



Felix Marchant A STORY OF THE SAN SIMON PLAIN. BY CLARENCE PULLEN.

Copyright, 1897 by the author.

(Continued)

Don Ramon's camp was a picture of rack and ruin, a mute memorial of the courtesies of the Apaches. The ancestral carriage was on its side with wheels in the air, its glass windows broken, several bullet-holes through it and an arrow sticking in a panel. A fire had been started under it, but had gone out with no further damage than to char a portion of the woodwork. The harnesses of the mules had been cut to pieces and the straps carried away. The baggage had been rudely ransacked, and these things that the Apaches had left were strewn about and partially destroyed. Carmen's guitar-case and her book of devotions had contributed to the fire under the carriage, while her guitar, smashed almost beyond recognition, hung forlornly, with dangling strings, from the bush against which it had been flung. Her little leather trunk had been cut open and despoiled of her finery, while broken glass and an odour—nothing more—of aguardiente, indicated that the quality of Don Ramon's special commissary supply had been approved by the marauders. Moccasin tracks were plenty, and marks of the hoofs of unshod ponies. As we looked over the scene of disaster, Felix lifted the water keg, the head of which had been smashed, and shook it, listening. There was a splash within.

"Here's luck," he cried—"water! We can have some coffee." Surely enough, there was a gallon or two of water still in the keg. That seemed for the present nothing better to do than to prepare breakfast. So, gathering materials for a fire, we fell to boiling coffee in our tin cans and frying bacon in a battered pan found among the wreckage. Dolores, stimulated by the prospect of something to eat, assisted us with alacrity, but her mistress sat downcast, giving no attention to our proceedings, nor would she afterward join us at the repast, not even so much as to touch the tin cup of coffee gallantly tendered her by Felix. The rest of us had no lack of appetite. After our troubled night the strong, black coffee was ambrosial, and we did the fullest justice to our simple fare.

Midway in the meal Felix touched me with his elbow and signalled with his eyes that I should look down the trail. The objects that we had seen moving near the plays in the early dawn had approached us, and were now so near that we could identify them as two mounted men coming up the trail driving a mule before them. They were advancing at a good pace, and their distance from us rapidly decreased. Presently Dolores, with her quick Indian eye, saw and identified them. Full of excitement, in a moment she ran to her mistress.

"Senorita, oh, senorita, behold Don Ramon—and the mules—and Manuel! All are returning safe. Oh, the blessed Virgin of Guadalupe who has heard our prayers!" Carmen raised her head and looked around, hardly understanding at first the vehement words of Dolores. Then she arose trembling, and, resting against the shoulder of her maid, looked long and unsteadily at the coming figures now near at hand. Her face changed from hopeless sadness to eager attention, and then, as she

cognized her people, to an expression of rapture. She sank to the ground, and sobbing with emotion, kissed again and again her gold medal of the Lady of Guadalupe, to whom she prayed in gratitude.

Don Ramon saw his ruined camp, the armed strangers, his daughter and her maid, and he spurred his mule fiercely toward us, his square, wrinkled face set in a look of fearful determination. Manuel's black eyes were gleaming as he strove to keep up with his master, and both carried weapons in hand. Then Carmen rose and sprang to her father's arms.

Don Ramon's eyes were wet as he disengaged his daughter's arms from his neck, patted Dolores on the head

and had been the cause of the absence of Don Ramon's party from his camp at the time it was raided by the Apaches. We proceeded to patch up a harness for the mules from such parts of their gear as the Apaches had left, helped out by lariats and bits of cord. The carriage when righted we found to be uninjured for travel, and, after considerable labour, we were able to attach the mules to it and resume our journey eastward in company with the Mexican party.

Our progress was necessarily slow, and it was high noon before we reached the San Simon stage station. There we found the stock corralled and the station-keeper and his herders at the house. They had received no news of an Indian outbreak, but had taken warning by the Apache fires in the mountains, and had driven up their grazing stock the day before. No buckboard had come from the west, and they were anticipating news of disaster. We were the first to bring them news that the Apaches had passed up the valley. We were invited to dinner, and arrangements were made by which a set of harness were furnished Don Ramon. Accepting the cordial invitation of the station-keeper, we decided to remain where we were during the remainder of the day.

The force at the station consisted of the keeper and two assistants, whose principal duty was herding. The accession of our party made a strong force for defence. In the afternoon the stock was turned out to graze in the immediate neighbourhood, guarded by Felix and one of the station herders. Don Ramon, wearing his wig and exertion of the night before, went to a long siesta on the mud bench that surrounded the common room of the station. Carmen and Dolores retired for the same purpose to an inner apartment.

Manuel offered to assist in the guarding of the stock, but he, poor fellow, was so tired and sleepy that Felix volunteered to go in his stead and give him a chance of repose. The rest of us sat about the door of the station, mending harness, smoking, talking, and watching the plain. Occasionally some one climbed to the roof and made a careful inspection of the country far and near. A large party of men were in sight coming rapidly on foot toward the station from the west. When they were near enough to be distinguished, they were seen to be Indians. The men herding were signalled to drive up the stock, which was soon done and the animals corralled. Every preparation was made for defence, and in readiness to retreat within we stood with our arms about the door of the station watching the advancing party. Some were mounted, and as they came near were revealed as white men in the undress uniform of the United States army.

"That's what I thought all along," remarked the station-keeper, resting his rifle against the adobe walls and taking a comfortable chew of tobacco. "There's no trouble from them. They are Apache scouts." The Indians, travelling at a dog trot, were 500 yards away, when an officer, evidently in command, rode ahead and halted the station. He was a young man of pleasant yet resolute expression, with a quick flashing eye, and his seat in the saddle was superb. His clothes and slouched hat were white with dust, and his bronzed face showed that he had had much recent campaigning. He was followed at a little distance by two other officers.

"Have you water here for my horses and men?" he asked. "I reckon so," replied the station-keeper. "There's the well. Help yourself." A barrel partially filled with water and a pail beside it stood by the well. The officer dismounted and held the reins of his horse as he drank. After its wants had been satisfied he went himself took a long draft. The other officers followed his example. By this time the Indian scouts, about fifty in number, had come up, and they proceeded to slake their thirst at the well. They were wild-looking savages, differing none in general appearance from their hostile kinspeople, against whom they were temporarily enlisted. Most or all of them had in times past been on the warpath against the white people, and probably would be again before all was over, but while in the employment of the Government were loyal soldiers. Their distinguishing badge as scouts was the band of red cloth, worn about the head and beneath which streamed their long, black hair. Calico shirts, drawers, deerskin leggings, and moccasins completed the costume of those who were fully dressed, but some had discarded all clothing save breechcloth and moccasins, and ran lightly over the prairie in a state closely approaching that of nature, their copper-coloured skins seeming to draw refreshment from the sun. The faces of all were hideously painted in red and black and yellow, and all were armed with repeating rifles, and carried well-supplied cartridge belts. The scouts were in nowise fatigued with their long run that morning from Camp Bowie, and, squatting on the ground, fell to rolling cigarettes and gambling during the short halt that was ordered.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a tragic story that Captain Beston, the officer in command of the Indian scouts, had to tell of the last

night's doings of the renegade Apaches upon the San Simon plain. Two mail coaches had been attacked, and the drivers and two passengers, all that were with them, killed. The Apaches had, of course, driven away the mules, and they had lifted the mail bags in search of letters containing money, of which these Indians fully know the value. Reports had come to Camp Bowie that a herder had been killed on the plain to the south, and that several prospectors had been massacred in the Chiricahua mountains. A courier, riding from the north-east, had met the detachment of scouts with the story of burning buildings seen to the north, in the direction of the Gila river. It was probable that the Apaches, sweeping north-easterly, were now harrying the Gila valley with the accompaniments of outrage and massacre that characterize all their raids. A body of troops were in direct pursuit of the Apaches, and Captain Beston's company of scouts was on its way eastward to cut off the renegades should they attempt to make their way back to Mexico, through the Burro mountains. Other detachments of troops had been ordered by telegraph from Fort Bayard and Fort Grant to points where they might be able to intercept the Apaches should they try to reach Mexico by way of the plain to the east or to the west of Fort Cummings, in Cook's canon.

"It's the worst outbreak in years," he said. "It has been carefully and secretly planned, and we know that from thirty to forty Indians have gone northward across the stage trail. They will number a half more after they have been joined by Apaches sneaking away from the reservations, enough to do a vast deal of mischief before any troops can overtake them, and to make a hard fight if they are cornered. They will scatter into bands, a half-dozen may be, and we shall get reports of outrages from as many different quarters at once."

"It's good luck the old Mexican's outfit didn't get bagged—and you, too," he added. "I had already told the officer the story of the doings of the night so far as Felix and I were concerned. You and your friend, as well as they, seem to have run about every chance of their getting you at one time or another during the night. By the way, isn't Don Ramon a fine type of the old style Spanish Hidalgo? I was at his hacienda once, years ago, and was royally entertained. I can assure you. He's wealthy, but what he most values is his descent from some of the historic families of Spain. He prides himself on his blue blood, and upholds the honour of his ancestral name in all his conduct. Isn't she a lovely girl, that daughter of his? What eyes and hair!"

As he spoke these last words he was looking at Carmen, standing in the doorway, an ideal vision of Spanish grace and beauty, as she gazed in shaking wonder upon the band of savage scouts with a half-conscious affection of unconsciousness of the ill-concealed admiration with which the two younger officers were regarding her.

"There's a romance about her," he continued, "and I think this journey is a sequel to it. There's a young Mexican connected with some good Spanish-American families, but poor, who wants to marry her. Whether the girl likes him, I don't know. Her preferences in the matter wouldn't count very much, with even a very affectionate Mexican father, you know. However that may be, Don Ramon won't hear to his suit. He's a dashing fellow, this Sangrado—Gaspar Sangrado's his name. His character is none too good, even for such a country as this. He has been in several shooting scrapes, and, a great many believe, has done some business as a road agent and stock thief. At all events, he is probably equal to any desperate act if his pride or jealousy is once excited. He swears that he will have the girl, with or without her father's consent."

"Whether or not Don Ramon thinks the chances worth considering that the young desperado might induce his daughter to elope with him, or carry her off by force, he is going to save himself all anxiety in the matter by placing her in a convent school in Santa Fe, and is taking her there himself. If Don Gaspar Sangrado should make it in his way to come upon them during this journey, something would be apt to happen as drama. It'll be a lively set of stage tragedies. But such a contingency as this isn't worth minding by comparison with the chances of falling in with the Apaches again, when your luck might be worse than it was last night. I confess I don't like to see an outfit with women along out on the trail in a time such as this. I hope you'll all stay here at the station until we've scouted the Burro mountains, and that you and your friend can make it suit your plans to keep along with the old Mexican party as far as Silver City. It'll be a long haul, but you'll have to do it." Captain Beston looked at his watch. "Time to be off," he said. "We must make all our halts short ones until we get to the scene of action. We're after an enemy that keeps forever on the move, and the passes must be watched early to prevent his slipping through on the back track to Mexico with his plunder. I hope to meet you again and to hear that you have made your journey safely."

An orderly was standing close at hand, holding his own and the captain's horse. The officer gave a sharp command. His two subordinate officers mounted their horses. The Indians rose lightly from the ground, adjusted their equipments, and, almost in a moment, were ready for the start. At the second word of command the savage company, headed by the two lieutenants, strung itself out into an irregular line, and the scouts were off, running lithely in that long, tireless half trot that can carry the Apache over mountain and plain at a speed which, in a day's journey, defies the pace of the best horse.

Captain Beston stopped a moment to bid adieu to Don Ramon and lift his hat to Carmen, then galloped after his command, and soon the wild procession had vanished to the eastward, indistinguishable among the mesquite clumps and yuccas and cactuses that dotted the plain.

There was urgent need in my own private concerns that Felix and I push forward to Silver City as fast as we could. Thanks to the events of the night before, we were now on terms of confidence and friendship with Don

Ramon, and as he was equally desirous of continuing his journey without delay, it was arranged that we should start onward, travelling together, that night. But our plans were interfered with when two hours before sundown it was discovered by the station-keeper that no harness gear could be spared from the stage company's supplies. This condition of things left Don Ramon no alternative for the continuing of his journey with the carriage but to send a mounted messenger back to Camp Bowie for a pair of harness or to wait where he was on the chance that some freighter or emigrant might come along with such an equipment to sell.

Felix and I had not fully decided what course we would take about starting out under the circumstances, when the attention of our company of wayfarers, seated about the station door, was attracted by distant moving objects on the trail advancing from the direction of Camp Bowie. By the aid of a spyglass we could distinguish three separate groups of travellers coming our way.

To persons inexperienced in the far Western country it seems remarkable the freedom and apparent unconcern with which people travel about and pursue their avocations in times of Indian outbreak, and especially over territory recently swept by hostile bands. This may be partly accounted for by the principle that familiarity with danger breeds confidence in one that he will survive it, and the fact that under the conditions of our savage warfare the past twenty years the Indians, after striking a blow, usually disappear for a time from the scene of its occurrence, knowing that the Government troops are likely soon to be upon the ground in pursuit of them.

Besides, most people that travel independently through the far Western country, the prospectors, emigrants, and freighters, have few resources beyond the means necessary to carry them without delay to their journey's end, and they can ill afford to stay long in any one place on the way; hence, in times of Indian troubles, as soon as it is known that troops are out after the "hostiles," the various travelling parties huddled temporarily in the shelter of frontier towns and Government posts, promptly strike out along the trails in the hope to make another stage of their journey without disaster.

So it was with less of surprise than curiosity that we saw these parties approaching us over a trail on which, not 24 hours previously, four people had been killed by Indians still abroad on their career of slaughter. As the three groups came nearer we identified them successively as a single wagon team, two men driving along three burros, and, lastly, a wagon and team preceded by three mounted persons.

"It seems we're not likely to be lonesome for lack of company to-night," remarked the station-keeper. "There's water enough and grass enough for all, but if they want grub I'm blessed if I know where it's coming from. We've got no more of that than what's engaged and what we want ourselves at the station."

I may here parenthetically remark that Felix and I, foreseeing that provisions might be scarce commodities on the San Simon plain before the Apache outbreak was over, had bargained with the keeper for a three days' supply of such as he had, for ourselves and for Don Ramon's party. Such a quantity was more than enough to provide us to Silver City, in case our journey were not seriously interrupted. This bit of precaution proved valuable to us and to people in whom we were interested while we were at the San Simon station. It was with a genial feeling of security as to our safety from famine that we watched the distant travellers meandering toward us over the lonely Indian haunted plain.

The first wagon had drawn so near that its characteristics could be detailed. "Eike county, I'll wager, at five miles away," exclaimed the station-keeper. "Will any gentleman take me up?" Nobody felt like raising the question as the wagon came on toward the station. It was a type of outfit common enough wherever emigrants go on the plains of the west, but which by western tradition is peculiarly associated with the migrations of the inhabitants of the Missouri country, to which the station-keeper had referred.

It was a "prairie schooner," a white topped, covered wagon, drawn by a pair of shaggy-tail mules. Sitting upon the seat in front was the driver, a long, lank, lantern-pawed man, just middle age, with unkempt hair and straggling beard. Beside him, with a small child wedged between them, sat a well-grown girl, in calico dress and sunbonnet, holding a smaller child in her lap. From the recesses of the wagon peered the faces of a cluster of children of various ages, but with strict uniformity as to their hair, which was of the colour of tow. The butt of a heavy rifle that swung from the awning hoops within protruded, easy at hand, at the driver's shoulder. At the back of the wagon, lashed against the end, outside the canvas, was a splint-bottomed rocking chair. A cow was led behind the wagon.

The man drove his team up before the station door, looked at us all deliberately and accented the station-keeper—

(To be Continued.)

Victoria Cafe

Great George St. Scene of attraction during these hot days. Nice drinks of all kinds to refresh the tired and weary. Nice Lunches, beautiful strawberries and cream. JOHN P. JOY VICTORIA CAFE Gt. George St....

Advertisement for Castoria, featuring '900 DROPS' and 'CASTORIA' text, along with a signature and product details.

Advertisement for English Manures, featuring 'HIGH GRADE' and 'English Manures' text, along with product details and 'AULD BROS.' signature.

Advertisement for E. W. TAYLOR, featuring 'Warning!' text and 'E. W. TAYLOR, OPTICIAN' signature.

Advertisement for VILLA MARIA CONVENT, featuring 'MONTREAL' text and 'MILLER BROS.' signature, along with details about piano sales.



A procession of horsemen passed.

and spoke to her kindly and came to us with extended hand. He thanked us in courtly Castilian phrase for our conduct toward his household, and expressed regret that he could offer us no adequate hospitality in his ruined camp. While he and Manuel finished the meagre remains of our breakfast, Don Ramon gave an account of his own adventures of the night before. The stampede of his mules had undoubtedly saved the lives of all his party. The first of the animals was the cause of their breaking away, and they had gone straight to the plays. To follow and catch them had consumed the remainder of the night, and the episode