

them, and under the disguises they had procured were not suspected. Such is a short account of the escape of these officers—an escape well conceived and bravely carried through from first to last.

After sitting out the *ôpera*, which as a whole was well performed, we returned to our quarters. I now found that during the day I had been robbed of two handkerchiefs and a penknife, besides part of a bundle of puros, but how, when, or where was a mystery. I had exercised, as I thought, all due caution—had kept an eye or a hand on my pockets whenever there seemed to be the least chance for the light-fingered gentry, who infest churches, theatres, and thoroughfares alike in the great city of Mexico, to ply their calling—but with all my watchfulness I had been eased of everything save a lead pencil, a little loose change which was in my vest pocket, and the clothes on my back. On informing my friends of these depredations, they appeared to think me peculiarly fortunate, inasmuch as to save anything was of itself an exceedingly rare occurrence with a stranger. As a “general average,” they said that the robbers should at least have taken my hat and what little silver I had! This was certainly consoling; but to guard against the *ladrones* in future I determined upon carrying nothing with me that the rascals might covet. The Mexican *cortabolsas*, or pickpockets, have the name of being the most adroit in the world, and from my little experience I should say they had well earned the reputation. At all events, I do not intend to rob them of their foul fame.

For three or four days after my release—in fact, during the whole of the time I was in the city at liberty—I was continually meeting with Mexicans of my acquaintance—officers who had been attached to our

guard at different places. They all appeared much rejoiced on seeing that I had regained my freedom, manifesting their pleasure by warmly embracing me, meet me where they would. This custom of throwing the left arm around each other, while the right hands are clasped as with us, is common, I believe, all over Mexico, alike when two men, or two women, or two of the opposite sexes meet who are well acquainted; and perhaps this cordial mode of reception from the females of the country may be considered as one of the strongest of those ties which certainly bind the Americans and English to the land of Montezuma. The cold and phlegmatic Anglo-Saxon, after a residence of some year or two in Mexico, leaves it with regret; for there are a grace, an ease, a fascination, and a cordiality of greeting among the *señoritas* of that country which cannot be forgotten. The American or Englishman reflects upon the stiffness and restraint imposed upon the actions of his fair countrywomen by cold, conventional rules—he remembers the distant bow, the formal shake of the hand, with which he will be greeted on his return, and contrasts them with his daily salutations from the dark-eyed daughters of the sunny land in which he is sojourning. The result is altogether in favour of the latter.

It is indeed a delightful thing to be ever greeted with the most cordial freedom, when we know that that freedom is entirely removed from forwardness—to have the person encircled by arms which are faultless in form—and a man feels that it is difficult to tear himself away from a people whose manners, in their daily intercourse, are in every respect more full of warmth and kindness than those of his own countrymen, and countrywomen, too; for while even the men are not wanting in natural

and easy politeness, the Mexican señoras have a frankness of deportment, a kindness and singleness of disposition, which captivate the natives of colder climes, and frequently did I meet with countrymen whose love for their fatherland had become completely estranged by the fascinations of female society in Mexico. The women of that country, when married to any of the Anglo-Saxon race, have the reputation of making the best and most affectionate wives; and scattered through Mexico may be found innumerable instances where foreigners, induced by no other motives than the superior charms and excellent domestic endowments of the women, have settled permanently and are rearing families.

I have been led to these remarks by a little circumstance which occurred a few mornings after I had regained my liberty. While walking at an early hour through one of the principal streets, wondering whence came the incessant current of passers, and staring at the many strange sights which strike the traveller on first visiting one of the most magnificent cities of the world, I noticed a young and pretty girl approaching, who seemed to gaze at me with marked attention. Dressed somewhat after the fashion of the Poblana girls—a costume I have already described—her neat and gracefully-worn reboso but partially concealed her head, face, and well-turned shoulders, and I might have bestowed more than an ordinary passing look upon the fair gazer, even had she not so intently eyed me. Her face certainly seemed familiar—like that of one I had previously seen: but in a country where there is so great a resemblance between the women—where black hair, dark and lustrous eyes, great regularity of features, and the same fashion of dress are almost universal—it is diffi-

cult to recognise a face until one becomes well acquainted. On arriving directly in front of me, the girl paused for a moment, gazing earnestly and intently in my face; and at a loss what to make of conduct so singular, I also stopped, anxious to see how this pantomime was to end. The last look of the girl seemed to satisfy her; for suddenly casting her reboso from her shoulders, while it still remained hanging from her head, she threw both arms around my neck with even more than ordinary Mexican *abandon*, and embraced me with as much cordiality as though I had been one of her dearest friends or nearest relatives. That she was making herself extremely familiar, on an acquaintance which I felt assured must be very limited, was my first impression; but not to be outdone, either in politeness or cordiality, I too threw my arms around her after her own fashion, and *acted*, to say the least of it, as though meeting with one of my oldest and most esteemed acquaintances.

In the streets of New-Orleans or New-York such a meeting would doubtless attract some little attention—not so in Mexico. The passers went by almost without deigning to notice us, and glad was I that they did so; for I could not satisfy my own mind that the open street was altogether a befitting place for the enactment of such a scene. But who was my fair friend, and why did this accidental meeting afford her so much gratification? These were questions I now asked myself. I placed a hand on either shoulder of the girl, gently disengaged myself, and then intently scrutinized her features with the hope of recognising one who must certainly be entitled to an acquaintanceship. I had an indistinct recollection of having seen her somewhere, but at what place or under what circumstances it was impossible to recall to mind. The girl, however, was far

from imagining the dilemma I was in, but on the contrary addressed me with as much familiarity as though we had known each other from childhood, expressing, over and over again, the great pleasure it afforded her to see me once more alive and at liberty, and then alluding to the time when I was first attacked by the small-pox with not a little feeling. This last remark was a clew to the whole mystery; for I now at once recollected that she was the sister of one of the sergeants of our guard, and had frequently brought her brother his dinner at the place where we were confined when I was ill with the disease I have just spoken of. In common with all the women of the country, she had manifested great solicitude in our behalf, had expressed her ardent hopes that we might all recover our liberty, and in addition to this, had, on several occasions, kindly invited me to partake of such food as she had brought her brother. To repay her, in some way, I had made her a trifling present; but it was one she had not forgotten, as was fully proved by the cordial manner in which she greeted me on my first meeting her in the street some two months after.\*

As I was about shaking hands to leave her, for I did not much care about going through another scene quite so familiar as was that at our first meeting, she invited me to visit her at her mother's residence before leaving the country. With artless simplicity she told me that her relatives were poor—in circumstances humble—but

\* Let not the reader understand that an adventure of this kind—a meeting so cordial—is a common or every-day occurrence in the streets of Mexico, although, as I have stated, it seemed to attract little notice from the passers. The girl was probably much astonished and highly pleased to meet with one at liberty whom she had last seen sick and in prison, and in the warmth of her heart threw a greater degree of cordiality into her actions at this first meeting than is common even with the impulsive women of her country.

that I should be welcome, and that her mother would feel pride if the stranger would but condescend to cross her lowly threshold. Promising to call upon her I turned from the spot, and the next moment, after repeating for the third time the exclamation, "*Ah! señor, quanto me alegre de ver a V. afuera de es a maldita carcel!*"\* she was lost to sight in the throng of passers which crowded the street.

The circumstance of the girl's telling me, openly, of the humble sphere and station in which she moved and lived, brings to mind one excellent trait in the character of the Mexican people—with them poverty is certainly no crime, is never insulted. The unfortunate mendigo, or beggar, is seldom or never spurned from the door of the rich; but on the contrary his misfortunes entitle him at least to respect if not to alms, and almost invariably both are bestowed. No concealment of poverty is attempted—the poor Mexican family, unlike that of the American or English in similar circumstances, never impoverishes itself still farther by forced endeavours to conceal its real necessities. Of such hospitality as the Mexican dwelling affords the stranger is always invited to partake; and while the master frankly admits his poverty, he at the same time uses it as an excuse for the scantiness of the repast to which he invites his guest. The stranger is not told that his presence is unexpected; that the butcher has neglected to furnish meat, with a threat to patronise him no more; that the bread has just given out and that there is no time to bake or send for a supply, or any of the thousand and one excuses a false and foolish pride invents in other lands to conceal its indigence—nothing of the kind is resorted to. "*Somos pobres*"—we are poor people—is

\* Ah! sir, how much it pleases me to see you out of that bad prison!

the honest admission made by the Mexican to cover any deficiency in his entertainment.\*

As an offset to their many vices, the Mexicans certainly possess charity and hospitality in an eminent degree—virtues which cover a multitude of sins, and which are not only professed but practised in that country. The early Spanish missionaries, in their endeavours to convert the Indians to their faith, appealed to the heart and sense through the medium of the eye—spread before the natives the pomp and pageantry of their imposing religion with hands far from niggardly—and thus first estranged them from their idols and many of their more absurd ceremonies. Then, as I have before stated, by allowing them to ingraft some of their own superstitions upon the rites of the Catholic religion, they were enabled to bring them over to Christianity. Such the primary efforts, and such the results.

The early fathers next zealously inculcated that heavenly spirit of charity which teaches that we must clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and relieve the sick and distressed; and with such untiring ardour did they impress this article of their creed upon the natives, that it took root, and has increased and continued to the present day. For evidence, we have but to look at the hospitals for the sick in body and mind scattered through the country, to the institutions for relieving the distresses of the unfortunate, and to the different orders of sisters of charity, those meek handmaidens of benevo-

\* Let it be understood that I am now speaking of the middle and lower orders. A concealment of poverty is no singular thing among such of the higher class as may have been reduced, and I have little doubt that many a family party may be seen rolling along the Alameda in the evening, in their carved and gilt coach, which is driven to great strait to procure a breakfast the next morning at all in keeping with the ostentation they outwardly assume.

lence, whose eyes are ever seeking the couch of sickness and whose hands are ever raised to succour with a beneficence that knows no tiring. It is not in Mexico alone that this holy feeling of charity towards the sick and helpless exists; but wherever the religion of Rome is known there do we find the same active benevolence exerted, the same attention to the wants of the suffering, and well would it be were other denominations of Christians to pattern after the Catholics in all that pertains to pity and compassion towards their sick and needy fellow-creatures—in plain terms, if they would make fewer professions and enter more into the real practice of charity.

I cannot close this subject or this chapter without a few words in relation to the present priesthood in Mexico—the faults of the holy brotherhood I shall allude to with reluctance, for from one and all I never received other than the kindest and most benevolent treatment. With whatever intolerant zeal they may preach to their congregations against the heretics, and with whatever vividness they may paint the purgatory to which all out of the fold of the true Church are destined after death, the Protestant stranger will seldom find other than a hospitality the most munificent within the gates of the padres. He will find them, too, men of liberal and enlightened views, well-educated and entertaining companions, tolerant and charitable, extremely good livers, and disposed to an indulgence in many of the luxuries and vanities of this lower world—in short, he will find that their numerous departures from the rule of conduct prescribed for them sit as easy upon their consciences as do their gowns upon their backs.

With the style of living and domestic relations of the Catholic priest we are taught to associate all that is ab-

stemious, so far as relates to worldly affairs, and that such is the case in Ireland and in the United States, I know full well; but he who believes that such a state of things exists among the brotherhood of Mexico is either woefully ignorant or wilfully blind. At his table, as I have stated above, the Mexican padre is a *bon vivant*, delighting in the good things of this life; and however strongly he may inculcate upon his flock the necessity of strictly observing all fasts, his appetite frequently begets an obliviousness which turns every day alike into one of feasting while at his own table. Another thing: if all the male portion of the community in Mexico were attached to the priesthood, centuries would elapse before the race would become extinct unless some tremendous revolution in the morals of the brotherhood should take place; for it is just as well known that they contrive to break the bonds of celibacy strictly enjoined upon them, as it is that such bonds are prescribed by the Church of Rome. Were the pope to be put in a *clairvoyant* state, and willed to look into the domestic habits and relations of his agents in Mexico, a precious set of backsliding padres he would find.

That the good padres of that country have their *compañeras*, or female companions, is well known, not only to foreigners, but to their own people, and equally well known is it that they invariably make their selections with a discrimination which shows that they are most excellent judges of female beauty. They rear families, too, and with great care and attention; and although the unaccepted and more ill-favoured portion of the women constituting his flock may think their padre very naughty, he finds means to close their eyes and mouths upon his peccadilloes, and all goes on smoothly.

I trust that the kind-hearted curas, from whom myself and companions received so many favours and attentions, will give me full pardon for thus exposing some of their weaknesses and frailties—absolution for my tell-tale sins: they will not attempt to deny anything I have said of them. They will also excuse me, when I say to and of them, that they are a class of enlightened, generous, good-natured, discerning, hospitable, hail-fellow-well-met, penance-hating, women-loving men, prone toward the enjoyments of the table, holding fasts in great scorn, addicted to occasional gambling and wine-bibbing, and pretending no ignorance in matters of cock-fighting and sports of a like nature; more particularly when I repeat that I entertain the best feelings towards one and all of them. In describing them, I have not “set down aught in malice,” but, on the contrary, have spoken of them precisely as I found them.

The influence and power exerted by the priests of Mexico, over the ignorant and superstitious population, are immense—a fact as well known to them, and even better, than to the intelligent foreigners who have visited the country. They know, too, that the population they govern is led and kept in subjection by impostures the most flimsy, by deception the most transparent—for not to know this would be proving them fools, a title they do not deserve. They farther know, that in order to sustain themselves in their past and present position, to retain their supremacy and their fat benefices, they must persevere in their impostures and continue to gull their simple flocks—to hold the down-trodden mass in the same ignorance in which they have so long been kept—and hence their open intolerance towards all other sects, and their zealous care that no other religion

than their own shall be preached or inculcated in the land.\* The almost countless number of ecclesiastics in Mexico are well aware that their expensive system of church domination inevitably tends to diminish the resources and retard the prosperity and advancement of the country; but it is not in the nature of men holding power, whether Protestant or Catholic, political or religious, to resign it willingly, or give up any office of influence or emolument already within their grasp, because it conflicts with the interests or liberties of the people; and to expect the priests of Mexico to abandon their sway or abdicate their ascendancy would be to suppose them more than men. All reformation of existing evils, either of Church or State, must come from the people themselves: whether the Mexican nation will ever be brought to know, feel, and exert itself against the powerful ecclesiastical and military establishments which are pressing and keeping it down, is a matter extremely problematical.

The Catholic reader must not construe these remarks into an attack upon his religion, for such is far from my

\* No other religion than the Catholic is allowed or preached up to this day in Mexico, but a greater degree of tolerance is manifested towards the professors of other creeds now than formerly. I have read in some book—but its author I cannot call to mind—of a debate in the Mexican Senate in relation to the allowing Protestant foreigners a burial-place. No such privilege was permitted them until within the last ten or fifteen years, and it was only through the urgent remonstrances of the then British minister that the point was conceded. One of the Mexican Senators, when the subject was debated in Congress, made remarks something like the following: "There is one of four things we must allow these heretics who may happen to die in our land: we must eat, pickle and send them out of the country, throw them in the fields, or bury them under ground. To eat them would be most repugnant—not one of my colleagues would taste the flesh of a heretic; to send them out of the country would be expensive; to throw them in the fields would be pestilence-breeding, and otherwise exceedingly offensive. To move, therefore, as the easiest, cheapest, safest, and every way the best course for us to adopt, is to allow them a burial-place"—and the motion was carried.

intention—towards both faith and its professors I entertain no other feelings than of respect. My object has been to draw a rough picture of Catholicism in Mexico, and the power and means by which it is sustained, and in so doing I have confined myself strictly to the truth. In its essentials the Romish religion in Mexico is doubtless the same as it is in the United States, or in any country where toleration, that firm and enduring foundation of all political liberty, is known; but in its administration there is as much difference between the two as there is between the religion of the Pilgrims of New-England and that of the Hindoos or New Zealanders.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Mode of passing our Time.—Herr Cline.—Mexico by Moonlight.—Note from Madame Calderon.—Rambles over Mexico.—A Dance.—The Jarabe.—Change of Scene.—A murdered Soldier.—Touching Instance of Grief.—More Moonlight.—"Quien Vive?"—A staggering Padre.—Release of Americans through the Exertions of General Thompson.—Visit to Tacubaya.—Cruel and mysterious Murder of Egerton and his Mistress.—Visit to the Acordada.—A Show-case of Murder.—Gloomy Entrance to the Acordada.—Some Description of the Interior.—Release of a Female Prisoner.—Mr. Navarro.—Story of his Wrongs.—Robbery and Crime in the Acordada.—Texan Prisoners within its dreary Walls.—Take Leave of Mr. Navarro.—Farther Description of the Prison.—Encounter with Dutch Broom Girls.—An old Acquaintance in the Broom Line.—The Ballad-mongers badly patronised.—Evangelistas, or Letter-writers of Mexico.—Their singular Calling.—Stock in Trade of the Evangelista.—Mexican Coaches and Mexican Coachmen.—Another Visit to Santiago.—More of the Mexican Coachmen.

OUR days, from the 21st to the 27th of April, were passed in roaming over the city and environs, in rides through the Alameda and Paseo, and in occasional visits