

THE RED TRAIL
By GUSTAVE AIMARD

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Spanish custom—a custom which has been kept up in all the old colonies of that power—of placing persons condemned to death in a chapel, requires explanation, in order that it may be thoroughly understood and appreciated, as it deserves to be.

Frenchmen, over whom the great revolution of '93 passed like a hurricane, and carried off most of their belief in its sanguinary cloak, may smile with pity and regard as a fanatic remainder of another age this custom of placing the condemned in chapel. Among us, it is true, matters are managed much more simply; a man, when condemned by the law, eats, drinks and remains alone in his cell. If he desire it he is visited by the chaplain, whom he is at liberty to converse with, if he likes; if not, he remains perfectly quiet, and nobody pays any attention to him, during a period more or less long, and determined by the rejection of his appeal. Then, one fine morning, when he is least thinking of it, the governor of the prison announces to him, when he wakes, as the most simple thing in the world, that he is to be executed that same day, and only an hour is granted him to recommend his soul to the divine clemency. The fatal toilet is made by the executioner and his assistant, the condemned man is placed in a close carriage, conveyed to the place of execution, and in a twinkling launched into eternity, before he has had a moment to look round him.

When a man is condemned to death from that moment he is, de facto, cut off from that society to which he no longer belongs, through the sentence passed on him; he is consequently separated from his fellow men.

He is shut up in a room, at one end of which is an altar; the walls are hung in black drapery, studded with silver tears, and here and there mourning inscriptions, drawn from Holy Writ. Near his bed is placed the coffin in which his body is to be deposited after execution, while two priests, who relieve each other, but of whom one constantly remains in the room, say mass in turn, and exhort the criminal to repent of his crimes, and implore Divine clemency. This custom, which, if carried to an extreme, would appear in our country before all, barbarous and cruel, perfectly agrees with Spanish manners, and the thoroughly believing spirit of this impressionable nation; it is intended to draw the culprit back to pious thought, and rarely fails to produce the desired effect upon him.

The general was, therefore, placed in capilla, and two monks belonging to the order of St. Francis, the most respected, and, in fact, respectable in Mexico, entered it with him.

The first hours he passed there were terrible; this proud mind, this powerful organization, revolted against adversity, and would not accept defeat. Gloomy and silent, with frowning brows, and fists clenched on his bosom, the general sought shelter like a wild beast in a corner of the room, recalling his whole life, and seeing with starts of terror the bloody victims scattered along his path, and sacrificed in turn to his devouring ambition, sadly defile before him.

Then he reverted to his early years. When residing at the Palmar, his magnificent family hacienda, his life passed away calm, pure, gentle and tranquil, without regrets, and without desires, among his faithful servants. Then he was so glad to be nothing, and to wish to be nothing.

By degrees his thoughts followed the bias of his recollections; the present was effaced; his contracted features grew softer, and two burning tears, the first perhaps this man of iron had ever shed, coursed slowly down his cheeks, which grief had hollowed. He fell into the arms open to receive him, exclaiming, with an expression of desperate grief, impossible to render:

"Have mercy, heaven; have mercy!" The struggle had been short but terrible; faith had conquered doubt, and humanity had regained its rights.

The general then had with the monks a conversation, protracted far into the night, in which he confessed all his crimes and sins, and humbly asked pardon of God whom he had outraged, and before whom he was about to appear.

The next day, a little after sunrise, one of the monks, who had been absent about an hour, returned, bringing with him the general's capataz. It had only been with extreme reluctance that Carnero had consented to come, for he justly dreaded his old master's reproaches. His surprise was therefore extreme at being received with a smile, and kindly, and on finding that the general did not make the slightest allusion to his treachery, which the evidence before the court-martial had fully revealed.

Carnero looked inquiringly at the two monks, for he did not dare put faith in his master's words, and each moment expected to hear him burst out into reproaches. But to his amazement nothing of the sort took place; the general continued the conversation as he had begun it, speaking to him gently and kindly.

At the moment when the capataz was about to withdraw, the general stopped him.

"One moment," he said to him; "you know Don Valentine, the French hunter, for whom I so long cherished an insensate hatred?"

"Yes," Carnero stammered.

"Be kind enough to ask him to grant

me the favor of a short visit; he is a noble-hearted man, and I am convinced that he will not refuse to come. I should be glad if he consented to bring with him Don Martial, the Tigrero, who has so much cause to complain of me, as well as my niece, Dona Anita de Torres. Will you undertake this commission, the last I shall doubtless give you?"

"Yes, general," the capataz answered, affected in spite of himself by such gentleness.

"Now go; be happy and pray for me, for we shall never meet again."

The capataz went out in a very different frame of mind from that in which he had entered the capilla, and hastened off to Valentine.

"I will go," said Valentine simply, and he dismissed him.

Curumilla was at once sent off to M. Rallier's quinta with a letter, and during his absence Valentine had a long conversation with Belhumeur and Black Elk. At about 5 in the evening a carriage entered the courtyard of Valentine's house at a gallop; it contained M. Rallier, Dona Anita and Don Martial.

"Thanks!" he said on seeing them.

"You ordered me to come, so I obeyed as usual," the Tigrero answered.

"You were right, my friend."

"And now what do you want of us?"

"That you should accompany me to the place, whither I am going at this moment."

"Would it be indiscreet to ask you—?"

"Where?" the hunter interrupted him with a laugh. "Not at all; I am going to lead you, Dona Anita, and the persons here present to the capataz in which General Guerrero is confined."

"The capilla?" the Tigrero exclaimed in amazement, "for what purpose?"

"What does that concern you? The general has requested to see you, and you cannot refuse the request of a man who has but a few hours left to live."

The Tigrero hung his head without answering.

"Oh! I will go!" Dona Anita exclaimed impulsively, as she wiped away the tears that ran down her cheeks.

"Since you insist, Don Valentine, I will go," said the Tigrero.

"I do not insist, my friend; I only ask, that is all."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Valentine, Dona Anita, M. Rallier and Don Martial got into the carriage. The two Canadians and the chief followed them on horseback, and they proceeded at a gallop to the chapel where the condemned man was confined.

All along the road they found marks of the obstinate struggle which had deluged the city with blood a few days previously; the barricades had not been entirely removed, and though the distance was in reality very short, they did not reach the prison until nightfall, owing to the detours they were forced to make.

Valentine begged his friends to remain outside, and only entered with Dona Anita and the Tigrero. The general was impatiently expecting them, and testified a great joy on perceiving them.

The young lady could not restrain her emotion, and threw herself into her uncle's arms with an outburst of passionate grief. The general pressed her tenderly to his bosom and kissed her on the forehead.

"I am the more affected by these marks of affection, my child," he said, with much emotion, "because I have been very harsh to you. Can you ever forgive me the sufferings I have caused you?"

"Oh, uncle, speak not so. Are you not, alas! the only relation I have remaining?"

"For a short time," he said, with a sad smile, "that is the reason why I ought, without further delay, to provide for your future."

"Do not talk about that at such a moment, uncle," she continued, bursting into tears.

"On the contrary, my child, it is at this moment, when I am going to leave you, that I am bound to insure you a protector. Don Martial, I have done you great wrong; here is my hand, accept it as that of a man who has completely recognized his faults, and sincerely repents the evil he has done."

The Tigrero, more affected than he liked to display, took a step forward and cordially pressed the hand offered him.

"General," he said, in a voice which he tried in vain to render firm, "this moment, which I never dared hope to see, fills me with joy, but at the same time with grief."

"Well, you can do something for me by proving to me that you have really forgiven me."

"Speak, general, and no matter, if it is in my power—" he exclaimed, warmly.

"I believe you, Don Martial," Don Sebastian answered, with his sad smile.

"Consent to accept my niece from my hand and marry her at once in this chapel."

One of the monks had prepared everything beforehand.

When the hunters and the French banker entered, followed by Curumilla and the officer commanding the capilla guard, who had been warned beforehand, the general walked eagerly toward them.

"Senores," he said, "I would ask you to do me the honor of witnessing the marriage of my niece, Dona Anita de Torres, with this caballero. One moment. I have something more yet, if

you please. I now wish to make you witness of a great reparation."

They stopped and looked at the general with the greatest surprise as he walked up to Valentine.

"Caballero," he said to him, "I know all the motives of hatred you have against me, and those motives I allow to be just. I am now in the same position in which I placed Count de Prebois Crance, your dearest friend. Like him, I shall be shot to-morrow at daybreak, but with this difference, that he fell as a martyr to a holy cause and innocent of crimes of which I accused him, while I am guilty, and deserve the sentence passed on me. Don Valentine, I repent from the bottom of my heart the iniquitous murder of your friend. Don Valentine, do you forgive me?"

"General Don Sebastian Guerrero, I forgive you the murder of my friend," the hunter answered in a firm voice.

"You forgive me?"

"I forgive you the life of grief to which I am henceforth condemned by you."

"You pardon me unreservedly?"

"Unreservedly I do."

"Thanks. We were made to love instead hate one another."

"You think so now."

"I misunderstood you; but yours is a great and noble heart. Now let death come, and I shall accept it gladly, for I feel convinced that heaven will have pity on me on account of my sincere repentance. Be happy, niece, with the husband of your choice. Senores, all accept my thanks. Don Valentine, once more I thank you. And now leave me, all, for I no longer belong to the world, so let me think of my salvation."

"But one word," Valentine said. "General, I have forgiven you, and it is now my turn to ask your pardon."

"What can you mean?"

"I have deceived you."

"Deceived me?"

"Yes; take this paper. The President of the Republic, employing his sovereign right of mercy, has, on my pressing entreaty, revoked the sentence passed on you. You are free."

His hearers burst into a cry of admiration. The general turned pale. He tottered, and for a moment it was fancied that he was about to fall. A cold perspiration stood on his temples.

"Fathers," he said, turning to the monks, "lead me to your monastery. General Guerrero is dead, and henceforth I shall be a monk of your order."

Two days after the scene we have described Valentine and his companions left Mexico and returned to Sonora. On reaching the frontier the hunter, in spite of the pressing entreaties of his friends, separated from them and returned to the desert.

Don Martial and Dona Anita settled in Mexico near the Ralliers. A month after Valentine's departure Dona Helena returned to the convent, and at the end of a year, in spite of the entreaties of her family, who were surprised at so strange a resolution, which nothing apparently explained, the young lady took the vows.

When I met Valentine Guillois on the banks of the Rio Joaquin some time after the events recorded in this long story, he was going with Curumilla to attempt a hazardous expedition across the Rocky Mountains, from which, he said to me, with the soft, melancholy smile which he generally assumed when speaking to me, he hoped never to return.

I accompanied him for several days, and then we were compelled to separate. He pressed my hand, and followed by his dumb friend, he entered the mountains. For a long time I looked after him, for I involuntarily felt my heart contracted by a sad foreboding. He turned round for the last time, waved his hand in farewell and disappeared round a bend of the track. I was fated never to see him again.

Since then nothing has been heard of him nor of Curumilla. All my endeavors to join them or even obtain news of them were vain.

Are they still living? No one can say. Darkness has settled down over these two magnificent men, and time itself will, in all probability, never remove the veil that conceals their fate. For all, unhappily, leads me to suppose that they perished in that gloomy expedition from which Valentine hoped, alas! never to return.

(The End.)

Fixing It.

"John," said the political leader's wife, "you'll have to get a new policeman assigned to this beat; Bridget doesn't like the present one."

"All right," said he, "and while I'm about it I'll get one that likes his meat rare. I'm getting tired of overdone beef."—Philadelphia Press.

High and Low Cities.

Pasco, the capital of Junin, in Peru, is the biggest city in the world. It is built on a table land fourteen thousand two hundred and seventy-five feet above the sea level. The Dutch cities are the lowest, being several feet below the level of the sea.

Tears Not Idle.

"My doctor tells me a good cry is beneficial."

The second woman, opening her purse, displayed a first-class return ticket to Europe.

"A good cry gained me this," she said.

At It Again.

Fair One—Really, Herr Schulze, do you think it amuses me to talk of nothing but the weather?

Schulze (ill at ease)—Well, fraulein, I thought—er—er—as the weather is so very fine just now.—Fliegende Blaetter.

Only one couple in over 11,000 live to celebrate their diamond wedding.

UNCLE SAM AND FISH.

A Novel Proposed Extension of Federal Authority.

With the stock of food fish in the United States growing less each year the proposal of the American Fisheries Society, made at its meeting at Erie, that control over the rivers and lakes be given to the Federal government, is a matter of timely interest, says the Philadelphia Record.

"Shad in the Delaware are less plentiful than ever, and the record of other rivers where they once abounded is the same," said an old fisherman the other day. "Complaint is rife from the Potomac to the Connecticut. The depletion of the great lakes is deplorable. They are growing less and less capable of furnishing their former supply of fish."

"Of course the extension of Federal control is not popular, but there seems to be no other way of meeting the situation. Where a river, as the Delaware, flows between two States neither has absolute jurisdiction, and laws rarely dovetail so as to effect a supervision worth the name. Moreover, artificial propagation must be carried on on a great scale and under the direction of some authority adequate to securing its full results."

"The bill now being drafted by Congressman Shires of Pittsburg to be introduced at the next session of Congress will doubtless be opposed by strict constructionists of State rights. But its provisions will be for the general good, and there appears to be no other way of securing the supply for future generations."

A joint commission of the States of New York and New Jersey is now working on laws to be passed by those commonwealths. Pennsylvania has a commission which is authorized to cooperate with it.

ALL DAY BEFORE HER.

In no other town than Dublin is the traveler so impressed by the fact that the public vehicles are really servants of the public. A writer in Macmillan's Magazine declares that in Dublin are a people who refuse to be dictated to. No white posts, registered stopping places, are considered. Passengers get in where they will and out where they will.

Occasionally, of course, conductors, being, after all, only mortal, deem it necessary to hurry the leisurely pedestrian, who clatters slowly and majestically into the car, but his urging is always resented.

One evening an old dame's feelings proved too much for her. She hailed the car too late; we had passed, and by the time we pulled up she was several yards down the road.

She was becoming arrayed, I remember, in a spotlessly white mob cap and a blue check apron, that covered her ample petticoat to the very hem. She had a big basket on her arm, and came trundling after the car in a very aggrieved fashion.

Perhaps the conductor was in a hurry; perhaps he thought her pace unnecessarily slow; at any rate, he clanged the bell vociferously.

Jerking her basket on to the foot-board and catching the brass rail in one hand, she stood on the road and treated him to a flood of eloquence, while he tried vainly to make her either enter the car or release her hold. The driver was growing impatient, and the other occupants were so openly amused that the conductor lost his temper.

"Will ye get on or will ye not?" he thundered.

"Get on? What else would I be doin', if ye'd only give me time."

Then she did condescend to get on, and finally seated herself with a genial smile that embraced the entire company.

"My," she remarked, "what a hurry fore us in! Sure, we have the day before us"—It was 6 m in the evening—"and that young man rampagin' and clatterin' as though Ould Nick was after him."

Hard to Answer.

The golfer had a very good opinion of himself, says a writer in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and after making a fairly good drive he turned to his caddy.

"I suppose," he said, "you have been round the links with worse players than me, eh?"

The caddy took no notice, and the golfer began again.

"I say," he said, loudly, "I suppose you've been round the links with worse players than me, eh?"

"I heard you the first time," replied the caddy, calmly. "I'm just thinking about it."

Shrewd Scheme.

Traveler in Parlor Car—Porter, that man in front will give you a quarter for dusting him off, won't he?

Porter—Yessir!
Traveler—Well, I'll give you half a dollar to leave the dust on him and not brush it off on to me.—Somerville Journal.

STEADY NONSENSE

She—Don't you think the new debutante's voice is perfectly heavenly? He—Quite unearthly.—The Bystander.

He (with a sigh)—I have only one friend on earth—my dog. She—Why don't you get another dog?—Chicago Daily News.

Citizen—Yes, she's married to a real estate agent, and a good, honest fellow, too. Subbubs—Good, gracious! Bigamy, eh?—Philadelphia Press.

"Johnny, doesn't your conscience tell you that you are doing wrong?" "Yes, mother, but father said I wasn't to believe everything I heard."—Punch.

Patience—Did you ever hear the Dugate sisters sing in concert? Patrice—No; one always seems to be a little ahead of the other.—Yonkers Statesman.

"No, I don't care for English opera." "Why not?" "Because it bothers me to listen to what the singers are saying when I want to talk."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Nell—She always said she wanted a husband who was easily pleased. Bea—Did she get such a one? Nell—Why, yes; didn't he marry her?—Lippincott's Magazine.

"I should think," she said, "that golfing would make you awfully tired!" "No, I stand it first rate. You see, I never keep my score at all."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Church—I see that Argentine has a 54-mile horse railway. It is the longest in the world. Gotham—Gee! Think of holding on to a strap for 54 miles!—Yonkers Statesman.

"I must get you another chair for the kitchen, Katie; I see you have only one." "Sure, you needn't mind, ma'am. I have none but gentleman callers."—Yonkers Statesman.

"I'm going to put a fender on the front of my runabout." "So you won't run over some one?" "Nope. So it won't hurt the radiator when I do."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Wigwag—That's a fine dog of yours, Saphedde. Saphedde—Yes, indeed, he is. That dog knows as much as I do. Wigwag—I'll give you a quarter for him.—Philadelphia Record.

"Excuse me, sir, but this is the sixth time that you have gone away without paying." "Oh, my dear young lady, when a man sees you he forgets everything else."—Fliegende Blaetter.

Lady Customer—I wish to tell you how these shoes of mine are to be made. Shoemaker—Oh, I know that well enough—large inside, and small outside.—Meggendorfer Blaetter.

"Oh! Willie, what's this queer lookin' thing with about a million legs?" "That's a millennium. It's somethin' like a centennial, only it has more legs."—"Natural History," in Life.

Nell—Yes, she said her husband married her for her beauty. What do you think of that? Belle—Well, I think her husband must feel like a widower now.—Catholic Standard and Times.

Blinks—The first principle of anarchism is to divide with your fellow man, is it not? Winks—No. The first principle is to make your fellow man divide with you.—Chicago Daily News.

Hotel Proprietor—Has not the man in No. 15 received his bill yet? Head Walter—Certainly! Fifteen minutes ago. "Strange! I hear him still singing in his room."—Meggendorfer Blaetter.

Tired Tatters—I saw de new moon over me left shoulder las' night. I wonder wot dat's a sign uv? Werry Walker—It's a sign dat de nex' place youse ask for work youse'll git it.—Chicago Daily News.

Mr. Phoxy—Did you send the Borems a card for our "at home?" Mrs. Phoxy—Yes; how could I get out of it? Mr. Phoxy—I'll tell Borem that Jenks is coming. Borem owes him money.—Terre Haute Tribune.

"Ah! pretty lady," said the fortune-teller, "you wish to be told about your future husband?" "Not much," replied Mrs. Galley. "I've come to learn where my present husband is when he's absent."—Philadelphia Press.

Husband (explaining his late homecoming)—My dear, I couldn't help it. I just missed the last car and had to wait forty minutes. Wife—Now don't blame it on the street car company. They've troubles enough without you.—Detroit Free Press.

Hawkins—Oh, well, Bjenks isn't such a bad fellow, after all. Dawkins—What makes you say that? Hawkins—Well, he wouldn't lend me the \$10 that I asked him for, but he didn't take advantage of the opportunity to give me good advice.—Somerville Journal.