

failed to notice the fearful volleys of oaths which the oxen-drivers hurl at their teams, but for ingenious flights of fancy profanity I have never met the equal of my host. With the most perfect good-nature and unmoved countenance he uttered florid blasphemies, which, I think, must have taken hours to invent.

I was glad when bed-time came, to be relieved of his presence, and especially pleased when he took me to the little separate building in which was a narrow single bed. Next this building on the left was the cook-house and dining-room, and upon the right lay his own sleeping apartment. Directly across the square, and not more than sixty feet off, was the gate of the corral, which, when moved, creaked on its rusty hinges in the most dismal manner.

As I lay upon my bed I could hear Kaweah occasionally stamp; the snoring of the Chinaman on one side, and the low mumbled conversation of my host and his squaw on the other. I felt no inclination to sleep, but lay there in half-doze, quite conscious, yet withdrawn from the present.

I think it must have been about eleven o'clock when I heard the clatter of a couple of horsemen, who galloped up to my host's building and sprang to the ground, their Spanish spurs ringing on the stone.

I sat up in bed, grasped my pistol, and listened. The peach-tree next my window rustled. The horses moved about so restlessly that I heard but little of the conversation, but that little I found of personal interest to myself.

I give as nearly as I can remember the fragments of dialogue between my host and the man whom I recognized as the elder of my two robbers.

"When did he come?"

"Wall, the sun might have been about four hours."

"Has his horse give out?"

I failed to hear the answer, but was tempted to shout out, "No!"

"Gray coat, buckskin breeches." (My dress.)

"Going to Mariposa at seven in the morning."

"I guess I wouldn't, round here."

A low muttered soliloquy in Spanish wound up with a growl.

"No, Antone, not within a mile of the place."

"Sta buen'."

Out of the compressed jumble of the final sentence I got but the one word, "buckshot."

The Spaniards mounted, and the sound of their spurs and horses' hoofs soon died away in the north, and I lay for half an hour revolving all sorts of plans.

The safest course seemed to be to slip out in the darkness and fly on foot to the mountains, abandoning my good Kaweah; but I thought of his noble run, and it seemed to me so wrong to turn my back on him, that I resolved to unite our fate.

I rose cautiously, and, holding my watch up to the moon, found that twelve o'clock had just passed, then taking from my pocket a five-dollar gold piece, I laid it upon the stand by my bed, and in my stocking-feet, with my clothes in my hands, started noiselessly for the corral.

A fierce bull-dog, who had shown no disposition to make friends with me, bounded from the open door of the proprietor to my side. Instead of tearing me, as I had expected, he licked my hands and fawned about my feet.

Reaching the corral gate, I dreaded opening it at once, remembering the rusty hinges, so I hung my clothes upon an upper bar of the fence, and, cautiously lifting the latch, began to push back the gate, inch by inch, an operation which required me eight or ten minutes; then I walked up to Kaweah and patted him.

His manger was empty; he had picked up the last kernel of barley.

The creature's manner was full of curiosity, as if he had never been approached in the night before. Suppressing his ordinary whinnying, he preserved a motionless, statue-like silence.

I was in terror lest by a neigh, or some nervous movement, he should awaken the sleeping proprietor and expose my plan.

The corral and the open square were half covered with loose stones, and when I thought of the clatter of Kaweah's shoes I experienced a feeling of trouble, and again meditated running off on foot, until the idea struck me of muffling the iron feet.

Ordinarily Kaweah would not allow me to lift his fore-feet at all. The two blacksmiths who shod him had done so at the peril of their lives, and whenever I had attempted to pick up his hind feet he had warned me away by dangerous stamps; so I approached him very timidly, and was surprised to find that he allowed me to lift all four of his feet without the slightest objection. As I stooped down he nosed me over, and nibbled playfully at my hat. In constant dread lest he should make some noise, I hurried to muffle his fore-feet with my trousers and shirt, and then, with rather more care, to tie upon his hind feet my coat and drawers.

Knowing nothing of the country ahead of me, and fearing that I might again have to run for it, I determined at all cost to water him. Groping about the corral and barn, and at last finding a bucket, and descending through the darkness to the stream, I brought him a full draught, which he swallowed eagerly, when I tied my shoes on the saddle-pommel, and led the horse slowly out of the corral gate, holding him firmly by the bit, and feeling his nervous breath pour out upon my hand.

When we had walked perhaps a quarter of a mile, I stopped and listened. All was quiet, the landscape lying bright and distinct in full moonlight.

I unbound the wrappings, shook from them as much dust as possible, dressed myself, and then mounting, started northward on the Mariposa trail with cocked pistol.

In the soft dust we travelled noiselessly for a mile or so, passing from open country into groves of oak and thickets of chaparral.

Without warning, I suddenly came upon a smouldering fire close by the trail, and in the shadow descried two sleeping forms, one stretched on his back snoring heavily, the other lying upon his face, pillowing his head upon folded arms.

I held my pistol aimed at one of the wretches, and rode by without awakening them, guiding Kaweah in the thickest dust.

It keyed me up to a high pitch. I turned around in the saddle, leaving Kaweah to follow the trail, and kept my eyes riveted on the sleeping forms, until they were lost in distance, and then I felt safe.

We galloped over many miles of trail, enjoying a sunrise, and came at last to Mariposa, where I deposited my gold, and then went to bed and made up my loss of sleep.

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A CATAMARAN.—Captain Brown, of the brig *Elmira*, which lately arrived at Portland, from Cuba, when twenty-four hours out from Cardenas, picked up a live cat seated on a bale of goods which was drifting in the sea. She was evidently the survivor of a wreck, and though she exhibited a ravenous appetite, she appeared to be in very good case.