

The summer of 1850 I spent quietly at my rancho of San Geronimo. My stock being all on the place to the amount of 300 head of "vaquillas" – young cows, 150 head of horses, one third of them being colts, and two "manadas", for breeding, each with its stallion and 25 mares, all we had to do was to wait for the increase.

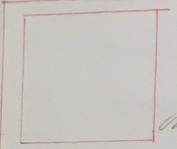
I had 15 acres in potatoes, 12 acres of barley, 5 acres of wheat and a "milpa" or vegetable garden.

Being roughly lodged in the old cabin, I set about building a house. I had the necessary lumber sawed by two Englishmen who had tired of mining and who consented to work for two dollars a day and found and the next thing was get a number of "adobes"; sun dried bricks – made.

Consulting with my neighbours — Don Rafael Garcia, Don Juan Bionet, and one or two other worthy "hijos del pais," — sons of the soil, after much talk and some liquor, it was agreed that an expedition should be immediately made to the country of the "Gentiles" as the Indians of the wild tribes are called in contra-distinction to the "Indios mansos" or "Christianos".

White labour was not to be had, at any price nor did the white emigrants understand the meaning of "adobes". So in accordance with the time honored custom of California we started one fine morning, — all the mornings and days too are fine at this season in this country, — for the Gentile country to catch brickmakers, as the children of Israel in former times were made to do the same identical thing for their taskmasters, the Egyptians.

We were a party of five rancheros, ten "vaqueros" Indians, who looked forward with pleasure to assisting in kidnapping their dusky "parientes" or relatives, accompanied by a "caballada" remounts, and guided by a most accomplished cavalier one Jose Armenteros, the "mayor domo" of R. Garcia and the best rider the most accomplished "riatero", or user of the "riata" or lasso in all northern California.



on Pepe, as he was called, was unanimously chosen chief of our party from having frequently engaged in such man hunting expeditions and from being personally well acquainted with the country.

We were all well armed and each ranchero had a good rifle or shot gun beside his other accoutrements.

The Indians with lances only, for they rarely use fire arms and their principal arm is the "riata".

We drove our horses ahead and leaving all settlements soon behind after a gallop of fifty miles, in the evening made our camp beyond Dolega in the woods.

The next morning we started again steering north.

All day we rode at the full gallop through the most magnificent country I ever remember to have seen in any part of the world, and my travels have not been very limited, for there are few countries I have not visited during the course of my twenty years naval career. The trees especially were superbe, lofty "palo colorado" some 300 feet high, the "wellingtonia gigantea," probably coeval with the deluge, the pine which bears the enormous cone, the "piñabete" a specis of pine the timber of which is hard as the toughest oak, the "madron," a beautiful yellowish wood, laurels and bays innumerable, the white oak, "alamos" and "alamitos"—poplars, little poplars but unlike the same tree in the Eastern States, tulips trees and many more strangers to me.

The ride changed with every few miles now we plunged into a forest, now crossed a lovely savannah enamelled with beautiful flowers of every hue and delightful perfume, rosemary being abundant, the butterfly flower, the humble "cunchalagua" which is a febrifuge, the "yerba del dos", a sure cure for a cold or catarrh, endless varieties of tulips, and the most beautiful of all, the lily of the valley, sacred to my patron San José. All of these flowers are as large wild as we see cultivated in gardens in the East.

As we rode gallantly forward over this paradisiacal land I saw with the eye of prophecy all this lovely country covered with farms and an industrious population which is is destined to be very shortly for doubtless these lands contain great mineral wealth like the rest of California.

I was not in the wrong for since that time, gold silver, quicksilver, and antimony and other important metals, as well as lead, iron, coal, & the baser metals have been discovered in abundance, while the auriferous deposits, which dame Nature seems especially to have bountifully supplied this land with, is distributed all over it from the tops of the mountains to the valleys, and even in the sands of the seashore.

This night we encamped early in the evening near Cape Mendocino, which extends into the Pacific Ocean, and having killed a deer to day, we supped sumptuously before rolling ourselves in our blankets on the dry sod.

Early in the morning I went out with Antonio my "vaquero" and between us we killed a fine young grisly bear whose paws we eat for breakfast.

We were now in the Gentile country and travelled cautiously looking out for sign of Indian.

The "cabellada" was also left at or rather near this camp, a place being selected on a point running out into the ocean where was good pasture and where we left old Juan Briones and two "vaqueros" to guard the neck of the point of land, and the horses.

Jose Armenderos, or "Don Pepe" was now in his element and many and vain glorious were his vaunts of former expeditions and adventures with the Gentiles.

He led our small and well mounted party forward until noon when he halted us in a wood, which gave us perfect concealment and taking with him only my Antonio – who was the most intelligent Indian I ever saw – set on alone for the supposed site of a village.

Meanwhile we dismounted, smoked and played "monte" with an ancient pack of cards of R. Garcia's.

Early in the evening Don Pepe returned and brought with him an ally in the shape of an Indian with a horrible squint, shaggy unkempt locks and destitute of clothing. This worthy bore a bow of wood strengthened ingeniously on the back with sinew and under his arm, like an umbrella, he carried a quiver of the skin of a cub bear, filled with reed arrows tipped with obsidian. Don Pepe, who spoke the Indian dialect, introduced his friend as an old acquaintance, a chief among his people and crafty and "muy bravo." Our party then returned with Pepe to the "rancheria," of this brave about ten miles off, the gentleman with strabismus running along with us and easily keeping up with our horses without the slightest evidence of being blown at the end of his race.

The "rancheria" was in a lovely valley encircled by woods, and evidently near the sea, as our noses too plainly told us in approaching it from the

unmistakeable odour of fish.

Not wishing to share the lodges of this untutored and unsavory race we made camp in the grove to windward of them and made a good meal off dried venison and fresh vegetables of delicious quality from the Indian "milpa", or in Eastern parlance truck patch.

Having brought a small quantity of goods suitable for Indian traffic we unpacked them in the next morning and having invited the men to our camp, - for it would have been useless to have asked the ladies, we exhibited our little stock to their wondering and admiring gaze. Old Arrabisimus's eyes grew more fixed to the end of his nose than ever, and we feared they would start from their sockets in his intense appreciation of the beads, great needles and awls, brass medals, cheap ribbons, mirrors and knives he saw laid out before him.

We then cautiously began to approach the subject of our mission like true diplomats, but found the wary Gentiles better at that business than ourselves and soon discovered that all our allurements and offers were in vain.

After two mortal hours spent in trying to get them to send men from their "ranchería" for our behoof to work little, be well fed, and handsomely rewarded, Don Pepe being spokesman, pleader and general ambassador, we broke up the conference in despair and prepared to pass the day in peace and quiet among ourselves in talking of our future movements, cleaning our arms, and resting and recruiting our tired horses.

In the afternoon however we were called upon by our cross eyed friend and another chief, a most blackguard looking fellow, and informed that

we should have their assistance in getting all the help we wanted if we would be guided by their advice and reward them accordingly.

It was plain that a council had been held and that the rascals wanted to get rid us after getting the objects of their desire, and cupidity, especially the fish hooks, at which they greatly marvelled, never have seen iron ones before. They also feared that our power would be used to compel them to give us "help", and like skilful diplomats they had resolved to divert our military prowess from them to their enemies. Accordingly a harangue, copiously abounding in gestures and guttural, was inflicted on Don Pepe, and which he was desired to expound to us in good Castillian.

The whole story was to the effect that these innocent men, our hosts, were a much abused and long suffering people while a neighbouring community about ten leagues off were vile oppressors and bloody minded villains, whom it would be a creditable and just act to capture and enslave.

Our conference was suddenly broken up by the appearance of Juan Bruno and his vaqueros with the intelligence that our horses left in the other camp had been stampeded by Indians unknown.

Here

To tell the story of Mrs Reed and
her manifold wrongs —

Jaimes himself and one of the vaqueros was wounded by arrows and the other dragged along at the end of his "riata" a tuck Indian of dogged and sullen aspect. On the appearance of the party the Indians of the "rancheria" instantly disappeared.

Of course we all prepared to follow the trail and rescue our "caballada" of forty odd excellent riding horses and containing some especial pets of all of us. Poor Don Rafael's exclamation at the news was "ay mi pinto galan", ah! my gallant pinto if those rascals shall have killed & eaten thee I will assuredly cut thy morsels — "pedazos" — out of their ugly maws.

These Gentiles only steal horses in order to eat them for they go altogether on foot, and excellent travellers they are. Consequently the first idea that presented itself to the minds of my ranchero friends was their noble and fromble steeds cut, slashed and carbonadoed to form the banquet of thieving and graceless heathens.

Our first warlike demonstration was against our allies and seizing the persons of several of the most influential of them we threatened them with instant death if our horses were not forthwith restored to us. On their promises to be faithful, we released them and entering into a new treaty offensive and defensive, we started just before dark with an allied force of twenty or thirty of our new made friends armed with clubs, wooden spears, and bows and arrows, steering the trail of our horses early in the evening by moonlight and proceeding in an easterly direction towards the hills leaving the sea behind us. The trail was so broad and plain that we pursued our course at full speed, guided by our Indian allies who kept far in advance without firing and about midnight we came upon fresh sign of horses and Indians.

We now travelled slower and more cautiously for an hour or two when we arrived at what seemed to be a populous rancheria, which we approached on foot having left our horses under care

of a vaquero half a mile or so in the rear while we approached the ranchería to reconoitre.

The little village lay in the gorge of a valley or "cañon" as they are called here, while the hills rose steep in every direction save the one by which we, carefully and heeding as if on eggs; approached it.

The attack then must be made in front, for our horses were secured in a rude "corral" or pen on the side nearest us where the cañon widened into a plain.

The experienced Pepe formed the plan of attack, assigned us our posts, and made the whole intelligible to our Indians, The main body of whom headed by himself went to the head of the cañon to cut off the retreat of men and horses up the valley, while the rancheros and their vaqueros seized upon the horses.

The village was just faintly illuminated by the starlight, – the moon had set an hour or two –, and creeping up we could see a group of Indians collected round a fire and roasting savoury horse meat on the coals the scent of which reached us and amused all particularly Don Rafael Garcia a bitter fancy for it was possible the viands might be the inestimable "puinto" a parti coloured animal for which he had refused 500 dollars from a miner at Sacramento a few weeks before.

We waited in silence from 3 o'clock A.M. until 4 without being disturbed by apprehensions of an alarm to prevent which Don Pepe had stationed us to the leeward of the village so that the horses and Indian dogs could not smell us, while the Indians were to the windward.

Shortly before daylight the Indians of the village left off gambling and eating attemetely, and one after another, sank to sleep, while silence deep as the grave reigned over the little community, undisturbed save by the occasional stir of a horse stamping in the corral.

Don Pepe skilful in the art of salvage ware thus permitted them to sink into the first profound sleep, which is always the deepest and dearest.

The light grey colour which precedes the dawn now began to dim the starlight when from the head of the cañon came the bark of the "coyote" or prairie wolf excellently imitated and three times repeated;

This was the signal for the vaqueros to bring up our horses and for us to mount, which we did.

Ten minutes more passed in breathless expectation when from the same quarter came the shrill war whoop of the Indian mingled with the old war cry of Spain "Santiago" from the deep chest of Don Pepe Armenteros, the signal for attack.

Singular that this ancient war note should still be used by the descendants of those who used it in all the ancient wars against Moors, Turks & pagans

and that the signal of "Santiago y cierra España" which resounded at the siege of Granada, and has since been repeated in many a bloody field, for the closing of mail clad Knights in the hand to hand conflicts in the melee, the shout of the Cid Campeador, of Gonsalvo de Cordova, of Don Juan de Austria, and Pizarro, Cortes, and Almagro in the new world, should serve as a war cry in these untrodden wilds.

We instantly moved up at the signal and placed ourselves between the corral and the village while the horse thieves roused from their first sleep rushed intuitively towards the corral, but met with levelled fire arms and lances by our little party, turned to escape by the head of the cañon.

Met in that place by Don Pepe and his braves, they turned again towards us and desperately threw themselves upon us discharging their arrows, and wielding their war clubs.

The fight now became general and shot followed shot and sabre lance and pistol were freely used by our party. The corral was broken by the enemy but our horses refused to leave their comrades in which we were mounted and finally after a free fight of about half an hours duration the horse thieves were surrounded and lay down their arms.

As "order reigned in Warsaw", so did it in the little "rancheria" when resistance ceased.

We recovered the whole of our horses except one of the most indifferents among them, which had served as a "bonne bouche" to our horse stealing new acquaintances, and on the time honoured principle that to the "victors belong the spoils," we proceeded to ascertain the extent of our acquisitions, the conquered yielding with a good grace and true stoicism to their inevitable fate, with the nonchalance in such cases of the Indian character.

As the stores of the conquered nation were utterly deficient in "materiel" we were glad to seize the "personnel" though entirely in violation of the rules of civilised warfare, and each selecting of able bodied men, women and children such as suited his purpose they were set apart from the rest, the men bound and started on the way to the ranchos with promises of reward in case of good behaviour & death should they attempt to escape, under the charge of Don Pepe and several vaqueros.

Their relatives wept aloud at seeing them depart, but their grief was assuaged by some inconsiderable presents which we gave them, and after satisfactorily rewarding our allies we followed the captive band towards home where we arrived in due season.

For my share I had a dozen stout fellows, who sojourned at San Geronimo about a fortnight and made all the adobes required for my new house and a large corral beside.

At the end of their labours I discharged my pressed "help" splendidly recompensed in their own estimation by a red shirt a piece and an old worn out mane for the gang.