

fallen into the hands of the few in Mexico, has given them a power over the numerous and abjectly poor which amounts nearly to that of the English barons under the feudal system—never will there be a change in favour of the lower orders until a thorough and radical revolution takes place in the very natures of the inhabitants, or until the country falls into other hands.

To resume my narrative. On the 14th of December, our men now much improved and invigorated by the substantial and bountiful supply of food furnished them, we passed the Palo Chino, encamping at a hacienda a few miles farther on. It was at this place, the name of which I did not ascertain, that we had still farther reason to admire the conduct of Colonel Velasco. Calling the officers and merchants together, amounting to some eighteen or twenty, he told us that he had every confidence in our words, and that while in his charge we should be permitted to go where we pleased on our parole of honour. No guard was to accompany us—the only exaction he made, and even that was in the shape of a request, was that we should all be in attendance every morning when the trumpet sounded an advance.

From this time we enjoyed the greatest liberty. When night came, we could select any meron, at the place where we were halted, to sleep in, and could roam about at will. The same liberty would have been granted our men, but that among them were several drunken, worthless fellows, ever ready to abuse every privilege allowed them. The larger portion of the Texans were well-educated, intelligent men, possessing all self-respect; yet they were obliged to suffer from the bad conduct of a few of their associates in imprisonment.

CHAPTER VI.

Arrival at El Gallo, or The Cock.—Singular Names for Towns.—A rich Silver Mine.—Scenes at a Fandango.—The Well of El Gallo.—Arrival at Dolores.—Guadaloupe.—The Prisoners reach Cuencamé.—A small Party of us quartered at the House of a Castilian.—Hospitable Treatment.—Strange Superstition in relation to a Statue.—Gullibility of the Poorer Classes.—We are turned over to a new Guard.—Selling a Watch.—La Señorita Juana.—Colonel Velasco takes leave of the Prisoners.—Captain Roblado.—Story in relation to him.—Superiority of the Bread of Cuencamé.—Our Departure.—Hacienda of Juan Perez.—Roblado, and his Treatment of an Alcalde.—A tedious March.—Arrival at San Sebastian.—Frightened Girls and wounded Dogs.—Freaks and Endurance of the genus Donkey.—Arrival at Saenea.—Picturesque Situation of the Town.—The Maguey Plant; its Uses and Abuses.—One Drink of Pulque sufficient.—A Gang of "Involuntary Volunteers."—Mode of Recruiting for the Mexican Army.—Rancho Grande.—Decay in Mexico.—An American Traveller.—Arrival at Fresnillo.—The Mines in the Vicinity.—Meeting with an Englishman.—The *Tienda del Gato*.—Stories and Egg-nog.—More "Involuntary Volunteers."—A Stage-coach, and Thoughts of Home.—La Caleta.—First Appearance of Small-pox among the Texans.

EARLY on the afternoon of the 15th of December we reached the small village of El Gallo, or The Cock.* It is situated at the foot of a rough and precipitous hill, on the sides of which, it was said, a rich vein of silver ore had just been discovered. This, I wish it to be understood, was but a Mexican story; I give my authority, lest some mining adventurer should be drawn to the spot in search of treasure, which probably has no existence, save in the imagination of the ignorant and gossiping inhabitants.

At night, a fandango was given at the house of the alcalde, attended by some half dozen of the prisoners as well as the very élite of El Gallo. One of the girls was

* The Mexicans give queer names to some of their smaller towns. I recollect sleeping one night at the town of Wheelbarrow.

dressed in a yellow-white tunica, or modern gown, of French cut, and brought probably from the city of Durango. She undoubtedly wore it in honour of *los Señores Tejanos* and their customs; but there was no necessity of her punishing herself thus severely on our account. That she felt stiff, awkward, and ill at ease under the infliction of the frock was evident, and it would have been all the same to us had she appeared in the common loose dress of her countrywomen. There were others in the room arrayed with the usual Mexican regard to physical liberty and comfort, their easy and graceful movements forming a pleasing contrast to the constrained and straight-jacketish carriage of their companion.

The evening passed pleasantly away, and had a spectator, unacquainted with our true situation, been present, and seen the Texan officers dancing and waltzing with the Mexican señoras, he would not have suspected that we were prisoners. A dance, executed by a Mexican sergeant and one of the girls, afforded much amusement. The name given to it was *danza de la espada*, or sword dance, the difficult and dangerous feats of the sergeant completely eclipsing the tricks of any juggler of the sword-swallowing genus I have ever seen. That he would not only take his own life, but that of his brunette partner in the dance, seemed inevitable; for he cut and slashed about, fell upon his sword, balanced it upon his nose and eyes, and so pointed it at the breast of the girl, that we all felt relieved when the dance was over and ascertained that both had escaped unhurt.

This exhibition gave infinite delight to a score of girls of the poorer class, seated upon the floor at one end of the room. And here I would mention one circumstance, which must have been observed, but appears to have

been forgotten or suppressed by all travellers and writers upon Mexico—the singular faculty the women have of bestowing themselves upon a floor. I have frequently seen a dozen girls seated upon a space too small for even three of any other nation. How they dispose of their nether limbs is a mystery—I only know that they group themselves so closely together, and sit so bolt upright, that one might imagine they had been cut in twain, and the upper portion placed upon the floor after the manner of so many barrels in a storehouse.

At El Gallo is a deep and clear natural well of warm water, from which the town is supplied. Like our negroes, the Mexicans can carry immense loads upon their heads, and processions of girls were seen passing to and from the well at all times, carrying large earthen jars with the greatest steadiness—not spilling a drop, even though the jars were filled to the brim.

The night of the 16th of December we spent at a poor rancho, the name of which I have forgotten. The next afternoon we reached the very wealthy hacienda of Dolores, where we saw a very pretty girl, and where we found every comfort. The night of the 18th we passed at the hacienda of Guadalupe, without any incident worthy of note occurring. On the 20th we reached Cuencamé, the largest town we had yet seen with the exception of El Paso and Chihuahua.

We had no sooner entered the plaza than a little Spanish merchant invited three or four of us to spend our time at his house. He was a proud and fiery little Castilian, fond of relating the exploits of his countrymen, but entertained us with the utmost hospitality and kindness. A very pleasant rest we were allowed at Cuencamé. Some of our officers, not liking the quarters provided for them, hired rooms in the town for the two

nights we were to pass there, and during the day we roamed about the place, visiting the churches, cockpits, and tiendas with which it abounds. In the principal church is a singular curiosity, religiously kept and worshipped by the ignorant and superstitious inhabitants of the vicinity. It is nothing more or less than a rude wooden statue of our Saviour. The marvellous story related of it is as follows: Some centuries ago, when the good people of Cuencamé were surrounded and likely to fall into the hands of their enemies, this statue suddenly appeared in their midst, and by wondrous deeds of prowess gave them the battle and rescued them from their foes. The statue was then borne in triumph to the town, a niche set apart for it in the church, and from that day to this it has been held in especial reverence, and looked upon as the guardian and protector of the place.

It was not without regret we now learned that Colonel Velasco was to leave us, the jurisdiction of the State of Durango extending no farther, and his men being required on the northern frontier to guard the inhabitants against Indians. We knew, however, that his influence would have considerable effect upon the officer who was to take charge of the prisoners as far as Zacatecas, and this fact partially consoled us for the loss of one who had ever acted towards us with kindness and consideration.

The pert little Castilian with whom I was quartered had two or three pretty and well-dressed daughters, girls perhaps of sixteen, eighteen, and twenty years, one of whom saw my gold watch lying upon a table in our sleeping apartment, where I had accidentally left it. It was a pretty watch enough to look at, but the rough wooden statue in the adjoining church was just as good a chron-

icler of the passing hours, it having been injured in my fall before leaving Texas. The girl fell in love with it, however, and mentioned her ardent desire to become its possessor to her father, who hinted to Van Ness that he would be glad to purchase it for her sake. He approached this subject very delicately: I was an invited guest at his house, and his lofty Castilian pride revolted at the idea of asking me to sell him the article, or at all events he pretended that it did. Van Ness at once communicated to me the wish of our host, adding that he wanted the watch for one of his daughters. I had no desire to dispose of the trinket, but told my comrade to inform the Spaniard that he might have it for a hundred dollars. I thought the price would frighten our host out of all idea of purchasing, but its effect was quite the reverse. He immediately counted out the sum in good Mexican dollars, and with many protestations hoped I would excuse the liberty he had thus taken in asking a guest to sell his private jewelry. Considering the injury the watch had sustained, the price was far above its worth; still I was very unwilling to part with it. It had been my companion for several years; I had carried it thousands of miles, and had succeeded in saving it from the hands of the rascal Salezar. Yet I could not retract; and the next morning I saw the watch gracing the girdle of la Señorita Juana.

The morning after we reached Cuencamé Colonel Velasco called us together and took his leave, at the same time introducing the commandante of our new guard, Captain Roblado. The latter had a face even more sinister in its expression than that of Colonel V., and in this instance the actions of the man did not belie his features. He had been many years in the Mexican service, possessed naturally a sour and morose disposi-

tion, with a petulance and ill-humour he but half concealed, even if he attempted so to do. If one anecdote told of him was true, he certainly had no reason to entertain any uncommon friendship for the Texans. It was said that he had received a severe wound from one of Colonel Jordan's men, in the celebrated retreat of the latter from Saltillo, after having been treacherously betrayed into the hands of the Centralists by the Federal General Canales. In the retreat of Jordan, Roblado commanded a company of dragoons sent out to cut him off. By a single fire from the Texans, but little more than a hundred in number, some fifty or sixty Mexicans were tumbled dead from their horses, Roblado receiving a wound in the leg which crippled him for life. Although Colonel Velasco, his superior in rank, had ordered him to treat us with every civility, which order he obeyed to a certain extent, it was invariably with a spirit of reluctance.

The bread of Cuencamé is noted throughout Mexico for its whiteness and sweetness, and probably a better article is not made in the wide world. Of this Colonel Velasco ordered a large quantity for our use on the road, and he also ordered the fattest oxen to be purchased and killed on the journey. This was the man we had supposed a tiger in disposition, until his actions proved him a liberal, mild, and courteous officer.

Every preparation having at length been completed, we left Cuencamé on the morning of the 22d of December. We passed the first night at a poor rancho by the roadside, and the next evening reached the hacienda of Juan Perez. An American physician, a resident of some town near the city of Durango, had accompanied us the first day's march from Cuencamé. He could give us no other information in relation to

Colonel Cooke's party than that they had been tolerably well treated on the route they had taken.

After a long and extremely fatiguing march, over a gravelly and stony road, we reached a poor village late on the afternoon of the 24th. Many of our men were very foot-sore and completely tired out with the long march, so much so that they declared themselves really unable to pursue the journey on foot the next day. To allow them a day's rest was deemed utterly impossible by Roblado, and he immediately sent an order summoning the alcalde before him. That functionary soon appeared, when Roblado told him that he must provide a hundred jackasses for the use of the men. The alcalde replied that the place was extremely poor, and that he could not furnish more than ten of the animals required.

"I am a man of few words," answered Captain Roblado. "I want one hundred jackasses for the men to ride to-morrow. If they are not here by six o'clock in the morning I'll make a jackass of you, Señor Alcalde, pack you with the heaviest man in the crowd, and make you carry him to San Sebastian."

"Si, Señor," said the terrified alcalde, and the next morning the requisite number of animals were on the spot in readiness. Here was another instance of the supremacy the military power exerts over the civil in Mexico. Not a cent was paid the poor owners of the animals for services thus extorted, and Roblado manifested as little compunction on the occasion as a bear would while robbing a beehive. I will not give the man credit for having thus mounted our men through feelings of humanity, believing him to have been actuated by no other motive than that of getting us on as fast as possible.

A tiresome march of some thirty-five miles, over a rough and uneven country, brought us to a dirty, miserable little hole which is dignified with the high-sounding name of San Sebastian. This place is situated in a small, sterile valley, amid barren hills, the only vegetation appearing upon their sides being a few stunted prickly pears and thornbushes. How the two or three hundred inhabitants obtain a living is a perfect mystery; in fact, they do not more than half live. Their little huts are built of small stones and mud, without doors or windows—they have neither chairs nor beds, nor in fact furniture of any kind—in fine, are infinitely worse off than Choctaw or Cherokee Indians, not only as regards clothing and food, but habitations and all the necessaries of life.

It was on Christmas day that we reached San Sebastian, and anything but "a merry Christmas" did we spend in the wretched hole. Many of us had intended to "keep" the day and night somewhat after the manner of our country, but we could not procure eggs and milk enough in the town to manufacture even a tumbler of egg-nog. We were therefore compelled to make our Christmas dinner of a piece of beef roasted on a stick, with no other than bread and water accompaniments.

While roaming about the town after nightfall, in company with one of our officers, and inquiring for milk and eggs of every man, woman, and child we met, we at length encountered a couple of half-dressed girls, standing within a few steps of one of the houses. We stopped, and were about to ask them if they had the articles we were in search of, when they set up a terrible scream, and scampered into the hovel as though frightened out of the little sense that had been vouch-

safed them. Some half dozen starved curs issued from the doorless entrance and commenced yelping at us, and this appeared to be a signal for every dog in town to join the chorus. Fortunately for us, there was no lack of stones, of a suitable size for throwing, in the vicinity, and I am strongly inclined to believe that several of the barking whelps had good reasons for regretting that they had attacked us—one, I know, must have required careful and unremitting nursing before he could ever hope to raise another bark at a stranger.

On returning to our quarters, some half an hour afterward, we found that an exceedingly grave charge had already been entered against us by the relatives or friends of the frightened girls, the complainants informing Roblado that we had not only insulted but chased them, and that had it not been for their faithful dogs it was impossible to imagine where we might have stopped! This was too rich. We told Roblado the circumstances exactly as they occurred, with one exception: as there was a remote probability that the plaintiffs might obtain a bill for damages sustained by their dogs, we did not even hint to Roblado our knowledge of the virtue possessed by stones, or that either of us had ever thrown one in our lives. Thus ended our Christmas frolic at San Sebastian.

At an early hour the next morning we were on the road. I looked around me, as we filed through the narrow and crooked lane leading from the town, expecting to see an occasional dead dog, or a limping one at least; but the search was fruitless. A thousand open mouths were grinning, growling, grinding their teeth, and barking at us at every step—the killed and wounded had probably been provided for. Has any one of my readers, in his journeyings, ever noticed that

the poorest towns and families always have the most and the meanest dogs? If he has not, I have, often.

We had proceeded a mile, or probably less, when suddenly one of our men was seen rising in the air, somewhat after the manner of a rocket, and then descending with even greater velocity. He had only been hoisted by one of those peculiar kick-ups which no animal but a donkey can give, but fortunately was only slightly injured. Many of the animals which had been pressed into the service by Roblado, although the forced contract with the alcalde extended no farther than to San Sebastian, were still retained to carry our more lame and infirm comrades; had it not been for this, many of them would have suffered dreadfully, as the march was nearly forty miles in length. How these animals sustain themselves is unaccountable; for they had nothing to eat for the thirty-six hours they were with us, and then had to retrace their steps over the same ground, and with the same nourishment. They stopped over night at San Sebastian, going and coming; but there was not food enough in the vicinity of that town to afford a respectable maintenance for a small flock of killdees.

Just at dusk we entered the town of Saenea, deep in a narrow but fertile and beautiful valley, which is bordered on every side by frowning hills and mountains. The location of this town, which contains some two thousand inhabitants, is picturesque in the extreme, and in addition it is one of the cleanest places we met with in the country. Here, for the first time, we saw the orange-tree in full bearing. Although we had been travelling for near a month in the latitude in which that delicious fruit arrives at perfection, the elevation of the table-lands we had journeyed over made the air

too cold for it to thrive. At Saenea, too, we for the first time saw the celebrated *maguey* plant, from which *pulque*, the principal beverage of the country, is extracted. The process of gathering this fluid is by cutting off the centre shoot of the plant, in the hollow of which, holding about a pint, the pulque finds a basin. This little basin fills two or three times a day with the sap of the plant, which, after being slightly fermented, is drunk in immense quantities by the natives.

The process of extracting the sap from the basin is primitive, and not well adapted to make it palatable to all tastes. The person to whom this part of the business is intrusted has a long tube made expressly for the purpose, one end of which he inserts in the basin and the other in his mouth, and then, by exercising what is generally termed the power of suction, he draws the liquid from the fountain-head to his own. It next finds its way to some skin or trough, and after being allowed to ferment, is considered fit to drink. Foreigners become extremely fond of it after much use, and many of them drink it to even greater excess than the natives. For myself, one swallow was quite sufficient—I never tasted it a second time. Some of the Mexican officers insisted that it was very refreshing, and palatable withal, and pressed me to try another cup. I told them I had little doubt it was a very fine drink to those who liked it, but that it did not exactly suit my taste—and here the matter ended. To me it had the flavour of stale small-beer mixed with sour milk, and the odour of half-tainted meat as it approached my nose. Moreover, the system of hydraulics by which the suckers first extracted it was not altogether such as met with my approval. I am not sure that I should have taken a single swal-

low, had I not been assured that it had first undergone a ten days' fermentation.

Of itself, *pulque* is slightly intoxicating, but by distillation a very strong liquor is made from it, called *mescal*, or *aguardiente de maguey*. This is also a very common drink among the lower orders of Mexico, who are much addicted to intemperance. The soldiers will almost invariably get intoxicated upon mescal whenever they have the opportunity, regardless of the severe flogging they are certain to receive for the transgression.

The abuses of the *maguey* end with the *mescal*, but its valuable uses do not cease with the *pulque*. From its leaves, which are frequently eight or ten feet in length by one foot in width, not only thread but rope is made, both strong and durable. The fibrous part is first twisted into thread, which is useful for an endless variety of purposes, and this can at any time be manufactured into rope of any size. Immense plantations of *maguey*, where it is planted in rows some ten feet apart, and cultivated with great care, may be found in the vicinities of Guanajuato, Queretaro, Mexico, and Puebla, and yield large revenues to their proprietors.

As we were about starting from Saenea, some thirty miserable, half-dressed, and, to judge from their appearance, half-starved wretches, were taken from a prison adjoining our quarters and marched into the plaza. Who or what they were we could not imagine, but that they were arrant knaves and cut-throats was plainly visible in their countenances. The officer who had charge of them immediately produced a long rope, with shorter ropes attached to it at intervals of about a yard. Each end of these shorter ropes was made into a slip-noose, the distance of the noose from the main cord

being eighteen inches or two feet. While we were alternately watching this singular contrivance and casting our eyes at the group of ragged wretches around it, the officer called upon one of them to advance to the head of the rope. His right arm was then drawn through the noose, the officer roughly pulling it tight. Another of the jail-birds was next made fast by his left arm to the opposite end of the short rope, and in this way the whole gang were strung together, and marched off under a strong guard directly upon our route.

On inquiry, one of the Mexican officers told us they were *volunteers*, on their way to the city of Mexico to join the army. The real truth was, they were convicts of the worst description, murderers and thieves, on their way to the capital to be manufactured into soldiers: yet abandoned as were these wretches, some of them had mothers and sisters who clung to them until the last, and were with difficulty forced away. With tears, they gave their vagabond sons and brothers the last remnants of tortillas and chile in their possession, and followed them with their eyes until lost in the distance. How strong is a mother's or a sister's love!

After being washed and cleaned up, and having uniforms put upon them, these convicts are drilled until they become familiar with the use of arms; but they can never make good soldiers. Our own men, who were in every way better treated, and guarded with far less strictness, made themselves not a little merry at the expense of the different strings of "*Involuntary Volunteers*," or "*United Mexicans*," as they were pleased to term them, whom we afterward met on our journey.

Immediately on leaving Saenea, our road led us up the steep sides of a mountain, difficult to climb, and of

tiresome length. Once at the summit, however, we were partially repaid for our toil by the prospect below us. Cleanly and neatly built as was the town we had just left, and beautiful as we thought its situation while gazing from the plaza at the bold and rugged mountains on every side, distance now certainly lent an enchantment we had not perceived before. Irrigating canals were seen extending in every direction; small patches of maguey, with their long, coarse leaves, gave a picturesque air to the scenery; the orange groves, now concealing, now disclosing the dwelling of some more wealthy proprietor, were clad in richest foliage, and yellow with golden fruit, although January was about closing the doors of the old year; the whole scene was mellowed by the distance, and was one of that varied and subdued beauty seldom met with in other lands than Mexico.

Our march, in the earlier part of this day, was over a country broken by rugged hills, and desolate from lack of vegetation. In the afternoon, however, we came to a more level tract, and ere nightfall reached a large and wealthy estate known as the Rancho Grande, having on it a neat church, and a new and commodious *meson* for the reception of travellers. In all my journeyings through Mexico, I do not remember having seen any other house bearing the evident marks of recent construction, or a single dwelling in progress. All presented the strongest tokens of age—many were crumbling and tottering under the influence of decay. In that falling Republic the traveller sees no new towns springing into existence, no improvements in those that are already built, none of that bustle and activity which indicate a healthy state; but on the contrary, such of the villages and cities as are not stationary are going

to ruin, and will continue to do so, slowly, perhaps, but surely, unless wars and revolutions cease, or the country falls into other hands. Of the former there is little hope; for such is the nature of the population, and so jealous, selfish, and ambitious are the men by whom that population is handled and governed, that no confidence can be placed in the stability of any form of government that can be set up.

At Rancho Grande we met an American, who informed us that Colonel Cooke's party had passed through the large mining town of Fresnillo about three weeks before, and that we should probably reach the same place the next day. The name of this American I do not recollect; I only remember that he said he was making his way out of Mexico as fast as a good mule would allow him, but the cause of his hot haste he did not mention.

As our informant conjectured, we arrived at Fresnillo early in the afternoon of the next day. It is a town containing some fifteen or twenty thousand inhabitants, has a large square with a costly fountain in the centre, and several large and showy churches. Within a mile are the celebrated mines of Fresnillo, among the most profitable, at the present time, in Mexico, if we were rightly informed. They are worked by steam, and the general superintendence is in the hands of Englishmen, although an American gentleman has charge of the hacienda. I have forgotten the revenue of this celebrated mine, which is owned by a Mexican family; but it is immense. The entire population of Fresnillo derive their support in some way from the mines; yet the most squalid poverty is to be met at every turn.

During the afternoon and evening we were visited

by several of the foreigners, and after dark a small party of us spent three or four hours very agreeably with a young Englishman employed about the mines. His residence was at some distance—too far for us to visit—but he appeared to be quite at home at the "*Tienda del Gato*," or Shop of the Cat—a singular name this for a confectionery or coffee-house, but such has the owner given it. In it was one of the largest cats I ever saw, and over the door was a painting which the proprietor informed us was a likeness of the animal. The painting was a most atrocious daub, and absolutely required some key to explain the intention of the artist. Had the animal within been a kangaroo or a grizzly bear, the strange figure over the door would have done as well for either as for the cat.

After being comfortably seated, our Englishman manufactured a generous bowl of excellent egg-nog. Over this, and with the usual accompaniments of smoking, story-telling, and anecdotes of travel, we passed a very pleasant evening, forgetting that we were prisoners in a strange land. Not until midnight did we return to the quarters provided for us at a meson, our acquaintance promising to see us before we set off in the morning. He said that the foreigners of Fresnillo had made up a liberal subscription for Colonel Cooke's party, and that they would endeavour to do something for the more unfortunate among our men.

Although many of the prisoners were worn down by our long and tiresome marches, we remained at Fresnillo but one night. Roblado said that Zacatecas was only some fifty miles distant, and that there we should be allowed a rest of two days.

Mexican-like, the streets of Fresnillo were thronged as we left it. The prisons of the place had been deliv-

ered of sixty or seventy convicts, hardened malefactors, whose very aspect showed a knowledge of every crime in the calendar. These were pinioned after the manner of those at Saenea, attached to the same rope, and driven under a strong guard before us. Not the least notice did the inhabitants of Fresnillo take of these wretches—it was no uncommon thing with them to see their fellow-beings tied and driven like brutes to the shambles; but Texans they had never seen before, and to catch a glimpse at us they rushed, squeezed, hustled, and crowded the streets, their curiosity raised to the highest pitch.

I will say one thing in favour of the Mexican population generally—they seldom manifested any feelings of exultation in our presence. On the contrary, the mild and subdued eyes of the poor Indians were turned upon us invariably in pity, while the crowds through which we passed, in all the large cities, appeared rather to be actuated by commiseration than triumph or hatred, Jews and heretics though they thought and termed us. With all their bad qualities, the Mexican people, as a body, are kind and benevolent, and disposed to grant every favour and indulgence to strangers who have been unfortunate. Let it be understood that I am speaking of the lower orders, and consequently the mass. In a journey of over two thousand miles through the country, during which we saw many of the largest towns and cities, I do not recollect that we were publicly insulted on more than one occasion after leaving El Paso. This speaks much for the lower orders, when it is understood that they might at any time have practised many acts of insolence towards us with impunity.

On our first day's march from Fresnillo, a mail-stage passed us on its way to Zacatecas. It was manufac-

tured at Troy, New-York, was of the same class as the stages in use in the United States, and as it rattled by, full of passengers, forcibly reminded us of freedom and of home.

At night we reached a poor rancho called La Caleta, where we stopped to sleep. Here one of our men, who had been complaining for two or three days, exhibited unequivocal symptoms of that loathsome disease, the small-pox. Eruptions appeared on every part of his body, he became partially delirious, and although we hoped that the disease might prove one of a lighter nature than appearances indicated, all were disappointed. It was small-pox of the worst type, and as there was no guarding against the infection, each one of our party could only hope that he might not become its victim.

CHAPTER VII.

Approach to Zacatecas.—Tedious mountain March.—Picturesque View.—First Sight of Zacatecas.—Its singular Situation.—Specimen of Roblado's Vanity.—Entrance into Zacatecas.—Character of the Inhabitants.—Passage through the City.—Arrival at a deserted Mining House.—Miserable Quarters.—Permission obtained to visit the City.—Inquisitive Urchins.—Arrival at an Irish Restaurant.—A sumptuous Breakfast.—Visit to a New-York Gentleman.—A Stroll through Zacatecas.—Dinner at the Restaurant.—Invitation to another Dinner.—A goodly Company.—Painting of Washington.—A pleasant Evening in Perspective.—Unrealized Hopes.—Again at our old Quarters at the Mining House.—Mr. Falconer in Trouble.—Mexican Justice.—Dr. Whittaker's Mode of getting rid of a troublesome Sentinel.—Subscription raised for the Prisoners.—Liberality of a Mexican Lawyer.—Departure from Zacatecas.—Convent of Guadalupe.—Santa Anna, and his Fight with the Zacatecans.—Sack of the City.—Refugio.—Arrival at Ojo Caliente.—A Bathing Scene.—Customs of the Mexican Women, and their Fondness for Swimming.—El Carro.—Arrival at Salina.—A Kentucky Circus Proprietor.—His Adventure with Roblado.—The Mexican House of Entertainment, or Meson.—The Foreigner meets with but poor Fare.—Modes of living, and Customs of the Lower Orders of Mexico.

On the morning of December 30th we commenced ascending the high range of mountains to the northward of Zacatecas. A very good road winds up the sides, but the ascent was steep and tiresome. Small parties of women, driving asses and mules from market, were passed as we toiled up, and exhibited no little astonishment as they gazed at us.

On reaching the summit we had a fine view of the valley through which we had just travelled, the distant smoke of the mines at Fresnillo being plainly visible, with the numerous little ranchos we had passed. Before us, and on different points of the mountain-tops, the silver mines of Zacatecas were seen—many of them