

try by detaining them; or perhaps they had orders to do so.

A subscription was got up among the foreigners in Zacatecas for the benefit of the Texan prisoners, and a sum exceeding one thousand dollars, besides no inconsiderable quantity of clothing, hats, and shoes, was raised for their necessities, the governor and some of the Mexicans subscribing liberally. The clothing was distributed, and also a small sum of money to each man; but the larger portion was applied to the hiring of two large American wagons for transporting the sick and infirm, as well as the blankets and small bundles of the prisoners. The lives of many of our men were doubtless saved by the timely assistance of these wagons, as by this time numbers were ill with the small-pox, and neither Roblado nor the governor dared take the responsibility of leaving the poor fellows behind in the hospital.

At an early hour on the morning of January 2d, the wagons which had been hired arrived at the foot of the hill, below the old mining-house, and the sick were as comfortably stowed in them as circumstances would admit. Shortly after, five horses were sent to our quarters, saddled and bridled, being presents to some of the Texan officers from the Mexican lawyer who had treated us so kindly. After partaking of an excellent breakfast, sent us by a French gentleman, we were ordered once more to resume the march towards the city of the Montezumas.

The main body of prisoners were guarded with no more strictness than heretofore, but an extra guard was detailed for the special purpose of watching Messrs. Navarro and Falconer—riding close by their side and eyeing their every movement. There was something peculiarly hard in the case of the latter. He was more

anxious than any of the prisoners to examine thoroughly such of the cities and towns as we might pass through, had never harboured a single hostile feeling against the country, was innocent of any inimical act, and was now kept a close prisoner, and debarred every little privilege granted the rest of us, for no other reason than that *Thomas Falconer* sounded more like *Robert Foster* than any other name on the list. Tornel had seen the name of the latter attached to some of the papers taken at the capture of General McLeod, and supposing that he was an important personage, and among the prisoners, had ordered him to be closely confined and strictly watched. The real personage, whose name, by-the-way, was not Robert, was all the while peaceably and quietly pursuing his avocations as principal clerk in the war office at Austin, Texas.

Some five or six miles from Zacatecas we passed the celebrated Convent of Guadalupe, an immense pile of buildings, enclosed within a large yard. We could plainly see a number of melancholy, pale-visaged monks, gazing at us from the small windows, doors, and balconies of the place. Near this convent, in 1835, the noted battle between Santa Anna and the Zacatecas was fought, which resulted in the discomfiture of the latter, and the subsequent sack of the city. It is said that both armies were defeated, and that both were on the point of retreating; but that Santa Anna, happening to see a panic among his opponents before they noticed that his men were wavering, was enabled to rally and turn the current in his favour. In the general sack, which soon after took place in the city, the houses of the foreigners, who had taken no part in the opposition to Santa Anna, were indiscriminately plundered with the rest, and two or three gallant Englishmen and Americans were killed

while stoutly defending their dwellings. Indemnification for the losses sustained by the foreigners in this outrage has since been made by the Mexican government.

A short time after the sack of Zacatecas, Santa Anna was on his way to Texas; and in less than six months after, the man who had filled grave-yards with victims to his avarice and ambition was upon his knees, cowering like a hound, and with uplifted hands begging a life he had richly forfeited by his massacre of Fannin and his men at Goliad, if by no other crime. The ups and downs of this man, than whom no one better qualified can be found to govern his own countrymen, would form a singular history.

Leaving the Convent of Guadalupe, our road led us across level plains until we reached the village of Refugio, where we encamped for the night. Our nearest route to the city of Mexico would have been by a road more to the right; but as Colonel Cooke and his party had been taken in that direction, it was determined by the Mexican government to give the inhabitants of San Luis Potosi and Guanajuato an opportunity to see a portion of the Texan prisoners, and we were therefore ordered to visit those cities in our march. We had plenty of *leisure*, however; and as our route took us through the more interesting portion of the country, and gave us an opportunity of seeing several of the finest cities, we cared but little for the extra delay it occasioned.

Early in the afternoon of January 4th, after a pleasant march, we reached the town of Ojo Caliente. Here we were allowed to ramble about wherever we pleased, and there being a noted warm well on the edge of the town, several of our party visited it for the purpose of bathing. The water boils up in great quantities, and

forms a large, deep basin from the very fountain-head. Several of the prisoners immediately divested themselves of their clothing, and dashed into the refreshing element, diving and swimming about in water just warm enough to be comfortable. Before they left the large natural bathing-tub the party was increased by the arrival of several Mexican girls, who, not in the least daunted by the presence of the Texans, immediately joined them in their aquatic sports. With merry and joyous laughter they commenced splashing the water about them; now diving to the bottom, and then rising to the surface, shaking the water from their long hair, and paddling about like Newfoundland dogs. It may not have been generally remarked, and may not be always the case, but nearly all the females I have seen swim—Mexicans, Indians, and all—paddle along after the manner of water dogs, and one of them makes more noise than a dozen of the other sex. In San Antonio, where the women are excellent swimmers and visit the river regularly once or twice a day, the noise a party of them make might be mistaken for that of so many porpoises or sea-horses.

That the females living upon many of the rivers and lakes of Mexico take to the water so naturally, and appear upon its surface divested of those loose garments with which our American ladies are wont to array themselves upon such occasions, may be looked upon as betraying a want of modesty by some of my fair readers; but with the girls of Mexico there is an absence of all thought that they are doing wrong, which should fully exculpate them from blame. The customs of the country sanction the occurrence of scenes such as I have just mentioned, and many others which would be deemed highly indelicate in other lands; and how-

ever much the foreigner may at first be tempted to doubt their strict correctness, he soon learns that no conventional rules forbid them. True modesty consists in the thought which governs every action; and viewed in this light, there was certainly no immodesty in the girls of Ojo Caliente indulging in a bath, even if they did appear "right before folks," as the philosophic Sam Slick would say.

On the ensuing night we reached El Carro, a fine hacienda belonging to the wealthy Count of Jaral. About noon on the 6th we were halted at the town of Salina, where there are extensive salt-works. Here, at the meson where we stopped, we found a stout Kentuckian, who was one of the owners of an American circus company then performing at San Luis Potosi. He was now on his way to Zacatecas, for the purpose of obtaining a suitable place in which to perform in that city, and at the same time the consent of the governor. As he had arrived at Salina a short time before us, he had, of course, selected the best room in the meson for his own use. This room happening to please Captain Roblado, he ordered the circus proprietor to leave it; but the latter told him at once that he had the best right, and should retain possession as long as he pleased. Roblado fumed and swore a little, and then left the place, threatening to bring the alcalde to his assistance. The Kentuckian went soon after to the alcalde's residence, but before he reached it he found that Roblado had been there before him, and had procured a writ of ejectment. The American was now forced to leave the room; but he remarked that if he had but reached the alcalde's first, and slipped a dollar into his hand, he could have retained possession of the room even though fifty Roblados had wanted it. The

dollar is the most powerful weapon with many of the officers of justice in Mexico, and when it is employed law and equity must step aside.

The English or American traveller, used to the comforts and conveniences of his own well-kept taverns, meets with but a sorry reception and miserable fare at the Mexican house of entertainment, or *meson*, as it is called. They are all built in the same style, the entrance being through a large gate or passage-way which leads into a *patio*, or court, in the interior. On either side of this yard are the rooms set apart for the reception of travellers. Another passage leads from this into the yard which his beast occupies, and which has a large trough of water in the centre, with uncomfortable stalls on the sides. The tired wayfarer is conducted to his room; but no friendly bed meets his anxious gaze. He sees, perhaps, a species of form, built of adobes and mortar, upon which he can spread his *sarape*, or Mexican blanket, and himself; or, mayhap, a corner of the floor is pointed out to him as a favourite spot on which to establish himself for the night; neither bed nor bedding is provided by the landlord. The next care of every prudent traveller is to bring his saddle, bridle, and the other trappings of his horse or mule, together with all and singular his own personal effects, into his room. If he understands well the population, he contrives to sleep upon as much of his property as possible, to prevent the léperos and ladrones from appropriating it during the night; for every Mexican town has its band of petty pilferers, ready to steal the very strings from the traveller's shoes, should he not take the precaution to lie down and sleep with them on.

The wayfarer is now housed—his next care is for his inward man, and here new difficulties arise. The Mex-

ican landlord sets no public table—provides no meal, and very likely keeps no provisions fit for his foreign guests. At the *cocina*, or kitchen, amid the steams of rank and highly-seasoned stews, he may esteem himself lucky if he can purchase a bowl of mutton broth, a coarse earthen platter of frijoles, or, perchance, a *guisado* so particularly high-seasoned with red pepper that the skin of his mouth is in danger of going down his throat at the first swallow. Ten chances to one if he is fortunate enough to find knife, fork, or spoon—articles by no means necessary in Mexican housekeeping. But what need of these when he has his own good fingers and a plate of those ever-accompanying and never-failing thin cakes, yept tortillas, to fall back upon? The soup he drinks from the bowl; a spoon he manufactures by tearing off a piece of tortilla and doubling it into a species of scoop, and with this he is enabled to shovel up a mouthful of his frijoles or *guisado* and carry it to his jaws. Tortilla and all are swallowed, for with every fresh mouthful a fresh spoon is made. Should the stranger happen to swallow a bit of *guisado* so outrageously hot with red pepper that from very agony a feshet of tears starts from his eyes, some by-standing Mexican exclaims that it is “*bueno por el estomago*”—good for the stomach! Fine consolation this, especially for an American; for what does an American care for his stomach? We may all fume and rage against Mrs. Trollope and Dickens, and work ourselves into a most patriotic fury at their strictures; but it cannot be denied that too many of us impose terrible taxes upon our digestive organs by bolting our food in overhaste and half masticated. Too many of us, again, consult but our tastes. We make a hopper of our mouths, feed it to overflowing with the richest dishes

until that trough or reservoir called the stomach is running over, stop suddenly in our eating, rush to business as though life and death depended upon our exertions, and spend half our lives wondering why we are troubled with indigestion and dyspepsia! I hope my countrymen will pardon the truth and the episode, while I go back to the tavern.

There is one thing the traveller in Mexico gets in all its perfection, and that is chocolate. They may have it as good in Spain—but in no part of the United States, or of the British possessions upon its borders, can anything approaching it be made—so fragrant, so rich, so delicious. But when he has swallowed his chocolate, there is an end to everything like perfection. The traveller, if anywhere in the vicinity of the *tierras calientes*, may eke out his dinner with the fruits which grow there in endless variety and profusion, and of most delicious and nutritious quality; but nowhere need he look for the roast beef, the boiled mutton, the potatoes, the pies, the puddings, or the thousand-and-one substantial and delicacies to which he has been accustomed. Such is tavern life in Mexico, at least at a majority of the *mesones* and *fondas* scattered through the smaller towns and cities. What the charge is for the lodging of a man and the stabling of his beast over night, I do not know—the Mexican government paid all my bills of this nature during the interesting tour I made through that country. The prices are moderate, however, especially away from the larger cities. A dish of frijoles, or of *guisado*, with a stack of some half dozen tortillas to match, seldom costs more than six or nine cents; and as upon these the traveller is generally obliged to subsist, his expenses are light. With a dollar and twenty-five cents or thereabout per diem, I

should suppose a man could pay his own expenses and those of his beast on the principal routes of the country, and live through it, unless some of *los señores ladrones* should see fit to stop his breath for the mere love of whatever plunder might be got from him.

Should the traveller happen to be at a village where there is no meson, it is considered the duty of the *alcalde* to furnish him with accommodations; but if night overtakes him at a poor rancho, where there is no *alcalde*, his situation is truly deplorable. He alights at the door of the best-appearing hut in the group, and after kicking and quieting some half dozen yelping, worthless curs, which seem inclined to dispute his passage by threats only—they never go so far as to bite—he at length effects an entrance. The room serves for all purposes—kitchen, parlour, and sleeping apartment.\*

\* The reader must bear in mind that I am now speaking of the dwellings of the very lowest and poorest classes, although a large majority of the inhabitants have but a common room in which to eat and sleep. Attached to this apartment, in many instances, may be found a small room which serves as a kitchen, and in which the little cooking of the family is done. In this kitchen the tortillas are made, and as the process may not prove uninteresting, I will quote Madame Calderon's description of the manner in which they are manufactured: "They first soak the grain in water with a little lime, and when it is soft peel off the skin—then grind it on a large block of stone, the *metate*, or, as the Indians (who know best) call it, the *metatl*. For the purpose of grinding it, they use a sort of stone roller, with which it is crushed, and rolled into a bowl placed below the stone. They then take some of this paste, and clap it between their hands, till they form it into light round cakes, which are afterward toasted on a smooth plate, called the *comalli* (*comal* they call it in Mexico), and which ought to be eaten as hot as possible." I agree, most decidedly, with the fair authoress, that they "ought to be eaten as hot as possible," *if at all*—for from all such tough, heavy, and unsavoury cakes I beg to be delivered. Most excellent bread do the Mexicans make—white, light, and sweet—and why they spoil their corn by converting it into tortillas is a mystery. Two women or girls are always engaged in making them—one to grind the grain, the other to form the cakes—and pass by a hut, either at night or morning, the traveller is sure to hear the patting of hands which denotes the progress of manufacture. When cooked, if the Mexican has no frioles, he besmears the tortilla with a composition of

There is no floor other than the hard-trodden earth; it is bedless, furnitureless, comfortless. The tired wayfarer looks around for some friendly evidence of food and rest—his beast without neighs aloud for corn, shelter, and some one to relieve him of his heavy load of saddle and baggage. Upon the rough walls of the room are to be seen, neatly enough arrayed with garlands of flowers and boughs, a collection of badly-executed lithographs, gaudily coloured, and intended to represent different scenes in the life of our Saviour and the Holy Mother. The centre of the little group is occupied, perhaps, by a rude wooden cross, trimmed with faded flowers. Beneath is probably a lithograph—sometimes an old engraving—of the Virgin of Guadalupe, while over it is suspended a picture representing the ascension of our Saviour. The crucifixion occupies a conspicuous place, then a print of the Virgin and Holy Child, and then an ingeniously-wrought crown of thorns, or a rosary and crucifix. A brass medal of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, and probably a lithograph of the patron saint of the country, will be seen in the collection, the former suspended by a red or yellow riband. A little bit of looking-glass generally completes the arrangement, for this piece of wordly vanity almost always has its station, in a Mexican cottage, in close proximity with the rude symbols of the faith of its inmates. On other parts of the walls the traveller sees little save strings of dry red peppers, perhaps a few ears of corn, and the coarse earthen bowls and dishes of the occupants.

Turning his eyes to the floor, in one corner he sees

red pepper and mutton fat, and always appears perfectly contented if he can procure a sufficiency of this singular food, with *pulque* enough to wash it down.

the universal *metate*, or stone instrument upon which the corn is mashed or ground before it is made into tortillas. In the next corner, probably, a fighting cock is tied by the leg, giving an occasional crow of defiance to some brother chicken tied in the same way in the adjoining or opposite house. Another corner is occupied, perhaps, by an elderly hen sitting upon a nest of eggs, while in the last stands a coarse box or chest, containing the little odds and ends belonging to the family in the way of dresses and ornaments. In this room, which is not more than ten or twelve feet square, live, sleep, and eat some eight, ten, or perhaps twelve persons, large and small, male and female, and with these the traveller is obliged to make his bed, or take up with lodgings upon the ground outside, which is every way preferable if the weather permits. "If a man lies down with a dog he gets up with fleas," says the old proverb—if he lies down with Mexicans of the lower classes he gets up with something worse, say I.

But sleep is a secondary, an after consideration—the wayfarer must have something to eat. He asks the master of the establishment if he has any meat. Nine times out of ten the answer is, "*No hai*"—there is none—accompanied by raising the right hand to a level with his nose, closing it with the exception of the forefinger, and then, with the palm turned outwardly, wagging the upraised finger directly before the face. Bread is next asked for. The answer this time is another wag of the forefinger, which is to all intents and purposes a negative; but frequently the word "*tampoco*" is uttered, signifying that there is neither bread nor meat on the premises. The traveller asks for milk or eggs. "*No hai nada*"—no, there is nothing here—is the answer, unless, by some turn of good fortune, his host happens to

own a goat or a cow, or has had extraordinary luck with his poultry. It is only when the hungry wayfarer is driven to the strait of asking for tortillas or frijoles that the welcome "*si hai*"—we have them—greet his ear. With these he at least stays the cravings of hunger, and after having made such provision for his horse as the poverty of the rancho allows, he gathers his property as nearly under him as possible, rolls himself in his sarape, and seeks forgetfulness and rest in sleep.

The above is a picture of life in Mexico, among the lower classes of the inhabitants, the fidelity of which will be attested by all who have travelled over the country. Flying tourists, who have confined their trip to Puebla, Mexico, Queretaro, Guanajuato, and such places as they could reach in stage-coaches, can learn little from their own personal experience; for with the introduction of this mode of travelling came regular stage-houses, where regular and more bountiful meals are served up. They must journey upon the backs of mules, and through the less-frequented highways, before they can come to a proper understanding of the country and the modes of living of its inhabitants.