

Six Years' Captivity Among the Indians— Narrative of Miss Olive Oatman.

It may be recollected that in the Spring of 1851 a family by the name of OATMAN was attacked by the Apache Indians, while endeavoring to reach California by the old Santa Fé route. The family consisted of the father, mother and seven children. Four were murdered outright by the Indians. One of the children, then a lad of 14, was left for dead, but subsequently recovered, and, after suffering incredible hardship, made his way in safety to California. Two daughters were carried into captivity, and the younger died while in the hands of the savages. The other was rescued two years since, joined her brother in California, and they have recently arrived together in this City. This brother and sister are, therefore, the sole survivors of a family of nine persons. Their story is simple and touching. We had yesterday, an interview with them, and derived some interesting particulars of their bereavement and subsequent suffering.

The girl OLIVE is near twenty years of age. She is a modest, intelligent young woman, but has evidently suffered greatly from the hardships she has been compelled to undergo during a captivity of *six years*. Her chin bears the "Chief's mark," a species of tattooing, set in fine parallel lines, running downwards from the lower lip. This savage embellishment does not materially enhance the personal charms of the lady, but it is an indelible evidence of the scenes she has undergone.

The brother, LORENZO D., is about 21 years of age and is a fair specimen of a Western man. The whole family came originally from Illinois. LORENZO has suffered pains and bruises enough to have killed an ordinary man, but has apparently a large stock of vitality remaining. He avers, however, that he would be very unwilling to pass again through the horrible scenes he has witnessed.

The story of the massacre of the OATMAN family has been but imperfectly told in former accounts. The narrative of OLIVE's captivity among the Apaches and Mohaves has not been given. It is but rarely that a tale so full of remarkable incident finds its way into print from the lips of the party interested. The history of the family is briefly as follows:

Mr. ROYSE OATMAN, the father, was a native of Western New-York. Soon after he came of age, his parents removed to the town of Laharpe, in Illinois, and the son afterwards joined them. In that place, the son was married to Miss MARY ANN SPERRY, then a girl of 18. The young couple lived for two years on a farm near Laharpe, and, having accumulated some means, removed to a residence in the town, where Mr. OATMAN entered into mercantile business. The crash of 1837 destroyed his hopes of success in that quarter; the competent fortune he had amassed, disappeared; and, at the suggestion of friends, he removed to the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania. His love for the free life of the Western prairies, however, drew him back, and in 1846 the family returned to Illinois, settling in a log-cabin, not far the village of Fulton. In 1849, an effort was made to organize a party to emigrate to that portion of New-Mexico lying between the Colorado and Gila. Mr. OATMAN cast in his lot with the company, and in the Spring of 1850 started for his new home. Including his own, nine families constituted the party. In August, they had progressed on their journey as far as Council Grove, on the old Santa Fé road. At this point, the first dissensions broke out among the party. The difficulties widened, until finally the Oatman family found themselves nearly alone. Nothing damped, they pursued their journey. At the Rio Grande they took the Cook and Kearney route, and in February, 1851, reached the Pimo village. The two families who had remained with them thus far, now resolved to stop. The OATMANS resolved, unhappily for themselves, to continue their route alone, hoping to reach Fort Yuma in California. On the 18th of March, they reached a camping ground on the Gila River, at a point about eighty miles from Fort Yuma. On the following day, they forded the river. While still encamped, a party of Apaches visited them, making professions of friendship, and desiring to smoke the pipe of peace. Mr. OATMAN made every exertion to secure the good will of the savages, offered them food, and gave them the best entertainment his means afforded. Their prying and inquisitive manner, however, excited his suspicions, and the withdrawal of the party to a short distance, and the holding of a council among themselves, confirmed his apprehensions. He had scarcely warned his family of their peril, when the savages burst upon them, with a terrific yell, and without the warning of a moment, massacred the father, mother, and four of the children. LORENZO (one of the survivors) was left for dead. The two younger girls, OLIVE and MARY ANN, were reserved for another fate. With these captives the Indians departed, after robbing the wagon and tent of the family of all that was valuable.

The lad LORENZO recovered his senses, after the departure of the Indians, only to find a mass of ruins, amidst which lay the bodies of the murdered family. He was afterwards met by a party of friendly Indians, one of whom he had seen before. He was humanely taken into their protection. After these Indians had visited the scene of the massacre, they returned with the report that they could only distinguish the bones of six persons. OLIVE and MARY ANN were not among them. Subsequently LORENZO reached Fort Yuma, where every kindness was shown him. His sisters, however, were now beyond the reach of human help. Whither their savage captors had gone it was impossible to tell; that a fate worse than death awaited them was certain. For five years one of these young girls was subjected to all the drudgery of savage life, and endured sufferings which language is too feeble to portray. The younger of the two, MARY ANN, a child of only eight years, died of starvation during the first year of their captivity; while OLIVE, aged 13 years, with greater endurance, survived her sufferings, and lives to give the narrative of them to the world.

In the keeping of this tribe, (the Mohaves,) OLIVIA wandered toward the Pacific, and in the year 1856 was heard of by Lieutenant-Colonel BURKE, then in command of Fort Yuma. Information was brought to the fort by a friendly Indian named FRANCISCO, who was dispatched to the Mohaves with directions to bring the white woman named OLIVIA to the fort. A great deal of address was necessary, both on the part of the Indian and Miss OATMAN, to reconcile the tribe to the idea of parting with her. She finally, however, reached the fort in safety, guarded by FRANCISCO, where, for the first time for five years she beheld the face of civilized whites. Her reception by the officers was of the most cordial description; and she was not long in sending information of her rescue to Los Angeles, where her brother, who had long been planning an expedition to go in search of his lost sister, heard the welcome news. After spending some two years in California, where a narrative of her captivity was published, she returned, in company with her brother, to New-York, arriving here by the last steamer.