

mittee of his officers. During this process, very fortunately for me, neither my gold pieces nor my other valuables were discovered; but all my papers, notebook, penknife, with such other articles as I happened to have in my pockets, were taken from me. At one time, one of the fellows had his hands upon the end of the old linen belt in which I had carried my gold, and which still contained nearly a hundred dollars; its ragged appearance alone saved it, for, thinking it but a worthless piece of worn-out cloth, he permitted me to retain it in my possession. Had Salezar got hold of this belt he would at once have seen the places from which I had but recently cut a number of doubloons, as well as found such of the gold as was still left; and so great was the scoundrel's avarice that I believe he would have boiled me could he have found no other means to extract my treasures.

Up to this time, the conduct of Salezar, with the arguments he used to sustain him in arresting us and taking our papers and other articles, was to a certain degree honourable, and it was impossible to suspect the deep treachery and atrocious designs lying under an exterior so apparently fair; we were now to read a new chapter in his character, one that broke upon us with all that suddenness and startling effect which fiction-writers strive to attain in their scenes of most thrilling, blood-freezing horror.

Our papers and effects had been tied in a handkerchief and removed, and we were waiting the next movement of our captors with some little impatience, when Salezar suddenly ordered twelve of his men, all armed with old muskets or carbines, to march up in front of us. The movement appeared strange, more particularly when we noticed that the men, now paraded directly

before us and within three yards, were pale, and fairly trembling as with fright; but still we could not suspect the horrible design of their leader. Our suspense was of short duration, however; for no sooner had he arranged the twelve men in front of us than it became but too evident his intentions were to shoot us on the spot! Fitzgerald was the first to speak. The brave but eccentric Irishman had seen much service in Spain, understood not only the language, but the treacherous and suspicious character of the Mexicans, and now fathomed the intentions of Salezar. Prefacing his short speech with a strong oath, the excited man, with fists clenched, and a rich brogue, exclaimed, "They're going to shoot us, boys; let's pitch into 'em and die in hot blood; it's much asier!" At the same moment I cast my eyes around, and noticed that the crowd in the rear were falling back in two straight lines, as if to escape the balls in their passage, while the women and girls were wringing their hands and flying from point to point, apparently in deep despair.

That we were to be immediately shot was now terribly manifest. We exchanged glances with each other, and those glances plainly told that each of my companions, in obedience to Fitzgerald's emphatic call, was prepared to rush upon the cowardly and faithless miscreants the moment they were in the act of levelling their guns, to wrest their weapons from them, and then to sell his life at as dear a rate as possible. I will give Lewis the credit of acting, in that moment of extreme peril, as became a man. My station happened to be on the extreme left of my companions, the position bringing me within a yard of a young Mexican whom I afterward ascertained to be a son of the Alcalde of San Miguel. Tied loosely around his waist was a coarse cotton hand-

kerchief, in which he had stuck two of Colt's revolving pistols taken from one of my friends. These I instantly determined to seize upon in the *melee*, while each of my companions had singled out his man to spring upon at the signal.

A man lives almost an age in a single moment of imminent danger—his thoughts crowd upon each other with such lightning rapidity, that his past life, its promises and hopes, are reviewed at a glance. I thought of home, relations, friends, in the fleeting moment which passed after Salezar had manifested his inhuman intentions; but the thoughts that came uppermost with all of us were of deep regret that we had given up our arms to such cowardly assassins, mingled with the bitter consciousness that we were to be shot down like dogs, without a possible chance that our friends could ever know the place or manner of our death. But our thoughts were suddenly checked by a motion from Salezar, as if to give the word of command for our execution. I cast hurried glances at Fitzgerald and my comrades for a signal to make a dash; but at this juncture an altercation ensued between Dimasio and a Mexican named Vigil. Not a word could I understand, but from my companions I learned that the latter was interfering for our lives. He contended that we had entered the settlements openly and peacefully, and that we had asked to see and hold converse with Governor Armijo. With him rested the power of life and death, and before him we must be taken. Vigil prevailed over the bloodthirsty captain, and thus were our lives spared; but in the few moments which had passed since we were first drawn up, we had lived a common lifetime of excitement.

Foiled in his murderous intentions by the prompt aid

of Don Gregorio Vigil, whom we afterward saw and thanked for his timely interference, Salezar now ordered Don Jesus to march us immediately to San Miguel, where it was thought Armijo had arrived with a large body of troops. With regret we saw our friend Vigil leave us. He was the owner of an estate near San Miguel, a man of good heart and correct principles, and had no little influence with the Mexicans in that quarter.

Under an escort of some half a dozen men, and followed by a rabble of men, women, and children, we now set off on foot for San Miguel, leaving our well-tried animals in the hands of the miscreants who had captured us. Arrived at the little village of Cuesta, we were marched into the house of the *alcalde*, where, after placing two sentinels over us, Don Jesus left us to make some arrangement for the march. While in this house we were visited by every woman and child in the place, the former giving us bread, cheese, and stewed pumpkins, and appearing deeply to compassionate us in our unfortunate condition. They undoubtedly thought we should be executed immediately on meeting with the governor, who they took every means to inform us was a brutal and unfeeling tyrant, delighting in every act of cruelty which might impress his subjects with fear, and ever anxious to show off his great influence and power by acts of the most atrocious persecution.

In half an hour Don Jesus returned, and ordered us to prepare for instant departure. We were destitute of every article of clothing except what we had on, and as the nights among the mountains were at this season of the year raw and chilly, we asked him to return at least one of our blankets to each of us. Without appa-

rently heeding this request, he turned to one of his men and ordered him to bring three or four lariats, or ropes, with which to tie us, intending, as he said, to take us before the governor in that degrading condition. Our friend Vigil was now out of the way, Salezar had taken the road towards Anton Chico with the main body of his men, and thinking that the heartless villain who now had charge of us might have adopted this plan to place us completely in his power, and then butcher us under orders from his superior, we preemptorily refused to be tied. He still insisted; but on our informing him that we would walk peaceably to San Miguel, he finally gave up his purpose. Forming us in front of the house, he then placed two of the guard in advance with bows and arrows and heavy clubs, two more in the rear armed in the same manner, and all of them barefoot, while he himself mounted a mule, and took his place at the side of our party. He had an American rifle resting before him on the pommel of his saddle, and drawing an old rusty sword, he started us off, simply informing us that the first one who left his place would be rewarded by the loss of his head.

There was something supremely ridiculous, not only in his threat, but in the appearance of our guard, and gloomy as our situation was, we could not help laughing. We could easily have fallen upon the miserable apologies for men who were guarding us and disarmed them in a twinkling; but we had no means of getting clear, and rejoining our men afterward; and as recapture would have been death, thoughts of an escape were not entertained.

A rapid march of an hour, along the valley of the Pecos, brought us to the little village of Puertecito, the residence of both Salezar and the fellow who now had

charge of us. Here we were halted for a short time, to give the inhabitants an opportunity of gazing at five unfortunate prisoners, and to convince them of the great prowess of the redoubtable Dimasio Salezar, and his equally valiant second in command, who had boldly conceived and successfully carried into execution a daring plan for our capture. That the women all pitied us was evident; for the commiserating exclamation of *pobrecitos!** as they gave us bread, cheese, and such food as they had at hand, fell from their tongues in softest and most feeling tones. They knew their husbands and brothers, and knowing them, felt that little of mercy or kindness could we expect at their hands.

A short distance above Puertecito we were obliged to ford the Rio Pecos. The water was not more than two feet in depth; but as my lame and weak ankle had now begun to swell from the active and unwonted exercise, I was deterred from taking off my boots by a fear that I could not get them on again. To soak my feet thoroughly, and to continue the march in this disagreeable plight, was therefore my only alternative.

The distance from Cuesta to San Miguel was fourteen or fifteen miles; and it was nearly sundown before the spire of the little church at the latter appeared in sight. Weary and faint from the unusual exercise, and extremely unwell from the great change which had recently taken place in our diet, we were escorted through the principal square or *plaza*, and taken to a little hole which was dignified with the name of a room. A crowd followed us to our prison doors, and continued to gaze at us until the last minute.

* Poor fellows! I believe, is a literal translation, although it means much more. Nothing can be more touchingly sweet than the pronunciation of this word by a Spanish or Mexican woman. The tones come fresh and warm from the heart when an object worthy of compassion presents itself.

The *alcalde*, a gruff, bad-countenanced man, sent us in a miserable meal of tortillas and weak mutton broth, while the priest of the place, more liberal, sent his servant with a generous bowl of hot coffee for each of us. Our scanty supper over, our thoughts were next turned towards sleep; but the earthen floor of our quarters was without a single blanket to relieve its hardness, and the chilling blast that came down from the adjoining mountains as the shades of evening drew nigh, told us, more plainly than words, that we need expect neither comfort nor sleep that night. We sent word to the *alcalde* of our unfortunate plight: he answered our petition by saying that he could do nothing for us. A kind-hearted woman living close by, however, sent us a buffalo skin and a single blanket, and another blanket I purchased of a man in the crowd, for which I gave him an English sovereign. With these we made up a bed for five persons. I suffered more than any of my companions, the bread I had eaten giving me a severe attack of colic; and I crawled from the ground in the morning weak and unrefreshed.

Thus did we spend our first night in prison.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ordered to march towards Santa Fé.—Departure from San Miguel.—Gloomy Anticipations.—Our Guard increased.—A Present from a Woman.—Meet with a Party of Mexican Troops.—Brutality of their Leader.—Lewis, Van Ness, and Fitzgerald tied with Cords.—Description of Don Jesus.—Large Bodies of Troops passed.—Their miserable Appointments.—Our first Interview with Governor Armijo.—His Reception.—Conduct of Lewis.—We are ordered back to San Miguel.—Armijo's last Command.—Carlos seen.—First Appearance upon a Donkey.—Antics of the Animal.—A heavy night Shower.—Once more at San Miguel.—Barbarous Execution of one of our Comrades.—We are ordered before the Governor.—An exciting Trial.—Howland condemned to Die.—Cruel Mode of Execution.—Noble Conduct of Howland.—Kindness of a young Priest.—Reflections upon our Situation.—Departure of Mexican Troops for Anton Chico.—News of Colonel Cooke and his Men.—Plans of Armijo.—Particulars of the Capture of Howland.—Description of Manuel Pino.—News of the Capture of our Friends at Anton Chico.—Great Rejoicings at San Miguel.

We had no sooner risen than Don Jesus told us that the governor had not yet arrived, and that he should march with us directly towards Santa Fé, distant some sixty miles, in the hope of meeting him upon the road. Before starting, we sent out and purchased an entire sheep, an officious fellow, named Tomas Bustamente, whose countenance appeared to indicate that he had some honesty, acting as our agent in the transaction. A part of this sheep Tomas cooked for our breakfast, the priest again sending us a large pitcher of coffee.

It was nearly nine o'clock before everything was in readiness for our departure. Although we were anxious to see the governor and learn the worst, it may be imagined that our anticipations were not of a very pleasant nature. Had we been prisoners in the hands of any other people under the sun our feelings would have