

THE RED TRAIL

By GUSTAVE AIMARD

CHAPTER V.

The sun rose; its beams played on the trembling yellow leaves of the trees, and tinged them with a thousand shades of gold and purple. The birds, cozily nestled in the bushes, struck up their matin carol; the awakening of nature was as splendid and imposing as it is in all mountainous countries.

The leader of the caravan left his tent and gave orders to strike the camp. The tent was at once folded up, the mules were loaded, and, so soon as the horses were saddled, the party started without waiting for the morning meal, for they generally breakfasted at the 11 o'clock halt.

The caravan advanced along the road from Santa Fe to the United States, at a speed unusual under such circumstances.

When he left the camp, the chief of the caravan spurred his horse and joined the Indian, who was marching alone in front, examining the bushes and apparently performing all the duties of an experienced guide. Curumilla, though he heard the hurried paces of the Mexican's horse, did not turn round, but continued trotting along on his sorry mule.

"Indian," said the caravan chief in Spanish, "I wish to speak with you on an important subject; be good enough to put off your usual silence for a while and answer like an honest man. You engaged with me at Santa Fe to lead me, for the sum of four ounces, safely to the frontiers of Upper Mexico. Since you have been in my service I must allow that I have only had reason to praise your prudence; but we are at this moment in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, that is to say, we have reached the most dangerous part of our journey. Two days ago you lifted the trail of Crow Indians, very formidable enemies of caravans, and I want to consult with you as to the means to employ to foil the snares in which these Indians will try to catch us."

The Indian felt in a bag of striped calico thrown over his shoulder, and produced a greasy paper, which he opened and offered the Mexican.

"What is this?" the latter asked. "Oh, yes, certainly; your engagement. Well, what has this to do with the question I asked you?"

Curumilla, still impassive, laid his fingers on the paper, at the last paragraph of the engagement.

"Well, what then?" the Mexican exclaimed ill-humoredly. "It is said there, it is true, that I must trust entirely to you, and leave you at liberty to act as you please for the common welfare. What proves to me that you are acting for our common welfare, and that you are not a traitor?"

At this word traitor, so distinctly uttered by the Mexican, Curumilla gave a tiger glance at the speaker, while his whole body was agitated by a convulsive tremor; he uttered two or three incomprehensible guttural exclamations, and ere the Mexican could suspect his intentions he was seized round the waist, lifted from the saddle, and hurled on the ground, where he lay stunned. Curumilla leaped from his mule, drew from his belt four gold ounces, hurled them at the Mexican, and then bounding over the precipice that bordered the road, disappeared.

The situation was becoming most critical for the chief of the caravan; he found himself abandoned without a guide, in unknown regions, doubtless watched by hidden foes, and exposed at any moment to an attack.

The march was continued; no suspicious sign was discovered; and the Mexicans were justified in believing that, with the exception of the time they would be compelled to lose, the flight of the Indian would entail no disagreeable consequences.

Singularly enough, Carnero seemed rather pleased than annoyed at the disappearance of the guide. Far from complaining or deploring the delay in the continuance of the journey he laughed at what had happened and made an infinitude of more or less witty jests about it, which considerably annoyed his master, whose joy was merely on the surface, and who, in his heart, cursed the mishap which kept them in the mountains and exposed them to the insults of the plunderers.

"Pray, what do you find so agreeable in what has happened that you are so affected to be so merry, No Carnero?" he at length asked.

"Forgive me, mi amo," the capataz answered; "but you know the proverb, 'What can't be cured must be endured.'"

"Hum!" said the master. "And besides," the capataz added, as he stooped down, "however bad our position may be, is it not better to pretend to consider it good?"

A little before 11 a. m. the caravan reached the terrace, and it was with a feeling of joy, which they did not attempt to conceal, that the peons recognized the strength of the position.

"We shall stop here for the present," the Mexican said. "Unload the mules, and light the fires. Immediately after breakfast we will begin entrenching ourselves."

The peons obeyed with the speed of men who have made a long journey and are beginning to feel hungry; the fires were lighted in an instant, and a few moments later the peons vigorously attacked their maize tortillas, their tocinas and their cecinas—those indispensable ele-

ments of every Mexican meal. When the hunger of his men was appeased the chief rose.

"Now," he said, "to work."

CHAPTER VI.

The position which the leader of the caravan fancied he had been the first to discover, and where he had made up his mind to halt, was admirably selected to establish an entrenched camp. The immense voladero hovering at a prodigious height above the precipices, and guarded on the right and left by enormous masses of rock, offered such conditions of security that the peons regained all their merry carelessness, and regarded the mysterious flight of the guide as an accident of no real importance.

It was, hence, with well promising ardor that they rose on receiving their chief's command and prepared under his directions to dig the trench which was intended to protect them from a surprise. This trench was to be bordered by a line of tall stakes, running across the open space between the rocks, which gave the sole access to the terrace.

At the moment when the leader proceeded with several peons armed with picks and spades toward the entrance, with the probable intention of marking the exact spot where the trench was to be dug, the capataz approached, and said with a respectful bow:

"Mi amo, I have an important communication to make to you."

His master turned and looked at him with ill-concealed distrust.

"An important communication to make to me?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"What is it? Speak, but be brief."

"I have discovered a grotto."

"What?" his master exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes, excellency."

"Where?"

"There," he said, stretching out his arm; "behind that mass of rocks."

A suspicious look flashed from behind his master's eyelashes.

"Well, we will enter it together. Fetch some torches of ocote wood, and show us the way. By the by, do not forget to bring weapons, for we know not what men or beasts we may find in caverns thus opening on a high road."

The Mexican selected six of his peons, on whose courage he thought he could rely, ordered them to take their muskets, and bidding the others keep a good watch, but not begin anything until he returned, he made a signal to the capataz that he was ready to follow him. Carnero had followed the arrangements made by his master with an evil eye, but probably did not deem it prudent to risk any remark, for he silently bowed his head, and walked toward the pile of rocks that masked the entrance of the grotto.

These granite blocks, piled one on top of the other, did not appear, however to have been brought there by accident, but, on the contrary, they appeared to have belonged in some early and remote age to a clumsy but substantial edifice.

"It would not be prudent," said the chief, "to venture without precautions into this cavern. Prepare your arms, machochos, and keep your eyes open; at the slightest suspicious sound, or the smallest object that appears, fire. Capataz, light the torches."

The latter obeyed without a word; the leader of the caravan assured himself at a glance that his orders had been properly carried out; then taking his pistols from his belt, he cocked them, took one in each hand, and said to Carnero:

"Take the lead. It is only just that you should do the honors of this place which you so unexpectedly discovered. Forward, you others, and be on your guard."

The eight men went into the cavern at the heels of the capataz, who raised the torches above his head, doubtless in order to cast a greater light.

They thus reached a rather large hall, into which several passages opened. All at once the leader stopped and listened.

"Listen," he said to the capataz, "do you not hear something?"

The latter bent his body slightly forward and remained motionless for some seconds.

"I do," he said, drawing himself up, "it sounds like distant thunder."

"Is it not? or, perhaps, the rolling of subterranean waters?"

"I can swear that you are right. It would be a piece of luck for us to find water in the cave, for it would add greatly to our security, as we should not be obliged to lead our horses, perhaps, a long distance to drink."

tance from the spot where they were, perhaps but a few steps, there ran one of those subterranean streams so frequently found in natural caverns.

All at once, without being warned by the slightest sound, the leader of the caravan felt himself seized round the waist, his torch snatched roughly from his hand, and extinguished against a rock, and himself thrown down and securely bound, before he was able to attempt the slightest resistance, so sudden and well calculated had the attack been. Carnero had been thrown down at the same time as his master, and bound.

"Cowards, demons!" the Mexican yelled, "show yourselves, at least, so that I may know with whom I have to deal."

"Silence! Gen. Don Sebastian Guerrero, resign yourself to your fate, for you have fallen into the power of men who will not liberate you."

Gen. Guerrero made a movement of impotent rage, but he was silent; he perceived that the originators of the snare of which he was a victim were implacable enemies.

When his conquerors had borne him to the hall, where his peons were disarmed and guarded, he saw, by the light of the torch that faintly illumined the hall, that among the men who surrounded him few wore the Mexican costume, it was true, and they had their faces hidden by a piece of black crape, forming a species of mask, and so well fastened round their necks, that it was entirely impossible to recognize them.

"What do these men want with me?" he muttered, as he let his head fall on his chest sadly.

"Patience!" said the man who had already spoken, "you will soon know."

CHAPTER VII.

There was a short delay, during which the conquerors appeared to be consulting together in a low voice; while doing so, an Indian chief, who was no other than the Jester, entered the hall. The general and the capataz were then again picked up by the redskins, and at a sign from one of the masked men, transported on to the voladero.

One hundred and fifty to two hundred Indians, mostly armed with guns, and ranged in good order round the terrace, the center of which remained free, faced the cavern, having among them the disarmed Mexicans, the baggage, horses and mules.

The tent still stood in the middle of what was to have been the encampment; but the curtain was raised, and a horseman was standing in front of it, as if to defend the entrance.

At the moment when the party emerged from the cave and appeared on the terrace, the horsemen drawn up at the entrance of the defile opened out to the right and left, leaving a passage for a small troop of men dressed in hunter's garb, and whom it was easy to recognize as white men; two ladies, mounted on ambling mules, were in the midst of them.

This troop of strangers was composed of eight persons altogether, leading with them two baggage mules. As the men were disarmed, and walked on foot amid some fifty Indian horsemen, they had, in all probability, been surprised by a party of redskins.

The two ladies, one of whom was of a certain age, while the other appeared scarce 18, and who might be supposed closely related, through the resemblance of their features, were treated with an exquisite politeness they were far from expecting by the Indians, and conducted to the tent. The curtain was then lowered, to conceal them from the glances of the Indians.

The newcomers, at a signal from their conductors, ranged themselves with the other prisoners; they were powerful men whom the Indians had probably not given a chance to defend; otherwise they looked as if they would sooner be killed than yield.

Two masked men took their seats on the granite blocks, and the Indians who carried the general laid him on the ground in front of this species of tribunal. The person who seemed to be the president of this sinister assembly gave a sign, the prisoner's bonds at once fell off, and he found himself once more able to move his limbs.

The general drew himself up, crossed his hands on his chest, threw his body back haughtily, raised his head and looked at his judges with a glance of withering contempt.

"What do you want with me, bandits?" he said; "enough of this; these insolent maneuvers will not alarm me."

"Silence!" the president said, coldly; "it is not your place to speak thus."

Then he remarked to the Jester, who was standing a few paces from him:

"Bring up the other prisoners, old and new; everybody must hear what is going to be said."

The Jester gave a signal to the warriors; some of them dismounted, approached the prisoners and, after loosening the cord that bound the capataz, they led him, as well as the peons and prisoners of the second caravan, in front of the tribunal. Then, at a signal from the Jester, the horsemen closed up round the white men.

(To be continued.)

Hardest of All Metals.

Tantalum has been hammered into sheets, which are extremely hard. Sir William Crookes, F. R. S., states that "a hole had to be bored through a plate of this metal and a diamond drill was used, revolving at the rate of 5,000 revolutions per minute. This whirling force was continued ceaselessly for three days and nights, when it was found that only a small depression 25 mm. deep had been drilled, and it was a moot point which had suffered the more damage—the diamond or the tantalum."

It is only a waste of time to look at the ashes after you have burned the money.



"Why is Jones growing a beard?" "Oh, I believe his wife made him a present of some ties."—Punch.

"Do you think we should let women vote?" "Certainly. Why not? We let them earn money all other ways."—Life.

"So she's about to be married again. Do you know who is the lucky man?" "Yes, the dead one."—Detroit Free Press.

The Man—None of their relatives will speak to them since their elopement. The Girl—They ought to be a very happy couple.—Puck.

"I notice your daughter dances with such graceful, free movements." "They ain't free; she takes reg'lar paid lessons."—Baltimore American.

Little Girl (after a domestic scene with her mother)—The best thing for us to do, mamma, is to agree to a separation.—Transatlantic Tales.

Duff—Rowell believes in the eternal fitness of things. Cuff—That's so; he wouldn't run for a car if he had a walking suit on.—Town Topics.

"Willie Green," said the teacher, "you may define the word memory." "Memory," said Willie, "is what we forget with."—Philadelphia Record.

"Do you favor any particular school of music?" asked the lady. "Yes, indeed," replied the young man who lives in a flat. "I favor the pianissimo school."—Puck.

Rector (showing a stranger the church monuments)—My grandfather has slept in this church for eighty years. Stranger—Is he living?—Yonkers Statesman.

Mrs. Neighbors—Are you aware that your new hired girl is a sonnambulist? Mrs. Meadowgrass—My goodness, no! She told me she was a Baptist.—Chicago Daily News.

Little Girl (telling of the Garden of Eden)—Yes, Mummy, Adam and Eve lived very happily there till the Evil One came in the form of a servant.—Canadian Courier.

First Little Girl—When you grow up are you going to advertise for a husband? Second Little Girl—No; I'm going to be a widow. They don't have to.—Harper's Weekly.

Mother-in-Law—Has the young man who saved my life yesterday called upon you yet? Son-in-Law—Yes, indeed, he has already made his apologies.—Fliegende Blaetter.

Clara—You may not believe it, but I said "No" to seven different men during the past winter. Maude—Oh, I don't doubt it. What were they selling.—Chicago Daily News.

Mistress—Why don't you boll the eggs! Cook—Sure, I've no clock in the kitchen to go by. Mistress—Oh, yes, you have. Cook—What good is it? It's ten minutes fast.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

"May I ask your father for your hand to-night, Miss Ketchum?" "Can't you wait until to-morrow night, George? I think Charlie Chumpley is going to ask him to-night."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Anxious Housewife (started by a crash in the room below)—There! Another of my best porcelains tureens gone. Husband—Never mind, dear; it has stopped the cook's slinging.—Portland Oregonian.

Voice from the parlor—Mary Ann, did you get the milk for the children and Fido in separate bottles? Mary Ann—Yes, ma'am. The voice—Have Fido's milk sterilized. Mary Ann—Yes, ma'am.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Geck (who has already wearied the guests with many songs)—Now I will sing you one more song and then go home. Lady—Pardon me, but do you attach much importance to the order of your program?—Fliegende Blaetter.

"Do you think you will learn to like your titled son-in-law?" "I don't know," answered Mr. Cumrox. "I can't quite tell where to place him in my expense account. He is neither a recreation nor an investment."—Washington Star.

Mrs. Scrapington (in the midst of her reading)—Here is an item which says that full-grown rhinoceroses cost \$12,000 apiece. Mr. Scrapington (meanly)—Eh-yah! And isn't it a pity that women can't wear them on their hats?—Smart Set.

Boston Newsboy.

New Yorker (in Boston)—I say there, boy! Move you an extra?

Boston Newsboy—I have an especial edition issued at 12 o'clock meridian, sir!—Yonkers Statesman.

Watch any man long enough, and you will see him make a mighty bad break.

HERE'S A WEATHER SHARP.

High Meteorological Standing of the Green Tree Frog.

Few animals have survived the attacks made by science upon their reputation as weather prophets. The green frog is a conspicuous exception. He is, to be sure, a croaking prophet, but plenty of people still pin their faith to him. Even so scientific a journal as Symons' Meteorological Magazine has a kind word to say of the little fellow.

Here is a picture of the frog's ladder which is provided for this weather prophet in Germany and Switzerland. In many houses the frog is kept in a bottle half filled with water and provided with a ladder, and the little fellow is carefully watched as to his behavior in uncertain conditions of the atmosphere. A number of weather maxims are based upon his posture and activity. If he remains on one of the lowest steps of the ladder it is considered a sure sign that bad weather is coming. If he emerges from the water and rests upon the steps above it fine weather may be expected, and the higher he sits on the steps the finer the weather is sure to be. He is also supposed to



SWISS WEATHER PROPHET.

give warning of bad weather by croaking loudly before a storm.

The magazine says that there is really some reason to believe that the green tree frog is somewhat experienced as regards climatic conditions and acts accordingly. In fine weather he skips about among the branches of trees, when at liberty, catching flies. At the approach of winter he seeks the water and finds himself a bed in the mud until the following spring calls him out to resume his war on the flies.

Now the frog on the ladder without doubt watches the weather conditions keenly and rises to look out for flies when the circumstances seem favorable. On the other hand, when the weather is cold and damp he is reminded of winter and instinctively retires to bury his sorrows in the imaginary mud which he sees at the bottom of his prison.

NOT A SAFE MAN TO WED.

The notions in regard to courtship and marriage held by Tibble, the young Scotchwoman who presided over the Jameson kitchen, were a never-ending source of amusement to her mistress. "I've taken me mind off Archie MacLachlan, ma'am," Tibble announced one day, referring to a young carpenter who had haunted her domain for some weeks. "He's no the man for me. I can see that weel."

"What has poor Archie done?" asked Mrs. Jameson, her heart filled with joy at the knowledge that she was not to lose her domestic treasure, as she had feared.

"It's what he has na done, ma'am," responded Tibble, briskly. "I put a few tests to him. I said, 'Archie, if ye had a wife, an' come home some day to find she'd gone gadding with her kin and left the house in disorder what'd you do?' And he looked at me with that foolish smile o' his, an' said he, 'I'd put it to rights myself!'"

"Again I tried him with churegoing. Said I, 'Archie, if ye had a wife that some Sawbeth morning would up an' tell ye she was too tired to bide the thoughts o' sitting under the minister, what'd you do?' An' again he smiled foolish at me, an' said, 'I'd go an' listen for two!'"

"And at last I tried him with the vapitries o' this world. I said, 'Archie, if ye had a wife that would take some o' your hard-earned money an' spend it for gay ribbons an' kicshaws to put on herself, what'd you do?' An' he smiled broader than ever, an' says he, 'I'd take my pleasure lookin' at her w! 'em on her!'"

"So then I up an' told him he's best be looking elsewhere for a wife. 'You'd be a fearfu' pleasant man to wed,' I said to him, 'but such easy-going ways would na train a lass like me!'"

"The answer to every one o' the three questions should 'a' been, 'I'd take a stick to her, an' you know it!'"

"So now we've parted, ma'am."

England has 30,000 persons with a single leg or arm.