their clouds of smoke, black and wind rent, across the sky; her sharp bow cut the yellow waters of the Mississippi and dashed the spray as high as her rails.

The cabins were thronged with passengers; the forward deck was tiered high with bales and barrels and boxes of merchandise.

Two boys sat by the rail upon the upper deck; their faces were earnest and they talked in low tones.

"Are you quite sure that Sam Davidge is on board, Walt?" asked one.

"I'd know him among a whole city-full, let alone a cabin-full," answered Walter Jordan. "And I've seen him three times to-day."

The other boy frowned and looked out over the wide river toward the Arkansas shore.

"It's queer," said he. "It's very queer that he should just happen to be going down the river at the same time we are."

Walter Jordan gave his friend a quick look.

"Ned," said he, "chance has nothing to do with it—as I think you know."

Ned Chandler nodded.

“He’s on board because we are; he’s trying to find out where we are going.” The boy ran his fingers through his short light hair, and his blue eyes snapped. “I never did think much of Davidge; and I think less of him now than I did before.”

Walter Jordan leaned back in his chair and clasped one knee with his hands. He was a tall, well-built young fellow of eighteen with a broad chest and shoulders, and a good-looking, resolute face.

“When we boarded the ‘General Greene’ at Louisville,” said he, “I thought I saw Davidge in the crowd. But you know what a miserable, wet night it was and how the lamps on the pier flickered. So I couldn’t be sure.”

“You never mentioned it to me,” said Ned, complainingly.

“I didn’t want to until I was sure. I thought there was no use getting up an excitement about a thing that might turn out to have nothing behind it.”

From somewhere around the high tiers of bales, a negro deck hand picked a tune out of a banjo; and the rhythmic shuffle and pit-pat-pit of feet told of another who danced to the music.

“All the way down the Ohio on the ‘Greene’ I noticed you were very quiet and watchful,” spoke young Chandler. “But to me it only meant that you were careful. I never thought of anything else.”

Walter Jordan looked at his friend, and there was a troubled look in his eyes.

“And Sam Davidge isn’t all we have to worry us,” said he, in a lower tone. “When we reached the Mississippi, and changed to this boat, I noticed something else.”

Ned caught the troubled look, and though he did not in the least suspect the cause of it, his own round face took on one just like it.

“What was it?” he asked.

“Have you seen a man on board whom they all call Colonel Huntley?”

Ned’s eyes went to the cabin door where he had noticed two persons a few moments before; the two were still there and intently examining them.

“Yes,” said Ned. “I know whom you mean.”

“I didn’t understand it, and I don’t like it,” said Walter, the troubled look growing deeper, “but there is never a time I look toward him that I don’t find his eyes upon me.”

“Humph!” said Ned. And then: “Well, Walt, he’s not changed his ways any. Don’t look around just yet, or he’ll see that we’ve been speaking of him. He’s over by the cabin door behind you, and he’s looking this way for all he’s worth.”

“Alone?” asked Walter.

“No. That fellow Barker is with him.”

“Barker’s like his shadow,” said Walter. “You never see one without the other.”

Colonel Huntley was a man of perhaps forty years, tall and powerfully built. He wore a long frock coat of gray cloth, doe-skin trousers, and long shining boots. Upon his head was a bell-crowned beaver hat with a curling brim. In the immaculately white stock about his neck was a large diamond set in rough gold.

The person beside him was a young fellow of perhaps twenty, with huge, thick shoulders and a round bullet head.

“Tell me,” said Ned, his eyes upon the two but his mind, apparently, upon a subject altogether foreign to them, “do you think Colonel Huntley has anything to do with Davidge?”

“I feel sure of it,” replied Walter. “When either of us is about, Sam keeps hidden. But when the coast’s clear, or they think it is, he is to be seen in out-of-the-way corners, earnestly discussing something with Colonel Huntley.”

“I can see that I’ve been missing a great deal,” said young Chandler. “But that’s past. In the future I’m going to keep both eyes wide open. Earnest conversation in out-of-the-way corners means only one thing. And that is: that something is under way which has a good bit to do with our trip to Texas.”

There was a silence for a space. Ned continued covertly to inspect the two at the cabin door. Walter gazed ahead along the broad stretch of the Mississippi; on the left was the thickly timbered shore of Tennessee; and that of Arkansas frowned at them from the right.

The “Mediterranean” was a large boat; she was deeply loaded with cargo and carried a great throng of passengers. But passengers were always plentiful in those early days of the year 1836; for the

situation between Texas and Mexico had grown acute; war had spread its sombre wings for a terrible flight across that new land; the adventurers and soldiers of fortune of the States were swarming toward the southwest.

Those men who had fought in the many wars with the Indians, who had carried the line of the frontier forward step by step, who had leveled the wilderness and subdued the forces which spring up in the path of civilization, had long ago turned their eyes toward the vast empire north of the Rio Grande. They saw it loosely held by an inferior race; they saw a hardy, fearless band of Americans resisting oppression and preparing to repulse the advance of Santa Anna. And so each steamer down the Mississippi carried a horde of them, armed and ready to do their part.

Since boarding the boat the boys had heard little else but Texas. The name seemed to be on every tongue. And even now, as they sat thinking over the turn that seemed to have taken place in their own affairs, the loud voices that came to their ears from the cabin held to the subject.

“A pack of mongrels, that’s what they are,” said a voice above the clatter. “And not a good fight among them. The idea of their trying to dictate to a free people like the Texans what shall and what shall not be done.”

Another man seemed stunned by the immense area of the new land.

“Just think of the size of it!” cried he, in high admiration. “Eight hundred and twenty-five miles long, and seven hundred and forty miles wide. It’s twice as big as Great Britain and Ireland, and bigger than France, Holland, Belgium and Denmark put together.”

“Who says a country like that is not worth fighting for?” shouted another voice. “Who says it shouldn’t belong to these United States?”

“Let Santa Anna poke his nose across the Coahuila line, and he’ll get it cut off with a bowie knife,” said still another adventurer.

“It seems to me,” said Walter Jordan, “that we couldn’t have had a worse time to carry out our errand to Texas than just now. The closer we get to it, the more war-like things are.”

Ned Chandler looked at his friend in surprise.

“What, Walter,” said he, “you’re not holding back because things are not all quiet and orderly, are you?”

Walter smiled.

“I’m headed for Texas, and going as fast as this boat will take me,” said he. “And I mean to keep on going until I get there and do what we set out to do.”

Ned laughed in a pleased sort of way. There was a light of adventure in his eyes.

“Why do you object to the coming war with the Mexicans, then?” said he. “That will make only the more fun on our trip south.”

“But fun is not what we’ve come for,” said Walter. “We’ve got a purpose in view, and until that’s accomplished, we must think of nothing else.”

Ned grew more sober.

“Right you are,” said he. “Not a thing must enter our minds but the one thing, until it’s done. But after that,” and his eyes began to dance once more, “we can take time to look around us a bit, can’t we?”

“Why, I suppose that would do no harm. But mind you, Ned, not until then.”

“Not for a moment,” said Ned Chandler. “You can count on me, Walt.”

Again there was a silence between them, and once more the voices came from the cabin.

“I know the settlement of Texas from start to finish,” said the loud-voiced man. “First the French built a fort; then they left, and the Spanish came and built missions, and called the state the New Philippines, and began to fight the Comanche and Apache. When the United States bought the Louisiana territory from France, trouble began with Spain. We claimed everything north of the Rio Grande; but the Spaniards said the Sabine was the natural line.”

“I recall the things that followed that,” said another voice. “I was quite a youngster then, and was in New Orleans. Every little while expeditions were formed to invade Texas and fight the Spanish. One, I remember, was while the war with England was going on; and the Spanish were licked, losing a thousand men.”

“Then Steve Austin went into the territory and planted a colony,” went on the first speaker. “The new Mexican republic stuck Coahuila on to Texas and tried to make one state of them. But when the Americans in the country got a little stronger they

rebelled against this, passed a resolution and sent it to Santa Anna, asking that Texas be admitted into the republic as a separate state.”

“They might have known that he wouldn’t listen to such a thing,” said the other man. “‘The Napoleon of the West’ he likes to be called, but a more detestable tyrant never oppressed an honest people.”

“Well, when he tried to go against the will of Texas, they gave him right smart whippings at Goliad and Concepcion, elected Smith governor, and Sam Houston commander of the army. Then they smashed into San Antonio and ran the Mexicans out of Texas.”

“Nothing will ever come of it until they cut away from Mexico for good and all,” said the second man. “I’m not for Texas as an independent state in the Mexican Republic. What I want to see, and what thousands of others want to see, is Texas, a republic itself, entirely free of Mexico, or else Texas, a state in our own Union.”

This saying met with much favor; the babble of voices arose, mingled with the clapping of hands.

“For,” went on the speaker, raising his voice that he might be heard, “as long as they stick to Mexico, just that long will they keep in hot water. Santa Anna may be, at this minute, marching against them with an army. And he will keep on marching against them until they make themselves altogether independent of him and his gang.”

Here Walter Jordan arose.

“Let’s go inside,” said he. “They all seem to be quite interested.”

Ned also got up.

“Do you think there will ever be such a thing as the Texas republic?” said he.

Walter shrugged his shoulders.

“It’s hard to say. But if the Texans are anything at all like what I hear they are, it wouldn’t surprise me if it came about some day.”

And so they turned toward the cabin door, and Walter found himself face to face with Colonel Huntley.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLOT

COLONEL HUNTLEY had cold gray eyes which, when he chose, had an insult in their every glance. And now, as Walter Jordan's eyes met his, he never stirred from the cabin door. Quietly the lad stood and looked at him; and the cold, valuing eyes were filled with mockery.

"Do you want anything?" he asked, sneeringly.

"I wish to go into the cabin," replied the boy. "Will you kindly step out of the way?"

Colonel Huntley laughed in an unpleasant manner, but did not move.

"I think," said he, "I've seen you somewhere before."

"Perhaps," said the boy.

"You're the son of Carroll Jordan, attorney, at Louisville?" said Colonel Huntley.

"I am," said Walter.

"I knew your father," sneered Huntley.

"If you did," came the boy's swift reply, "you knew one of the finest gentlemen in Kentucky."

The mockery in Huntley's eyes increased.

“That depends altogether on how one looks at it,” said he.

When Walter Jordan spoke there was a ring in his voice which Ned Chandler knew well.

“Looked at in the right way,” said the lad, “and by that I mean the way in which any fair and honest person would look at it, there can be only one opinion. And that is the one which I have given.”

The bullet-headed young man grinned widely, showing a row of strong teeth, with wide spaces between them. He nodded to Colonel Huntley.

“That’s talking,” said he. “Right to your face, too.”

Huntley had a satisfied look in his face; his cold eyes examined Walter from head to foot. Ned Chandler plucked at his friend’s sleeve, and breathed into his ear.

“Look out! He’s trying to get you into some kind of a muss.”

“So,” spoke Huntley, and his tones were as cold as his eyes, “you don’t consider me either fair or honest, then?”

Walter met the man’s look steadily.

“I have not mentioned you,” said he. “I referred to those persons who might, as you suggested, speak ill of my father. *You* have not said what you thought, sir.”

Again Huntley laughed his unpleasant laugh.

“You are something of a diplomat,” said he. “Or, had I better say, a dodger.”

“Why, if I cared to,” said Walter, quietly, “I might say almost the same thing of yourself. Put yourself on record—say openly what you mean, and I will give you an answer, plain enough for you or anybody else.”

There was a silence after the boy’s bold words. Ned Chandler’s eyes snapped with delight, for here was a chance for excitement. Colonel Huntley hesitated—not at all because he had not a ready word or act, but apparently because he feared to trust himself. It was his bullet-headed companion who spoke.

“I’ve heard of your father,” said he. “I’ve been told of the little game he’s up to; and I think he’s trying to feather his own nest.”

Apparently stung to the quick, young Jordan whirled upon the speaker, his hand drawn back for a blow. But he felt an iron clutch on his wrist, and saw the burly chief mate of the “Mediterranean” at his side.

“None of that,” said the mate, sternly. “No fighting here. There are women passengers, you know.”

The bullet-headed youth had stepped aside at Walter’s first swift motion; this left a space in the cabin doorway, and seizing the chance, Ned Chandler crowded his friend through and pushed him along the full length of the men’s cabin, in spite of his efforts to halt.

“Now,” said the light-haired boy, when they finally brought up in an unoccupied corner, “before you say anything, let me tell you what I think.” He shoved his hands down into his trousers pockets, and eyed his friend calmly.

“You were a little excited out there,” said he, “and maybe you didn’t see what I saw.”

“I saw that Colonel Huntley deliberately set out to insult me,” said Walter, his eyes glinting with anger, his fists clenched.

“That’s true,” said Ned, coolly. “So he did. And more than that.”

Walter looked at his friend, for in his tone he noted a something which attracted his attention.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“The whole thing was arranged,” said Ned, nodding his head assuredly. “Those two planted themselves in the doorway to wait for you. Colonel Huntley was to provoke you, and that fellow Barker was to step in at the right moment and pick a fight with you.”

Walter threw up his hand and his angry eyes sought the length of the men’s cabin.

“Well,” said he, his hands tightly clenched, “it’s not too late, if he’s still of the same mind.”

But Ned Chandler shook his head; apparently he did not agree with his friend’s present humor.

“I know how you must feel,” said he, “to hear your father badly spoken of in a thing like this. He’s giving his money and his time and his learning to do a thing which will never bring him a penny of gain. He’s sending you on a mission to a distant place like Texas, just because he wants to see right done. And to hear people say things, like those Huntley and Barker have said, is hard to bear. But you must bear it.”

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