



CHAPTER I.

"It's a pity our horses should each cast a shoe to-day. It looks as if we should have a night ride of it on the plain."

As Felix Marchant said this, he gave his carriage belt a hitch and glanced eastward, where the wagon trail leading from the glorietta was lost to view in the windings of the pass.

"If the blacksmith had something less than a cavalcade of troop horses to shoe ahead of ours, we might get away in time to make the stage station before camping," he continued, discontentedly. "But things being as they are, we've got to wait and start when we can. We'll have to get along as far as we're able to-day, go into dry camp and strike the Peloncillos to-morrow. It's an interesting tract of country to cross—the San Simon plain. Indians, rustlers, reptiles, and alkali, they're all on the programme. But we can't afford to lose any more time than we have to here. We must push through and take things as we find them."

The scene was Southern Arizona and the time a bright September day in the seventies. In the hot sunshine of early afternoon but little life was astir about the adobe houses and dusty parade ground at Camp Bowie. A sentinel pacing his beat and the officer of the day were in sight, a half dozen Mexicans lounged listlessly in front of the post trader's store, and at the officers' quarters three or four garrison ladies, entertained by a young lieutenant, sat in the shade on a cottage verandah. The hammer of the post blacksmith, on whose motions Felix and I were waiting, rang in slow time through stillness unbroken by other sound than the random bray from some tethered mule or straying burro. On the sloping plateau below the military post, a Mexican wagon train was drawn up to one side, and the swarthy teamsters lay asleep under the wagons, while the oxen, watched by a herder, grazed down the pass. Every feature of the landscape was sharply defined in light and shade, and through the thin, transparent, upland air the most distant peak looked near. The scene was full of the repose, the genial warmth, the illumination of early autumn in Arizona.

While our horses stood before the blacksmith shop Felix and I strolled in the military burial ground, idly reading the names and dates on the wooden slabs set thickly about amid dusty grass and wild flowers and the fresh earth of new mounds. Beneath the name on every whitewashed headboard, in long rows, there faced us, with awful uniformity, the inscription in black letters, "Killed by Indians," and it brought to our minds more forcibly than anything else perhaps could have done that we were in the focus of ambush and massacre, the rocky-walled route of savage foray through long centuries, the picturesque and dangerous Apache pass.

We had hidden into Camp Bowie early that morning, coming from the San Pedro valley through the south-westerly opening of the pass. Within the canyon our way had lain amid graves, some marked with headboards or crosses, some showing only as mounds of earth or stone, and what mortal record could tell how many bodies of dead men we rode over, buried, in times of Indian troubles, obscurely under the trail to hide them from savage desecration? Trail and graves and grassy bottoms, shut in by sea-walled and fissured walls of red rock grown thin about with gnarled pines and clumps of scrub oak—the brightness in sunlight, the gloom in shadow—told mutely their story of the Apache, of ambush and treacherous attack, of murder and torture which through untold generations have made this mountain pass of ominous name a veritable valley of death.

The wheels of the massive family carriage of Senor Don Ramon Velasquez Bustamante had imprinted the trail in advance of us that morning, coming from the south-west, and he had halted at Camp Bowie. Now, after his noonday meal, the stout Don was lying at full length on a cowskin baccia spread on the ground in the shade of the carriage, peacefully enjoying his siesta. His mules, a little distance away, grazed on the hillside in the care of a servant, Manuel, who reclined near them beneath a tree and caught cat naps between their excursions.

While Don Ramon slept, his daughter, Carmen, attended by her little Indian maid, Dolores, wandering about within sight of the carriage, came near the burial ground. She was a charming picture of Mexican beauty, this senorita, from the Santa Cruz valley, sauntering in the sunlight amid the grim surroundings of the lonely pass. Spanish blood steeped in southern sunshine flowed pure in her veins, and the traits of her birth and station were manifest in the unstudied grace, the mingled pride and gentleness of her bearing. Influences of race and climate had moulded this young girl into those contours which in colder northern regions come only with maturer years. Her face, with its clear, pale olive tint, was set off most becomingly by the black lace mantilla worn over the heavy braids and coils of her dusky hair, and there was a suggestion of slumbering fire in the sleepy fall of long lashed lids over magnificent dark eyes.

As Carmen took her way past the cemetery she looked curiously over the low wall at the mounds and headboards, and frankly at the two caballeros, Felix and myself, with our riding costumes of California jean much overlaid with cartridge belts, and the dust of Arizona trails. After we had

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Left the burial ground she passed within the wall, where, looking back, I saw her gathering wild flowers among the graves.

It was the middle of the afternoon before we could get our horses from the blacksmith. Saddling and mounting them, we rode toward the easterly mouth of the pass. As we crossed the parade ground an Indian courier, dusty and travel-worn, rode a tired horse from the trail up to the quarters of the commanding officer, and before we were out of sight of Camp Bowie I saw an orderly going in haste across the parade ground toward the soldiers' barracks. Then a rocky point shut off the backward view as we followed the wagon trail that winds along the steep canyon side down to the San Simon plain.

As we emerged from the pass a wide, open valley lay before us, slightly depressed toward its middle, and rising again toward its far-off eastern boundary, the foot of the Peloncillo mountains, which stretched north and south parallel with the Chiricahua range, which we were leaving. Stein's peak rose loftily ahead, and our trail, the overland stage route across the plain, marked by telegraph poles and their wires, led well to its right. We carried our rifles across our saddle pommels as we rode the bay Missouri horses, Bill and Tip, which had borne us many a hundred miles in the Apache country. A single blanket and oil-skin "sloker" were strapped behind each saddle, and a flour sack rolled in Felix's blanket held our provisions, bought at Camp Bowie. With cartridges freshly filled with water before starting out, we felt that we had made all reasonable preparations for comfort and safety, and entered on our journey with light hearts.

North and south the plain extended seemingly without limit. The summer had been rainy; and the grass and plants of the arid region had grown exuberantly. On delicate stems the razor blade heads of the grama grass waved in the breeze above the curly bunches from which they rose, and the plain was spangled with wild flowers. There were mimic thickets of the taller, coarser grasses, patches of sagebrush and greasewood, and here and there a space of barren alkali ground. Low clumps of thorny mesquite trees dotted the landscape, miniature and grotesque groves of the larger yuccas and cactuses appeared, and growing near the ground were seen the prickly pear, the spiky soapweed, and the trailing vine, and odoriferous yellow fruit of the wild pumpkin.

Animal life was not lacking in the distance, and jack rabbits bounded away at our approach, and then saguaro, upright and motionless, holding erect their prodigious, black-tipped ears, as they watched us out of the corner of their eye. Slender, striped gophers ran lithely through the grass, to crouch, in an attitude of attention, at the entrance of their holes, and the chameleon lizards darted hither and thither with surprising swiftness. High in the air hawks and eagles swam in circles, with extended, motionless wings, and at one place, where the carcass of an ox lay by the wayside, a flock of buzzards were contesting the carrion with two coyotes. On the left, ahead, in a depression of the plain, a playa, or prairie lake, caused by the summer rains, glittered brilliantly blue in the sun.

The trail, worn hard and smooth by the travel of centuries, was an excellent roadway, and we pushed forward at a good pace, varying the fast walk and the trot to which our horses were accustomed by an occasional short gallop. Late in the afternoon we turned from the trail to the playa, 200 yards away. Near at hand the water, so blue in the distance, revealed itself as turbid, and its recession through evaporation had left it surrounded by a wide, flat margin of hardened mud, deeply imprinted by the feet of birds and animals, and white with alkali. Spreading as it did over ground that was almost level, the lake was astonishingly shallow, and the horses had to be ridden into it, far from the edge, to find water deep enough for them to drink comfortably. Swarms of pallid, alkali fed mosquitoes rose about us, and the horses, tormented by their bites, and not liking the water, stamped and pawed and moved about, drinking slowly, a little at a time.

Don Ramon had driven out of the pass an hour after us, but he traveled faster than we, and his ponderous carriage rolled along the trail as we sat on our horses at the lake. A water keg, swinging below the rear axle, showed that he was prepared to camp that night on the plain. The pair of Spanish mules, flanked by a led animal, drew the vehicle easily at a trot and, passing the playa, rapidly widened the distance from us. Manuel was driving the team, and beside him sat the Indian maid, Dolores. As the carriage drew past the water sheet, Don Ramon looked watchfully, perhaps suspiciously, at us from the window, and over his shoulder appeared for a few moments the fair face, the dark eyes and sombre hair of Carmen.

The sun was an hour above the western mountains as we rode out of the water and resumed the trail. The mosquitoes followed and continued to annoy us, until a friendly breeze blew them to leeward. The horses, refreshed by the halt and the water, moved with a brisker pace than before. We were nearing the middle of the plain, and the mountain ranges that bound it on the east and west were equally in view. To the south, in the Chiricahua, smoke was rising from unseen fires to several places on distant peaks and wooded mountain sides. As we

movements around, far and near, as those need no who ride on Arizona prairies, it was seen that the smoke from some of the places rose strangely in spires and puffs. The sign of these mysterious signals was a sudden and unpleasant revelation to Felix and me. Each, by the same impulse, examined the carriage in his rifle barrel, and whirled the cylinder of his revolver to make sure that the weapon was in working order.

Felix spoke first. "Indian fires," he said. "The Apaches are out. They're rendezvousing in the mountains about the San Simon plain."

I nodded, and he continued:—"I thought something was up when that courier rode in so much of a hurry into Camp Bowie. He probably brought news that the renegades have crossed the border. It wasn't to be expected they would let this moon go by without an outbreak."

"What about these renegades?" I asked. "I thought General Crook had got all the Apaches killed or safe in reservations."

"He didn't get them all," said Felix. "There were some forty warriors of Cochise's old band, led by a chief named Skin-ya, who refused to come upon the San Carlos reservation, and went across the border into the trail. There they have been lurking since, keeping near the boundary line between the United States and Mexico. They pass

to the one side or the other of the border, according as the Mexican or American troops get after them, and go on the warpath as often as they want horses and the excitement of killing white people. On their raids they are usually joined by Indians who steal away from the San Carlos and the Warm Springs reservations."

"Those fires certainly look as if the Indians were moving," I remarked.

"What are we going to do about it?" "I size up matters this way," said Felix. "The renegades have been coming up from Mexico in little parties, so as to divide their trail, and are gathering in the Chiricahua mountains. The fires are to bring them together, and notify the reservation Indians where to join them. There is a full moon this week, and within a day or two—to-night, as likely as not, after moonrise, or to-morrow, at daybreak—they will sweep the San Simon plain northward on their way to the Gila river. They will manage the business with the greatest cunning. One thing they are certain to lay out to do, that is, to capture the east and west bound overland stages so as to keep the news of their outbreak from getting out as long as possible. They will time their attack so as to corral them both. They're watching the plain from the mountain tops now like hawks. They've had their eyes on us ever since we left the pass, and if we are on the plain when they move they won't slight us in their round up. What we've got to settle right away is this: Shall we go into camp at fall of darkness, as we have intended, or make a long night ride for the San Simon stage station?"

"I knew Felix, and that his judgment was to be trusted. "I'll leave the matter with you," I said. "I know nothing better for us than to carry out the plan we have arranged, and camp down on the prairie. We want to keep our horses fresh in case we should have to run for it, and it would be well not to exhaust the animals by a long night ride."

"That's just my idea of the best thing to do," said Felix. "Suppose we manage it this way: we'll stop a little before sundown, and have supper. As soon as it grows dark, we'll saddle up, push on, and go into camp off the trail, two or three miles ahead. The Indians, once started, must hurry



She looked curiously over the low wall.

along, for they know that the first tidings of their outbreak will bring the soldiers after them, and they won't spend much time hunting us in the dark. We'll get through that way, if at all."

So it was agreed upon that we should follow this plan of operations. Soon we came to a clear, grassy space on the prairie. Here we stopped and picketed the horses out to graze. Bread we had, and a few dry branches of mesquite made a fire sufficient to frizzle some slices of bacon and to boil coffee in a pot extemporized from an emptied peach can. We fell to our supper with a good appetite, just as the sun was going down behind the Chiricahua range. By the time we had eaten our meal, and smoked a pipe, darkness had fallen. The stars were out, and the distant mountains were lost in darkness, as we saddled the horses, mounted, and rode onward upon the trail.

The night was wonderfully fair, and the luminous stars shone with soft brightness through the misty blue of the high, cloudless sky. In the dusk the plain took on a new aspect. Its

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mesquite and other thick vegetation looked strange in shade and darkness and, with our motion, seemed themselves to move and change their places. Myriads of fireflies flashed above the darkened earth. The shriek of a coyote came from the direction of the playa, which, still in sight, several miles away, threw back a reflection like dull, molten lead. Owls hooted from unknown regions of the night, and there were other calls and cries abroad which we could not identify.

We rode in silence at a fast walk for three-quarters of an hour, and then turned off the trail to where some clumps of mesquite stood in a space of open prairie. Here we unsaddled our horses and tied them to mesquite trees, giving them the length of their rope that they might graze freely. Then, with our saddles on rollows, Felix and I lay down on the ground to sleep, back to back, each rolled in his blanket, with rifle beside him and revolver by his head.

(To be Continued.)



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SCOTT ACT ELECTION.

RESULT OF THE VOTING.

THURSDAY, JULY 22.

	For the Act.	Against the Act.
Ward One, East—Poll held at Engine House,	40	77
Ward One, West—Poll held at J. McEachern's,	34	74
Ward Two, East—Poll held at Thomas Connolly's,	42	57
Ward Two, West—Poll held at Geo. Thorne's,	14	50
Ward Three, East—Poll held at Court House,	42	40
Ward Three, West—Poll held at John Bell's,	27	55
Ward Four, East—Poll held at Geo. Mathews,	65	52
Ward Four, East—Poll held at Hobbs Corner,	63	45
Ward Four, West—Poll held at McKay's Corner,	58	68
Ward Five, East—Poll held at Chas. McGregor's,	103	48
Ward Five, East—Poll held at R. Coffins,	72	49
Ward Five, West—Poll held at Thos. Pickards,	60	85
Ward Five, West—Poll held at Ball's Meat Shop,	53	86
	673	786

Majority against the Act 113.

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