

The Old Frontiersman A Story of the Frontier, F. Scott Fitzgerald

It was the middle of the forest. A figure might have been noticed crawling along, sniffing at the ground. It was Old Davy Underbush, the frontiersman and b'ar hunter. He was completely invisible and inaudible. The only way you could perceive him was by the sense of smell.

He was dressed as a frontiersman (cf. "what the men will wear," theatre programs of 1776.) On his feet he wore moccasins made from the skin of the wood weasel. Around his legs were coonskin spats which ran into his trousers made of sheepskin; these extended to the waist. He wore a belt made of an old rattlesnake and a long bearskin coat. Around his head was wrapped a fishskin hat. At his hip hung horrible trophies of Indian warfare. One scalp of Object the Ojibway still wet with Oleaqua hung there beside the pompadour of Eardrum the Iroquois and the cowlick of Bootblack the Blackfoot. By his side walked "Tres Bien," his trusty Eskimo cheese-hound.

He carried a muzzle loading shotgun, an old horse-pistol, and a set of razors. He was on the trail of Sen-Sen the Seneca and Omlette the Omega. They had come into the clearing and drunk all the fire-water from the fire-water factory. As they left they had, in the usual Indian manner, carved their initials on each tree they passed and it was by this that the astute old frontiersman had been sent out to track them.

It was now too dark to read the initials plainly and Davy often got them mixed up with those of other savages who had passed that way before. For three weeks the old b'ar hunter had followed them, living on the berries from the bushes and sometimes when no berries were to be found, snatching great handfuls of grass and dry leaves and devouring them.

As he crawled along he was thinking. If he did not find the redskins soon he would have to eat his moccasins. His scarred brow was knit with worry.

All around him were the noises of the forest; the long sad "Hoo" of the Huron, the plaintive sigh of the Sioux, and the light cackle of the Apache. Suddenly a new sound broke the stillness. It was the dry harsh cawing of the Seneca. Davy ran forward noiselessly. He was careful to make no sound. He ran with his feet completely off the ground to leave no clue for the watchful redmen. Sure enough the savages were in a little clearing in the forest playing on their primitive musical instruments. Sen-Sen the Seneca sat playing "The Last Rose of Summer" on an old comb wrapped in tissue paper and Omlette the Omega accompanied him on the snare Tom-Tom. The old frontiersman burst in on them waving his gun at them and threatening their scalps with one of his tempered razors.

The fight which ensued was furious.

The savages pulled his coat over his ears and hit him on the head with their bows and arrows. One would kneel behind Davy and the other would push the old frontiersman over him. Sen-Sen combed all the hair of his sheepskin trousers the wrong way and frantic with pain the old bar hunter fought on.

Finally Omlette the Omega withdrew to a distance and taking a station behind the old frontiersman let fly an arrow at him which passed through his sheepskin trousers and pierced his catskin underwear. The old b'ar hunter expired.

The savages fried him for dinner but found, to their disappointment that he was all dark meat owing to his lifelong exposure to the sun.

Published in The Princeton Tiger magazine (December 18, 1916).