

THE RED TRAIL

By GUSTAVE AIMARD

CHAPTER XIV.

It was very late when the conspirators separated, and when the last groups of officers left the rancho the sound of the Indian horses and mules proceeding to market was audible on the paved highway.

The two travelers had seated themselves again at a corner of the table, opposite one another, and were dumb and motionless as statues. At length the person who had always spoken on his own behalf and that of his companion struck the table twice, and the landlord hurried up at this summons.

"What do you wish for, excellency?" he asked, with an obsequious air.

"I tell you what, landlord," the stranger continued, "it strikes me that your criado is a long time in returning; he ought to have been back before this."

"Pardon me, excellency, but it is a long journey from here to the Segunda Monterilla. Still, I believe the peon will soon be back."

At this moment there was a tap at the door.

"Perhaps it is our man," the stranger said.

After exchanging a few words with the new arrival, the landlord unhooked the chain and opened the door.

"Excellency," he said to the stranger, "here is your messenger."

"At last," the traveler said, gladly. The peon entered, politely doffed his hat and bowed.

"Well, my friend," the stranger asked him, "did you find the person to whom I sent you?"

"Yes, your excellency. I had the good fortune to find him at home."

"Ah, ah! And what did he say on receiving my note?"

"Well, excellency, he is a caballero, for sure; for he first gave me a plastre, and then said to me: 'Go back as quick as you can walk and tell the gentleman who sent you that I shall be at the meeting he appoints as soon as yourself.'"

"So that—"

"He will probably be here in a few minutes."

"Very good; you are a clever lad," the stranger answered. "Here is another plastre for you."

"Thanks, your excellency. I should be a rich man with only two nights a month like this."

The peon had scarce left the room ten minutes ere a rather loud voice was heard without; horses stamped, and not only was the door struck, but there were several loud calls.

"Open the door without fear," the stranger said; "I know that voice."

The ranchero obeyed, and several persons entered.

"At last you have returned, my dear Valentine," the newcomer exclaimed in French, as he walked quickly toward the travelers, who, for their part, went to meet him.

"Thanks for your promptitude in responding to my invitation, my dear Rallier," the hunter answered.

"Now," said Valentine, so soon as the door closed behind the landlord, "we shall talk at least in safety."

"Speak Spanish, my friend," said M. Rallier.

"Why so? It is so delightful to converse in one's own tongue, when, like me, you have so few opportunities for doing so. I assure you that Curumilla will not feel offended."

"Hum; I did not say this on behalf of the chief, whose friendship for you I am well acquainted with."

"Who then?"

"For Don Martial, who has accompanied me, and has important matters to communicate to you."

"Oh, oh, that changes the question," said the hunter. "Are you there, my dear Don Martial?"

"Yes, señor," the Tigreiro answered, emerging from the gloom, "and very happy to see you."

"Who else have you brought with you, Don Antonio?"

"Me, my friend," said a third person, as he let the folds of his cloak fall. "My brother thought that it would be better to have a companion."

"Your brother was right, my dear Edward, and I thank him for the good idea, which procures me the pleasure of shaking your hand a few moments sooner. And now, señores, if you are agreeable, we will sit down and talk."

"I am ready!" Antonio Rallier answered, as he sat down.

"If you like," Valentine continued, "we will proceed in rotation."

"First and before all else, my friend," said Antonio Rallier, "permit me to thank you once again, in my own name and that of my family, for the service you rendered me in your journey across the Rocky Mountains. Without you, without your watchful friendship and courageous devotion, we should never have emerged from those frightful gorges, but must have perished miserably in them."

"What good is it, my friend, to recall at this moment—"

"Because," Antonio Rallier continued eagerly, "I wish you to be thoroughly convinced that you can dispose of us all as you please. Our arms, purses, and hearts all belong to you."

"I know it, my friend, and you see that I have not hesitated to make use of you, at the risk even of compromising you. So let us leave this subject, and come to facts. What have you done?"

"I have literally followed your instructions; according to your wish, I have hired and furnished for you a house in Tacuba street."

"Pardon me, but you know that I am very slightly acquainted with Mexico, for I have visited that city but rarely, and each time without stopping."

"The Tacuba is one of the principal streets in Mexico; it faces the palace."

"That is famous. And in whose name did you take the house?"

"In that of Don Serapio de la Ronda. Your servants arrived two days ago."

"You mean—"

"I mean Belhumeur and Black Elk. They have made all the arrangements, and you can enter when you please."

"To-day, then."

"I will act as your guide."

"Thank you; what next?"

"Next, my brother Edward has taken, in his own name, at the San Lazaro gate a small house, where ten horses, belonging to the purest mustang breed, were at once placed in a magnificent corral."

"That concerns Curumilla."

"And now one other thing, my friend."

"Speak!"

"You will not be angry with me?"

"With you? nonsense!" said Valentine, holding out his hand.

"Not knowing whether you had sufficient funds at your disposal—and you will agree with me that you will require a large sum—"

"I know it. Well?"

"Well, I—"

"I see I must come to your assistance, my poor Antonio. As you believe me a poor hunter not possessed of a farthing, and are so delicate minded yourself, you have placed in a corner of the room, or in some article of furniture, of which you want to give me the key and don't know how, fifty or perhaps one hundred thousand piastres, with the reservation to offer me more, should not that sum prove sufficient?"

"Would you be angry with me had I done so?"

"On the contrary, I should be most grateful to you."

"In that case I am glad."

"Glad of what, my dear Antonio?"

"That you accept the hundred thousand piastres."

Valentine smiled.

"I am delighted to find that you are the man I judged you to be. Still, I do not accept it."

"Do you refuse, Valentine?" he said mournfully.

"Let us understand each other. I do not refuse; I simply tell you that I do not want the money, and here is the proof," he added, as he took out a folded paper, "you, as a banker, may know the firm of Thornwood, Davison & Co."

"It is the richest in San Francisco."

"Then open that paper and read."

Mr. Rallier obeyed.

"An unlimited credit opened at my house," he exclaimed in a voice tremulous with joy.

"Does that displease you?" Valentine asked with a smile.

"On the contrary; but you must be rich in that case."

A cloud of sadness passed over the hunter's forehead.

"I have grieved you, my friend."

"Alas! as you know, there are certain wounds which never close. Yes, my friend, I am rich; Curumilla, Belhumeur and myself alone know in Apacheria the richest placer that exists in the world. It was for the purpose of going to this placer that I did not accompany you to Mexico; now you understand; but what do I care for this incalculable fortune, when my heart is dead, and the joy of my life is forever annihilated!"

And under the weight of the deep emotion that crushed him, the hunter hung his head down and stifled a sob.

"Koutonepi," said Curumilla in a hollow voice, "remember that you have sworn to avenge our brother."

The hunter drew himself up as if stung by a serpent, and pressed the hand of the Indian offered him.

"Women alone weep for the dead, because they are unable to avenge them," the Indian continued in the same harsh, cutting accent.

"Yes, you are right," the hunter answered with feverish energy; "I thank you, chief."

Curumilla laid his friend's hand on his heart and stood for an instant motionless, at length he let it fall, sat down again, and wrapping himself in his sarape, he returned to his habitual silence, from which so grave a circumstance alone could have aroused him.

"Forgive me, my friends, for having forgotten, during a moment, the character I have assumed," said Valentine in a gentle voice.

Their hands were slightly extended to him.

"Now," he exclaimed in a firm voice, "let us speak of that poor Dona Anita de Torares."

"Alas!" said the elder Rallier, "I cannot tell you anything, although my sister Helena, her companion at the Convent of the Bernardines, to which I sent her, has let me know that she would have grand news for us in a few days."

"I will give you that news, with your permission," Don Martial said at this moment, suddenly joining in the conversation.

"Do you know anything?" Valentine asked him.

"Yes, something most important."

"Speak then, my friend, speak, we are listening."

The Tigreiro, without further pressing, at once reported, in the fullest details, his interview with Don Sebastian Guerrero's capataz.

CHAPTER XV.

The Convent of the Bernardines is situated but a short distance from the Pasco de Bucarelli. On the day when we introduce the reader into the convent, at about five in the evening, three persons, collected in a leafy arbor, at the end of the garden were talking with considerable animation.

Of these persons, one was a nun, while the other two, girls of from sixteen to eighteen, were novices.

The first was the Mother Superior of the convent, a lady of about fifty years of age, with delicate and aristocratic features, gentle manners, and a noble and majestic demeanor.

The second was Dona Anita. She was pale and white as a corpse, her fever-parched eyes were not easy, fixed on any object, and she looked about her hurriedly and desperately.

The third was Dona Helena Rillier, a light-haired, blue-eyed girl, with a saucy look, whose velvety cheeks, and noble and well-defined features, revealed the candor and innocence of youth, combined with the laughing expressions of a boarder spoiled by an indulgent governess.

Dona Helena was standing a little outside the arbor, like a vigilant sentry carefully watching lest the conversation between the Mother Superior and her companion, should be disturbed.

"Sister Redemption is coming this way, holy mother," Dona Helena said at this moment.

At a sign from the Mother Superior, Dona Anita withdrew to the other end of the bench on which she was seated, folding her arms on her chest.

"Are you looking for our mother, sister?" Dona Helena asked a rather elderly lay sister, who was looking to the right and left as if really seeking somebody.

"Yes, sister," the lay sister answered, "I wish to deliver a message with which I am intrusted for our mother."

"Then enter this arbor, sister, and you will find her reposing there."

The lay sister entered the arbor, approached the Mother Superior, stopped three paces off, folded her arms, and looked down and waited.

"What do you desire, daughter?" the Mother Superior asked her.

"Your blessing in the first place, holy mother," the lay sister answered.

"I can give it you, daughter; and now what message have you for me?"

"Holy mother, a gentleman of lofty bearing, called Don Serapio de la Ronda, wishes to speak with you privately."

"Remain here till the oracion, my children; converse together, but be prudent," she said.

Then after giving Dona Anita a parting kiss, the Mother Superior went away, sorely troubled in mind at this visit from a man she did not know, and whose name she heard for the first time. When she entered the parlor the abbess examined the stranger with a hasty glance. On perceiving her he rose from his chair and bowed respectfully. This first glance was favorable to the stranger, in whom the reader has doubtless already recognized Valentine Guillois.

"Pray resume your seat, caballero," the abbess said to him, "if your conversation is to last any time; we shall talk more comfortably while sitting."

Valentine bowed, offered the lady a chair, and then returned to his own.

"Señor Don Serapio de la Ronda was announced to me," the lady continued after a short silence.

"I am that gentleman, madam."

"I am at your orders, caballero, and ready to listen to any communication you may have to make."

"Madam, I am merely commissioned by the Minister of the Home Department to deliver this letter, to which I have a few words to add."

While uttering this sentence with exquisite politeness Valentine offered the abbess a letter bearing the ministerial arms.

"Pray open the letter, madam," he added, on seeing that she held it in her hand unopened; "you must be acquainted with its contents to understand the meaning of the words I have to add."

The abbess, who in her heart was impatient to know what the minister had to say, offered no objection and broke the seal of the letter. On reading it a lively expression of joy lit up her face.

"Then," she exclaimed, "His Excellency deigns to grant my request."

"Yes, madam; you remain, until fresh orders, responsible for your young charge. You have only to deal with the minister in the matter; and," he added, with a purposed stress on the words, "in the event of Gen. Guerrero, the guardian of Dona Anita, trying to force you into surrendering her to him, you are authorized to conceal the young lady."

"Oh, señor," she answered, her eyes filling with tears of joy, "pray thank His Excellency in my name for the act of justice he has deigned to perform."

"I will have that honor, madam," Valentine said, as he rose, "and now that I have delivered my message, permit me to take leave of you, while congratulating myself that I was selected by His Excellency the minister to be his intermediary with you."

At the moment when Valentine left the convent Carnero entered it, accompanied by a monk whose hood was pulled down over his face. The hunter and the capataz exchanged side glances but did not speak.

(To be continued.)

A Reason for It.

"Do they always have laundries attached to big prisons?"

"Certainly. Don't they always have to wash and iron the convicts?"—Baltimore American.

Very few men ever attempt to drown their sorrow in water.

COL. TUCKER IS ABSOLVED.

Army Investigation Fails to Sustain Charges of Wife.



MRS. MARY LOGAN TUCKER.

Lieutenant Colonel William F. Tucker, paymaster of the Department of the Lakes, with headquarters at Chicago, will not be court martialed on the complaint preferred by his wife, Mrs. "Dolly" Logan Tucker. The report of the Inspector General charged with the investigation of the affair establishes that the paymaster has not been guilty of any violation of the law or the army regulations.



Water is the universal solvent, and it preserves this property inside the human body as well as without. It is therefore a useful, indeed indispensable, substance; but it must be taken with discretion.

If one drinks a hard water—one already saturated with salts—it does little good, for all its energy must be expended in removing from the system the mineral matter which it already holds in solution, and the animal waste is left where it was before.

A drinking water, to be of any use, must be pure, or comparatively so. Distilled water is the best drink, but unless it is aerated—shaken up so as to absorb air—it is flat and most unpalatable.

Rain-water, in the country, is distilled water, and if properly collected and stored, is excellent for drinking purposes. The first fall should be allowed to run away, for it contains the dust and other impurities in the air, and also the bird droppings and dirt from the roof or other collecting surface.

The cistern in which it is stored should be protected from the surface drainings, and should be tightly covered to keep out dust. Water so kept is greatly preferable to well water, which is almost never beyond the possibility of contamination, no matter how far it may be from the barn or the outhouses, and no matter though it may be at a higher level. There are often seams and cracks in the earth which give free way to water, and in this way the surface washings may be carried to the bottom of a deep well a long way off and on a higher level.

Many persons will not trust any natural supply, and drink only bottled water, either natural or artificial. But this is not always as safe as it seems to be. The maker of the artificial water may not filter it before charging it with carbonic acid gas, and then of course it is no better than the water of the town where it is made.

The natural waters may be pure and they may not, just as any spring may be pure or contaminated.

Those who live in cities where the water is filtered may safely drink it, if they can be sure the water supplied is always that which came through the filter-beds. Those in charge of public water supplies have been known to mix unfiltered water with the filtered, or to substitute it entirely, without warning to the users.—Youth's Companion.

Icy.

"Yes," said Miss Backbay, "Emerson appeals to us women of Boston; although he has passed beyond, we always keep him in our hearts, you know."

"You don't say?" replied Miss Knox of Chicago. "I wonder how it feels to be kept in cold storage like that."—Philadelphia Press.

TRAFFIC OF THE FAR EAST.

American Ships Have Little Share in Trade of Asia.

Again the lamentable condition of the American merchant marine is the subject of an official report to the Department of State, says the Boston Transcript. The latest complaint comes from the far east. "The share of American ships in the immense traffic is this port," writes Amos P. Wilder, our consul general at Hongkong, "is humiliating to those who know the proud place they held in the early days of this colony and earlier in the Canton trade. The present-day liners from San Francisco and Seattle are the largest ships that come to Hongkong. In these leviathans every American takes pride, and for passenger travel they are in high favor; but while in tonnage capacity the rank of the United States is not small, the huge ships of the great Northern Pacific Mail, and other lines bringing up the total, the fact remains that a great body of the imports and exports of our Pacific and Atlantic ports are carried in ships flying a foreign flag. The total number of ocean ships arriving and clearing at Hongkong in 1906 was 7,984, of which 3,697 were British; and of the 4,287 "foreign" (non-British) the Germans listed 1,082, the Japanese 594, the Norwegians 552, the French 435, the Chinese 405, the Portuguese 148 and the Dutch 125, while there were 119 arrivals and departures credited to the United States. While the immense individual tonnage of the few American ships that come to this port made a total of 613,115, yet the German ships aggregated over four times as much, the Japanese over twice as much and the French somewhat more than the American.

"The enjoyment of American foreign trade by non-American ships may be illustrated thus: The 119 ships of the United States arriving in 1906 brought to Hongkong a total of 41,430 tons from the United States, yet the flour receipts alone for the year, nearly all from America, were 79,635 tons, and of kerosene oil, mainly an American product, a total of 72,869 tons, to make no mention of cotton piece goods and general merchandise. So of exports, American ships took from Hongkong but 56,149 tons, not all of which went to the United States. All of the rest of the huge exports went in foreign ships. Of the 3,744,287 tons of imports into Hongkong for 1906, American ships brought 41,430 tons; of the 1,940,274 tons of exports, only 56,149 tons went in American bottoms. Of the 2,878,860 tons 'in transit' only 25,329 tons are credited to American ships. These figures have to do with ocean traffic."

As for "river traffic" from Hongkong as a center to Canton and the Delta, while six other nations figure in the statistics, not one item is credited to the United States. The necessity of assisting the American merchant marine will again be emphasized in the President's next annual message to Congress and in stronger terms than he used last year. By the advocates of the bill the President's message last year was not considered sufficiently specific as to the kind of assistance needed to accomplish much in behalf of a cause in which he is really deeply interested. Care will be taken this year not to belaud the issue by mere generalities. During the summer the President will acquaint himself with the details of the most practicable legislation that can be enacted and he will probably recommend in detail the shipping law which he desires passed.

Both Green.

"Wanted, at once, a rough carpenter; seven shillings a day. Apply J. Morris, Onehunga." This advertisement caught my eye one morning, says the author of "Adrift in New Zealand," when I had been some weeks in the antipodes, and thought it time to cast about for work. The seven shillings appealed to me, and as the advertiser did not say how rough the carpenter was to be, I decided to apply at once to Mr. J. Morris. I applied, and got the job.

In spite of my conceit, however, I felt very nervous when the day arrived on which I had to begin my work. I was at the appointed place a full half-hour before my time, tramping up and down in front of two empty houses, wondering what I would have to do to them.

At eight o'clock my fellow worker arrived, and after a critical survey of me, asked if I were the new man; and on my explaining that I was, he had the impertinence to inquire if I knew anything about carpentering. I was piqued.

"No," I answered, very sharply.

"Neither do I," he replied as cheerfully as could be, and swung open a gate and walked into an empty house. From that moment we were fast friends.

If a man occasionally tells a woman how pretty she looks she will forgive most of the other lies he tells her.

If you want a woman to do a certain thing get her to say she won't.