

ALICE of OLD VINCENNES

BY MAURICE THOMPSON

CHAPTER XV.

Virtue in a Locket.

Long-Hair stood not upon ceremony in conveying to Beverley the information that he was to run the gantlet, which, otherwise stated, meant that the Indians would form themselves in two parallel lines facing each other, about six feet apart, and that the prisoner was to be expected to run down the length of the space between, thus affording the warriors an opportunity, greatly coveted and relished by their predatory natures, to beat him cruelly during his flight. This sort of thing was to the Indians, indeed, an exquisite amusement, as fascinating to them as the theatre is to more enlightened people. No sooner was it agreed upon that the entertainment should again be undertaken than all the younger men began to scurry around getting everything ready for it. Their faces glowed with a dull earnestness to see, and they further expressed their lively expectations by playful yet curiously solemn antics.

The preparations were simple and quickly made. Each man armed himself with a stick three feet long and about three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Rough weapons they were, but from boughs of scrub-oak, knotty and tough as horn. Long-Hair unbound Beverley and stripped his clothes from his body down to the waist. Then the lines formed, the Indians in each row standing about as far apart as the width of the space in which the prisoner was to run. This arrangement gave them free use of their sticks, and plenty of room for full swing of their limbs.

In removing Beverley's clothes Long-Hair found Alice's locket hanging over the young man's breast. He tore it easily off and grunted, glaring viciously at it, then at Beverley. He seemed to be mightily wrought upon. "White man damn thief," he growled deep in his throat; "stole from little girl!"

He put the locket in his pouch and resumed his stupidly indifferent expression.

When everything was ready for the delightful entertainment to begin, Long-Hair waved his tomahawk three times over Beverley's head, and, pointing down between the waiting lines, said:

"Ugh, run!"

But Beverley did not budge. He was standing erect, with his arms, deeply crossed where the thongs had sunk, folded across his breast. A rush of thoughts and feelings had taken tumultuous possession of him, and he could not move or decide what to do. A mad desire to escape arose in his heart the moment that he saw Long-Hair take the locket. It was as if Alice had cried to him and bidden him make a dash for liberty.

"Ugh, run!"

The order was accompanied with a push of such violence from Long-Hair's left elbow that Beverley plunged and fell, for his limbs, after their long and painful confinement in the rawhide bonds, were stiff and almost useless. Long-Hair, in no gentle voice, bade him get up. The shock of falling seemed to awaken his dormant forces; a sudden resolve leaped into his brain. He saw that the Indians had put aside their bows and guns, most of which were leaning against the boles of trees here and yonder. What if he could knock Long-Hair down and run away? This might possibly be easy, considering the Indian's broken arm. His heart jumped at the possibility. But the shrewd savage was alert, and saw the thought come into his face.

"You try git way, kill dead!" he snarled, lifting his tomahawk ready for a stroke. "Brains out, damn!"

Beverley glanced down the waiting and eager lines. Swiftly he speculated, wondering what would be his chance for escape were he to break through. But he did not take his own condition into account.

"Ugh, run!"

Again the elbow of Long-Hair's hurt arm pushed him toward the expectant rows of Indians, who flourished their

clubs and uttered impatient grunts.

This time he did not fall; but in trying to run he limped stiffly at first, his legs but slowly and imperfectly regaining their strength and suppleness from the action. Just before reaching the lines, however, he stopped short. Long-Hair, who was close behind him, took hold of his shoulder and led him back to the starting place. The big Indian's arm must have given him pain when he thus used it, but he did not notice.

"Fool-kill dead!" he repeated two or three times, holding his tomahawk on high with threatening motions and frequent repetitions of his one echo from the profanity of civilization. He was beginning to draw his mouth down at the corners, and his eyes were narrowed to mere slits.

Beverley understood now that he could not longer put off the trial. He must choose between certain death and the torture of the gantlet, as frontiersmen named this savage ordeal. An old man might have preferred the stroke of the halibut to such an infliction as the clubs must afford, considering that, even after all the agony, his captivity and suffering would be only a little nearer its end. Youth, however, has faith in the turn of fortune's wheel, and faith in itself, no matter how dark the prospect. Hope blazes her horn just over the horizon, and the strain bids the young heart take courage and beat strong. Moreover, men were men, who led the van in those days on the outpost lines of our march to the summit of the world. Beverley was not more a hero than any other young, brave, unconquerable patriot of the frontier army. His situation simply tried him a trifle harder than was common. But it must be remembered that he had Love with him, and where Love is there can be no cowardice, no surrender.

Long-Hair once again pushed him and said:

"Ugh, run!"

Beverley made a direct dash for the narrow lane between the braced and watchful lines. Every warrior lifted his club; every copper face gleamed and stolidly, a mask behind which burned

a strangely atrocious spirit. The two savages standing at the end nearest Beverley struck at him the instant he reached them, but they were taken quite by surprise when he checked himself between them, and, leaping this way and that, swung out two powerful blows, left and right, stretching one of them flat and sending the other reeling and staggering half a dozen paces backward with the blood streaming from his nose.

This done, Beverley turned to run away, but his breath was already short and his strength rapidly going. Long-Hair, who was at his heels, leaped before him when he had gone but a few steps and once more flourished the tomahawk. To struggle was useless, save to insist upon being brassed outright, which just then had no party in Beverley's considerations. Long-Hair kicked his victim heavily, uttering laconic curses meanwhile, and led him back again to the starting point.

A genuine sense of humor seems almost entirely lacking in the mind of the American Indian. He smiles at things not in the least amusing to us and when he laughs, which is very seldom, the cause of his merriment usually lies in something repellently cruel and inhuman. When Beverley struck his two assailants, hurting them so that one lay half stunned, while the other spun away from his fist with a smashed nose, all the rest of the Indians grunted and laughed raucously in high delight. They shook their clubs, danced, pointed at their discomfited fellows and twisted their painted faces into knotted wrinkles, their eyes twinkling with devilish expression of glee quite indescribable.

"Ugh, damn, run!" said Long-Hair, this time adding a hard kick to the elbow-shove he gave Beverley.

The young man who had borne all he could, now turned upon them furiously and struck straight from the shoulder, setting the whole weight of his body into the blow. Long-Hair stepped out of the way and quick as a flash brought the flat side of his tomahawk with great force against Beverley's head. This gave the amusement a sudden and disappointed end, for the prisoner fell limp and senseless to the ground. No more running the gantlet for him that day. Indeed it required protracted application of the best Indian skill to revive him so that he could fairly be called a living man. There had been no dangerous concussion, however, and on the following morning camp was broken.

His enemies, who set out swiftly eastward, their disappointment at having their sport cut short, although bitter enough, not in the least indicated by any facial expression or spiteful act.

Was it really a strange thing, or was it not, that Beverley's mind now busied itself unceasingly with the thought that Long-Hair had Alice's picture in his pouch? One might find room for discussion of a cerebral problem like this; but our history cannot be delayed with analyses and speculations; it must run its direct course unhindered to the end. Suffice it to record that, while tramping at Long-Hair's side and growing more and more desirous of seeing the picture again, Beverley began trying to converse with his taciturn captor. He had a considerable smattering of several Indian dialects, which he turned upon Long-Hair to the best of his ability, but apparently without effect. Nevertheless he babbled at intervals, always upon the same subject and always endeavoring to influence that huge, stolid, heartless savage in the direction of letting him see again the child face of the miniature.

A stone, one of our travel-scattered and mysterious western granite boulders brought from the far north by the ancient ice, would show as much sympathy as did the face of Long-Hair. Once in a while he gave Beverley a soulless glance and said "damn" with utter indifference. Nothing, however, could rouse or even in the slightest sense allay the lover's desire. He talked of Alice and the locket with constantly increasing volubility, saying over and over phrases of endearment in a half-delirious way, not aware that fever was fermenting his blood and heating his brain. Probably he would have been very ill but for the tremendous physical exercise forced upon him. The exertion kept him in a profuse perspiration and his robust constitution cast off the malarial poison. Meantime he used every word and phrase every grunt and gesture of Indian dialect that he could recall, in the iterated and reiterated attempt to make Long-Hair understand what he wanted.

When night came on again the band camped under some trees beside a swelling stream. There was no rain falling, but almost the entire country lay under a flood of water. Fires of logs were soon burning brightly on the comparatively dry bluff chosen by the Indians. The weather was chill, but not cold. Long-Hair took great pains, however, to dry Beverley's clothes and see that he had warm wraps and plenty to eat. Hamilton's large reward would not be forthcoming should the prisoner die. Beverley was good property, well worth

careful attention. To be sure his scalp, in the worst event, would command a sufficient honorarium, but not the greatest. Beverley thought of all this while the big Indian was wrapping him snugly in skins and blankets for the night, and there was no comfort in it, save that possibly if he were returned to Hamilton he might see Alice again before he died.

A fitful wind cried dolefully in the leafless treetops, the stream hard by gave forth a rushing sound, and far away some wolves howled like lost souls. Worn out, sore from head to foot, Beverley, deep buried in the blankets and skins, soon fell into a profound sleep. The fires slowly crumbled and faded; no sentinel was posted, for the Indians did not fear an attack, there being no enemies that they knew of nearer than Kaskaskia. The camp slumbered as one man.

At about the mid-hour of the night Long-Hair gently awoke his prisoner by drawing a hand across his face, then whispered in his ear:

"Damn, still!"

Beverley tried to rise, uttering a sleepy ejaculation under his breath.

"No talk," hissed Long-Hair. "Still!"

There was something in his voice that not only swept the last film of sleep out of Beverley's brain, but made it perfectly clear to him that a very important bit of craftiness was being performed; just what its nature was, however, he could not surmise. One thing was obvious, Long-Hair did not wish the other Indians to know of the move he was making. Deftly he slipped the blankets from around Beverley, and cut the thongs at his ankles.

"Still!" he whispered. "Come long."

Under such circumstances a competent mind acts with lightning celerity. Beverley now understood that Long-Hair was stealing him away from the other savages and that the big villain meant to cheat them out of their part of the reward. Along with this discovery came a fresh gleam of hope. It would be far easier to escape from one Indian than from nearly a score. Ah, he would follow Long-Hair, indeed he would! The needed courage came with the thought, and so with immense labor he crept at the heels of that crawling monster. It was a painful process, for his arms were still fast bound at the wrists with the rawhide strings; but what was pain to him? He shivered with joy, thinking of what might happen. The voice of the wind overhead and the noisy bubbling of the stream near by were cheerful and cheering sounds to him now. So much can a mere shadow of hope do for a human soul on the verge of despair! Already he was planning or trying to plan some

way by which he could kill Long-Hair when they should reach a safe distance from the sleeping camp.

But how could the thing be done? A man with his hands tied, though they are in front of him, is in no excellent condition to cope with a free and stalwart savage armed to the teeth. Still Beverley's spirits rose with every rod of distance that was added to their slow progress.

Their course was nearly parallel with that of the stream, but slightly converging toward it, and after they had gone about a furlong they reached the bank. Here Long-Hair stopped and, without a word, cut the thongs from Beverley's wrists. This was astounding; the young man could scarcely realize it, nor was he ready to act.

"Swim water," Long-Hair said in a guttural murmur barely audible. "Swim damn!"

Again it was necessary for Beverley's mind to act swiftly and with prudence. The camp was within hailing distance. A false move now would bring the whole pack howling to the rescue. Something told him to do as Long-Hair ordered, so with scarcely a perceptible hesitation he scrambled down the bushy bank and slipped into the water, followed by Long-Hair, who seized him by one arm when he began to swim, and struck out with him into the boiling and tumbling current.

Beverley had always thought himself a master swimmer, but Long-Hair showed him his mistake. The giant Indian, with but one hand free to use, fairly rushed through that deadly cold and turbulent water bearing his prisoner with him despite the wounded arm, as easily as if towing him at the stern of a pirogue. True, his course was down stream for a considerable distance, but even when presently he struck out boldly for the other bank, braving a current in which few swimmers could have lived, much less made headway, he still swung forward rapidly, splitting the waves and scarcely giving Beverley freedom enough so that he could help in the progress. It was a long, cold struggle, and when at last they touched the sloping low bank on the other side, Long-Hair had fairly to lift his chilled and exhausted prisoner to the top.

"Ugh, cold," he grunted, beginning to pound and rub Beverley's arms, legs and body. "Make warm, damn heap!"

All this he did with his right hand, holding the tomahawk in his left.

It was a strange, bewildering experience out of which the young man could not see in any direction far enough to give him a hint upon which to act. In

(Continued on Page 6.)

Morning News of the Big Boston Store.

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Monday, August 4, 1902.

"Always Up to the Moment."

As I Was Saying,

This week we are handing out bargains for housekeepers.

First let me invite everybody to gather 'round in front of Big Boston today and hear one of our fine minstrel shows. First performance at 10:30 a. m.; second at 3:30 p. m.

Now about the newly completed big basement, with carpenters routed out and tons upon tons of new goods in.

Maybe you are going to fix up your kitchen or dining room for the coming of the thousands of jolly Elks. Well—

We've got lots of chinaware that will do your heart good to look at. The boss buyer got 'em in at a figure that shows he knows buying and we can afford to quote such prices as these and yet feel that there will be a slight rake-off for us when everybody has bought.

Look You!

- Half dozen cups and half dozen saucers, all fine, firm, glossy china for (the whole lot) **43c**
- Large size handled tea cups and saucers, one-half dozen of each, the whole for **63c**
- Another lot, fine fragile goods, cups and saucers, twelve pieces **75c**

Glassware.

Here's where we are specially strong today:

- Glass nappies at, apiece **2c**
- Big drinking glass tumblers, apiece **2c**
- One thousand dinner sets, handsome ones, at **\$4.98**

Yes, that period was in the right place—\$4.98 for a whole set.

Chamber Sets—dollar ninety-eight.

About a thousand Washbowls and Pitchers.

And, Say, Table Linen.

Here's the chance of chances:

Table Linen that always sold for fifty cents (50) going today and all this week (if it lasts that long) at, listen **17c**

As to Stoneware—such as churns, jars of all sizes for putting up fruit—why, we've got only about ten (10) tons of these goods in, that's all.

GATHER WHERE THE CROWDS GATHER TODAY!



Those Big Boston Minstrels.

Here is the Programme. Guess You Can't Afford to Miss This.

- There will be 10 artists.
- Ten artistic turns.
- Four funny end men.
- Four sweet-voiced soloists.
- Interlocutor—Mr. Hello Bill.

Bones.

- Mr. Carl Devera.
- Mr. Billy Hart.

Tambos,

- Mr. Joe Marquette.
 - Mr. Geo. Miles.
- (I guess they're bad, eh?)

Soloists,

- Mr. Ray Pons.
- Mr. Billy Powers.
- Mr. Kid Rogers.
- Mr. Will Lee.

Let Them Thrill You Once!

Won't hurt you to gather 'round with the crowds in West Temple street and hear new sentimental, comic, con and topical songs by sprightly comedians. Maybe some of the gags will be worth while. Anyway, it will all be as free as the air God gives us.

Big Boston Store Minstrels Are Giving Big Free Shows Today.

Good Morning!