

THE RED

By GUSTAVE AINARD

TRAIL

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

"Have you learned any important news since our last interview?"

"Only one thing, but I think it is of the utmost gravity for you."

"Speak, my friend."

"What I have to tell you is short and gloomy, senores. The general, after a secret conversation with his man of business, ordered me to carry a letter to the Convent of the Bernardines."

"To the convent?" Don Martial exclaimed.

"Silence," said Valentine. "Do you know the contents of this letter?"

"Dona Anita gave it me to read. The general informs the abbess that he is resolved to finish the matter; that whether his ward be mad or not, he means to marry her, and that at sunrise on the day after to-morrow, a priest sent by him will present himself at the convent to arrange the ceremony."

"What is to be done?" the Tigero exclaimed sadly.

"Silence," Valentine repeated. "Is that all, Carnero?"

"No; the general adds that he requests the abbess to prepare the young lady for this union, and that he will himself call at the convent to-morrow, in order to explain more fully his inexorable wishes."

"Very good, my friend, I thank you for this precious information; it is of the utmost importance that the general should be prevented from going to the convent before three o'clock."

"Do not be uneasy, my dear Valentine; the general shall not go to the convent before the hour you indicate."

"I count on your promise, my friend; and now good-by."

He offered him his hand, which the capatas pressed forcibly.

"My friends," Valentine then said, "we have now arrived at the moment for the final struggle which we have so long been preparing. We must not let ourselves be led away by hatred, but act like judges, not as men who are avenging themselves. Blood demands blood, it is true, according to the law of the desert, but remember, however culpable the man whom we have condemned may be, his death would be an indelible spot, a brand of infamy which would sully our honor."

"But this monster," the Tigero exclaimed, "is beyond the pale of humanity."

"He may re-enter it to repent."

"Are we priests then, to practice forgetfulness of insults?" Don Martial asked with a fenshish grin.

"No, my friend; there are men in the grand and sublime acceptance of the term; men who have often been faulty themselves, and who, rendered better by the life of struggling they have led, and the grief which has frequently bowed them beneath its iron yoke, inflict a chastisement, but despise vengeance, which they leave to weak and pusillanimous minds. Who of you, my friends, would dare to say that he has suffered more than I? To him alone will I concede the right of imposing his will on me, and what he bids me do I will do."

"Forgive me, my friend," the Tigero answered, "you are ever good, ever great. Heaven, in imposing on you a heavy task, endowed you at the same time with an energetic soul, and a heart which seems to expand in your bosom under the blast of adversity, instead of withering."

"Through my own sufferings, I can understand what yours are. I, too, often feel my heart bound with wrath and indignation; for, believe me, my friend, I have a constant struggle to wage against myself, not to let myself be led away to make a vengeance of what must only be a punishment. But enough on this head; time presses, and we must arrange our plans so as not to be foiled by our enemies. I went to-day to the Palace, where I had a secret conversation with the President of the Republic, whom, as you are aware, I have known for many years, and who honors me with a friendship of which I am far from believing myself worthy. At the end of our interview he handed me a paper, a species of blank signature, by the aid of which I can do what I think advisable for the success of our plans."

"Did you obtain such a paper?"

"I have it in my pocket. Now, listen to me. You will go at sunrise to-morrow to the house of Don Antonio Rallier; he will be informed of your coming, and you will follow his instructions."

"And you?"

"Do not be anxious about my movements, good friend, and only think of your own business, for, I repeat, the decisive moment is approaching. The day after to-morrow begins the feast of the anniversary of Mexican independence; that is to say, on that day we shall do battle with our enemy, and meet him face to face; and the combat will be a rude one, for this man has a will of iron, and a terrible energy. We shall be able to conquer him, but not to subdue him, and if we do not take care he will slip through our hands like a serpent; hence our personal affairs must be finished to-morrow. Though apparently absent, I shall be really near you, that is to say, I will help you with all my power. I trust that you have heard and understood me, my friend?"

"Yes, Don Valentine."

"And you will act as I recommend?"

"I promise it."

"Reflect that you are perhaps risking the loss of your future happiness."

"I will not forget your recommendation, I swear to you; I am risking too great a stake in this game, which must decide my future life, to let myself be induced to commit any act of violence."

"Good; I am happy to hear you speak thus; but have confidence, my friend, I feel certain that we shall succeed."

"May heaven hear you!"

"It always hears those who appeal to it with a pure heart and a lively faith. Hope, I tell you; and now, my dear Don Martial, permit me to say a few words to our worthy friend, Belhumeur."

"I will withdraw."

"What for? have I any secrets from you? You can hear what I am going to say to him."

"You have nothing to say to me, Valentine," the hunter said, with a shake of his head, "nothing but what I know already; I have no other interest in what is about to take place beyond the deep friendship that attached me to the count and now to you. You think that the recollection I have preserved of our unhappy friend cannot be sufficiently engraved on my heart for me to risk my life at your side in avenging him; but you are mistaken, Valentine, that's all. I will not abandon you in the hour of combat; I will remain at your side even should you order me to leave you, I tell you that I swear, and have taken an oath to that effect, to make a shield of my body to protect you, if it should be necessary. Now, give me your hand, and suppose we say no more about it?"

Valentine remained silent for a moment; a scalding tear ran down his bronzed cheek, and he took the hand of the honest, simple-minded Canadian, and merely uttered the words:

"Thank you, I accept."

They then rose and returned to their carriage, after Valentine had warned his faithful bodyguard, Curumilla, by a signal that he could leave his hiding place, as the interview was over. A quarter of an hour later the three gentlemen reached the house in the Calle de Tacuba, where Curumilla was already awaiting them.

CHAPTER XXII.

On the morning Mexico awoke to a holiday; nothing extraordinary in a country where the year is a perpetual holiday. This time the affair was serious, for the inhabitants wished to celebrate in a proper manner the anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence, of which the day to which we allude was the eve.

At sunrise a formidable bando issued from the government palace, and went through all the streets and squares of the city, announcing with a mighty clamour of bugles and drums, that on the next day there would be a bull fight with "Jamaica" and "Monte Parnasso" for the leperos, high mass celebrated in all the churches, theaters thrown open gratis, a review of the garrison, and of all the troops quartered sixty miles round, and fireworks and illuminations at night, with open-air balls and ferias.

Don Martial, in order to throw out the spies doubtless posted round Valentine's house, had left his friend in the middle of the night, and gone to his lodgings, and a few minutes before day proceeded to the house of M. Rallier.

"You are welcome," the Frenchman said cordially, on perceiving Don Martial; "I was busy with our affair. My brother Edward is just off to our quinta, whither my mother and my brother Auguste proceeded two days ago, so that we might find all in order on our arrival."

Although the Tigero did not entirely understand what the banker said to him, he considered it unnecessary to show it, and hence bowed without answering.

"All is settled, then," M. Rallier continued, addressing his brother; "get everything ready, for we shall probably arrive before mid-day—that is to say, in time for lunch."

"Your country house is not far from the city?" the Tigero asked, for the sake of saying something.

"Hardly five miles; it is at St. Angel; but in an excellent position for defense, in event of attack. You are aware that St. Angel is built on the side of an extinct volcano, and surrounded by lava and spongy scoria, which renders an approach very difficult."

"I must confess my ignorance of the fact."

"In a country like this, where the government is bound to think of its own defense before troubling itself about individuals, it is well to take one's precaution, and be always perfectly on guard. And now be off, my dear Edward, your weapons are all right, and two resolute peons will accompany you; besides the sun is now rising, and you will have a pleasant ride; so good-by till we meet again."

During this conversation the peons had put the horses in a close carriage.

"Get in," said M. Rallier.

"What!" Don Martial replied, "are we going to drive?"

"Do you think I would venture to go to the convent on horseback?"

"But this carriage will betray you."

"I admit it; but no one will know whom it contains when the shutters are drawn up, which I shall be careful to do before leaving the house. Come, get in."

The Tigero placed himself by the Frenchman's side; the latter pulled up

the shutters, and started at a gallop in a direction diametrically opposed to that which it should have followed, in order to reach the convent.

"Where are we going?" the Tigero asked presently.

"To the Convent of the Bernardines."

"I fancy we are not going the right road."

"That is possible, but, at any rate, it is the safest."

"I humbly confess that I cannot understand it at all."

M. Rallier began laughing.

"My good fellow," he replied, "you will understand at the right time, so be easy. You need only know that in acting as I am now doing I am carrying out to the letter the instructions of Valentine, my friend and yours."

"I have no repugnance to obey you, Senor Don Antonio," the Tigero answered. "The confidence our common friend places in you is a sure guarantee to me as you think proper, without fearing the slightest objection on my part."

"That is the way to talk," the banker said, with a laugh. "Now, to begin, my dear senor, you will do me the pleasure of changing your dress, for the one you wear is slightly too worldly for the place to which we are going."

"Change my dress?" the Tigero exclaimed. "You ought to have told me so at your house."

"Unnecessary, my dear sir. I have all you require here."

"Here?"

"Well, you shall see," he said, as he took from one of the coach pockets a Franciscan's gown, while from the other he drew a pair of sandals and a cord.

"Have you not worn this dress before?"

"I have."

"Well, you are going to put it on again, and for the following reasons: At the convent people believe (or pretend to believe, which comes to the same thing) that you are a Franciscan monk. For the sake, then, of the persons who are not in the secret, it is necessary that I should be accompanied by a monk, and more, that they may be able, if required, to take their oaths to the fact."

"I obey you. But will not your coachman be surprised at seeing a Franciscan emerge from the carriage into which he showed a cabellero?"

"My coachman? Pardon me, but I do not think you looked at him."

"Indeed I did not. All these Indians are alike and equally hideous."

"That is true; however, look at him."

Don Martial bent forward and slightly lowered the shutter.

"Curumilla!" he cried, in amazement, as he drew back. "He, and so well disguised?"

"Do you now believe that he will be surprised?"

"I was wrong."

"No, but you did not take the trouble to reflect."

"Well, I will put on the gown, since I must. Still with your permission I will keep my weapons under it."

"Caspita! My permission? On the contrary, I order you to do so. But what are they?"

"You shall see. A machete, a knife, and a pair of pistols."

"That is first rate. If necessary, I shall be able to find you a rifle."

While talking thus, the Tigero had changed his dress.

"There," the Frenchman continued, "you are a perfect monk."

"No; I want something more, something which is even indispensable."

"What's that?"

"The hat."

"That's true."

"That part of my costume I hardly know how we shall obtain."

"Man of little faith!" the Frenchman said with a smile, "see, and be confounded."

While speaking thus he raised the front cushion, opened the box it covered and pulled out the hat of a monk of St. Francis, which he gave the Tigero.

"And now do you want anything else?"

"Indeed, no. Why, your carriage is a perfect locomotive shop."

The Frenchman opened the door, for the carriage had stopped in front of the Convent of the Bernardines. Two or three ill-looking fellows were prowling about; and, in spite of their affected indifference, it was easy to recognize them for spies. The Frenchman and his companion were not deceived. They got out with an indifference as well assumed as that of the spies, and approached the door slowly, which opened at their first knock, and closed again behind them with a speed that proved the slight confidence the sister porter placed in the individuals left outside.

"What do you desire, senores?" she asked, politely, after curtsying to the newcomers with a smile of recognition.

"My dear sister," the Frenchman answered, "be good enough to inform the holy mother abbess of our visit, and ask her to favor us with an interview for a few moments."

"It is still very early, brother," the nun answered, "and I do not know if holy mother can receive you at this moment."

"Merely mention my name to her, sister, and I feel convinced that she will make no difficulty about receiving us."

"I doubt it, brother, for, as I said before, it is very early. Still, I am willing to tell her, in order to prove to you my readiness to serve you."

"I feel deeply grateful to you for the kindness, sister."

(To be continued.)

Convenient.

"So you have three pairs of glasses, professor?"

"Yes. One pair to read with, another for nearsightedness and a third pair to look for the other two with."—*Fliegende Blaetter.*

The number of divorces is increasing rapidly in England.

WHAT IS A "LADY."

Funny Definitions by English School Children.

Some elementary school children were asked to write down what they understood by a lady. Some of the answers deserve a wider publicity than that of the magazine of the Graystoke (L. C. C.) Training College, England, in which they were recently published. The following is a selection:

Ada (aged 7). A lady marries a man and she goes in a car or she goes in a motor. Sometimes she is a rich lady, sometimes she goes to a ball, and she has glasses when she can't see, and when her father dies she is a widow.

John (aged 8). A lady is a pres (person) And a Cookmaed And a lady does the wreck (work) And a lady dos the doorstep And Clens the handle of the dora And the nokre And the steyos (stoves) And the tadools And bred.

Bertie (aged 7). A lady has got a love haves (house) and have got some serves and lovely frames and a ring and a lovely long hair and a pony trap.

Eddie (aged 8). A lady has a very nice house and she has nice things in it and when she is married she has very nice wrings and then she mite have a nice husband and sometimes he treats her to nice things and then they be kind to each other.

Lizzie (aged 7). A lady is something like a man. But she's got long hair and she's got a different face and different clothes and she's got a lot of work to do.

Ernest (aged 7). A lady is a mother oo as a lot of children and she thest (tries) to get rid of her children.

Harry (aged 7). A lady is a maid and sometimes a cook that cooks the dinner, and a lady as a skirt, and when a lady isn't married she is called a widow a lady has long hair.

Dolly (aged 7). A lady is a kind Woman. A lady is a Guvnats. A lady is a Ruler. A lady is a kind and gentle woman to us and gives us clothes.

Jack (aged 7). A lady is a nice woman because she don't have torn clothes, and she has a woch with her and she has a chane on the woch.

Ned (aged 7). A lady is like a Mistress and like a sister and she prhers (preaches) to people and tehhs (teaches) about God.

Charles (aged 6). A lady is diverent from a man because a lady has difrent clothes from a man and a lady has Different eyes from a man and a lady has Different body from a man and a lady has Different shoes from a man.

Jack (aged 6). A lady has A dress and A man hasn't, and A man has A top hat and A lady hasn't.

BLACK GIRL A NOVELTY THERE.

Why One Family Will Not Take a Colored Maid to France Again.

"My wife and I went to France not long ago to see her parents, who live in that country, and we took along my wife's maid, an extremely efficient colored girl, who has been in the family a long time," said J. T. Lenert, of New Orleans at the New Willard, according to the Washington Herald. "This girl, besides being an excellent creature, is about the complexion of the ace of spades, the deepest of blacks, for she is the direct descendant of slaves of unadulterated African blood. Next year we may go again to France, but we will leave the maid at home."

"What for? Well, that colored girl created a sensation that we never dreamed of. It seems that in many parts of France no colored person had ever before been seen and this one was a novelty that whenever she appeared crowds gathered to look at the unaccustomed sight. This was carried to such an extent as to prove very embarrassing to us and it also worried the maid greatly, for she was not used to being stared at by great throngs of people. One day she went to church, but her presence came very near breaking up divine services and the good father, seeing what was the matter, dismissed the congregation in short order. In London, where black folks are not unfamiliar sights, her appearance created no such stir and, while the girl would willingly go back there, no money could induce her to revisit France."

Well-Meaning But—

"So you don't like Mr. Bliggins?"

"No," answered Miss Cayenne. "He is very clumsy."

"But he means well."

"Yes. He is one of those people who think it doesn't matter how much damage they do if they say 'Excuse me.'"

—Washington Star.

Not Quite.

"Have you any difficulty in getting the proper diet for the invalid?"

"No, indeed; the doctor has ordered us to give some of that prepared desecrated food."—*Baltimore American.*

You are more apt to hear any woman rave over a doctor than the woman who has to earn the money to pay her bills.

If a woman has her children with her, she never hears half what you say to her.

THE DESERTED SANDWICH.

It Had the Fatal Gift of Beauty and It Was Coveted by Many.

"Don't leave your sandwich up there on the advertising boards," said Tommy's mother; "the train will come along soon and you will forget it."

But Tommy did not heed the warning, the train came and went away with Tommy and his mother and the others, bound for Coney Island, and the sandwich remained, says the New York Sun.

It was a remarkably neat package for a sandwich. Lying there on top of the advertising boards it looked as if it had been done up by a jeweler, so rectangular was it and so precisely were the ends of the wrapper folded over.

An elderly man stood near by reading his newspaper. He had heard the talk about the sandwich and he noted that the event had turned out as Tommy's mother had predicted.

A young girl came up the stairs and walked along the platform. She saw the neat package and looked from it toward the man. He drew a step nearer to it, glanced at it as if to assure himself that it was still there, and resumed reading his paper.

Several passengers alighted from the next train, and as they passed the sandwich most of them saw it and the man and tried to decide whether it belonged to him. One young fellow strolled back, after going as far as the door of the waiting room, and walked slowly up and down the platform.

The elderly man stepped to the edge of the platform and looked along the track, as if to see whether the train was coming. Just as he turned to take his former position he saw the young man lingering close to the sandwich.

He cleared his throat with a loud "Ahem!" and rested his arm on the advertising boards a few feet away from the package. The young man took the next train that came along.

A large woman rigged out in clothes that she evidently thought were just the thing hurried up the stairs and was rushing toward the train that had just come in. Her eye caught the package, with its jewelry store appearance, and she did not enter the train.

She looked up and down the track and glanced toward the sandwich, and from it toward the man. He folded his paper, put his reading glasses in his pocket and again stepped to the edge of the platform and looked along the rails.

The woman eyed him and the package alternately. The roar of a train was heard. As it slowed down the man, all unmindful of the package, hurried toward one of the car gates. The man stood on the car platform as the train moved out.

By leaning outward as the train rushed away he could watch the package long enough to see the large woman grab it from the top of the signboards, thrust it under her summer wrap and hurry down the platform stairs faster than she came up. Quite naturally he smiled.

A Wardrobe in a Hat.

Grandfather De Voe is an artist who appreciates fine millinery. His young married daughter, however, was practising domestic economy, when a hat, a beautiful creation in real lace, arrived for little Elise from her devoted grandparent, whose eye had surrendered to this bit of baby apparel the moment he saw it in a department store.

"That hat is too extravagant for this family," remarked the young mother. "I'll take it back and see what I can do."

A few days later the grandfather called to see the baby in the new hat.

"Do let me see how she looks in it," he said. "And how did you like it?"

"Very much, father, thank you. They gave me two hats, two dresses, a sweater, and thirty-nine cents in change for it."

Good-Bye, Euclid.

Within the last few years a revolution has been accomplished at Oxford which ought really to affect the mind of the nation more than the difference between Lord Curzon and Lord Rosebery. A text-book has been discarded which was already venerable for its antiquity at the beginning of the Christian era. Needless to say, we are referring to Euclid's "Elements." For what other text-book ever had such a run as that? It has been accepted ever since its publication, which was in the reign of the first Ptolemy (B. C. 323-285). No writer has ever become so identified with a science as Euclid with geometry. The nearest approaches are to be found in the relation of Aristotle to logic and of Adam Smith to political economy.—*London Spectator.*

Not Like a Woman.

"Have you interviewed that female criminal?"

"I have tried to."

"Tried to?"

"Yes, but she refuses to talk."

"Refuses to talk! Head your article 'Man In Disguise,' and make it three columns on the first page."—*Houston Post.*