

THE WAR-TRAIL!

CHAPTER LIV.—(CONTINUED.)

Pleasant gossip I heard about the relations existing between our troops and the people of the town. Many of the inhabitants had grown quite Ayankicado, in consequence of our excellent behavior towards them. Our conduct was compared with that which they had lately experienced at the hands of their own army. The latter is in the habit of seizing property at pleasure, or pretence of using it for the defence of the state. We, on the contrary, pay for everything—round prices too—in bright American dollars. The ricos and merchants prefer this system, and would have no objections to making it permanent. Outrages are few on the part of our soldiery, and severely punished by the general. Our enemies contrast the modest bearing of the American soldier with the conceited strut and insolent swagger of their own gold bedizened military who are wont on all occasions to "take the wall," of them. It is only outside the lines, between stragglers and lepers, that the retaliation system is carried on so fiercely. Within the walls, everything is order, with a mildness too rare under martial law. Private property is strictly regarded, and private dwellings are not occupied by our troops. Even the officers are not billeted in private houses; and many of them have to make shift in rather uncomfortable quarters, while most of the soldiers live under canvas. This state of things is scarcely satisfactory to the troops; and some grumbling is heard. There is no complaint, however from the Mexicans, who seem rather astonished at so much forbearance on the part of their conquerors. I doubt whether in the whole history of war can be found a conquest characterized by equal mildness and humanity, as is the "Second Conquest of Mexico."

It is principally for this reason the people have grown so well affected towards us. But there is another, perhaps, not less potent. From the extensive operations we are now about to undertake, they see that we mean war in earnest; and the belief has become general, that a large "annexation" will follow; that perhaps the whole valley of the Rio Grande will become American territory. It is but human nature in them to do homage to the rising sun.

The ricos are better disposed towards us than the common people; but this enigma is easily explained. The latter are more patriotic than is, more ready to fight for native tyranny than accept freedom from a foreign hand. 'Tis so in all lands. In the event of a war with England, the black slave of Carolina would range himself by the side of his master, and prove the bitterest foe to the enemies not of his freedom but of his country.

The familias principales of Mexico have good reasons for being friendly to us. They have a stake to lose, which, under their own government has been ill guarded for them. No wonder they should desire to come under the broad protecting wings of the northern eagle.

I found that another species of "annexation" had been going on during my absence. One of our officers had become annexed to a wealthy senorita of the place, and the marriage ceremony had been performed with great pomp and splendor. Another was talked of as being fiance; and it was expected that the example would find numerous imitators.

I need not say that I was much interested by these novedades, and I returned with lighter heart to the camp.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE RUINED RANCHO.

The pleasant excitement caused by my visit to my old comrades was soon over; and having nothing to do but lounge about my tent, I became again the victim of the same painful bodings. I could not shake them off.

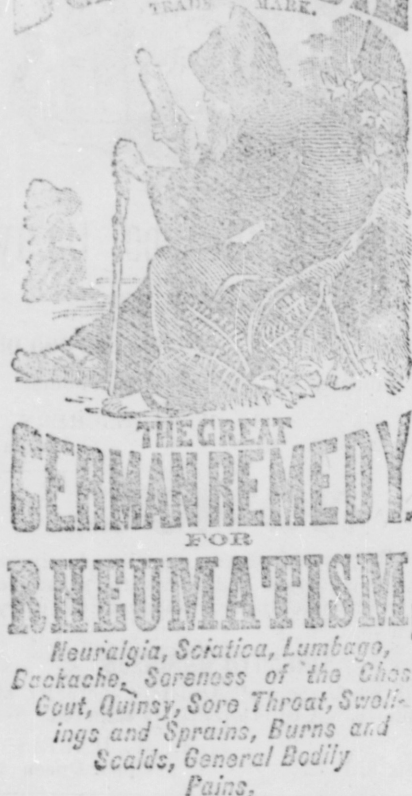
Subtle and mysterious is the spirit-world within us, certainly does it seem to have presence of the future. Is it an electric chain connecting what is with what is to be? Or is it the second sight of instinct? Certainly there are times when something within whispers a warning, as in the physical world, God's wild creatures are warned from without of the earthquake and the storm. How often do we experience the realizations of portentous dreams? Why should not the waking soul have also its moments of clairvoyance?

As I lay stretched upon my leathern cot, I gave way to such reflections. I soon succeeded in reasoning myself into a full belief in foreknowledge; and my apprehensions were proportionately strengthened. But I had conceived a design, and the prospect of putting it in execution somewhat relieved me from the heaviness I had hitherto felt.

My new project was to take a score of my best men, to ride back the road we had come, place the party in ambush near the hacienda, while I alone should enter the house, and further urge the counsels I had committed to writing. If I should find that these had been already followed, so much the better—I should be assured, and return content; but I felt almost certain that Don Ramon had rejected them. At all events I was determined to know the truth—determined, moreover, to gratify my longing for one more interview with my beloved.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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CHARLES DRINKWATER, Secretary. Montreal, December 1st, 1881. [Jan 17 2w 2aw]

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Railway Office, Charlottetown, Nov. 27, 1881 [5 2aw]

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TIME TABLE NO. 17. WINTER ARRANGEMENT. To take effect on the 1st Dec., 1881.

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Table with columns: STATIONS, MIXED, MIXED, MIXED. Rows include Ch'town, Royalty, N. Wilt's, Hunter R., Bradalbe, Co'ty Line, Pictou, Keusing'n, Summ'side, Wellington, Port Hill, O'Leary, Bloomfield, Alberton, Tignish, Royalty, Bedford, Mt. Stewart, Cardigan, Georgetown, Mt. Stewart, Morell, St. Peter's, Bear River, Souris.

TRAINS INWARD.

Table with columns: STATIONS, MIXED, MIXED, MIXED. Rows include Ch'town, Royalty, N. Wilt's, Hunter R., Bradalbe, Co'ty Line, Pictou, Keusing'n, Summ'side, Wellington, Port Hill, O'Leary, Bloomfield, Alberton, Tignish, Royalty, Bedford, Mt. Stewart, Cardigan, Georgetown, Mt. Stewart, Morell, St. Peter's, Bear River, Souris.

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