

WITH CRAWFORD IN MEXICO *

BY ROBERT HANNA

I read with much interest the account of the pursuit of Geronimo in the April number of the *Overland*, as it was my fortune to accompany the command of Captain Emmet Crawford, who continued the pursuit of this band into the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico.

After a hard chase after a portion of the hostiles as far as Lake Palomas in Mexico, the command to which I belonged was ordered to go to Deming and report to Captain Crawford awaiting us with a train of stock cars, all ready to pull out as soon as some Indian scouts should arrive on the train from the east.

The main body of the hostiles was reported as making its way south, to the west of us, and telegrams reporting its position were coming all day long; but the train from the east was late, and we did not get away until afternoon. It soon discharged its motly load of Indian scouts, whose appearance bore evidence of the long hard chase they had just concluded; for they had been following the hostiles from the north, and were put on the cars in the Rio Grande valley to endeavor to head them off to the west of Deming before they got to the railroad. We were soon loaded and off and after dark disembarked at Separ, having heard nothing from the hostiles since leaving Deming.

The darkness was intense, and unloading the animals on an open freight platform difficult in the extreme. The

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cries of the scouts, the trampling of loose animals, and the efforts of the men to find their belongings in the darkness, created an indescribable confusion; while the resemblance to pandemonium was, if anything, increasing by the little fires the scouts had lighted, which illuminated the somber darkness in places, and showed the savage faces and almost naked forms of the Indian scouts gathered around them.

It was midnight, before the tired men got to rest, and at daybreak the camp was astir, and we were soon marching away over the gray-looking plain stretching off to the southwest. Crawford had received telegrams that the hostiles had crossed the railroad to the south of us, and we were going southwest to find the trail. We learned afterwards that the hostiles had gone off to the west, and thus we missed seeing their trail till long afterward.

We continued to the southwest, to Skeleton canyon, where we were joined by the Chiricahua scouts under Chatto, and our transportation increased by another pack train. Chatto was a chief of the same tribe as the hostiles, the Chiricahuas, and it was said that he was desirous of killing Geronimo and the other chiefs of the hostile band, in order to become head chief, and that we were indebted to this ambition for the company of himself and braves on our expedition against his brethren.

In the course of interview with Crawford, Chatto said that he knew just where the hostiles intended to rendezvous in Mexico; and it was finally determined to proceed directly to the spot, instead of wasting time in following trails, which is necessarily a slow process. We went to Lang's Ranch, on the Mexican line, the next day, and on the following day went through the San Luis Pass, and turned south along the eastern base of the Sierra Madre, and around the Mexican line. To the west of us were the mountains and off to the east stretched the great Janos plain, and to the south could be seen the blue outlines of high mountains in Mexico. The scouts could be seen outlined against the sky as they crossed the ridges of the foothills ahead of us, while behind followed the long line of cavalry, followed

in turn by the white pack-covered mules; each train led by its bell horse with his tinkling bell.

Our command consisted of nearly a hundred Indian scouts and a troop of cavalry, and for transportation we had two pack trains of fifty mules each, and a full complement of packers with each train. The scouts went ahead of the rest of the command, and with the exception of a few who had captured horses or mules in a previous encounter with the hostiles, were all afoot. Where the country would permit it, they would cover nearly a mile of country between their flanks. There was no attempt at any regular order of march; each scout would follow his own inclination, all keeping the same general direction. As a rule, they would get quite a long distance ahead of the cavalry and pack trains by ten or eleven o'clock in the morning; they would then sit down under trees and rest and smoke awhile and as we would come in sight, would move on; always keeping ahead of the cavalry with apparent ease, although on foot. Mountains or hills seemed to have no terrors for them, and they would generally go over a mountain, no matter how steep, if it would shorten the distance.

Finding no water in the foothills, we turned off to the east toward a rugged looking mountain that stood out into the plain, called the Sierra en Media or Middle mountain. Here a very few years ago the troops had a fight with the hostiles. A rough, rocky hill, somewhat detached from the main mountain with an occasional skeleton of a horse or a man about it, and the rocks spattered with lead, told the story.

The horses and mules were turned out to graze, and we went into camp. Our animals got no feed except what they could pick up and they were always grazed all night under charge of a guard. We used no tents, so were spared the necessity of putting them up. The usual rule was, when there happened to be any trees, to spread our blankets in the shade, and after a wash in the one tin wash basin that sufficed for all headquarters, lie around until the cook should announce dinner.

The officers messed with the packers, and were about equally divided among the two trains. The tin plates and cups would be laid out on a manta, or pack cover, on the ground, and we would squat around, Indian fashion. Our cook, who rejoiced in the name of "Nibs," and who looked more like a cowboy than a cook, would yell "Chuck!" and everybody would then be expected to come to dinner. Every one helped himself, but it was not considered good form to put one's foot on the table in order to reach things, unless absolutely necessary. Our fare was but little better than the ordinary soldiers' ration, and it was always safe to say that for dinner, breakfast, and supper it would consist of bacon, bread, beans, and coffee. Our dinner over, it grew cooler as the sun went down, and after a smoke nearly every one turned in to sleep, so as to be up at daybreak the next morning for another long day's march. After leaving the Sierra en Media, we went back to the main range to the west, and after two days' travel in the mountains, through a beautiful wooded country covered with live oaks, we camped at an old abandoned rancho on the trail crossing the Sierra Madre, leading from Janos in Chihuahua, to Babispe, in the State of Sonora.

Chatto had been having frequent interviews with Captain Crawford, which were carried on through the medium of two interpreters, one Spanish the other Apache. The Apache rejoiced in the name of "Mickey Free," and it was said that he was not an Indian, but the son of an Irishman and a Mexican woman, and had been a captive among the Apaches all his life. Mickey certainly had a Milesian cast of countenance, although in every other respect he seemed a thorough Indian. His knowledge of Spanish did not include any use of tenses, so that it was extremely difficult to tell whether he meant the present, future, or past, in his translations from Apache into Spanish. We, however, learned enough to know that Chatto was exceedingly averse to going through any of the Mexican towns, on account, as we thought, of his depredations when formerly in Mexico; so the next day we traveled on the Babispe trail until we were about half way down the western slope of the

mountain, then turned south to avoid going into Babispe.

In the evening we brought up in a deep canyon in front of a mescal distillery, where we were obliged to halt and camp. The distillery was well supplied with Mexican fire water, and before morning we were in the company of nearly a hundred drunken savages.

It was not a pleasant feeling to know that we were in a foreign country, and that a not over friendly one, with a small force, in the company of such utterly irresponsible beings; moreover, some of our savage allies had been raiding in this very country only a short time before, and might be tempted to try it again.

Our march the next morning led down a valley by the side of a stream grown up with immense canebrakes, and about ten o'clock in the morning we came out of the valley in front of Babispe, which our Apache friends were so anxious to avoid the day before. Babispe is a little Mexican town, built in the usual Mexican style, with a plaza, in front of which is a church of apparently considerable antiquity. The town is situated on the river of the same name which here runs nearly due north along the western base of the Sierra Madre. It is a clear running mountain stream, and there is considerable land under cultivation in the vicinity of the towns in the valley.

We observed that all over this country there seemed to be no attempt to occupy ranches at any distance from towns; although the abandoned ranches all over the country indicate that at one time it was not so; and that insecurity of life and property at any distance from town has caused this state of affairs. The Apaches have made their homes in the Sierra Madre, and literally devastated the surrounding country.

The Mexicans in the towns we passed recognized Captain Chatto, and asked after Captain Geronimo, not yet knowing that that noble chieftain was among them with blood in his eye. Our information on that subject created a visible coolness toward Captain Chatto and his followers. That brave, and in fact the majority of our braves, were very tired indeed, between Mexican whiskey inside and the

Mexican sunshine outside, so we camped on the river opposite the town of Baseraca, a village much resembling Babispe. The male inhabitants of these towns seemed to be largely in the minority, and we were unable to account for it until told that the majority of them had gone off to the Yaquis war, then going on.

We kept traveling south until we reached the Tesero Babi creek where General Crook camped in 1883 before going into the Sierra Madre; and the Indians pointed out to us the dim outlines of a mountain far to the southwest, where they said the hostiles were to rendezvous. The Indians called it the "Klee," or "Horse Mountain," but we afterwards learned the Mexicans called it the Sierra de Teres.

Our march from here led over the roughest country that I have even seen; although the Mexicans called the trail the Camino Real, and it was used as a highway between towns, it was all but impracticable for animals. We walked and led our half starved horses, for since leaving the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre, grass was but scarce and poor, and they had nothing else to live on.

Down into interminable canyons, thousands of feet, under the broiling sun, only to find, when we got to the bottom, we had to climb up another just as bad. The canyons seemed to be the bottom of some immense craters in some places, and if it had been cool enough to appreciate the beauties of nature, I do not doubt we should have admired the grand views that often burst upon us; but it was too hot for anything but a rest, and we could not take a rest then.

The Indians had been making "medicine" songs every night since we started. After they had had supper, and had all smoked their cigarettes, they would start in to sing a monotonous chant, in which all joined; and they would keep it up till the small hours, no matter how hard the day's march had been. We were all lying about in our blankets one night, when camped in the bottom of one of the crater-like canyons, when we were honored by a visit from Uklenny, the principal medicine man, accompanied by

most of the scouts. The gloomy canyon was in darkness except for an occasional campfire. We heard the guttural tones of Uklenny, as he told his story, and made an evident impression on all his hearers. He said he had come to tell us that he had made medicine, and the medicine was good; that we should have a fight in three days, and some one would be killed, but if Captain Crawford would kill a white cow and let them eat it, we should catch the Chiricahuas. The singular part of it was, that the next day a part of his story came true.

After a long, hot march of nearly forty miles, a great deal of which was on foot, having crossed the Batipito river and gone into camp at the foot of the Sierra de Teres, word was brought in that one of the scouts had been killed, and another wounded by Mexicans, while lagging behind the column. This created the greatest excitement among the scouts and many of us feared that if they attempted reprisals on the Mexicans, as they threatened, we should have a poor chance with our little command ever to get out of Mexico. We shortly after received a letter from the Presidente of Huasavas, a small town on the river south of us. He inclosed a letter from an American, explaining the circumstances. The Americans had come over a hill suddenly, and seeing the scouts, thought they were hostiles, and fired upon them. This was explained to the Indians, and apparently they were satisfied, but they neither lagged nor straggled after that.

The letter from the Presidente of Huasavas also contained the information that the hostiles had left the Sierra de Teres, where we were then camped, and had been seen near the village of Opunta, north of us. They had evidently gone to these mountains, as Chatto said they would. We went out and buried the dead scout, and brought in the wounded one, and the next morning started for Opunta.

We camped about three miles above Opunta and had it not been for the kindness of the people of that town, our animals would have fared badly, as there was no grass in the country. They allowed us to turn the animals into their stable fields, and showed in every way a very friendly feel-

ing. The singing of the scouts had grown so tiresome that we got them out of hearing by placing them on the opposite side of the river from us. The river was broad and shallow at our camp, and on each side there was a large growth of cottonwoods, under which we were camped.

After some scouting in the vicinity, the scouts announced that they had located the camp of the hostiles; so that evening a part of the command was detailed to go on foot at night, with a view to surrounding the camp and surprising them. Each man carried a hundred rounds of ammunition and three days' food. Just as the moon rose over the distant peaks of the Sierra Madre, they silently stole out of camp. The moon shone brightly on the broad rim, and the cottonwood trees threw both camps into a dark shadow, beneath which it would be difficult to imagine a command like ours was concealed. The silence was only broken by the croaking of the frogs, and the scene had little in keeping with the object of the little command then going out. The party that went out traveled about twenty miles, and the next morning surprised a band of hostiles under Chi-hua-hua, and captured eleven women and children. They made but little fight, and fled as fast as they could leaving one dead on the ground, all their camp equipage and horses. We had one scout seriously wounded. But although Crawford did not kill the white cow, as Uklenny desired, we did catch the hostiles.

The women and children were a miserable looking lot, and showed in their appearance that their flight from the reservation had been no pleasure excursion to them. Among the captives were the squaw and children of Chi-hua-hua. The next day I was ordered to take the prisoners and wounded, and an empty pack train, with an escort of ten cavalrymen, to the nearest camp in the United States.

We had to travel through a country totally unknown to me, and had for a guide a scout named "Dutchy" a brother of Chi-hua-hua, who was sent because he declined to go out and fight his brother. Among our prisoners was a woman shot through the hips, and we had no way to carry her but on a horse. She suffered horribly, and had to be

taken off frequently to rest. The groans of the wounded, and the cries of the children, some of whom were wounded, made our little column rather a melancholy procession.

We had received a caution from Captain Crawford to keep a good lookout, as he was somewhat afraid the hostiles would attempt to recapture their families, which, with our small party, and taking into consideration that we had Chi-hau-hau's family with us, seemed not unlikely. Ukleny, the medicine man, and another scout, accompanied us. I suspect Ukleny's success in his prophecies had made him such a reputation he was going into the reservation to retire on his laurels.

We traveled silently over the rugged and barren foothills of the Sierra de Teres, and only made a short march the first day on account of the difficulty in getting the wounded along. We camped the first night at the bottom of a deep canyon, in which were some immense trees which looked like mahogany. The Mexicans had been getting logs out of this wood, hewing them, and hauling them to the river.

The next day we crossed a large trail of Indians. Ukleny and the scouts declared that this had been made the day before, and expressed great fear that we should be attacked the next morning. After arrival in camp, the scouts built themselves a little fort of rocks, and put in their canteens and a bucket filled with water, and placed the prisoners around the outside and prepared to stand a siege. We thought they ought to know what they were about, so made the best disposition we could of the little party for an attack. Every one was ordered to be up at three o'clock in the morning, so as to be ready at daybreak, the usual hour for an Indian attack.

We were not molested, however, and the next morning continued our march along the summit of the Sierra de Teres, through a beautiful country. The hills were covered with live oaks, and in the canyons there were great numbers of immense cabbage palms fifty and sixty feet high. Ledges cropped out across the hills, and there was every evidence of valuable mineral. The trail was an old smug-

gler's trail, and was but little traveled, but the small wooden crosses and piles of stones beside them, marking the graves, indicated that it had not always been as peaceful as it looked then.

We finally crossed the Sierra de Teres, and came out into a broad valley, and two days after camped near the town of Fronteras, where we were objects of great curiosity and visited by almost the entire population. After several days of marching over an interesting country, we arrived at Fort Bowie, Arizona, to learn that we had been reported massacred by the Indians, our prisoners recaptured, and that a party had been sent after us.

After assisting in putting "Dutchy" in irons in the guard-house for mutiny, and turning over our prisoners to the commanding officer of that post, I rested a few days, and went back to the Mexican line with other scouts going to Mexico, and began anew my wanderings over the dusty plains and rugged mountains of Arizona and New Mexico.

I did not return to Crawford's command, and never saw him again. A few months later his tragic death at the hands of the Mexicans put an end to an honorable and useful life, and deprived us of the services of a conscientious officer and a just commander.—Robert Hanna in July *Overland*.

