

Although the writer has often heard his mother tell this thrilling story of her uncle and aunt, it is so well told in "The Ligonier Echo," Vol. IX, No. 37, that we beg leave to produce it herewith with but few changes. It reads like a romance, but the facts cannot be denied. It says:

"Among the enterprising company of adventurers who came to Fort Ligonier in the spring of 1759, Mr. Reed and family were conspicuous members. His oldest daughter was named Mattie, and the next, a son, named George.

"Mattie the heroine of our tale being the oldest, was necessarily required to assist her father in his out-door vocations, such as planting, hoeing and gathering in the crop. These active employments gave to her physical system a strength and activity unusual to her sex.

"Thus blessed, as she was, enjoying a fine flow of spirits, and a mind, calm, serene and fearless, she grew up

to maturity, ripened into womanhood, the pride of her parents and the favorite of the Valley.

“For the first sixteen years, this brave little colony enjoyed comparative peace with their Indian neighbors.

“During that period each family had acquired a comfortable home. Many other families had from time to time been added to their number and in the delightful valley, but a comparatively brief space before an unbroken wilderness, might now be seen from the summits of the mountains, which surrounded it, at least a hundred thriving improvements, and as many plain log dwellings, tenanted by a free, fearless, peaceful and happy community.

“But human prospects, however flattering, are liable to vicissitudes, and so it was with our early settlers.

“On the commencement of the American Revolution in 1775, the northern Indians, hitherto the murderers of the French, became the ruthless desperadoes of Great Britain, and fiercely fought for that power which they formerly had opposed.

“But though the red man had changed his ally, he had not changed his nature. He was still the foe of the pioneers, and cherished an inveterate and uncompromising hostility to “Deadenings and Clearings.” Stimulated by the hope of reward from the employers, urged by the inextinguishable fires of vengeance, and favored by their knowledge of the country, they lurked unseen in the defiles of the forest, except when they chose to be felt in their exterminatory mode of warfare.

“The situation of the settlement became extremely perilous. They found that to remain in isolated dwellings was to insure universal destruction. They therefore united for common defence and took shelter in the fort, particularly in the summer season. In the winter, during the prevalence of snow, they were but little molested, the Indians instinctively fearing that “moccasin tracks might tell tales.”

“Our settlers, though dangerously situated, could not be frightened from their cherished abodes.

“They determined at all hazards to occupy their toil-purchased heritage, their love-endearred domiciles. Noble, dangerous resolutions! In order to sustain life, the means of subsistence must come from the farms, and as much as possible to guard against danger while tilling their land, they went, each man with his rifle to the field in a body, leaving but few to defend the fort.

“When arriving at the theater of operations a part stacked their arms in some convenient and accessible place and ardently engaged in the business of agriculture, while the rest stood sentry around the field to prevent a surprise from their wily foe. Thus passed years of those fearful times, almost every week producing some scene of excitement and alarm from depredations of the savage, either on the citizens of their own or neighboring settlements. But the very frequency of these alarms rendered their effects transient. They were thought of only when narrated. and served to perpetuate their vigilant system of united defence.

“Among the inmates of the fort were a number of both sexes, who had arrived at the interesting time of life—maturity of intellect and physical powers—when the spirits are buoyant, nerves elastic, hearts joyous and feelings prone to convivial enjoyment. These could not, and why should they, be restrained from engaging for amusement in trials of strength and activity, such as were common in that day.

“One favorite rural sport was running foot races over the green lawns inside of the stockade. Of those engaged in these pedestrian exercises, our heroine, Miss Reed, was not the least distinguished. Custom not then excluding her sex from these amusements, she constantly enjoyed them and aspired if possible to be the fleetest of the com-

petitors. For this desirable reputation she had but one rival, Mr. Shannon, a young man, two or three years her senior. Shannon possessed the requisite traits of character for popularity—bravery and generosity—and was, like our heroine, a general favorite.

“In the races, which were frequent, he and Miss Reed far outstripped every other competitor; but though they often contended for victory over each other, the nicest judge could not determine to which it belonged, but a question sometimes arose in the minds of critical observers, whether she was in every instance spared the mortification of defeat by her own unsurpassed fleetness or by his partial gallantry. As that question was not decided then, we will not attempt its solution now.

“In 1778, the gloomiest period of the revolution, that period which emphatically tried men’s souls, from the Commander-in-chief through every class of society, down to the danger-defying pioneer, with hostile savages. Regardless of danger, the colony of Ligonier united in their usual way, and harvested their little crop.

“After the ingathering, Miss Reed, a female companion, her brother George, and another young man, left the fort in the afternoon intending to gather blackberries at a farm some two miles from the fort, their road leading for some distance through a thick growth of underwood. While passing this part of the road, they saw coming toward them on horseback, with a gun on his shoulder, a Mr. McDowell, an inmate of the fort, to which he was returning from his farm. When within a few rods of meeting, they were fired on by a party of Indians lying in ambush. George Reed was shot through the body and mortally wounded. A ball from the enemy struck the barrel of McDowell’s rifle just where it rested on his shoulder and was shivered to atoms by the concussion; particles of it were afterwards extracted from his face and neck.

“George Reed, with a death effort, sprang into the thicket and his companion wheeled and ran toward the young women, who were a short distance behind. An Indian rushed into the path before him, seized and made him prisoner. Miss Reed was at this time walking arm in arm with her female friend. On hearing the alarm, she turned to run, but her comrade retained her hold, exclaiming, ‘Oh, Mattie will you leave me?’ The peril of this moment suspended every consideration but that of safety. Every other emotion was lost in the fear of the horrid death and the hope of self preservation. Extricating herself from her intimidated companion, who stood mute in despair until the tomahawk of a ruthless savage sank deep into her skull and laid her a lifeless corpse at his feet, Miss Reed bounded off, but at that very instant an Indian, the swiftest of the party, disencumbered of tomahawk and gun, sprang forward and attempted to seize her. He was so near her that he extended his hand to grasp her clothes. This was seen and related by Mr. McDowell who after receiving the fire of the Indian, wheeled his horse across the road, urged him to his speed, having just time to look back and witness what we have narrated. The savage failing in his first effort to secure his victim, a determined and protracted chase ensued. Miss Reed, having summoned all her energies to the task and confident of her own powers, retreated with a velocity never before witnessed by her merciless pursuer; who notwithstanding his proverbial admiration of superior powers, was not only astonished but mortified to find himself outrun by a woman. The very thought was agony to his feelings, and he became more and more determined to make her his captive. For this purpose he resorted to the usual stratagem of the Indian.

“He endeavored to intimidate his intended victim by those terrific yells which the savage alone can utter.

But his scheme proved abortive and produced a result very different from that he intended. Our heroine afterwards stated that she thought each fearful savage scream she heard behind her added energy to her feelings and accelerated her speed. Every bound now increased the distance between her and her sanguinary foe. But, relying on his superior powers to continue the pursuit, and inspired by the hope thence arising of yet capturing the rich prize before him, and preserving his character from perpetual reproach, he persevered in the pursuit. The inmates of the fort heard the reports of the guns and the hideous yells of the Indian. Knowing that a party had gone out in that direction and rightly conjecturing they were surprised by a party of their skulking enemies, the men instantly seized their rifles and rushed forth to the rescue. Shannon was one of the party that flew to the relief of the victims. He knew that Miss Reed was among them. If he needed anything to stimulate him to superior exertion, anxiety for the fate of her to him most dear furnished that stimulant, and he soon left far behind the fleetest of his companions.

“When he had proceeded about a quarter of a mile, he saw with joy unspeakable, Miss Reed, still safe, and at top of her speed making towards the fort, pursued at some distance by an Indian warrior. The latter, seeing the object of his wishes within reach of a deliverer, who held in his hand the unerring rifle, turned, and frantic with rage and disappointment, made good his retreat. The next moment, the preserved and preserver were in each other’s arms.

“Here, gentle reader, let me pause and not mock the scene by inadequate description. Their emotions at this interesting crisis, not only far surpassed the powers of language but also the conceptions of the most vivid imaginations. Her feelings were those of gratitude to her deliver-

er; his, the proud and happy consciousness of having been instrumental in saving for himself the lovely object he now pressed to his throbbing bosom. In that thrilling instant every peril was forgotten. During a moment's converse, held, not in the cold formality of words but in the sacred language of the heart language, which however intelligible to them, admits of no translation they discovered how much they loved, how inseparably their affections were entwined.

“But their felicity did not cause them to forget their duty. Having been instructed in the Christian religion and taught to put their confidence in God and to be grateful for His favors, they united in presenting their unfeigned thanks to the Father of Mercies for this special interposition of His providence in behalf of His children. Happy moment! It was but a moment, for the lofty pinnacle of bliss to which her devout aspirations had elevated her feelings, they soon resumed their wonted equanimity.

“Her mind recurred to the scenes she had passed through, and her brother and companions naturally came first to her thoughts and seemed to demand her utmost solicitude. ‘Oh my brother! oh my companions, where are they? What has been their fate?’ ‘Fly,’ said she to those around her, ‘fly to their relief. It may be that it is not too late to rescue them from a cruel death or a still more cruel bondage.’

Instantly every man flew to the relief of their common friends. Mr. Shannon, on whose arm she still clung, was left to take care of Mattie. He led her to the fort at the gate of which they were met by its aged inmates, among whom were her parents, whose joy for her safety was only dampened by a fearful apprehension for the fate of her comrades. These apprehensions were anon supplanted by a bitter reality. When the party that went out in pursuit of the Indians arrived at the fatal thicket, they

found the lifeless body of the young woman, Beckie Means, lying scalped in the road. After a brief search, the body of George Reed was also found at some distance from the road. He was not scalped. The Indians had departed with their prisoner without obtaining this much prized trophy—a trophy the more highly valued, as it procured, not only the approbation of the British government, but also a portion of their gold.

“The party returned with the remains of their butchered friends to which they, the next day, paid the last sad duties of interment.

“During the continuance of the war, which lasted three years after the incident, we have related, our colony was confined principally to the fort. But after the storms of war, smiling peace again returned to bless our land and released the pioneer from his protracted confinement within the dusky walls of the stockade, to resume in safety his agricultural pursuits. Shannon and Miss Reed united by marriage, spent their days on a farm near the fort.” (The writer of this narrative saw them when far advanced in life surrounded by a number of grand children, still apparently happy in the enjoyment of each other’s affections. They lived to a good old age, respected in life; in death lamented by all who knew them.)

“But it was different with the discomfited Indian. His ears were constantly greeted with ‘White squaw beat you, ‘You no warrior’ and similar expressions of contempt. But this was not all. A chieftain’s daughter, the flower of the forest, to whom he was engaged to be married on his return, and to whom he had promised a white servant of his own capturing as a nuptial present—heard with mortification the account of his disgrace. She met the abashed warrior with a contemptuous frown. She told him she had loved him for his prowess in battle and the chase, but that his being beaten by a ‘pale-faced squaw’



had broken the chain by which she was won. So saying, she turned from him with a look of contempt, declaring that she would keep her affections and hand for some one more worthy of a chieftain's daughter. When the prisoner already mentioned returned from a three years' servitude with his captors this Indian still continued to be employed in the meanest drudgery of the tribe, a striking evidence of the odium with which failure in any undertaking considered practicable is regarded by savage nations."