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ALICE of OLD VINCENNES

By MAURICE THOMPSON

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CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST MAYOR OF VINCENNES.

GOVERNOR ABBOTT probably never so much as heard of the dame Jeanne of French brandy sent to him by his crew friend in New Orleans. He had been gone from Vincennes several months when the batteau arrived, having been recalled to Detroit by the British authorities, and he never returned. Meantime the little post with its quaint cabins and its dilapidated blockhouse, called Fort Sackville, lay sunning drowsily by the river in a blissful state of helplessness from the military point of view. There was no garrison, the two or three pieces of artillery, abandoned and exposed, gathered rust and cobwebs, while the pickets of the stockade, decaying and loosened in the ground by winter freezes and summer rains, leaned in all directions, a picture of decay and inefficiency.

M. Gaspard Roussillon was looked upon as the aristocrat par excellence of Vincennes, notwithstanding the fact that his name bore no suggestion of noble and titled ancestry. He was rich and in a measure educated; moreover, the successful man's patent of leadership, a commanding figure and a suave manner, came always to his assistance when a crisis presented itself. He traded shrewdly, much to his own profit, but invariably with the excellent result that the man, white or Indian, with whom he did business felt himself especially favored in the transaction. By the exercise of firmness, prudence, vast assumption, florid eloquence and a kindly liberality he had greatly endeared himself to the people, so that in the absence of a military commander he came naturally to be regarded as the chief of the town, *maitre* le maire.

He returned from his extended trading expedition about the middle of July, bringing, as was his invariable rule, a gift for Alice. This time it was a small, thin disk of white flint, with a hole in the center through which a beaded cord of sinew was looped. The edge of the disk was beautifully notched and the whole surface polished so that it shone like glass, while the beads, made of very small segments of porcupine quills, were variously dyed, making a curiously gaudy show of colors.

"There now, ma chérie, is something worth fifty times its weight in gold," said M. Roussillon when he presented the necklace to his foster daughter with pardonable self-satisfaction. "It is a sacred charm string given me by an old heathen who would sell his soul for a pint of cheap rum. He solemnly informed me that whoever wore it could not by any possibility be killed by an enemy."

Alice kissed M. Roussillon. "It's so curious and beautiful," she said, holding it up and drawing the variegated string through her fingers. Then with her mischievous laugh she added: "And I'm glad it is so powerful against one's enemy. I'll wear it whenever I go where Adrienne Bourcier is. See if I don't!"

"Is she your enemy? What's up between you and la petite Adrienne, eh?" M. Roussillon lightly demanded. "You were always the best of good friends, I thought. What's happened?"

"Oh, we are good friends," said Alice quickly, "very good friends, indeed; I was but chaffing."

"Good friends, but enemies; that's how it is with women. Who's the young man that's caused the coolness? I could guess, maybe!" He laughed and winked knowingly. "May I be so bold as to name him at a venture?"

"Yes, if you'll be sure to mention M. Rene de Ronville," she gayly answered. "Who but he could work Adrienne up into a perfect green mist of jealousy?"

"He would need an accomplice. I should imagine; a young lady of some beauty and a good deal of heartlessness."

"Like whom, for example?" And she tossed her bright head. "Not me, I am sure."

"Poh! Like every pretty maiden in the whole world, ma petite coquette. They're all alike as peas, cruel as blue-jays and as sweet as apple blossoms." He stroked her hair clumsily with his large hand, as a heavy and roughly fond man is apt to do, adding in an almost serious tone:

"But my little girl is better than most of them—not a foolish mischief maker, I hope."

Alice was putting her head through the string of beads and letting the translucent white disk fall into her bosom.

"It's time to change the subject," said she. "Tell me what you have seen while away. I wish I could go far off and see things. Have you been to Detroit, Quebec, Montreal?"

"Yes, I've been to all, a long, hard journey, but reasonably profitable. You shall have a goodly dot when you get married, my child."

"I'll tell you what I can," he cried, assuming a humorously resigned air. "Perhaps if I smoke I can remember everything."

Alice gladly ran to do what was asked. Meantime Jean was out on the gallery blowing a flute that M. Roussillon had brought him from Quebec.

The pipe well filled and lighted apparently did have the effect to steady and encourage M. Roussillon's memory, or, if not his memory, then his imagination, which was of that fervid and liberal sort common to natives of the Mid and which has been exquisitely depicted by the late Alphonse Daudet in Tartarin and Bompard. He leaned far back in a strong chair, with his massive legs stretched at full length, and gazed at the roof poles while he talked.

In the first place, he had not been in Quebec or Montreal during his absence from home. Most of the time he had spent disposing of pelts and furs at Detroit and in extending his trading relations with other posts, but what mattered a trifling want of facts when his mercurial fancy once began to warm up? A smattering of social knowledge, gained at first hand in his youthful days in France while he was a student whose parents fondly expected him to conquer the world, came to his aid, and, besides, he had saturated himself all his life with poetry and romance. Scudery, Scarron, Prevost, Mme. La Fayette and Calprenede were the chief sources of his information touching the life and manners, morals and gayeties of people who, as he supposed, stirred the surface of that resplendent and far off ocean called society.

Alice was absolutely charmed. She sat on a low wooden stool and gazed into M. Roussillon's face with dilating eyes in which burned that rich and radiant something we call a passionate soul. She drank in his flamboyant stream of words with a thirst which nothing but experience could ever

quench. He felt her silent applause and the admiring involuntary absorption that possessed his wife. The consciousness of his elementary magnetism augmented the flow of his fine descriptions, and he went on and on until the arrival of Father Beret put an end to it all.

The priest, hearing of M. Roussillon's return, had come to inquire about some friends living at Detroit. He took luncheon with the family, enjoying the downright refreshing collation of broiled birds, onions, meat cakes and claret, ending with a dish of blackberries and cream.

M. Roussillon seized the first opportunity to resume his successful romancing and presently in the midst of the meal began to tell Father Beret about what he had seen in Quebec.

"By the way," he said, with expansive casualness in his voice, "I called upon your old time friend and coadjutor, Father Sebastian, while up there. A noble old man. He sent you a thousand good messages. Was mightily delighted when I told him how happy and hale you have always



Alice was absolutely charmed.

been here. Ah, you should have seen his dear old eyes full of loving tears. He would walk a hundred miles to see you, he said, but never expected to in this world. Blessings, blessings upon dear Father Beret, was what he murmured in my ear when we were parting. He says that he will never leave Quebec until he goes to his home above—ah!"

The way in which M. Roussillon closed his little speech, his large eyes upturned, his huge hands clasped in front of him, was very effective.

"I am under many obligations, my son," said Father Beret, "for what you tell me. It was good of you to remember my dear old friend and go to him for his loving messages to me. I am very, very thankful. Help me to another drop of wine, please."

Now the extraordinary feature of the situation was that Father Beret had known positively for nearly five years that Father Sebastian was dead and buried.

"Ah, yes," M. Roussillon continued, pouring the claret with one hand and

making a pious gesture with the other. "The dear old man loves you and prays for you. His voice quavers whenever he speaks of you."

"Doubtless he made his old joke to you about the birthmark on my shoulder," said Father Beret after a moment of apparently thoughtful silence. "He may have said something about it in a playful way, eh?"

"True, true; why, yes, he surely mentioned the same," assented M. Roussillon, his face assuming an expression of confused memory. "It was something sly and humorous, I mind, but it just escapes my recollection. A right jolly old boy is Father Sebastian. Indeed very amusing at times."

"At times, yes," said Father Beret, who had no birthmark on his shoulder and had never had one there or on any other part of his person.

"How strange!" Alice remarked. "I, too, have a mark on my shoulder—a pink spot, just like a small, five-petaled flower. We must be of kin to each other, Father Beret."

The priest laughed. "If our marks are alike, that would be some evidence of kinship," he said. "But what shape is yours, father?" "I've never seen it," he responded. "Never seen it? Why?"

"Well, it's absolutely invisible," and he chuckled heartily, meantime glancing shrewdly at M. Roussillon out of the tail of his eye.

"It's on the back of his shoulder," quickly spoke up M. Roussillon, "and you know priests never use looking glasses. The mark is quite invisible therefore so far as Father Beret is concerned!"

"You never told me of your birthmark before, my daughter," said Father Beret, turning to Alice with sudden interest. "It may some day be good fortune to you."

"Why so, father?"

"If your family name is really Tarleton, as you suppose from the inscription on your locket, the birthmark, being of such singular shape, would probably identify you. It is said that these marks run regularly in families. With the miniature and the distinguishing birthmark you have enough to make a strong case should you once find the right Tarleton family."

"You talk as they write in novels," said Alice. "I've read about just such things in them. Wouldn't it be grand if I should turn out to be some great personage in disguise?"

The mention of novels reminded Father Beret of that terrible book which he last saw in Alice's possession, and he could not refrain from mentioning it in a voice that shuddered.

"Rest easy, Father Beret," said Alice. "That is one novel I have found wholly

distasteful to me. I tried to read it, but could not do it. I flung it aside in utter disgust. You and Mother Roussillon are welcome to hide it deep as a well for all I care. I don't enjoy reading about low, vile people and hopeless unfortunates. I like sweet and lovely heroines and strong, high souled, brave heroes."

"Read about the blessed saints, then, my daughter. You will find in them the true heroes and heroines of this world," said Father Beret.

M. Roussillon changed the subject, for he always somehow dreaded to have the good priest fall into the strain of argument he was about to begin. A stray sheep, no matter how refractory, feels a touch of longing when he hears the shepherd's voice. M. Roussillon was a Catholic, but a straying one, and he had promised the dying woman who gave Alice to him that the child should be left as she was, a Protestant, without undue influence to change her from the faith of her parents. This promise he had kept with stubborn persistence, and he meant to keep it as long as he lived.

A few weeks had passed after M. Roussillon's return when that big hearted man took it into his head to celebrate his successful trading ventures with a moonlight dance given without reserve to all the inhabitants of Vincennes. It was certainly a democratic function that he contemplated, and motley to a most picturesque extent.

Rene de Ronville called upon Alice a day or two previous to the occasion and duly engaged her as his partenaire, but she insisted upon having the engagement guarded in her behalf by a condition so obviously fanciful that he accepted it without argument.

"If my wandering knight should arrive during the dance, you promise to stand aside and give place to him," she stipulated. "You promise that? You see, I'm expecting him all the time. I dreamed last night that he came on a great bay horse and, stooping, whirled me up behind the saddle and away we went!"

There was a childish, half bantering air in her look, but her voice sounded earnest and serious, notwithstanding its delicious timbre of suppressed playfulness.

"You promise me?" she insisted. "Oh, I promise to slink away into a corner and chew my thumb the moment he comes!" Rene eagerly assented. "Of course I'm taking a great risk. I know, for lords and barons and knights are very apt to appear suddenly in a place like this."

"You may banter and make light if you want to," she said, pointing admiringly. "I don't care. All the same, the laugh will jump to the other corner of your mouth; see if it doesn't. They say that what a person dreams about and wishes for and waits for and believes in will come true sooner or later."

"If that's so," said Rene, "you and I will get married, for I've dreamed it every night of the year, wished for it, waited for it and believed in it, and—"

"A very pretty twist you give to my words, I must declare," she said, "but not new by any means. Little Adrienne Bourcier could tell you that. She says that you have vowed to her over and over that you dream about her and

(Continued on 6th page)

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Just A Word

To Teacher and Parent.

The time is fast approaching when our children will enter into the school, the duties that will require the use of one of the most delicate and useful organs of their bodies. The eyes. And the testing of the eyes of school children as is now widely advocated by both Accutists and Optometrists is an absolute essential. The present age can truthfully be called an Age of Vision. Our entire system of civilization is based on the school education of the rising generation. And this school education is based primarily on the use of the eyes. Those who cannot use their eyes quickly and correctly are at an enormous disadvantage, which, however, can often be remedied by the wearing of properly correcting glasses. It is strange that so many parents and teachers should be so apathetic in regard to this most important human sense. They seem to doubt that ocular defects exist, claiming that the idea that children should wear glasses at all is an absurd one that we are also a mass of minor defects. This applies to the eyes so that a normal or emmetropic is a rarity. Since we are living in a state of civilization and not in a state of nature we should conform to the former by improving upon the latter to the best of power. This means to wear glasses in those cases where nature has failed to come up to the usual requirements of civilization. It is for this very purpose that we are engaged with the knowledge and best instruments known to the optical profession for the elevation of pain and optical defects that about 80 per cent of the human family are suffering from.

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In the town of Newton, Utah. I have in my possession the following described animal which if not claimed and taken away, will be sold at public auction to the highest cash bidder, in the said town of Newton on Monday the 19th day of Sept. 1904, at 1 o'clock noon.

Description of animals. One black mare about 14 years old, lame in right front foot, branded N bar on right shoulder.

Said animal was impounded by Hyrum Jensen in said town on Thursday the 8th day of September 1904.

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