

THE WAR-TRAIL!

CHAPTER LVII.—(CONTINUED.)

With Cyprio I had conversed upon the harrowing theme, and that only at starting. From him I had gathered further details. No doubt, the matador had performed his office. O God! without ears!

Cyprio had seen blood; it was streaming down her neck and over her bosom; her slight garments were stained red with it. He knew not whence it came, or why she was bleeding. He was not present when that blood had been drawn; it was in her chamber, he thought. She was bleeding when the ruffians dragged her forth.

Belike, too, the herrero had done his work? Cyprio had seen the blacksmith, but not the fierro. He had heard they had branded some at the plaza, among others the daughter of the alcalde—pobre Conchita! He did not see them brand the Dona Isolina.

The ruffian deed might have been accomplished for all that; there was plenty of time, while the boy lay hid.

How was she placed upon the horse? Despite my heart's bitterness, as I put these interrogatories, I could not help thinking of the Cossack legend. The famed classic picture came vividly before my mind. Wide was the distance between the Ukraine and the Rio Bravo. Had the monsters who re-enacted this scene on the banks of the Mexican river—had these ever heard of Mazeppa? Possibly their leader had; but still more probable that the fiendish thought was original.

The fashion at least was. Cyprio had seen and could describe it.

She was laid longitudinally upon the back of the steed, her head resting upon the point of his shoulder. Her face was downward, her cheek touching the withers, her arms embraced the neck, and her wrists were made fast under the animal's throat. Her body was held in position by means of a belt around her waist, attached to a surcingle on the horse—both tightly buckled. In addition to this, her ankles, bound together by a thong, were fastened to the croup, with her feet projecting beyond the hips!

I groaned as I listened to the details. The ligation was perfect—cruelly complete. There was no hope that such fastenings would give way. Those thongs of rawhide would not come undone. Horse and rider could never part from that unwilling embrace—never, till hunger, thirst, death—no, not even death could part them! O horror!

Not without groans could I contemplate the hideous fate of my betrothed—of her whose love had become my life.

I left the tracking to my comrades, and my horse to follow after. I rode with loose rein, and head drooping forward; I scarcely gave thought to design. My heart was well-nigh broken.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE VOYAGEUR.

We had not gone far when some one closed up beside me, and muttered a word of cheer; I recognized the friendly voice of the big trapper.

"Don't be afeard, cap'n," said he in a tone of encouragement; "don't be afeard! Rube and me'll find em afore thar's any harm done. I don't b'lieve the white hoss'll gallip far, knowin thar's somebody on his back. It war them gim-cracks that sot him off. When they burn out, he'll come to a dead halt, an then!"

"And then?" I inquired mechanically.

"We'll get up, an your black'll be able to overhaul him in a jump or two." I began to feel hope. It was but a momentary gleam, and died out in the next instant.

If the moon 'ud only hold out," continued Garey, with an emphasis denoting doubt.

"Rot the moon!" said a voice interrupting him; "she's a wine to guv out. Wag!"

It was Rube who had uttered the unpleasant prognostication, in a peevish, but confident tone.

All eyes were turned upward. The moon, round and white, was sailing through a cloudless sky, and almost in the zenith. How, then, was she to 'give out'? She was near the full, and could not set before morning. What did Rube mean? The question was put to Rube.

"Lookee 'ander!" said he in reply.

"D'ees see thar 'urk line, down low on the para'ra?"

There appeared a dark streak along the horizon to the eastward. Yes, we saw it.

"Wal," continued Rube, "thar's no timber thur—ne'er a stick—nor high groun neyther: thar ur's a cloud; I've seed the likes afore. Wait a bit. Wag! In jest ten minutes, the durned thing'll liver up the moon, and make that pretty blue sky look as black as the hide o' an Afrikin nigger—it will."

"I'm afreed he's right, cap'n," said Garey, in a desponding tone. "I war doubtful o' it myself: the sky looked too near. I didn't like it a bit: thar's always a change when things are better'n common."

I needed not to enquire the consequence, should Rube's prediction prove correct; that was evident to all of us. The moon once obscured by clouds, our progress would be arrested; even a horse could not be tracked in the darkness.

We were not long in suspense. Ag in the foresight of the old trapper proved unerring. Onwuli rolled up the sky one

after another, until their black masses shrouded the moon. At first, they came in detached clouds, and there was light at intervals; but these were only the advanced columns of a heavier body, that soon appeared, and without a break, spread itself pall-like over the firmament.

The moon's disc became entirely hidden from our view; her scattered beams died out, and the prairie lay dark as if shadowed by an eclipse.

We could follow the trail no further. The ground itself was not visible, much less the hoof-prints we had been tracing; and halting simultaneously, we drew our horses together, and sat in our saddles to deliberate upon what was best to be done.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Mentone.

THE QUEEN DEPARTS FOR AN ITALIAN RETREAT—SOMETHING ABOUT ITS SITUATION.

The Queen started from Windsor for Mentone on the 14th inst. Mentone is situated in one of the most picturesque nooks in Northern Italy, on the west shore of the "Riviera" of the Gulf of Genoa. On three sides the Alps hem it in; on the fourth the blue waters of the Gulf. The indentation in the shore in which the town is situated forms a graceful curve about a mile in depth and four miles in width, from the long and thickly-wooded promontory of Cape St. Martin on the west to the bold projecting cliffs of Mortola on the east. On the land side is a complete amphitheatre of hills and mountains, which stretch down to within a quarter of a mile of the beach, rising in successive curving lines one above another to a height of three and four thousand feet, overtopped by the still higher snow-clad summits of the parent chain of the Alps. Within a short distance the shore the delighted visitor wanders amid orange and lemon groves, under a sky which, unlike that of Nice, scarce knows a fog, and in a temperature which the cold blast rarely molests, and where the thermometer, even in the cool of the morning or the chill of evening, rarely registers below 48° Fahrenheit, and throughout the coldest winter seldom falls below 60° at midday. That it should be such a resort for invalids is therefore not to be wondered at, nor is it extraordinary that the principal doctors of England and Europe in general are unanimous in recommending it as the best health resort on the continent. Hence it is that at all seasons like the normal population of the place, amounting to some 5,000 souls, is abnormally added to by a multitude of sick folks who resort to this Italian amphitheatre of nature's building, and fill the various villas and hotels which dot the shores of the East and the West Bay. Of the two the latter is pleasanter and better adapted to catering for the wants of the visitors, and is likewise more popular and prosperous than its eastern rival, though the latter is warmer and a trifle the less windy of the two. On both bays there is sea-wall, with a wide promenade and a delightful drive, whence the outlook over the Mediterranean is unobstructed by buildings of any sort. This is the only street which the East Bay boasts—it is part of the famous "Coracio" nor do any roads lead from it back into the country as they do from the West Bay, whence the most fascinating views are gained, extending far out across the sea or northward over the lands where the orange and myrtle groves fringe the verdant heights, which in their turn seem to glide into the realms of shadow and perpetual snow. The sea beach is not a success. There is little or no sand, but instead any amount of pebbles and shingle, with a powerful smell from the drains, which, especially on the east side, pour forth their unsavory contents openly into the waters of the Mediterranean. Shells and seaweed-clad rocks are conspicuous by their absence, their place being usurped as at all the other Riviera towns, by the rubbish in the shape of old boots and vegetable refuse cast out on the shore by the inhabitants. Over these float countless hosts of gulls, and on the debris herds of goats find their daily and not precarious meal. These blots on the beauty of Mentone should be remedied at once. Yet these, notwithstanding the verdict of every traveller must be that the spot is little short of an earthly paradise.

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