Gustave Aimard

THE FREEBOOTERS

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An Enthralling Saga of the Texan War

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PREFACE.

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Apart from the thrilling interest of Aimard's new story, which I herewith offer to English readers, I think it will be accepted with greater satisfaction, as being an historical record of the last great contest in which the North Americans were engaged. As at the present moment everything is eagerly devoured that may tend to throw light on the impending struggle between North and South, I believe that the story of "THE FREEBOOTERS," which is rigorously true in its details, will enable my readers to form a correct opinion of the character of the Southerners.

The series, of which this volume forms a second link, will be completed in a third volume, to be called "THE WHITE SCALPER," which contains an elaborate account of the liberation of Texas, and the memorable battle of San Jacinto, together with personal adventures of the most extraordinary character.

L.W.
7, DRAYTON TERRACE,
WEST BROMPTON.

CHAPTER I.
FRAY ANTONIO.

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All the wood rangers have noticed, with reference to the immense virgin forests which still cover a considerable extent of the soil of the New World, that, to the man who attempts to penetrate into one of these mysterious retreats which the hand of man has not yet deformed, and which preserve intact the sublime stamp which Deity has imprinted on them, the first steps offer almost insurmountable difficulties, which are gradually smoothed down more and more, and after a little while almost entirely disappear. It is as if Nature had desired to defend by a belt of thorns and spikes the mysterious shades of these aged forests, in which her most secret arcana are carried out.

Many times, during our wanderings in America, we were in a position to appreciate the correctness of the remark we have just made: this singular arrangement of the forests, surrounded, as it were, by a rampart of parasitic plants entangled one in the other, and thrusting in every direction their shoots full of incredible sap, seemed a problem which offered a certain degree of interest from various points of view, and especially from that of science.

It is evident to us that the circulation of the air favours the development of vegetation. The air which circulates freely round a large extent of ground covered with lofty trees, and is driven by the various breezes that agitate the atmosphere, penetrates to a certain depth into the clumps

of trees it surrounds, and consequently supplies nourishment to all the parasitical shrubs vegetation presents to it. But, on reaching a certain depth under the covert, the air, less frequently renewed, no longer supplies carbonic acid to all the vegetation that covers the soil, and which, through the absence of that aliment, pines away and dies.

This is so true, that those accidents of soil which permit the air a more active circulation in certain spots, such as the bed of a torrent or a gorge between two eminences, the entrance of which is open to the prevailing wind, favour the development of a more luxuriant vegetation than in flat places.

It is more than probable that Fray Antonio[1] made none of the reflections with which we begin this chapter, while he stepped silently and quietly through the trees, leaving the man who had helped him, and probably saved his life, to struggle as he could with the crowd of Redskins who attacked him, and against whom he would indubitably have great difficulty in defending him.

Fray Antonio was no coward; far from it: in several critical circumstances he had displayed true bravery; but he was a man to whom the existence he led offered enormous advantages and incalculable delights. Life seemed to him good, and he did all in his power to spend it jolly and free from care. Hence, through respect for himself, he was extremely prudent, only facing danger when it was absolutely necessary; but at such times, like all men driven into a corner, he became terrible and really dangerous to

those who, in one way or the other, had provoked in him this explosion of passion.

In Mexico, and generally throughout Spanish America, as the clergy are only recruited from the poorest class of the population, their ranks contain men of gross ignorance, and for the most part of more than doubtful morality. The religious orders, which form nearly one-third of the population, living nearly independent of all subjection and control, receive among them people of all sorts, for whom the religious dress they don is a cloak behind which they give way with perfect liberty to their vices, of which the most venial are indubitably indolence, luxury, and intoxication.

Enjoying a great credit with the civilized Indian population, and greatly respected by them, the monks impudently abuse that halo of sanctity which surrounds them, in order to shamefully plunder these poor people under the slightest excuses.

Indeed, blackguardism and demoralisation have attained such a pitch in these unhappy countries, which are old and decrepit without ever having been young, that the conduct of the monks, offensive it may seem in the sight of Europeans, has nothing at all extraordinary for those among whom they live.

Far from us the thought of leading it to be supposed that among the Mexican clergy, and even the monks we have so decried, there are not men worthy of the gown they wear, and convinced of the sanctity of their mission; we have, indeed, known many of that character; but unfortunately

they form so insignificant a minority, that they must be regarded as the exception.

Fray Antonio was assuredly no better or worse than the other monks whose gown he wore; but, unluckily for him, for some time past fatality appeared to have vented its spite on him, and mixed him up, despite his firm will, in events, not only opposed to his character but to his habits, which led him into a multitude of tribulations each more disagreeable than the other, and which were beginning to make him consider that life extremely bitter, which he had hitherto found so pleasant.

The atrocious mystification of which John Davis had rendered the poor monk a victim, had especially spread a gloomy haze over his hitherto so gay mind; a sad despondency had seized upon him; and it was with a heavy and uncertain step that he fled through the forest, although, excited by the sounds of combat that still reached his ear, he made haste to get off, through fear of falling into the hands of the Redskins, if they proved the victors.

Night surprised poor Fray Antonio ere he had reached the skirt of this forest, which seemed to him interminable. Naturally anything but hard-working, and not at all used to desert life, the monk found himself greatly embarrassed when he saw the sun disappear on the horizon in a mist of purple and gold, and the darkness almost instantaneously cover the earth. Unarmed, without means of lighting a fire, half-dead with hunger and alarm, the monk took a long glance of despair around him, and fell to the ground, giving vent to a dull groan: he literally did not know to what saint he should appeal.

Still, after a few moments, the instinct of self-preservation gained the mastery over discouragement, and the monk, whose teeth chattered with terror on hearing re-echoed through the forest the lugubrious roaring of the wild beasts, which were beginning to awaken, and greeted in their fashion the longed-for return of gloom—rose with a feverish energy, and suffering from that feverish over-excitement which fear raised to a certain pitch produces, resolved to profit by the fugitive rays that still crossed the glade, to secure himself a shelter for the night.

Opposite to him grew a majestic mahogany tree, whose interlaced branches and dense foliage seemed to offer him a secure retreat against the probable attack of the gloomy denizens of the forest.

Assuredly, under any other circumstances than those in which he found himself, the bare idea of escalading this immense forest would have appeared to the monk the height of folly and mental aberration, owing first to his paunch, and next to his awkwardness, of which he felt intimately convinced.

But it was a critical point: at each instant the situation grew more dangerous; the howling came nearer in a most alarming manner; there was no time to hesitate; and Fray Antonio did not do so. After walking once or twice round the tree, in order to discover the spot which offered him the greatest facility for his ascent, he gave vent to a sigh, embraced the enormous and rugged trunk with his arms and knees, and painfully commenced his attempted climb.

But it was no easy matter, especially for a plump monk, to mount the tree, and Fray Antonio soon perceived this fact

at his own expense; for each time that, after extraordinary efforts, he managed to raise himself a few inches from the ground, his strength suddenly failed him, and he fell back on the ground with lacerated hands and torn clothes.

Ten times already had he renewed his efforts, with the desperation produced by despair, without seeing them crowned with success; the perspiration poured down his face; his chest panted; he was in a state to produce pity even in his most obstinate enemy.

"I shall never succeed in mounting it," he muttered sadly; "and if I remain here, I am a lost man, for within an hour I shall be infallibly devoured by some tiger in search of its supper."

This final reflection, which was incontestably true, restored a fresh ardour to the monk, who resolved to make a new and supreme attempt But this time he wished to take all his precautions; consequently, he began collecting the dead wood round him and piling it at the foot of the tree, so as to form a scaffolding high enough for him to reach, without any great difficulty, a branch sufficiently low for him, while careful to remain awake, to hope to spend the night without fear of being devoured—an alternative for which the worthy monk did not feel the slightest inclination.

Soon, thanks to the vivacity of his movements, Fray Antonio had a considerable heap of wood piled up around him. A smile of satisfaction lit up his wide face, and he breathed again, while wiping away the perspiration that poured down his face.

"This time," he muttered, calculating with a glance the space he had to cover, "if I do not succeed, I shall be

preciously clumsy."

In the meanwhile the last gleams of twilight, so useful to the monk, had entirely disappeared; the absence of the stars, which had not yet shown themselves, left a profound obscurity in the sky, which was even more obscure under the covert; all was beginning to be blotted out, only allowing here and there a few clumps of trees to be distinguished, as they designed their gloomy masses in the night, or a few patches of water, the result of the last storm, which studded the forest with paler spots. The evening breeze had risen, and could be heard soughing through the foliage with a sad and melancholy plaintiveness.

The dangerous denizens of the forest had quitted their lurking places, and crushed the dead wood, as they eagerly came on, amid a deafening current of catlike howls. The monk had not an instant to lose, if he did not wish to be attacked on all sides at once by the wild beasts, whom a lengthened fast rendered more terrible still.

After taking a searching glance around him in order to assure himself that no pressing danger threatened him, the monk devotedly crossed himself, fervently recommended himself to Heaven with a sincerity he had probably never evinced before, and then, suddenly making up his mind, began resolutely climbing up the pile of wood. After several unsuccessful attempts, he at last reached the top of this fictitious mount.

He then stopped for a minute to draw breath; indeed, thanks to his ingenious ideas, Fray Antonio was now nearly ten feet from the ground. It is true that any animal could easily have overthrown this obstacle; but for all that, this

beginning of success revived the monk's courage, the more so because, on raising his eyes he saw a few paces above him, the blessed branch toward which he had so long extended his arms in vain.

"Come!" he said, hopefully.

He embraced the tree once more, and recommenced his fatiguing clambering. Either through skill or accident Fray Antonio at length managed to seize the branch with both hands, and clung to it with all his strength. The rest was as nothing. The monk assembled by a supreme effort all the vigour his previous attempts had left him, and raising himself by his arms, tried to get astride on the branch. Owing to his energetic perseverances, he had raised his head and shoulders above the branch, when all at once he felt a hand or a claw fasten round his right leg, and squeeze it as in a vice. A shudder of terror ran over the monk's body: his blood stood still in his veins; an icy perspiration beaded on his temples, and his teeth chattered fit to break.

"Mercy!" he exclaimed in a choking voice, "I am dead. Holy virgin, have pity on me."

His strength, paralyzed by terror, deserted him, his hands let loose the protecting branch, and he fell in a lump at the foot of the tree. Fortunately for Fray Antonio, the care he had taken in piling up the dead wood to a considerable extent broke his fall, otherwise it would probably have been mortal: but the shock he experienced was so great that he completely lost his senses. The monk's fainting fit was long: when he returned to life and opened his eyes again, he took a frightened glance around, and fancied he must be suffering from a horrible nightmare.

He had not stirred from the spot, so to speak: he still found himself by the tree, which he had tried so long to climb up in vain, but he was lying close to an enormous fire, over which half a deer was roasting, and around him were some twenty Indians, crouching on their heels, silently smoking their pipes, while their horses, picketed a few yards off, and ready to mount, were eating their provender.

Fray Antonio had seen Indians several times before, and had stood on such intimate terms, indeed, with them, as to be able to recognize them. His new friends were clothed in their war garb, and from their hair drawn off their foreheads, and their long barbed lances, it was easy to recognize them as Apaches.

The monk's blood ran cold, for the Apaches are notorious for their cruelty and roguery. Poor Fray Antonio had fallen from Charybdis into Scylla; he had only escaped from the jaws of the wild beasts in order to be in all probability martyred by the Redskins. It was a sad prospect which furnished the unlucky monk with ample material for thoughts, each more gloomy than the other, for he had often listened with a shudder to the hunters' stories about the atrocious tortures the Apaches take a delight in inflicting on their prisoners with unexampled barbarity.

Still, the Indians went on smoking silently, and did not appear to perceive that their captive had regained his senses. For his part, the monk hermetically closed his eyes, and anxiously preserved the most perfect tranquillity, in order to leave his dangerous companions, so long as he could, in ignorance of the state in which he was.

At length the Indians left off smoking, and after shaking the ash out of their calumets, passed them again through their girdle; a Redskin removed from the fire the half deer which was perfectly roasted, laid it in abanijo leaves in front of his comrades, and each drawing his scalping knife, prepared for a vigorous attack on the venison, which exhaled an appetizing odour, especially for the nostrils of a man who, during the whole past day, had been condemned to an absolute fast.

At this moment the monk felt a heavy hand laid on his chest, while a voice said to him with a guttural accent, which, however, had nothing menacing about it.

"The father of prayer can open his eyes now, for the venison is smoking, and his share is cut off."

The monk, perceiving that his stratagem was discovered, and excited by the smell of the meat, having made up his mind, opened his eyes, and sat up.

"Och!" the man who had before spoken said, "My father can eat; he must be hungry, and has slept enough."

The monk attempted to smile, but only made a frightful grimace, so alarmed did he feel. As however, he was really hungry as a wolf, he followed the example offered him by the Indians, who had already commenced their meal, and set to work eating the lump of venison which they had the politeness to set before him. The meal did not take long; still it lasted long enough to restore a little courage to the monk, and make him regard his position from a less gloomy side than he had hitherto done.

In truth, the behaviour of the Apaches toward him had nothing hostile about it; on the contrary, they were most

attentive in serving him with what he needed, giving him more food so soon as they perceived that he had nothing before him: they had even carried their politeness so far as to give him a few mouthfuls of spirit, an extremely precious liquid, of which they are most greedy, even for their own use, owing to the difficulty they experience in obtaining it.

When he had ended his meal, the monk, who was almost fully reassured as to the amicable temper of his new friends, on seeing them light their pipes, took from his pocket tobacco and an Indian corn leaf, and after rolling a *pajillo* with the skill which the men of Spanish race possess, he conscientiously enjoyed the bluish smoke of his excellent Havana tobacco, *costa abajo*.

A considerable space of time elapsed thus, and not a syllable was exchanged among them. By degrees the ranks of the Redskins thinned: one after the other, at short intervals, rolled themselves in their blankets, lay down with their feet to the fire, and went to sleep almost immediately. Fray Antonio, crushed by the poignant emotions of the day, and the enormous fatigue he had experienced, would gladly have imitated the Indians, had he dared, for he felt his eyes close involuntarily, and found immense difficulty in contending against the sleep that overpowered him. At last the Indian who hitherto had alone spoken, perceiving his state of somnolency, took pity on him. He rose, fetched a horsecloth, and brought it to the monk.

"My father will wrap himself in this fressada,[2]" he said, employing the bad Spanish in which he had hitherto spoken; "the nights are cold, and my father needs sleep greatly, he will, therefore, feel warmed with this. Tomorrow, a Chief will

smoke the calumet with my father in council. Blue-fox desires to have a serious conversation with the father of prayer of the Palefaces."

Fray Antonio gratefully accepted the horsecloth so graciously offered by the Chief, and without attempting to prolong the conversation, he wrapped himself up carefully, and lay down by the fire so as to absorb the largest amount of caloric possible. Still the Indian's words did not fail to cause the monk a certain degree of anxiety.

"Hum!" he muttered to himself, "That is the reverse of the medal. What can this Pagan have to say to me? He does not mean to ask me to christen him, I suppose? especially as his name appears to be Blue-fox, a nice savage name, that. Well, heaven will not abandon me, and it will be day tomorrow. So now for a snooze."

And with this consolatory reflection the monk closed his eyes: two minutes later he slept as if never going to wake again.

Blue-fox, for it was really into the hands of that Chief the monk had so unexpectedly fallen, remained crouched over the fire the whole night, plunged in gloomy thought, and watching, alone of his comrades, over the common safety: at times, his eyes were fixed with a strange expression on the monk who was fast asleep, and far from suspecting that the Apache Chief was so obstinately engaged with him.

At sunrise Blue-fox was still awake: he had remained the whole night without once changing his position, and sleep had not once weighed down his eyelids.

[1] See "Border Rifles," same publishers.

[2] "frazada."

CHAPTER II
INDIAN DIPLOMACY.

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The night passed calm and peaceful. At the moment when the sun appeared on the horizon, saluted by the deafening concert of the birds, hidden beneath the foliage, Blue-fox, who had hitherto remained motionless, extended his right arm in the direction of the monk, who was lying by his side, and gently touched him with his hand. This touch, slight as it was, sufficed, however, to arouse Fray Antonio.

There are moments in life when, although the body reposes, the mind retains all its delicate perceptions and vigilance; the monk was in a similar situation. The gentleness the Apaches displayed towards him on the previous night was so extraordinary, and opposed to their usual habit of treating white men, their inveterate foes, that the monk, despite the coolness which formed the basis of his character, understood that the strange conduct of the men into whose power he had fallen must result from very powerful motives, and that, in spite of the pretended friendship they showed him, he would do well to keep on his guard, in order to be able to make head against the storm, from whatever quarter it might come.

In consequence of this reasoning, while taking advantage of the friendly feeling of the Indians, he craftily watched their movements, only yielded to sleep with great circumspection, and then slept with one eye open, to employ the vulgar expression. Hence at the first signal he

was ready to respond to the Indian's summons with a vivacity that brought an equivocal smile upon the latter's stern features. The Redskins are physiognomists by nature; and, in spite of the tranquillity the monk affected, Blue-fox had, from certain signs that never deceive, guessed the secret alarm that internally devoured him.

"Has my brother slept well?" the Indian asked in his hoarse voice; "The Wacondah loves him, has watched over his sleep, and kept Nyang, the genius of evil, away from his dreams."

"I have, indeed, slept well, Chief, and I thank you for the cordial hospitality you have been pleased to grant me."

A smile played round the Indian's lips, as he continued:—

"My father is one of the Chiefs of prayer of his nation, the God of the Palefaces is powerful, He protects those who devote themselves to His service."

As this remark required no answer, the monk contented himself by bowing in the affirmative. Still, his anxiety increased; beneath the Chiefs gentle words he fancied he could hear the hoarse voice of the tiger, which licks its lips ere devouring the booty it holds gasping in its terrible claws.

Fray Antonio had not even the resource of pretending not to understand the dangerous speaker, for the Chief expressed himself in bad Spanish, a language all the Indian tribes understand, and which, despite their repugnance to use it, they still employ in their dealings with the white men.

The morning was magnificent; the trees, with their dew-laden leaves, seemed greener than usual; a slight mist, impregnated with the soft matutinal odours, rose from the ground, and was sucked up by the sunbeams, which with

each moment grew warmer. The whole camp was still sunk in sleep; the Chief and the monk were alone awake. After a moment's silence, Blue-fox continued:—

"My father will listen," he said; "a Chief is about to speak; Blue-fox is a Sachem, his tongue is not forked, the words his chest breathes are inspired by the Great Spirit."

"I am listening," Fray Antonio replied.

"Blue-fox is not an Apache, although he wears their costumes, and leads one of their most powerful tribes on the war trail; Blue-fox is a Snake Pawnee, his nation is as numerous as the grains of sand on the borders of the great lake. Many moons ago, Blue-fox left the hunting grounds of his nation, never to return to them, and became an adopted son of the Apaches; why did Blue-fox act thus?"

The Chief interrupted himself. The monk was on the point of answering that he did not know the fact, and cared very little about learning it, but a moment's reflection made him understand the danger of such an answer to a man so irritable as the one he was now talking with.

"The brothers of the Chief were ungrateful to him," he replied with feigned interest, "and the Sachem left them; after shaking off his moccasins at the entrance of their village."

The Chief shook his head in negation.

"No," he answered, "the brothers of Blue-fox loved him, they still weep for his absence; but the Chief was sad, a friend had abandoned him, and took away his heart."

"Ah!" said the monk, not at all understanding.

"Yes," the Indian continued; "Blue-fox could not endure the absence of his friend, and left his brothers to go in

search of him."

"Of course you have found the person again, Chief, to whom you devoted yourself?"

"For a long time Blue-fox sought, but did not succeed in obtaining any news of him; but one day he at length saw him again."

"Good, and now you are re-united?"

"My father does not understand," the Indian answered drily.

This was perfectly correct. The monk did not understand a syllable of what it pleased the Chief to tell him—the more so, as this obscure narrative interested him but very slightly; and while the Apache was speaking, he was cudgelling his brains to discover the motives for this confidence. The consequence was that most of the words uttered by the Chief struck his ear, but only produced an empty sound, whose meaning did not reach his mind; but the peremptory accent with which Blue-fox uttered the last sentence, aroused him, and while recalling him to a feeling of his present position, made him comprehend the danger of not seeming to take an interest in the conversation.

"Pardon me, Chief," he eagerly answered; "on the contrary, I perfectly understand; but I am subject to a certain absence of mind completely independent of my will, which I hope you will not feel offended at, for I assure you it is no fault of mine."

"Good, my father is like all the Chiefs of Prayer of the Palefaces, his thoughts are constantly directed to the Wacondah."

"So it is, Chief," the monk exclaimed, delighted at the way in which his apology was accepted; "continue your narrative, I beg, for I am now most anxious to listen to it."

"Wah! My father constantly traverses the prairies of the Palefaces."

"Yes, for the duties of my office oblige me to—"

Blue-fox quickly interrupted him.

"My father knows the pale hunters of these prairies?"

"Nearly all."

"Very good; one of these hunters is the friend so deeply regretted by Blue-fox."

"Who is he?" the monk asked.

The Indian did not seem to hear the question, for he went on—

"Very often the Redskin warrior has been led a short distance from his friend by the incidents of the chase, but never near enough to make himself known."

"That is unfortunate."

"The Chief would like to see his friend, and smoke the calumet of peace with him at the council fire, while conversing about old times, and the period when, as children of the same tribe, they traversed together the hunting grounds of the Sachem's terrible nation."

"Then the hunter is an Indian?"

"No, he is a Paleface; but if his skin is white, the Great Spirit has placed an Indian heart in his bosom."

"But why does not the Chief frankly go and join his friend, if he knows where he is? He would be probably delighted to see him again."

At this insinuation, which he was far from anticipating, the Chief frowned, and a cloud momentarily crossed his face; but the monk was too little of an observer to remark this emotion: he had asked the question, as he would have done any other, unmeaningly, and simply to show the Chief by replying that he was an attentive listener. After a few seconds, the Indian reassumed that apathy which the Redskins rarely put off, and only when taken by surprise, and continued—

"Blue-fox does not go to meet his friend, because the latter is not alone, and has with him enemies of your Chief."

"That is different, and I can understand your prudence."

"Good," the Indian added, with a sardonic smile, "wisdom speaks by the mouth of my rather; he is certainly a Chief of prayer, and his lips distil the purest honey."

Fray Antonio drew himself up, and his alarm was beginning to be dissipated; he saw vaguely that the Redskin wished to ask something of him—in short, that he wanted his help. This thought restored his courage, and he tried to complete the effect he fancied he had produced on his Machiavellian questioner.

"What my brother is unable to do, I can undertake," he said, in an insinuating voice.

The Apache gave him a piercing glance.

"Wah!" he replied, "Then my father knows where to find the Chiefs friend?"

"How should I know it?" the monk objected; "You have not told me his name yet."

"That is true; my father is good, he will forgive me. So he does not yet know who the Pale hunter is?"

"I know him, perhaps, but up to the present I am ignorant whom the Chief alludes to."

"Blue-fox is rich; he has numerous horses; he can assemble round his totem one hundred warriors, and ten times, twenty times more. If my father is willing to serve the Sachem, he will find him grateful."

"I ask nothing better than to be agreeable to you. Chief, if it lies in my power; but you must explain: clearly what I have to do, in order that I may make no mistake."

"Good; the Sachem will explain everything to his father."

"In that way, nothing will be easier."

"Does my father believe so?"

"Well, I do not see what can prevent it."

"Then my father will listen. Among all the Pale hunters, whose moccasins trample the prairie grass in all directions, there is one who is braver and more terrible than the rest; the tigers and jaguars fly at his approach, and the Indian warriors themselves are afraid to cope with him. This hunter is no effeminate Yori; the blood of the Gachupinos does not flow in his veins; he is the son of a colder land, and his ancestors fought for a lengthened period with the Long Knives of the East."

"Good," the monk said; "from what the Chief tells me, I see that this man is a Canadian."

"That is the name given, I think, to the nation of my friend."

"But among all the hunters I am acquainted with, there is only one who is a Canadian."

"Wah!" said the Chief, "Only one?"

"Yes; his name is Tranquil, I think, and he is attached to the Larch-tree hacienda."

"Wah! That is the very man. Does my father know him?"

"Not much, I confess, but still sufficiently to present myself to him."

"Very good."

"Still, I warn you, Chief, that this man, like all his fellows, leads an extremely vagabond life, being here today and gone tomorrow; so that I am in great doubt as to where I should seek him."

"Wah! my father need not trouble himself about that; the Sachem will lead him to the camp of the Tiger killer."

"In that case, very good; I will undertake the rest."

"My father must carefully retain in his heart the words of Blue-fox. The warriors are awaking; they must know nothing. When the hour arrives, the Chief will tell my father what he wants of him."

"As you please, Chief."

The conversation broke off here. The warriors were really awaking, and the camp, so quiet a few moments previously, had now the aspect of a hive, when the bees prepare at sunrise to go in search of their daily crop. At a sign from the Chief, the hachesto, or public crier, mounted a fallen tree, and twice uttered a shrill cry. At this appeal all the warriors, even those still lying on the ground, hastened to range themselves behind the Chief. A deep silence then prevailed for several minutes; all the Indians, with their arms folded on their chest, and their faces turned to the rising sun, awaited what the Sachem was about to do.

The latter took a calabash full of water, which the hachesto handed him, and in which was a spray of wormwood. Then raising his voice, he sprinkled toward the four cardinal points, saying—

"Wacondah, Wacondah! Thou unknown and omnipotent spirit, whose universe is the temple, Master of the life of man, protect thy children!"

"Master of the life of man, protect thy children!" the Apaches repeated in chorus, respectfully bowing.

"Creator of the great sacred Tortoise, whose skill supports the world, keep far from us Nyang, the genius of evil! Deliver our enemies to us, and give us their scalps. Wacondah! Wacondah! Protect thy children!"

"Wacondah! Wacondah! Protect thy children!" the warriors repeated.

The Sachem then bowed to the sun, and then towards the contents of the calabash, saying—

"And thou, sublime star, visible representative of the omnipotent and invincible Creator, continue to pour thy vivifying heat on the hunting grounds of thy Red Sons, and intercede for them with the Master of life. May this clear water I offer thee be grateful. Wacondah! Wacondah! Protect thy children!"

"Wacondah! Wacondah! Protect thy children!" the Apaches repeated, and followed their Chief's example by kneeling reverently. The latter then took a medicine rod from the hachesto, and waved it several times over his head, while shouting in a loud voice—

"Nyang, spirit of evil, rebel against the Master of life; we brave and despise thy power, for the Wacondah protects

us!"

All the congregation uttered a loud yell, and rose. When the morning prayer had been said, and the rites performed, each man began attending to his daily duties.

Fray Antonio had witnessed with extreme astonishment this sacred and affecting ceremony, whose details, however, escaped his notice, for the words uttered by the Chief had been in the dialect of his nation, and consequently incomprehensible to the monk. Still, he experienced a certain delight on seeing that these men, whom he regarded as barbarians, were not entirely devoid of better feelings, and religious faith.

The expiring campfires were rekindled, in order to prepare the morning meal, while scouts started in every direction, to assure themselves that the road was free, and no enemy on the watch. The monk, being now completely reassured, and beginning to grow accustomed to his new position, ate with good appetite the provisions offered him, and made no objection to mount the horse the Chief indicated to him, when they prepared to set out on the termination of the meal.

Fray Antonio was beginning to find that the savages, who had been represented to him in such gloomy colours, were not so wicked as they were said to be, and he was almost inclined to believe that they had been calumniated. In truth, their hospitality had never once been in default; on the contrary, they had apparently studied to please him.

They rode on for several hours along tracks marked by the wild beasts, forced, through the narrowness of the paths, to go in Indian file, that is to say, one behind the

other; and although the monk perceived that the Sachem constantly kept by his side, he did not feel at all alarmed by it, remembering the conversation they had in the morning.

A little before midday the band halted on the bank of a small stream, shadowed by lofty trees, where they intended to wait till the great heat had passed over. The monk was not at all vexed at this delay, which enabled him to rest in the cool. During the halt Blue-fox did not once address him, and the monk made no attempt to bring on a conversation, as he much preferred enjoying a siesta.

At about four P.M. the band mounted, and set out again; but this time, instead of going at a walking pace, they galloped. The Indians, by the way, only recognize these two paces; they consider trotting an absurdity, and we confess that we are somewhat of their opinion. The ride was long; the sun had set for more than two hours, and still the Indians galloped. At length, at a signal from their Chief, they halted. Blue-fox then went up to the monk, and drew him a little aside.

"We shall separate here," he said; "it would not be prudent for the Apaches to go further: my father will continue his journey alone."

"I?" the monk said, in surprise; "You are jesting, Chief—I prefer remaining with you."

"That cannot be," the Indian said, in a peremptory voice.

"Where the deuce would you have me go at this hour, and in this darkness?"

"My father will look," the Chief continued, stretching out his arm to the south-west, "does he see that reddish light scarce rising above the horizon?"

Fray Antonio looked attentively in the direction indicated. "Yes," he said, presently, "I do see it."

"Very good; that flame is produced by a campfire of the Palefaces."

"Oh, oh! are you sure of that?"

"Yes; but my father must listen; the Palefaces will receive my father kindly."

"I understand; then I will tell Tranquil that his friend Blue-fox desires to speak with him, point out where he is, and—"

"The magpie is a chattering and brainless bird, which gabbles like an old squaw," the Chief roughly interrupted him; "my father will say nothing."

"Oh!" the monk said, in confusion.

"My father will be careful to do what I order him, if he does not wish his scalp to dry on the lance of a Chief."

Fray Antonio shuddered at this menace.

"I swear it, Chief," he said.

"A man does not swear," the Chief remarked, brutally; "he says yes or no. When my father reaches the camp of the Palefaces, he will not allude to the Apaches; but when the Pale hunters are asleep, my father will leave the camp and come to warn Blue-fox."

"But where shall I find you?" the monk asked, piteously, beginning to perceive that he was destined to act as the spy of the savages in one of their diabolical machinations.

"My father need not trouble himself about that, for I shall manage to find him."

"Very good."

"If my father is faithful, Blue-fox will give him a buffalo skin full of gold dust; if not, he must not hope to escape the

Chief; the Apaches are crafty, the scalp of a Chief of prayer will adorn the lance of a Chief; I have spoken."

"You have no further orders to give me?"

"No."

"Good-bye, then."

"Till we meet again," the Apache said, with a grin.

Fray Antonio made no reply, but uttered a deep sigh, and pushed on in the direction of the camp. The nearer he drew to it, the more difficult did it appear to him to accomplish the sinister mission with which the Apache Chief had intrusted him; twice or thrice the idea of flight crossed his mind, but whither could he go? And then it was probable that the Indians placed but slight confidence in him, and carefully watched him in the gloom.

At length the camp appeared before the monk's startled eyes, as he could not draw back, for the hunters had doubtless perceived him already; he decided on pushing forward, while desperately muttering—

"The Lord have mercy upon me!"