

Alice of Old Vincennes

By Maurice Thompson

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THE doughty Captain felt a sudden and impetuous thirst seize his throat. The liquor seized his veins before his lips touched the cup. He had been abstaining lately; now his besetting appetite rushed upon him. At one gulp he took in the fiery yet smooth and captivating draught. Nor did he notice that Father Beret, instead of joining him in the potion, merely lifted his cup and set it down again, smacking his lips with gusto.

There followed a silence, during which the aromatic breath of the bottle increased its dangerous fascination. Then Father Beret again filled Farnsworth's cup and said:

"Ah, the blessed monks, little thought they that their matchless brew would ever be sipped in a poor missionary's hut on the Wabash! But, after all, my son, why not here as well as in sunny France? Our object justifies any impropriety of time and place."

"You are right, Father. I drink to our object. Yes, I say, to our object."

In fact, the drinking preceded his speech, and his tongue already had a loop in it. The liquor stole through him, a midst of bewildering and enchanting influence. The third cup broke his sentences into unintelligible fragments; the fourth made his jaw sag loosely, the fifth and sixth, taken in close succession, tumbled him limp on the floor, where he slept blissfully all night long, snugly covered with some of Father Beret's bed clothes.

"Per casum obliquum, et per indicatum," muttered the priest, when he had returned the bottle and cup to their hiding-place. "The end justifies the means. Sleep well, my son. Ah, little Alice, little Alice, your old Father will try—will try!"

He fumbled along the wall in the dark until he found the rapier, which he took down; then he went out and sat for some time motionless beside the door, while the clouds thickened overhead. It was late when he awoke and gazed away shadow-like toward the fort, over which the night hung black, chill and drearily silent. The moon was still some hours high, but smothered by the clouds; a fog slowly drifted from the river.

Meantime Hamilton and Helm had spent a part of the afternoon and evening, as usual, at cards. Helm broke off the game and went to his quarters rather early for him, leaving the Governor alone and in a bad temper, because Farnsworth, when he had sent for him, could not be found. Three times his orderly returned in as many hours with the same report: the captain had not been seen or heard of. Naturally this sudden and complete disappearance, immediately after the reprimand, suggested to Hamilton an unpleasant possibility. What if Farnsworth had deserted him? Down deep in his heart he was conscious that the young man had good cause for almost any desperate action. To lose Captain Farnsworth, however, would be just now a calamity. The Indians were drifting over rapidly to the side of the Americans, and every day showed that the French could not long be kept quiet.

Hamilton sat for some time after Helm's departure, thinking over what he now feared was a foolish mistake. Presently he buckled on Alice's rapier, which he had lately been wearing as his own, and went out into the main area of the stockade. A sentinel was tramping to and fro at the gate, where a hazy lantern shone. The night was breathless and silent. Hamilton approached the soldier on duty and asked him if he had seen Captain Farnsworth, and receiving a negative reply, turned about puzzled and thoughtful to walk back and forth in the chill, foggy air.

Presently a faint yellow light attracted his attention. It shone through a porthole in an upper room of the blockhouse at the farther angle of the stockade. In fact, Alice was reading by a sputtering lamp a book Farnsworth had sent her, a volume of *Ronsard* that he had picked up in Canada. Hamilton made his way in that direction, at first merely curious to know who was reading so late; but after a few paces he recognized where the light came from, and instantly suspected that Captain Farnsworth was there. Indeed he felt sure of it. Somehow he could not regard Alice as other than a saucy hussy, incapable of womanly virtue. His experience with the worst element of Canadian French life and his peculiar cast of mind and character colored his impression of her. He meant to be repelled by the women with whom the *coureurs des bois* and half-breed trappers congealed in Detroit and at the posts eastward to Quebec.

Alce, unable to sleep, had sought forgetfulness of her bitter captivity in the old poet's charming lyrics. She

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"Then he is here—he is—you have

ish cruelty hurt her; and somehow

it chilled him as if by reflection; but he could not forgive another thrust.

"A part of him, Miss Roussillon, enough to be quite sure that there is one traitor who will trouble his king no more. Mr. Long-Hair brought in the Lieutenant's scap."

Alice received this horrid statement in silence, her face blanched and she stood as if frozen by the shock.

Then Alice, however, fell without effect upon the girl's ears, in which was boozing the awful, storm-like roar of her excitement. She did not see her persecutor standing there;

her vision, unhindered by walls and distance, went straight away to a place in the wilderness, where all tangled and disengaged Beverley lay dead. A low, crooked branch from her lips; she dropped the heavy swivel-balls; and then, like a bird, swiftly with a rustling swoop, she went past Hamilton and down the stairs.

For perhaps a full minute the man stood there motionless, stupefied, amazed; and when at length he recovered himself, it was with difficulty

that he followed her. Everything seemed to hinder him. When he reached the open air, however, he quickly regained his activity of both mind and body, and looked in all directions. The clouds were breaking into parallel masses with streaks of sky between. The moon hanging astir against the blue peeped forth just in time to show him a flying figure which, even while he looked, reached the postern, opened it and slipped through.

With but a breath of hesitation between giving the alarm and following Alice silently and alone, he chose the latter. He was a swift runner and light footed. With a few bounds he reached the little gate, which was still oscillating on its hinges, darted through and away, straining every muscle in desperate pursuit, gaining rapidly in the race, which bore eastward along the course twice before

chosen by Alice in leaving the stockade.

(To Be Continued)

Tenants Must Have Family

London, April 4.—In giving a piece of land near Ebury square, St. W., to the city of Westminster, the Duke of Westminster has stipulated that the tenants of any houses built on the grounds must be people with children.

DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—



OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS

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—By ALLMAN



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER

THEM DAYS IS GONE FOREVER—



—By AL POSEN



THE OLD HOME TOWN—By STANLEY



BUSTER ENTERS INTO A BUSINESS DEAL — By AHERN

"The Indian, Long-Hair, whom I sent upon Lieutenant Beverley's trail, reported to tell him quite successfully. He caught his girl."

Alice's voice came to her now. She drew in a quivering breath of relief.

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