

Davy Crockett's Own Story: As Written by Himself



ABOUT THE READING Colonel Davy Crockett—frontiersman, member of Congress, and one of six men left defending the Alamo when the fight there was lost—was killed after being taken prisoner by General Santa Anna. The following excerpt, written in the Alamo a few days before his death, is from his autobiography.



*As you read the passage below, think about how the March 2 entry relates to the entries that follow. These words might be new to you: **aggrandizement**, **ardor**, **unscathed**. You may want to use a dictionary to look them up.*

March 2 [1836]. This day the delegates meet in general convention at the town of Washington, to frame our Declaration of Independence. That the sacred instrument may never be trampled on by the children of those who have freely shed their blood to establish it, is the sincere wish of David Crockett. Universal independence is an almighty idea, far too extensive for some brains to comprehend. It is a beautiful seed that germinates rapidly and brings forth a large and vigorous tree, but like the deadly Upas [a mythical poisonous tree], we sometimes find the smaller plants wither and die in its shades. Its blooming branches spread far and wide, offering a perch of safety to all alike, but even among its protecting branches we find the eagle, the kite, and the owl preying upon the helpless dove and sparrow. Beneath its shades myriads congregate in goodly fellowship; but the lamb and the fawn find but frail security from the lion and jackal, though the tree of independence waves over them. Some imagine independence to be a natural charter, to exercise without restraint, and to their fullest extent, all the energies, both physical and mental, with which they have been endowed; and for their individual **aggrandizement** alone, without regard to the rights of others, provided they extend to all the same privilege and freedom of action. Such independence is the worst of tyranny.

March 3. We have given over all hopes of receiving assistance from Goliad or Refugio [nearby settlements] . . .

March 4. Shells have been falling into the fort like hail during the day, but without effect. About dusk, in the evening, we observed a man running toward the fort, pursued by about half a dozen of the Mexican cavalry. The Bee hunter immediately knew him to be the old pirate who had gone to Goliad, and, calling to the two hunters, he sallied out of the fort to the relief of the old man who was hard pressed. I followed close after. Before

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we reached the spot the Mexicans were close on the heel of the old man, who stopped suddenly, turned short upon his pursuers, discharged his rifle and one of the enemy fell from his horse. The chase was renewed, but finding that he would be overtaken and cut to pieces, he now turned again, and to the amazement of the enemy, became the assailant in his turn. He clubbed his gun, and dashed among them like a wounded tiger, and they fled like sparrows. By this time we reached the spot, and in the **ardor** of the moment, followed some distance before we saw that our retreat to the fort was cut off by another detachment of cavalry. Nothing was to be done but to fight our way through. We were all of the same mind. "Go ahead!" cried I, and they shouted, "Go ahead, Colonel!" We dashed among them, and a bloody conflict ensued. They were about twenty in number, and they stood their ground. After the fight had continued about five minutes, a detachment was seen issuing from the fort to our relief, and the Mexicans scampered off, leaving eight of their comrades dead upon the field. But we did not escape **unscathed**, for both the pirate and the Bee hunter were mortally wounded, and I received a saber cut across the forehead. The old man died, with out speaking, as soon as we entered the fort. We bore my young friend [the Bee hunter] to his bed, dressed his wounds, and I watched beside him. He lay, without complaint or manifesting pain, until about midnight, when he spoke, and I asked him if he wanted any thing. "Nothing," he replied, but drew a sigh that seemed to rend his heart, as he added, "Poor Kate of Nacogdoches!" His eyes were filled with tears, as he continued, "Her words were prophetic, Colonel;" and then he sang in a low voice that resembled the sweet notes of his own devoted Kate,

"But toom cam' the saddle, all bluidy to see,

And hame cam' the steed, but hame never cam' he."

He spoke no more, and a few minutes after, died. Poor Kate, who will tell this to thee!"

March 5. Pop, pop, pop! Bom, bom, bom! Throughout the day. No time for memorandums now. Go ahead! Liberty and independence forever! [Here ends Davy Crockett's Own Story.]

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. **Main Idea** How does the March 2 entry relate to the rest of the entries?

2. **Critical Thinking: Interpretation** Why does Davy Crockett compare independence to a tree that can be poisonous?
