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## The Lovers

Dr. Geo. W Ryan's Informal

By Theo Kemper

Persons are yet living who remember a pair of storm-beaten trees which stood near the bottom of the ravine down which Kemper Lane winds its way, and not far from the site of the Park avenue Bridge. They were an elm and an oak which stood so close together that their roots and branches intertwined. For unknown years these venerable relics, locked in an embrace which passing years increased in firmness, had faced all weathers. They had from time immemorial, together put forth new leaves in the spring and scattered them in common on the ground beneath, when the frosts of winter had snapped their life. When the huge branches were dry and bare, as they swayed in the wind, their rubbing together gave forth a wailing sound which was not soon forgotten by the boy, who sometimes had to penetrate that rough quarter after a truant cow, or perhaps in tracking a tempting rabbit.

These trees were known as the lovers. They fell together before the conquest of civilization, and so interlaced where their tough branches that it was necessary to chop them into short pieces to get them apart. Near them a small spring of clear water bubbled up and trickled down over the rocks; and to this day there is to be found there a well covered with a large stone into which the same tiny rivulet finds its way, and from thence, through the sewer, down the hillside into the river. And when the trees were uprooted, two stone Tomahawks were found one of which is now among the Indian relics in the museum in Eden Park.

Half a century ago an old man of more than 90 years died near Brookville Indiana, whose early life was passed as a willing captive with the Delawares, who occupied a large portion of the Miami valley when the Miamis had moved westward. By him the story of the lovers was related.

The lovers were a grave mark. When the Miamis were a powerful tribe in this valley, one of their youths, wandering too far North, passed the hunting grounds of the friendly Shawnees, and was captured by the Eries, who dwelt along the southern shore of the great Lake which bears their name. He was adopted into one of their families and given the name of Manteekah. He became in early manhood a brave of the Eries and his courage and manly beauty won the heart of Ticona, daughter of one of the Erie Chiefs. Ticona of course had other suitors, all of whom wished to get rid of Manteekah, but only one of them all dared to challenge the young Miami to a mortal fight. He, whose name was Oranto, instigated and encouraged by Ticona's father who did not favor the suit of the stranger, passed the unpardonable insult to Manteekah, [which was nothing more

than telling him that he stank (editor's note: There is a pencil note that suggests omitting the this phrase)], when the duel was on.

The day came, the ring was formed and the contestants appeared, each naked to the loins and armed with a club and knife. After a little maneuvering to get at each other's weaker points, Oranto made a reckless plunge at his combatant, when Manteekah, who was left-handed, dodged to the right and dealt a left-handed blow with his club on the back of Oranto's head as he passed, which dropped him to the ground, and he was instantly dispatched with the knife. There were loud lamentings in the air as his friends bore away the body, while the applause of the victor was neither hearty nor general. Ticona's father became still more inimical to Manteekah and sought diligently to accomplish his destruction so that no long time passed before he became convinced that he could not claim Ticona as his bride and continue to live with the Eries. She was quite willing to forsake all and follow him; and seizing a favorable moment to make their escape, they mounted the best horse that they could find, and traveled night and day southward, until, in the gray of an early dawn, they galloped into the camp of the Shawnees, south of the Mad river. The Shawnees were at first disturbed by the presence of the young Eries, and questioned them closely until the facts were made known. Then the young lovers received all the aid and comfort which Indian civilization commanded. They were refreshed and rested, their jaded horse exchanged for a fresh one, and before the dew was off the grass, they leapt from the ground to the back of the horse and continued their flight toward the valley of the Miamis.

Manteekah and his little Erie wife were kindly received by his parental tribe, and they planted their wigwam between the trees and the burbling spring which have been spoken of. Here for two years they lived, and if they were held aloof by their neighbors, they compensated themselves for that by the intense devotion to each other, which was no stranger to the Indian character. But by and by they wearied of the heavy air and the changing river. They longed for the crisp winds of the lakes, and its clear depths, and its myriads of great fishes. They grew tired and disgusted with the Ohio, now low and blue, and after a while filling its banks with a resistless torrent of muddy water, in which no good fish could be caught, and against whose current it was no pleasure to paddle a canoe. And so they concluded to try to return to the Eries. Upon pretense of a visit to the friends whom they had made among the Shawnees, they went northward as far as it was safe for Manteekah; and thence Ticona, mounted on her pony and supplied with dried meats and corn went further intending to find her father and pave the way for, the return of herself and her husband. It was only three days ride to reach the village of her father, but when she arrived, she found nothing but ruins and unburied human bones. She traveled on until her eyes rested upon the spreading waters and her lungs drank in the life giving air. Her heart became bold and she continued for days and weeks a fruitless search for her kindred and friends.

Controlled by a passionate impulse to rejoin them, she traveled eastward and northeastward until she came to the shore of the little water whose hourglass shaped lead the Indians to call it the bag-tied-in-the-middle -- Chautauqua. Nowhere did she find a living soul, everywhere the ashes of their burned villages and their unburied bones; nowhere anything but desolation and silence. But looking across the Chautauqua, she descried a blue smoke ascending from a clump of trees on the other side, and she circumvented the lake, only to run into a camp of the Senecas, by whom she was held captive; and to learn from them that her people had been swept from the face of the earth. They had been attacked by the Iroquois and after a brave resistance, had been overcome. Every man and male child and old woman had been killed, and the comelier women and girls had been carried away. The Sun of the Eries had not merely passed behind a cloud; he had set forever.

Ticona begged without avail to be allowed to return to her husband who was not an Erie; they compelled her to follow them eastward to their hunting grounds in the mountains. But the brave spirit of the captive did not yield to despair. She managed in each resting place to leave unobserved a shred of her garment where it could be seen, either to help her find her way back if she should make her escape, or to aid Manteekah to follow her trail, as she knew he would do. And when she learned that their destination was at the triple head-waters, she scratched upon a piece of birch bark a representation of three springs of water near each other from which streams flowed away in opposite directions. And after weeks of travel they reached the high ground in what is now Potter county Pennsylvania, and were within a few miles of each other, the Genesee, flowing northward, and the Susquehanna, flowing southward, and the Allegheny, flowing south westward all take their rise. Ticona was kindly treated, but was constantly watched by the women and two or three braves, one of whom claimed her for himself.

After waiting many days past the time within which Manteekah was to hear from his dusky mate, regardless of consequences he set out to find her. Day by day he followed her trail, and night after night he rested his pony and himself just where she had alighted. He too witnessed the appalling destruction and was chilled by the desolate silence. Away up to the Bag-tied-in-the-middle and around it, and then he found the marks of a lately deserted camp, and that their trail led eastward. He discovered the foot prints of Ticona's pony along with the rest, and then began to notice the threads left on bushes or stuck into the moss on the North side of the trees. Then he found the Birch bark diagram and understood it and so for days and weeks he pursued his way, having abandoned his horse at the foot of the hills along the Tunewanda and with a stealthiness which no human has excelled the Indian in his prime, he stole into the highlands from which the waters descended. In the first glimmer of dawn he examined the Springs and found that the people of the village came to them all for water; and near each one

he left in the tree moss a little gray owl feather, which was his totem and which Ticona knew as well as she did his face. In that hilly land, amid the whispering pines and hemlocks, it was easy to hide and not difficult to gather sufficient food. After many days of patient vigilance, he was rewarded by seeing one of the familiar threads stuck in the moss near the owl feather. Communication was now established between the lovers. On the second morning he found the thread and the owl feather pointing in a certain direction. Searching that way he found some food carefully placed for him. Quiet signaling was kept up for some time and his observations were unremitting until he discovered that nearly all the men in the village had gone to the open country northward for game; and soon after this he received a signal showing a certain tree at a certain time. From that point he could see the wigwam in which Ticona was compelled to sleep between two old women and near the entrance to which the young brave who wanted her for his wife was in the habit of sleeping, as an outside sentinel; yet he did not see Ticona herself, as she was too prudent for that. Their communications were continued until their plans were matured, and when all was ready, he stole to her wigwam on a murky night, let her out, and helped her to cut the throat of the amorous though sleeping sentinel at the gate, and then their flight began. They separated, intending that she should follow down the streams while he should creep over the hills and hollows and rejoin her in a safe place below. Neither was to wait a moment for the other but both to push on in the chosen direction until they were united. Under no circumstances was either to turn back. Now these little rills wander among the hills toward every point of a compass before they get fairly off, each for its own destination, so that for some distance it is impossible to tell certainly which one may be intercepted. Ticona struck the Allegheny and pursued her flight along its course day after day until she reached a depth of water in which she could float a bark canoe. In this, readily constructed, she traveled on until as the snows of winter began to whiten all the mountain sides she paddled into the head of the great River where the two waters met. Here she found a camp of Delawares by whom she was hospitably received and cared for. But Manteekah was not there and during all the long winter he did not come; and the only consolation was that, as her kind protectors tried to make her believe, he had followed the wrong water and after the winter was over and the snow gone he would come to her down the other water and would certainly find her there.

In traversing the hills in the highlands Manteekah had struck the source of the Susquehanna, whose devious way he followed for many a long weary day until he found himself in the beautiful valley of the Wyoming, in the very heart of the Delawares' country. His pathetic story secured the sympathy of that powerful tribe, and they persuaded him that Ticona had followed the right stream and would be picked up by their own people at the junction of the great waters, from whom she had nothing to fear; and, as it was too late in the season to travel over the mountains, they persuaded him to tarry with them until the following summer, and thus each waited, with an Indian's patience, the coming of the warmer sun.

When the ice had all run out and the snow had disappeared from the hills, Ticona began every day to push her canoe a little way up the Monongahela, looking for Manteekah. And one bright afternoon near mid-summer, she, all alone, still watching and waiting, espied three canoes coming down the stream. She stood up and waved her bright wanpum above her head, and immediately one of the shells shot forward like an arrow, and brought Manteekah to her side. He left his companions and stepping into Ticona's little boat, took the paddler and headed it homeward. No audible word was spoken — there was no embracing and kissing — but there was an unutterable and indescribable radiance of happiness on the two dusky faces, and an expression of satisfaction and contentment which no human tongue has been able to depict in words.

They remained at the head waters of the Ohio until the hills and forests began to put on the russet hues of autumn when they set out, in a large and well furnished canoe, for the country of the Miamis. The water was clear and blue and they found no fault with the gentle current, for it carried them steadily toward their destination; a peaceful sailing into a haven of rest after a perilous and anxious journey. They could have wished for no richer gift from the Great Spirit whom they worshiped, then that their voyage down the beautiful river should keep on and on forever. But in due time they came to the mouth of the Miami, which they recognized with its flat lands and the hills beyond, and not much further down they saw their own familiar landmarks, and the mouth of the mouth of the little valley in which their wigwam had stood. Here they must pull their boat up into the willows and go ashore. But their coming had been observed by some of the warriors of the Miamis who had heard rumors of an invasion which was threatened them from the East, and they hastily and recklessly took the two strangers to be spies from the enemy, stealing near, they shot a fierce volley of arrows without a breath of warning. Ticona fell dead at her husband's feet and Manteekah received a mortal wound. By a strange fatality, they had overcome all enemies and survived all hardships only to fall, as many another has done, by the fatal error of their friends. When their identity was ascertained there was sincere though silent grief throughout the tribe. They buried the bodies between the trees and the spring, and the women twisted the limbs of the then young elm and oak together so that they grew into an inseparable union. Manteekah's two tomahawks were buried with him, and between the two sleeping lovers was placed an earthen vessel full of parched corn for food on their last long journey.

Fortunately the lovers left no descendents to suffer with the rest the martyrdom of their race. They lived perfect lives in the very lap and bosom of nature, and near to her heart and in the reverence of nature's God. Without a theology they observed a sincere religion: without the artificial hindrances and distractions of so-called civilized life, they reveled in a faithful and perfect love, which the winged seraphs of heaven might have coveted. They were a high type of manhood and womanhood, for the Indian was a noble creature before misfortune

and sorrow had broken his spirit, and the vices and cruelties of the white man had transformed him into a vindictive serpent.

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End of Dr. George W. Ryan's informal

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