

THE WAR-TRAIL!

CHAPTER XC.—(CONTINUED.)

From the bend to the Indian camp the river trended almost in a straight line, and its long reach lay before my eyes like a band of shining metal.

At this point, therefore, it was necessary for me to take to the water, and dismounting, I made ready for the immersion.

The trappers had spoken their last words of instruction and counsel. They had both grasped my hand, giving it a significant squeeze that promised more than words.

"Don't be afraid, capt'n!" said the younger; "Rube and I won't be far off. If we hear your pistols, we'll make a rush for you, and meet you half way anyhow; and if anything should happen amiss"—here Gary spoke with emphasis—"you may depend on't, we'll take a bloody revenge."

"Ye-es," echoed Rube, "we'll do just that—thurr'll be many a nick in Targuis afore next Krissmuss, ef you ur rubbed out, young fellur—that I swear to ye—but don't be skeert! Keep your eyes sharp skinned, an' your claws steady, an' thurr's no fear but you'll get clur—oncest your clur o' the camp, 'ee may reckon on us—but start for the timber, an' gallop as ef ole scratch wur a gruppung at the tail o' your critter."

I waited to hear no more, but leading Moro down the bank at a place where it sloped, I stepped gently into the current. My well-trained steed followed without hesitation, and in another instant we were both breast deep in the flood. The water was just the depth I desired. There was a half yard of bank that rose vertically above the surface, and this was sufficient to shelter either my own head as I stood erect, or the frontlet of my horse. Should the channel continue of uniform depth as far as the camp, the approach would be easy indeed, and for certain hydrographic reasons, I was in hopes it would.

The plumes of the Indian bonnet rose above the level of the meadow turf; and as these feathers, dyed of gay colors, would have formed a conspicuous object, I took off the gaudy head-dress and carried it in my hand. I also raised the robe of jaguar skin over my shoulders, in order to keep it dry, and for the same reason I temporarily carried my pistols above the water-line.

The making of these slight alterations occupied only a minute or so, and as soon as they were completed, I moved forward through the water. The very depth of the stream proved a circumstance in my favor. In wading, both horse and man make less noise in deep than in shallow water, and this was an important consideration. The night was still—too still for my wishes—and the plunging sound would have been heard afar off, but fortunately, there were rapids below, just where the stream forced its way through the spur of the hill, and the hissing slough there, louder in the still night, was borne upon the air to the distance of many miles. Their noise to my own ears almost drowned the plashing made by Moro and myself. I had noted this point *avantage* before embarking upon the enterprise.

At the distance of two hundred yards from the bushes, I paused to look back. My purpose was to fix in my memory the direction of the hill, and more especially the point where my comrades had been left in ambush. In the event of a close pursuit, it would not do to mistake their exact situation.

I easily made out the place, and saw that, for several reasons, a better could not have been chosen. The trees that timbered the crest of the hill were of a peculiar kind, more so upon the face of the earth. They were a species of arborescent yucca, then unknown to botanists. Many of them were forty feet in height, and their thick angular branches and terminal fascicles of rigid leaves, outlined against the sky, formed a singular, almost an unearthly spectacle. It was unlike any other vegetation upon earth, more resembling a grove of cast iron than a wood of exogenous trees.

Why I regarded the spot as favorable for an ambush, was chiefly this: a party approaching it from the plain, and climbing the hill, might fancy a host of enemies in their front, for the trees themselves, with their heads of radiating blades, bore a striking resemblance to an array of plumed gigantic warriors. Many of the yuccas were only six feet in height, with tufted heads and branchless trunks as gross as the body of a man, and these might readily have been mistaken for human beings.

I saw at a glance the advantage of the position, should the Indians pursue me, and I could succeed in reaching the timber before them. A volley from my comrades would check the pursuers, however numerous. The nine rifles would be enough, with a few shots from the revolvers. The savages would fancy nine hundred under the mystifying shadows of that spectral-like grove.

With confidence, strengthened by these considerations, I once more turned my face up stream, and breasting the current, kept on.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Eric-A-Brac.

The difference between a cat and a comma is that one has the claws at the end of the paw, while the other has the pause at the end of the clause.

We are told "the evening wore on," but we are not told what the evening wore on that particular occasion. Was it at the close of the summer's day?

The best men know they are very far from what they ought to be, and the very worst think that, if they were a little better, they would be as good as they need be.

Every one who is worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten, to the evil thoughts and habits in himself, or spiritual wickedness in high places or Russians, or border ruffians.

A brother rose in a weekly prayer meeting in New Jersey and said, "Brethren, when I consider the shortness of life, I feel as if I might be taken away suddenly, like a thief in the night."

A French writer remarks:—"If a lady says to you, 'I can never love you,' wait a little longer; all hope is not lost. But if she says, 'No one has more sincere wishes for your happiness than I,' take your hat."

A young composer has just written for a soprano voice a beautiful song entitled "Would that I were young again!" It has been so much time wasted. A woman can't be found who'll sing it.

A clergyman dwelt in a quiet, rural district, where laziness is apt to grow upon a man. One day his excellent spouse remarked to him at breakfast, "Minister, there's a bit of butter on your neckcloth."

"Weel, weel, Janet, my dear," slowly responded the worthy pastor, "when I get up, it'll fa' all!"

An old lady, who had no relish for modern church music, was expressing her dislike of the singing of an anthem in a certain church not very far from—, when a neighbor said: "Why, that is a very old anthem. David sang it to Saul." To this, the old lady replied, "Weel, weel, I noo for the first time understand why Saul threw his javelin at David when the lad sang for him."

At a church in Scotland, where there was a popular call for a minister, as it is termed, two candidates offered to preach, whose names were Adam and Low. The latter preached in the morning and took for his text, "Adam, where art thou?" He made a very excellent discourse and the congregation were much edified. In the afternoon Mr. Adam preached upon these words: "Lo, here am I." The impromptu and the sermon gained him the appointment.

A Sunday school teacher read to his class that the Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing after Philip had talked with him, and then asked, "Why did he rejoice?" A boy answered, "Because Philip was done a-teachin' him." It is too often that there is a great rejoicing when the lesson is finished. Attending a lecture lately, the speaker was long, learned, but dreadfully tiresome. When he finished, there was a loud applause, "Why, we asked, 'this loud applause?'" "Because he stopped there; he might have gone longer."

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L. B. ARCHIBALD, Superintendent, Railway Office, Charlottetown, Nov. 29, 1881.

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