ALICE of OLD VINCENNES

By MAURICE THOMPSON

Copyright, 1900, by the BOWEN-MERRILL COMPANY

CHAPTER XVII. A MARCH THROUGH COLD WATER.

N the 5th day of February, 1779, Colonel George Rogers Clark led an army across the Kaskaskia river and camped. This was the first step in his march toward the Wabash. An army! Do not smile. Fewer than 200 men, it is true, answered the roll call when Father Gibault lifted the cross and blessed them.

It was an army, small indeed, but yet an army, even though so rudely equipped that, could we now see it be fore us, we might wonder of what use it could possibly be in a military way.

Clark knew when he set out on his march to Vincennes that he was not indulging a visionary impulse. The enterprise was one that called for all that manhood could endure, but not more. With the genius of a born leader he measured his task by his means. He knew his own courage and fortitude and understood the best capacity of his men. He had genius-that is he possessed the secret of extracting from himself and from his followers the last refinement of devotion to purpose. There was a certainty, from first to last, that effort would not flag at any point short of the topmost possible

The march before them lay over s as the delta of the Nile, but extremely difficult to traverse. The distance, as the route led, was about 170 miles. On account of an open and rainy winter all the basins and flat lands were inundated, often presenting leagues of water ranging in depth from a few inches to three or four feet. Colonel Clark understood perfectly the strategic importance of Vincennes as a post commanding the Wabash and as a base of communication with the many Indian tribes north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi. Francis Vigo (may his name never fade!) had brought him a comprehensive and accurate report of Hamilton's strength and the condition of the fort and garrison. This information confirmed his belief that it would be possible not only to capture Vincennes, but Detroit as well.

Just seven days after the march began the little army encamped for a night's rest at the edge of a wood, and here, just after nightfall, when the fires were burning merrily and the smell of brolling buffalo steaks burdened the damp air, a wizened old man suddenly appeared, how or from where nobody had observed. He was dirty and in every way disreputable in appearance, looking like an animated mummy, bearing a long rifle on his shoulder and walking with the somewhat halting ctivity of a very old yet vive energetic siminn. Of course it was Oncle Jazon, "Oncle Jazon sui generis," as Father Beret had dubbed him.

"Well, here I am!" he cried, approaching the fire by which Colonel Clark and some of his officers were cooking supper. "But ye can't guess in a mile o' who I am to save yer livers an' lights."

He danced a few stiff steps, which made the water gush out of his tattered moccasins, then doffed his nondescript cap and nodded his scalpless

head in salutation to the commander. Clark looked inquiringly at him, while the old fellow grimaced and rubbed his shrunken chin.

"I smelt yer fat a-fryin' somepin' lfke a mile away, an' it set my in'ards to grumblin' for a snack, so I jes' thought I'd drap in on ye an' chaw

wittles wi' ye." "Your looks are decidedly against you," remarked the colonel, with a dry smile. He had recognized Oncle Jazon after a little sharp scrutiny. "I suppose, however, that we can let you gnaw the bones after we've got off the meat."

"Thank 'ee, thank 'ee, pienty good. A feller 'at's as hongry as I am kin go through a bone like a feesh through water."

Clark laughed and said:

"I don't see any teeth that you have worth mentioning, but your gums may be unusually sharp."

'Ya-a-s, 'bout as sharp as yer wit, Colonel Clark, an' sharper 'n yer eyes. a long shot. Ye don't know me, do ye? Take ernother squint at me, an' see 'f ye kin 'member a good lookin'

"You have somewhat the appearance that formerly loafed around with a worthless gun on his shoulder, and

SALEM,

fown yonder in Kentucky." Clark beld sut his hand and added cordially: "How are you, Jazon, my old friend,

and where upon earth have you come from ?" Oncle Jazon pounced upon the hand and gripped it in his own knotted fingers, gazing delightedly up into Clark's

bronzed and laughing face. "Where'd I come frum? I come frum ever'wheres. Fust time I ever got lost in all my born days. I've been a trompin' round in the water seems like a week, crazy as a pizened rat, net s-knowin' north f'om south ner my big toe f'om a turnip! Who's got some

tobacker?" Oncle Jazon's story, when presently he told it, interested Clark deeply. He and Kenton had, with wise judgment, separated on escaping from the Indian camp, Kenton striking out for Kentucky, while Oncle Jazon went toward Kaskaskia.

The information that Beverley would be shot as soon as he was returned to Hamilton caused Colonel Clark serious worry of mind. Not only the fact that Beverley, who had been a charming friend and a most gallant officer, was now in such imminent danger, but the impression (given by Oncle Jazon's account) that he had broken his parole was deeply painful to the brave and scrupulously honorable commander. Still friendship rose above regret, and magnificent plain, mostly prairie, rich Clark resolved to push his little column forward all the more rapidly, hoping to arrive in time to prevent the impending execution.

Next morning the march was resumed at the break of dawn, but a swollen stream caused some hours of delay, during which Beverley himself arrived from the rear, a haggard and weirdly unkempt apparition. He had been for three days following hard on the ar-



"Vive Zhorzh Vasinton!"

my's track, which he came to far westward. Oncle Jazon saw him first in the distance, and his old but educated eyes made no mistake, "Yander's that youngster Beverley!"

he exclaimed. ."Ef it sin't I'm squaw! Nor did be parley further on the sub-

jeer, but set off at a rickety trot to meet and assist the fagged and excited young man.

Clark had given Oncie Jazon his flask, which contained a few gills of whisky. This was the first thing offered to Beverley, who wisely took but a swallow. Oncle Jazon was so elated he waved his cap on high and, unconsciously falling into French, yelled in a piercing vôice:

"Vive Zhorzh Vasinton! Vive la banniere d'Alice Roussillon!"

Seeing Beverley reminded him of Alice and the flag. As for Beverley, the sentiment braced him and the beloved name brimmed his heart with aweetness:

Clark went to meet them as they came in. He hugged the gaunt lieutenant with genuine fervor of joy, while Oncle Jazon ran around them making a series of grotesque capers. The whole command, bearing Oncle Jazon's patriotic words, set up a wild shouting on the spur of a general impression that Beverley came as a messenger bearing glorious news from Washington's army in the east.

It was a great relief to Clark when he found out that his favorite lieutenant had not broken his parole, but had instead boldly resurrendered himself. declaring the obligation no longer bindof an old scamp of the name of Jazor ing and notifying Hamilton of his intention to go away with the purpose worthless gun on his shoulder, and of returning and destroying him and used to ran from every Indian he saw his command. Clark laughed heartily

when this explanation brought out Beverley's tender interest in Alice, but he sympathized cordially, for he himself knew what love is.

Although Beverley was half starved and still suffering from the kicks and blows given him by Long Hair and his warriors, his exhausting run on the trail of Clark and his band had no worked him serious harm. All of the officers and men did their atmost to serve him. He was feasted without stint and furnished with everything that the scant supply of clothing on the pack horses could afford for his comfort. He promptly asked for an assignment to duty in his company and took his place with such high enthusiasm that his companions regarded him with admiring wonder. None of them save Clark and Oncle Jazon suspected that love for a fair haired girl youder in Vincennes was the secret of his amazing zeal and intrepldity.

In one respect Clark's expedition was sadly lacking in its equipment for the march. It had absolutely no means of transporting adequate supplies. The pack horses were not able to carry more than a little extra ammunition. a few articles of clothing, some simple cooking atensils and such tools as were needed in improvising rafts and canbes. Consequently, although but 'alo and deer were sometimes pientiful they furnished no lasting supply of ment, because it could not be trans ported, and as the army neared Vinconnes wild animals became scarce, so that the men began to suffer from hunger when within but a few days of their Journey's end,

Clark made almost superhuman ef forts in urging forward his chilled, wa ter sonked, footsore command. To ward the end of the long march a decided fall of temperature added ice to the water through which our dauntless patriots waded and swam for miles. The wind shifted northwester ly, taking on a searching chill. Each gust, indeed, seemed to shoot wintry splinters into the very marrow of the men's bones. The weaker ones began to show the approach of utter exhaus tion just at the time when a final spurt of unflinching power was needed True, they struggled berolcally, but nature was nearing the inexorable limit of endurance. Without food, which there was no prospect of getting, col lapse was sure to come.

Standing nearly waist deep in freez ing water and looking out upon the muddy, sealike flood that stretched far away to the channel of the Wabash and beyond, Clark turned to Beverley and said, speaking low, so as not to be overheard by any other of his of ficers or men:

"Is it possible, Lieutenant Beverley that we are to fall, with Vincennes at most in sight of us?"

"No, sir, it is not possible," was the firm reply. "Nothing must, nothing can, stop us. Look at that brave child He sets the heroic example."

Beverley pointed as he spoke at boy but fourteen years old, who wa using his drum as a float to bear his up while he courageously swam beside

Cinck's clouded face cleared one more. "You are right," he said. "Come on! We must win or die!"

"Sergeant Dewit," he added, turning to an enormously tall and athletic mat near by, "take that little drummer and his drum on your shoulder and lead the way, and, sergeant, make him pound that drum like the devil beating tan

The fuge man caught the spirit of his commander's order. In a twinkling he had the boy astride of his neck with the kettledrum resting on his head and then the rattling music began. Cinck followed, pointing onward with his sword. The half frozen and totter ing soldiers sent up a shout that wen back to where Captain Bownian was bringing up the rear under orders to shoot every man that straggled or strank from duty.

Now came a time when not a mouth ful of food was left. A whole day they floundered on, starving, growing faint er at every step, the temperature fall ing, the ice thickening. They camped on high land, and next morning they heard Hamilton's distant sunrise gun boom over the water.

"One half ration for the men," said Clark, looking disconsolately in the direction whence the sound had come "Just five mouthfuls aplece, even, and I'll have Hamilton and his fort within forty-eight hours." "We will have the provisions, colonel

or I will die trying to get them," Beverley responded. "Depend upon me." They had constructed some canoes in which to transport the weakest of

the men. "I will take a dugout and some picked fellows. We will pull to the wood yonder, and there we shall find some kind of game which has been forced to shelter from the high water."

It was a cheerful view of a forloru nope. Clark grasped the hand extended by Beverley and they looked encouragingly into each other's eyes. Oncle Jazon volunteered to go in the

pirogue. He was ready for anything. everything. "I can't shoot wo'th a cent," be whined as they took their places in the

pen to kill a squir'i or a elephant or somepin' 'nother." "Very well!" shouted Clark in a loud, cheerful voice, when they had paddled away to a considerable distance. "Bring the meat to the woods on the hill you der," pointing to a distant island-like

ridge far beyond the creeping flood.

cranky pirogue, "but I might jes' hap-

'We'll be there ready to eat it!' He said this for the ears of his men. They heard and answered with a straggling but determined chorus of approval. They crossed the rolling current of the Wabash by a tedious process of ferrying, and at last found themselves once more wading in back water up to their armpits, breaking ice

the closing struggle to reach the high wooded lands. Many of them fell exhausted, but their stronger comrades lifted them, holding their heads above water, and dragged them on.

Clark, always leading, always inspiring, was first to set foot on dry land. He shouted triumphantly, waved his sword and then fell to belping the men out of the freezing flood. This accomplished, he ordered fires built, but there was not a soldier of them all whose hands could clasp an ax handle, so weak and numbed with cold were they. He was not to be baffled, however. If fire could not be had, exercise must serve its purpose. Hastily pouring some powder into his hand, he dampened it and blacked his face. "Victory, men, victory!" he shouted, taking off his hat and beginning to leap and dance. "Come on! We'll itself in a short semicircle past a tree have a war dance and then a feast as soon as the meat arrives that I have swung around to the rear of him, sent for. Dance, you brave lads, dance! Victory! Victory!"

The strong men, understanding their colonel's purpose, took hold of the delicate ones, and the leaping, the capering, the tumult of voices and the stamping of slushy moccasins with which they assaulted that stately forest must have frightened every wild thing thereabout into a deadly rigor. Clark's irrepressible energy and optimism worked a veritable charm upon his faithful but almost dying compantons in arms. Their trust in him made them feel sure that food would soon be forthcoming. The thought afforded a stimulus more potent than wine. It drove them into an ecstasy of frantic motion and shouting which soon warmed them thoroughly.

It is said that fortune favors the brave. The larger meaning of the sentence may be given thus: God guards those who deserve his protection. History tells us that just when Clark halted his command almost in sight of Vincennes-just when hunger was about to prevent the victory so close to his grasp-a party of his scouts brought in the baunch of a buffale captured from some Indians. The scouts were Beverley and Oncle Jazon. And with the meat they brought Indian kettles in which to cook it.

With consummate forethought Clark arranged to prevent his men doing themselves injury by bolting their food or eating it half cooked. Broth was first made and served hot; then small bits of well broiled steak were doled out, until by degrees the fine effect of nourishment set in, and all the command felt the fresh courage of healthy reaction.

"I sin't no gin'ral, nor corp'ral, nor nothin'," remarked Oncle Jazon to Colonel Chris, "but 'f I's you I'd h'ist up every dad dinged ole flag in the rig ment, w'en I got ready to show myself to 'em, an' I'd make 'em think, over yander at the fort, 'at I had 'bout ninety thousan' men. Hit 'd skeer that sandy faced gov'nor over there till he'd think his backbone was a comin' out'n 'im by the roots,"

Clark laughed, but his face showed that the old man's suggestion struck him foreibly and seriously.

"We'll see about that presently, Oncle Jazon. Wait till we reach the hill yonder, from which the whole town can observe our maneuvers; then we'll try it, maybe."

Once more the men were lined up, the roll call gone through with satisfactorily and the question put: "Are we ready for another plung

through the mud and water?" The answer came in the affirmative, with a unanimity not to be mistaken. The weakest heart of them all beat to the time of the charge step. Again Clark and Beverley clasped hands and took the lend.

When they reached the next high ground they gazed in silence across the slushy prairie plot to where, on a slight elevation, old Vincennes and Fort Sackville lay in full view.

Beverley stood apart. A rush of sensations affected him so that he shook like one whose strength was gone. His vision was blurred. Fort and town, swimming in a mist, were silent and still. Save the British flag twinkling above Hamilton's headquarters nothing indicated that the place was not deserted. And Alice? With the sweet name's echo Beverley's heart bounded high, then sank fluttering at the recollection that she was either yonder at the mercy of Hamilton or already the it weakness for him to lift his clasped bands beavenward and send up a voiceless prayer?

A little later Clark approached hastily and said:

"I have been looking for you. The march has begun. Bowman and Charleville are moving. Come; there's no time to lose."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BURL BY MOONLIGHT. THEN Hamilton, after running some distance, saw that he would soon overtake her, it added fresh energy to his limbs. He had quickly realized the foolishness of what he had done in visiting the room of his prisoner at so late an hour in the night. What would his officers and men think? To let Alice escape would be extremely embarrassing, and to be seen chasing her would give good ground for ridicule on the part of his entire command. Therefore his first thought, after passing through the postern and realizing fully what sort of pure remark when hard pressed. At predicament threatened him, was to re- all events. Father Beret said something capture her and return her to the with vigorous emphasis, and met Hamprison room in the blockhouse without liton half way. attracting attention. This now promised to be an easier task than he had tips by a draft of imperious passion, at first feared, for in the moonlight, fairly plunged to the inevitable conwhich on account of the dispersing clouds was fast growing stronger, he beautiful weapons cross, if she could saw her seem to faiter and weaken. have heard the fine, farreaching clink. Certainly her flight was checked and clink, clink, while sparks leaped forth

an inch thick as they went, it was struction had barred her way. He rushed on, not seeing that as Alice swerved a man intervened. Indeed, be was within a few strides of laying his hand on her when he saw her make the strange movement. It was as if. springing suddenly aside, she had become two persons instead of one. But instantly the figures coincided again, and in becoming taller faced about and confronted him.

Hamilton stopped short in his tracks The dark figure was about five paces from him. It was not Alice, and a sword flashed dimly but unmistakably in a ray of the moon. The motion vis thle was that of an expert swordsman placing himself firmly on his legs, with his weapon at guard.

Alice saw the man in her path just in time to avoid running against him. Lightly as a flying bird when it whisks or a bough she sprang aside and where she could continue her course toward the town. But in passing she recognized him. It was Father Beret, and how grim he looked! The discov ery was made in the twinkling of an eye, and its effect was instantaneous. not only checking the force of her flight, but stopping her and turning her about to gaze before she had gone five paces farther.

Hamilton's nerve held, startled as he was, when he realized that an armed man stood before him. Changing the rapier, which he held in his right

hand, over into his left, he drew a small pistol from the breast of his coat and fired. The report was sharp and loud, but it caused no uneasiness or inquiry in the fort owing to the fact that Indians invariably emptied their guns when coming into the town.

Hamilton's aim, although hasty, was not bad. The bullet from his weapon cut through Father Beret's clothes between his left arm and his body, slightly creasing the flesh on a rib. Beyond him it struck heavily and audibly. Alice fell limp and motionless to the soft, wet ground, where cold puddles of water were splintered over with ice. She lay pitifully crumpled, one arm outstretched in the moonlight. Father Beret heard the bullet hit her and turned in time to see her stagger backward with a hand convuisively pressed over her heart. Her face, slightly upturned as she recled, gave the moon a pallid target for its strengthening rays. Sweet, beautiful, its rigid features flashed for a second and then half turned from the light and went down.

Father Beret uttered a short, thin cry and moved as if to go to the fallen girl, but just then he saw Hamilton's sword pass over again into his right hand and knew that there was no time for anything but death or fight. The good priest did not shirk what might have made the readlest of soldiers nervous. Hamilton was known to be a great swordsman and proud of the dis



"It's you, is it?"

tinction. Father Beret had seen him fence with Farnsworth in remarkable form, touching him at will, and in ministering to the men in the fort he had heard them talk of the governor's incomparable skill.

A priest is, in perhaps all cases but the last out of a thousand, a man of peace, not to be forced into a fight, but the exceptional one out of the ten victim of an unspeakable crueity. Was hundred it is well not to stir up if you are looking for an easy victim. Ham-Ilton was in the habit of considering every antagonist immediately conquerable. His domineering spirit could not, when opposed, reckon with any possibility of disaster. As he sprang toward Father Beret there was a mutual recognition and-we speak guardedlysomething that sounded exactly like an exchange of furious execrations. As for Father Beret's words, they may have been a more priestly formula of objurgation.

The moon was accommodating. With was gaining upon Alice and a beautiful white splendor it entered a space of cloudless sky, where it seemed to slip along the dusky blue surface among the stars, far over in the west. "It's you. is it?" Hamilton exclaimed

between teeth that almost crushed one another. "You prowling hypocritef" Father Beret said something. It was not complimentary, and it sounded sulphurous, if not profune. Remember, however, that a priest can scarcely hope to be better than Peter, and Peter did actually make the simon

Both men, stimulated to the finger

flict. Ah, if Alice could have seen her = = cocentric turn, as if some ob-

comm nave moved the adinfrable-nay, the amazing-play as the men, regaining coolness to some extent, gathered their forces and fell cautiously to the deadly work, it would have been enough to change the cold shimmer of , her face to a flash of warm delight. For she would have understood every feint, lunge, parry, and seen at a glance how Father Beret set the pace and led the race at the beginning. She would have understood, for Father Beret had taught her all she knew about the art

Hamilton quickly felt, and with a sense of its strangeness, the priest's masterly command of his weapon. The surprise called up all his caution and cleverness. Before he could adjust himself to such an unexpected condition he came near being spitted outright by a pretty pass under his guard. The narrow escape, while it put him on his best mettle, sent a wave of superstition through his brain. He recalled what Barlow had jocularly said about the doings of the devil-priest or priestdevil at Roussillon place on that night when the patrol guard attempted to take Gaspard Roussillon. Was this indeed Father Beret, that gentle old man, now before him, or was it an avenging demon from the shades?

The thought flitted electrically across his mind, while he deftly parried, feinted, lunged, giving his dark antagonist all be could do to meet the play. Priest or devil, he thought-he cared not which-he would reach his vitals presently. Yet there lingered with him a haunting half fear or tenuous awe which may have alded, rather than hindered, his excellent swordsman-

Underfoot it was slushy with mud, water and ice, the consistency varying from a somewhat solid crust to puddles that half inundated Hamilton's boots and quite overflowed Father Beret's moccasins-an execrable field for the little matter in hand. They gradually shifted position. Now it was the governor, then the priest, who had advantage as to the light. For some time Father Beret seemed quite the shiftier and surer fighter, but (was his age telling on him?) he lost perceptibly in suppleness. Still Hamilton failed to touch him. There was a baffling something in the old man's escape now and again from what ought to have been an inevitable stroke. Was it luck? It seemed to Hamilton , more than that-a sort of uncanny evasion. Or was it supreme mastery, the last and subtlest reach of the fencer's

Youth forced age slowly backward in the struggle, which at times took on spurts so furious that the slender blades, becoming mere glints of acicular steel, split the moonlight back and forth, up and down, so that their meetings, following one another in a well nigh continuous stroke, sent a jarring noise through the air. Father Beret lost inch by inch, until the fighting was almost over the body of Alice, and now for the first time Hamilton became aware of that motionless something with the white, luminous face in profile against the ground; but he did not let even that unsettle his fencing gaze, which followed the sunken and dusky eyes of his adversary. A perspiration suddenly flooded his body, however, and began to drip across his face. His arm was tiring. A doubt crept like a chill into his heart. Then the priestappeared to add a cubit to his stature strangely in th Behind him, low against the sky, a wide winged owl shot noiselessly across just above the prairie.

The soul of a true priest is double; it is the soul of a saint and the soul of a worldly man. What is most beautiful in this duality is the supreme courage with which the saintly spirit attacks the worldly and so often heroteally masters it. In the beginning of the fight Father Beret let a passion of the earthly body take him by storm. It was well for Governor Henry Hamliton that the priest was so wrought upon as to unsettle his nerves; otherwise there would have been an evil heart impaled midway of Father Beret's rapier. A little later the saintly spirit began to assert itself, feebly indeed, but surely. Then it was that Father Beret seemed to be losing agility for awhile as he backstepped away from flamilton's increasing energy of assault. In his heart the pricet was saying: "I will not murder him. I must not do that. He deserves death. but vengeance is not mine. I will disarm him." Step by step he retreated, playing erratically to make an opening for a trick he meant to use

It was singularly loose play, a sort of wavering, shifty, incomprehensible show of carelessness that caused Hamilton to entertain a doubt, which was really a fear, as to what was going to happen, for, notwithstanding all this neglect of due precaution on the priest's part, to touch him seemed impossible, miraculously so, and every plan of attack dissolved into futility in the most maddening way.

"Priest, devil or ghost!" raged Hamilton, with a froth gathering around his mouth, "I'll kill you, or"-

He made a lunge when his adversary left an opening which appeared absolutely beyond defense. It was a quick, dexterous, vicious thrust. The blade leaped toward Father Beret's heart with a twinkle like lightning.

At that moment, although warily alert and hopeful that his opportunity was at hand, Father Beret came near losing his life, for as he sidestepped and easily parried Hamilton's thrust, which he had invited, thinking to entangle his blade and disarm him, he eaught his foot in Allce's skirt and stumbled, nearly falling across her. It would have been easy for Hamilton to run him through had he instantly followed up the advantage, but the moonlight on Alice's face struck his eyes, and by that indirect ray of vision

Theo. M. Barr Successor to Barr & Petzel.

TINDER --

--PLUMBER Hot Air, Hot Water and Steam Reating a Specialty.

OREGON