

and the crumbled and dismantled furnace. It was as he had left it that morning; there was no trace of recent human visitation. Revolver in hand, Concho examined every cave, gully, and recess, peered behind trees, penetrated copses of buckeye and Manzanita, and listened. There was no sound but the faint sighing of the wind over the pines below him. For a while he passed backward and forward, with a vague sense of being a sentinel, but his mercurial nature soon rebelled against this monotony, and soon the fatigues of the day began to tell upon him. Recourse to his whiskey flask only made him the drowsier, until at last he was fain to lie down and roll himself up tightly in his blanket. The next moment he was sound asleep.

His horse neighed twice from the summit, but Concho heard him not. Then the brush crackled on the ledge above him, a small fragment of rock rolled near his feet, and he stirred not. And then two black figures were outlined on the crags beyond.

"St-t-t!" whispered a voice. "There is one lying beside the furnace." The speech was Spanish, but the voice was Wiles'.

The other figure crept cautiously to the edge of the crag and looked over. "I is Concho, the imbecile," said Pedro, contemptuously.

"But if he should not be alone, or if he should awaken?"

"I will watch, and wait. Go you and affix the notification."

Wiles disappeared. Pedro began to creep down the face of the rocky ledge, supporting himself by *chemical* and brush-wood.

The next moment Pedro stood beside the unconscious man. Then he looked cautiously around. The figure of his companion was lost in the shadow of the rocks above; only a slight crackle of brush betrayed his whereabouts. Suddenly Pedro flung his *scrape* over the sleeper's head, and then threw his powerful frame and tremendous weight full upon Concho's upturned face, while his strong arms clasped the blanket-pinioned limbs of his victim. There was a momentary upheaval, a spasm and a struggle; but the tightly-rolled blanket clung to the unfortunate man like cerements.

There was no noise, no outcry, no sound of struggle. There was nothing to be seen but the peaceful prostrate figures of the two men darkly outlined on the ledge. They might have been sleeping in each other's arms. In the black silence the stealthy tread of Wiles in the bush above was distinctly audible.

Gradually the struggles grew fainter. Then a whisper from the crags:

"I can't see you. What are you doing?"

"Watching!"

"Sleeps he?"

"He sleeps!"

"Soundly?"

"Soundly."

"After the manner of the dead?"

"After the fashion of the dead!"

The last tremor had ceased. Pedro rose as Wiles descended.

"All is ready," said Wiles; "you are a witness of my placing the notifications?"

"I am a witness."

"But of this one?" pointing to Concho. "Shall we leave him here?"

"A drunken imbecile—why not?"

Wiles turned his left eye on the speaker. They chanced to be standing nearly in the same attitude they had stood the preceding night. Pedro uttered a cry and an imprecation, "Car-ramba! Take your devil's eye from me! What see you? Eh—what?"

"Nothing, good Pedro," said Wiles, turning his bland right cheek to Pedro. The infuriated and half-frightened ex-vaquero returned the long knife he had half drawn from its sheath, and growled surlily:

"Go on then! But keep thou on that side, and I will on this." And so, side by side, listening, watching, distrustful of all things, but mainly of each other, they stole back and up into those shadows from which they might have been evoked.

A half hour passed, in which the East brightened, flashed and again melted into gold. And then the sun came out haughtily, and a fog that had stolen across the summit in the night arose and fled up the mountain side, tearing its white robes in its guilty haste, and leaving them fluttering from tree and crag and scar. A thousand tiny blades, nestling in the crevices of rocks, nurtured in storms and rocked by the trade winds, stretched their wan and feeble arms towards him; but Concho the strong, Concho the brave, Concho the light-hearted, spake not nor stirred.

CHAPTER IV. WHO TOOK IT.

There was persistent neighing on the summit. Concho's horse wanted his breakfast.

His protestation reached the ears of a party ascending the mountain from its western face. To one of the party it was familiar.

"Why, blank it all, that's Chiquita. That d—d Mexican's lying-drunk somewhere," said the President of the B. M. Co.

"I don't like the look of this at all," said Dr. Guild, as they rode up beside the indignant animal. "If it had been an American it might have been careless, but no Greaser ever forgets his beast. Drive ahead, boys: we may be too late."

In half an hour they came in sight of the ledge below, the crumbled furnace and the motionless figure of Concho, wrapped in a blanket, lying prone in the sunlight.

"I told you so—drunk," said the President.

The doctor looked grave, but did not speak. They dismounted and picketed their horses. Then crept on all fours to the ledge above the furnace. There was a cry from Secretary Gibbs, "Look yer. Some fellar has been jumping us, boys. See these notices."

There were two notices on canvas affixed to the rock, claiming the ground, and signed by Pedro Manuel, Miguel, Wiles and Itoscommon.

"This was done, doctor, while your trust-worthy Greaser locat—d—n him—lay there drunk. What's to be done now?"

But the doctor was making his way to the unfortunate cause of their defeat, lying there quite mute to their reproaches. The others followed him.

The doctor knelt beside Concho, unrolled him, placed his hand upon his wrist, his ear over his heart, and then said:

"Dead."

"Of course. He got medicine of you last night. This comes of your d—d heroic practice."

But the doctor was too much occupied to heed the speaker's raillery. He had peered into Concho's protuberant eye, opened his mouth and gazed at the swollen tongue, and then suddenly rose to his feet.

"Tear down those notices, boys, but keep them. Put up your own. Don't be alarmed, you will not be interfered with, for here is murder added to robbery."

"Murder!"

"Yes," said the doctor, excitedly, "I'll take