

# THE RED

BY GUSTAVE AIMARD

# TRAIL

## CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

The president looked round the assembly, rose in the midst of a profound silence, stretched out his arm toward the general, who stood cold and passionless before him, and, after darting at him a withering glance through the holes made in the crape that concealed his face, he said, in a grave, stern and impressive voice:

"Caballeros, remember the words you are about to hear. In the first place, in order to reassure you and restore your freedom of mind, learn that you have not fallen into the hands of Indians thirsting for your blood, or of pirates who intend to plunder you first and assassinate you afterward. When you have acted as impartial witnesses you will be at liberty to continue your journey, without the forfeiture of a single article. The men seated on my right and left, although masked, are brave and honest hunters. The day may perhaps arrive when you will know them; but reasons, whose importance you will speedily recognize, compel them to remain unknown for the present."

One of the travelers belonging to the second caravan stepped forward; he was a young man, with elegant and noble features, tall and well built.

"Caballero," he answered, in a distinct voice, "I thank you, in the name of my companions, for the reassuring words you have spoken. I know how implacable are the laws of the desert; but permit me to ask you one question."

"Speak, caballero."

"Is it an act of vengeance or justice you are about to carry out?"

"Neither, señor."

"Enough of this," the general said haughtily; "and if you are, as you assert, an honorable man, show me your face."

"No, Don Sebastian," said the president, "for in that case the game would not be even between us."

The general attempted to smile, but in spite of himself the smile died away on his lips. The president looked round with flashing eyes and began speaking again in a sharp, cutting voice.

"Now, listen, señores," he said, "and judge this man impartially; but do not judge him according to prairie law, but in your hearts. Gen. Don Sebastian Guerrero, who is standing so bold and upright before you at this moment, is one of the greatest noblemen of Mexico. His fortune is immense, almost incalculable. This man, by the mere strength of his will, and the implacable egotism that forms the basis of his character, has always succeeded in everything he has undertaken. Coldly ambitious, he has covered with corpses the bloody road he has followed to attain his proposed object, and he has done so without hesitation or remorse; he has looked on with a smiling face, when his dearest friends and nearest relations fell by his side; for him nothing which men respect exists. He had a daughter, who was the perfection of women, and he coldly lacerated her heart; he finally drove her to suicide, and the blood of the poor girl spurted on his forehead while he was triumphantly witnessing the legal murder of the man she loved, and whose death he resolved on because he refused to palter with his honor. This human-faced tiger, this monster with the mocking skeptical face, you see, señores, has only one thought, one object, one desire—to attain the highest rank, even if, to effect it, he were compelled to clamber over the panting corpses of his nearest relations and friends; and if he cannot carve out an independent kingdom in this collapsing republic, which is called Mexico, he wishes to seize, at least, on the supreme magistracy, and be elected president. This man is Gen. Don Sebastian Guerrero, military governor of Sonora."

"Oh!" the audience said involuntarily, as they instinctively recoiled in horror.

"If this man is the ex-governor of Sonora," the hunter who had already spoken said, in disgust, "he is a wild beast, whom his ferocity has placed beyond the pale of society, and it is the duty of honest men to destroy him."

"He must die! he must die!" the newcomers exclaimed.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"Nonsense," said the general, shrugging his shoulders with a contemptuous smile. "I know now who you are: your hatred of me has unconsciously discovered you. Remove that veil which is no longer of any use. You are the French hunter whom I have constantly met in my path to impede my projects, or overthrow my plans."

"Add," the hunter interrupted, "and whom you will ever meet. Brothers," he added, turning to his assistants, "my mask alone must fall; retain yours, for it is important for my plans of vengeance that you should remain unknown."

The four men bowed their assent and the hunter threw away the crape that covered his features.

"Valentine Guillols!" the general exclaimed; "I was sure of it."

"Listen then," the hunter coldly continued; "when my unhappy friend fell at Guaymas, in my paroxysm of grief I allow that I intended to kill you; but reflection soon came, and I saw that it would be better to let you live. Thanks to me, one week after the Mexican government, not satisfied with disavowing your conduct, deprived you of your command without inquiry and refused to explain to you the motives of their conduct."

"Ah, ah," the general said, "it was you, then, that I owe my recall?"

"Yes, general, to me alone."

"I am delighted to hear it."

"You remained, then, in Sonora, without power or influence, hated and despised by all, and marked on your forehead with that indelible brand which was imprinted on Cain, the first murderer; but Mexico is a blessed country, where ambitious men like yourself can easily fish in troubled waters, when, like yourself, they are not restrained by any of those bonds of honor. But you could not remain long bowed beneath the blow that had fallen on you and so you resolved to leave Sonora and proceed to Mexico, where, thanks to your colossal fortune and the influence it would necessarily give you, you could carry on your ambitious projects. Your preparations were soon made—listen attentively, general, for I assure you that I have reached the most interesting part of my narrative."

"As you fancied, for certain reasons which it is unnecessary to remind you of, that your enemies might try to lay some ambush for you, you thought it necessary to take the following precautions, the utility of some of which I presume that you have recognized. While, for the purpose of deceiving your enemies, you started in disguise, and only accompanied by a few men, for California, in order to return to Mexico across the Rocky mountains; while you gave questioners the fullest details of the road you intended to follow, with your men—your real object was different. The man in whom you placed your confidence, Don Isidro Vargas, who had known you when a child, and whom you had converted into your tool, took the shortest, and, consequently, most direct route for the capital, having with him not only twelve mules loaded with gold and silver, the fruit of your plunder during the period of your command, but a more precious article still, the body of your unhappy daughter, which you had embalmed, and which the captain had orders to inter with your ancestors at your Hacienda del Palmar. Your object in acting thus was not only to divert attention from your ill-gotten riches, but also to attract your enemies after yourself. Unfortunately, I am an old hunter so difficult to deceive that my comrades gave me long ago the glorious title of the Trail-hunter, and hence, I alone was not deceived."

"Still your presence here gives a striking denial to the assertion," the general interrupted.

"You think so, señor. That proves you are not thoroughly acquainted with me; but patience, I hope that you will, ere long, appreciate me better. Again, you have not reflected on the time that has elapsed since your departure from Hermosillo."

"What do you mean?" the general asked, with a sudden start of apprehension.

"I mean that before attacking you, I resolved to settle matters first with the captain."

"Ah!"

"Well, general, it is my painful duty to inform you that four days after he left Pitic, our brave friend Don Isidro fell into an ambush resembling the one into which you fell to-day, with this exception—"

"What exception?" the general asked, with greater interest than he would have liked to display.

"My men were so imprudent," the hunter continued, "as to leave the captain the means of defending himself. The result was that he died, bravely fighting to save the gold you had intrusted to him, and the coffin containing your daughter's corpse."

"Well, and I presume you plundered the caravan, and carried off the gold and silver?" he asked, contemptuously.

"So, most probably, you would have acted under the circumstances, Don Sebastian," the hunter answered, "but I thought it my duty to act differently. What could you expect? I, a coarse, uneducated hunter, do not know how to plunder, for I did not learn it when I had the honor to serve my country. This is what I did; so soon as the captain and the peons he commanded were killed—for the poor devils, I must do them the justice to say, offered a desperate resistance—I myself, you understand, friend, I myself conveyed the money to your Hacienda del Palmar, where it now remains in safety."

The general breathed again, and smiled ironically. "Instead of blaming you, señor," he said, "I, on the contrary, owe you thanks for this chivalrous conduct."

"Do not be in such a hurry to thank me," the hunter answered; "I have not told you all. Captain Don Isidro Vargas not only escorted the money, but there was also a coffin. Well, general, why do you not ask me what has become of that coffin?"

An electric shock ran through the audience on hearing the ironical question so coldly asked by the hunter.

"What!" Don Sebastian exclaimed.

"The assassin can have no claim to the body of his victim, and you are morally your daughter's murderer, I have robbed you of this body, which must rest by the side of him for whom she died."

There was a moment's silence. The general's face, hitherto pale, assumed a greenish hue. At length he yelled in a hoarse and hissing voice:

"It is not true; you have not done this. You cannot have dared to rob a father of his child's body."

"I have done it, I tell you," the hunter

said coldly. "I have taken possession of the body of your victim, and now you understand me; never shall you know where this poor body rests. But this is only the beginning of my vengeance. What I wish to kill in you is the soul and not the body; and now begone, and remember that you will find me in your path everywhere and ever."

"One last word," the general exclaimed, affected by the deepest despair, "restore me my daughter's body; she was the only human creature I ever loved."

The hunter regarded him for a moment with an undefinable expression, and then in a harsh and coldly mocking voice, "Never!"

Then, turning away, he re-entered the grotto, followed by his assistants.

Don Sebastian, who was the more overwhelmed by the last blow because it was unexpected, stood for a moment like a man struck by lightning. At last a heart-rending sob burst from his bosom, two burning tears sprang from his eyes and he rolled like a corpse on the ground.

In the meanwhile the Jester had ordered the peons to saddle the horses and load the mules. The general was placed by two servants on a horse, without appearing to notice what was done to him, and a few moments later the caravan left the fort of the Chichimeques.

When the Mexicans had disappeared in the windings of the road Valentine emerged from the grotto, and walked courteously up to the hunters.

"Forgive me," he said, "not the delay, but the involuntary alarm I caused you; but I was compelled to act as I did. You are going to Mexico, where I shall soon be myself, and it is possible that I may require your testimony some day."

"A testimony which will not be refused," the first hunter gracefully answered.

"What!" the hunter exclaimed in amazement, "are you French?"

"Yes, and all my companions. We have come from San Francisco, where, thanks to Providence, we amassed a fortune, which we hope to double in the Mexican capital. My name is Antoine Rallier, and these are my brothers, Edward and Augustus; the two ladies who accompany us are my mother and sister."

The hunter pressed the hand his countryman offered him.

"Then," he said, "I will not let you go alone! These mountains are infested by dangerous bandits, but with my protection you can pass anywhere."

"I heartily accept the offer; but why do you not come with us to Mexico?"

"That is impossible for the present."

Two hours later the Fort of the Chichimeques had returned to its usual solitude; white men and Indians had abandoned it forever.

## CHAPTER IX.

We will now leap over about two months, and invite the reader to accompany us to the heart of Mexico, to the capital. Half-past nine was striking by the cathedral clock at the moment when a dull sound resembling the rustling of reeds shaken by the wind was audible on the gigantic highway joining the city to mainland. This sound soon became more distinct, and changed into the trampling of horses, which was deepened by the damp air and the ground, softened by a lengthened rain. A black mass emerged from the fog, and two horsemen wrapped in thick cloaks stood out distinctly in the moonlight.

These horsemen seemed to have made a long journey. They at last reached a low roofed house through whose dirty panes a doubtful light issued, which showed that the inhabitants were still awake.

The horsemen stopped before this house, which was an inn, and without dismounting one of them gave the door two or three kicks and called the host in a loud, sharp voice. The latter was in no hurry to answer, and would have probably left the strangers for some time in the cold if the man who had kicked, probably tired of waiting, had not thought of an expeditious means of obtaining an answer.

"Ah!" he shouted, as he drew a pistol from his holster and cocked it, "since this dog is resolved not to open, I will send a bullet through his window."

This menace had scarce been uttered ere the door opened as if by enchantment and the landlord appeared on the threshold.

"Believe me, señor, that if I had known what a distinguished caballero did me the honor of stopping before my humble dwelling, I should have hastened to open," he said.

"A truce to such impertinent remarks, and open the door."

A glance was sufficient for the travelers to understand the place to which accident had led them, still they did not display any of the disgust with which the sight of this cut-throat den inspired them. They seated themselves as comfortably as they could at a table, and the one who had hitherto addressed mine host went on:

"Look here, we are dying of hunger, patron; could you not serve us up a morsel of food?"

"Hum!" said the host, with an embarrassed air, "it is very late, caballero, and I don't believe I have even a maize tortilla left in the whole house."

"Nonsense," the traveler replied, "I know all about it, so let us deal frankly with each other; give me some supper, for I am hungry, and we will not squabble about the price."

"Even if you paid me a piastre for every tortilla, excellency, I really could not supply you with two," the landlord replied, with increased constraint.

(To be continued.)

## What the Stork Learned.

The Owl—Twins, eh? Ain't you afraid they'll displease your patrons? The Stork—Certainly not. Cupid says he often bears 'em telling each other that two can live as cheaply as one.—Puck.



If you have anything to say to a mule, say it to his face.—Chicago Daily News.

Anthropology Instructor—What effect has the climate on the Eskimo? Student—Cold feet.—Harvard Lampoon.

Officer—Seen anything of my baggage, sentry? Sentry—She's waitin' round the corner for ye, sir!—Regiment.

"Did I tell you the story of the old church bell?" "No. Let's hear it." "Sorry, but it can be tolled only on Sunday."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

He—So they got married and went off in their new motor car. She—And where did they spend their honeymoon? He—In the hospital.—London Tit-Bits.

Footie Lighte—Has your sister a strong part in the new piece? Miss Sue Brette—Why, yes; she has to carry around one of those heavy spears!—Yonkers Statesman.

Mrs. Kelly—'Tis another of them soovyeer post cyards from me darter Maggie—the fourth this month, begorry! She sinds me wan every toime she changes her place.—Puck.

Anxious Mother—I hope you are not thinking of marrying young Clarkson. He spends every cent he earns. Pretty Daughter—Oh, well, he doesn't earn very much.—Chicago Daily News.

"Do you ever talk back to your wife?" asked the solicitous friend. "Sometimes," answered Mr. Meekton; "a very little; just to show her that I have not gone to sleep."—Chicago Daily News.

Tommy—Does it make any difference if baby takes all his medicine at once? Baby's Mother (in horror)—Good heavens! Of course it does! Tommy—But it hasn't made any difference.—Punch.

Mrs. Wickwire—If you go first, you will wait for me on the other shore, won't you, dear? Mr. Wickwire—I suppose so. I never went anywhere yet without having to wait for you.—Illustrated Bits.

"Any accident in your motor trip through Italy and France, Morgan?" "Nothing worth mentioning. My wife was thrown out and bruised a bit, but the machine never got so much as a scratch."—Life.

"So Jack's been made secretary and treasurer of the company, has he?" "Yes. He has to copy all the letters, and take all the deposits to the bank, and, oh, Mary, I'm so proud of him."—Harper's Bazaar.

Church—I like to see a man who can forget an injury. Gotham—Well, there's that neighbor of mine; he's suing the railroad company for an injured leg, and every once in a while he forgets to limp!—Yonkers Statesman.

A kind old gentleman, seeing a small boy who was carrying a lot of newspapers under his arm, said: "Don't all those papers make you tired, my boy?" "Naw; I don't read 'em," replied the lad.—Canadian Courier.

"But to my mind," said the clerical tourist from the East, "a plurality of wives is unspeakable." "Huh," snorted the good-natured Mormon. "I never even heard of one wife that was unspeakable."—Philadelphia Press.

Young Lady—You are a wonderful master of the piano, I hear. Professor von Spleter (hired for the occasion)—I play accompaniments sometimes. "Accompaniments to singing?" "Accompaniments to conversations."—Tattler.

Waiter—Mr. Brown's left his umbrella again, sir. I do believe he'd leave his head if it were loose. Robinson—I dare say you're right. I heard him say only yesterday he was going to Switzerland for his lungs.—Ally Sloper.

Church—See that man going along with his head in the air, sniffing with his nose? Gotham—Yes; I know him. Church—I suppose he believes in taking in the good, pure ozone? Gotham—No; he's hunting for an automobile garage, I believe.—Yonkers Statesman.

"I cracked a lawyer's house the other night," said the first burglar, disgustedly, "and the lawyer was there with a gun all ready for me. He advised me to get out." "You got off easy," replied the other. "Not much I didn't! He charged me \$25 for de advice."—Philadelphia Press.

"In the summer," remarked the obese passenger with the big diamond stud, "people should eat nothing but cold food and drink the coldest water obtainable." "Ah!" exclaimed the railway detective, "you are evidently a doctor?" "Not me," replied the o. p. "I'm an ice dealer."—Chicago News.

Parson (on a bicycling trip)—Where is the other man who used to be here as keeper? Park Gatekeeper—He's dead, sir. Parson (with feeling)—Dead! Poor fellow! Joined the great majority, eh? Park Gatekeeper—Oh, I wouldn't like to say that, sir. He was a good enough man \*\* for as I know.—Punch.

## THE MOUND BUILDERS.

Burial in This Manner Practiced Up to Advent of Whites.

Mound builders of the Mississippi valley, in the manner of burial of their dead, were in close touch with those of the valley of the Ohio, and had something in common with them embracing the ideals displayed in the ancestor-worship of the oriental, as well as antedating the custom of setting a granite shaft as a mark of respect over the graves of our departed at the present time.

Formerly mound builders were supposed to have become an extinct race, occupying the territory in which these numerous burial mounds are found, prior to its occupancy by the North American Indians, but in the light of more recent and more thorough investigation, writes Richard Hermann, in Records of the Past, it has been shown that burial of the dead in mounds has been practiced by the Muskawakies of the Foxes, who occupied the territory up to and including some of the time when the first white people settled in the upper Mississippi valley.

The former erroneous supposition came about principally through the uncommunicativeness of the Indian. When questioned concerning the mounds and their contents he would invariably act the stoic, for according to his ideas of ancestor worship the subject was held sacred and was not to be touched upon, nor were any of the belongings which had been buried with him ever in any manner to be used again by any living man. For this reason, when shown flint arrow or spearheads they would profess ignorance and insist that they were there before the arrival of the Indian.

The conical mounds, Mr. Hermann states, are generally individual or family burial mounds. The earth, sand and other material is carried there by the members of the tribe or the nearest of kin and filled around the body. Apparently the further the earth, sand or other material of which the mound is being built is brought or the more laborious the work of carrying it to the place of interment, the higher the respect paid to the dead. And in this respect they do not differ materially from the white people. We would disdain to erect over a grave in the middle west a shaft made from the limestone of the local Galena formation, but instead get a granite shaft shipped from Vermont or elsewhere, equally as great a distance and at as great an expense.

## VAST IMPORTER OF RUBBER.

United States Purchaser of \$50,000,000 Worth in a Year.

The United States imported an aggregate of \$50,000,000 worth of crude India rubber the year 1906, according to a statement made public by the bureau of statistics of the department of commerce and labor. If to this is added the value of old and scrap rubber intended for remanufacture the total will considerably exceed that amount. In the ten months ending with October 31, 1906, 53,500,000 pounds of India rubber, with a value of \$41,500,000, were imported. During the single month of October 5,000,000 worth of this product found its way into this country.

The enormous growth in the importations of India rubber into the United States, which consumes more than one-half of the world's production, is attributed to the popularity of the bicycle and automobile, coupled with the increased use of electricity in the daily affairs of the people. The importations of this product into this country have more than trebled during the last twelve years and show now a larger value in the import list than almost any other single product.

The statement shows that the value of India rubber importations has increased more than 200 per cent in a decade. The increase is attributed to the great demand in the various parts of the world for the use of this product.

The statement says the indications seem to justify the belief that the Philippine and Hawaiian islands are capable of producing large quantities of this article as a result of this government's establishment of nurseries in those possessions for the distribution of rubber plants for use of rubber plantations.

## Possibilities of Cotton Stalks.

Some recent experiments have demonstrated that all grades of paper can be manufactured from cotton stalks, and in addition to this a variety of by-products, including alcohol, cotton fiber and smokeless powder, can be secured in commercial quantities. On the estimate that an acre of land producing a field of cotton will also produce one ton of stalks, 10,000,000 or 12,000,000 tons of raw material can be depended on annually. Some enthusiasts claim that in addition to increasing the value of the South's annual cotton crop by \$10,000,000 the removal of the stalks from the fields early in the fall will mean the extermination of the boll weevil.—Farming.

Men enjoy doing anything they don't have to do for a living.