

CHAPTER XIX.

ON the 26th of July, 1847, the Columbus, seventy-four, bearing the pennant of Commodore Biddle, sailed from San Francisco for the United States, leaving the flag of the Commander-in-Chief, flying on board the razee Independence. By this time most of the ships composing the squadron had either rendezvoused in Monterey or Yerbabuena. Central and Upper California had become perfectly tranquil, with the exception of some trifling difficulties which had arisen in San Diego, between the New York Volunteers and the natives. But these were speedily settled; and a sufficient force being now ready for service, the preparations, which had already been too long delayed, were actively begun for the purpose of attacking the Mexican coast. The crews of the different vessels were constantly exercised in companies and battalions for service on land: they were taught to march and counter-march, in line, platoons, and column; to throw themselves into squares; were thoroughly instructed in the manual drill; and although they occasionally knocked their broad-brimmed tarpaulins off at "Shoulder arms," yet upon the whole they did extremely well for sailors, and on the weekly field-days on shore, went through the evolutions in a very creditable manner.

Early in September we returned to Monterey. The bright

green verdure that clothed the hill sides, the beautiful mantle of green and flowers of spring, had long since paled beneath the blaze of summer. No rain had fallen; the clear rills that murmured in every gully were absorbed by the parched earth. The broad lagoons near the beach were rapidly receding, and mud had been converted into dust. And although vandals were making the axe resound in murderous blows upon the picturesque bolls of fine trees that decked the slopes, there was still sufficient delight for the eye to rest upon in the lovely undulating landscape encircling the shores of the bay.

Monterey was rapidly increasing, and houses of a more substantial build than the paper-like structures of Yerbabuena, were rising in the streets. The fort on the hill was nearly completed, mounting a numerous battery of long twenty-fours; and in the rear were stone magazines, barracks, and quarters; so that the natives, if they entertained doubts before, were now convinced that their invaders had resolved to remain. A salutary system of police had also been established in the town—the Reverend Alcalde was a terror to evil doers. Woe betide the pockets of those who slaughtered cattle at their door-steps, or the rollicking gentry vaulting at full speed through the streets, or drunken Indians, or quiet persons in back rooms, amusing themselves at monté—for down came that ivory-headed cane—"Alcalde de Monterey"—like a talisman; and with a pleasant smile he would sweep the white and yellow dross into his capacious pockets. Others were mulcted in damages, or made to quarry stone for the school-house; but, whether native or foreigner, the rod fell impartially on their pockets, and all, more or less, contributed towards the new Californian college. These measures were not relished at first by the natives, but in the end they dis-

cerned the wisdom of a prompt and just administration of the laws, and became devoted admirers of the indefatigable Alcalde.

About this time a more serious event occurred. Two Indians were charged with the murder of a foreigner; a woman, who was their accomplice, betrayed them; they were tried by jury, selected equally from natives and strangers; the crime was clearly and indubitably proved—the offenders were condemned to be hung. The punishment was unknown in California, and a large concourse of persons assembled around the gallows, which was erected within sight of the town. Attended by two priests, the criminals, who seemed perfectly indifferent to their fate—in fact many thought rather pleased at being the observed of all observers—were placed beneath the beam, and the cords finally adjusted by the pious fathers. At the signal, down came the platform, and with it the murderers; but, by some unaccountable fatality, both knots slipped, and with the exception of being a little “choky” in the face, they sustained no injury. In a moment one of the priests mounted a horse, and galloped to the Governor’s, urging a reprieve on the plea of a special dispensation of Providence—that the criminals had been hung once, and were consequently entitled to pardon. The philanthropic padre might better have saved his ride and breath, for Colonel Mason informed him, that in case these villains were not executed, Providence might interfere with the ropes for ever after, and moreover the sentence was to hang them until dead. Meanwhile the sheriff on the ground had replaced the halters with unslippable hitches, as he observed that they would receive “particular fits;” and soon after they were properly worked off, and swung, dangling, lifeless figures, within their timber frame. This event generated a feeling of bitter hostility on the part of the Catholic

clergy towards the local government, although generally conceded by the Catholics themselves to be entirely uncalled for and unreasonable.

On Saturday evenings, crowds of these degraded Indians, of both sexes, after laboring during the week, and feeding on locusts or grasshoppers, were accustomed to congregate on the outskirts of the town, where, with gaming and arguadiante, they were enabled to remain torpid all the following day. Their favorite amusement was a game called *escondido*—hide and seek—played with little sticks; and their skill was exerted by trying to discover in whose hands they were: seating themselves on the ground, around a huge blazing fire, separate parties were ranged on opposite sides; then beginning a low, wild chaunt, moving their bodies to and fro, groping with their hands within the serapas before them, until the perspiration starts in streams down their naked sides, after a strange succession of deep, harsh, guttural grunts and aspirations, they suddenly terminate their exertions by giving a sharp yell, and pointing to one of the opposite party, who, if rightly detected, pays forfeit. When one set of players becomes exhausted, others supply their places, and thus they keep it up the live-long night.

Among the Californians an agreeable pastime, much in vogue, is the *merendar*—Anglice, pic-nic. They are usually given on the patron saint’s day of some favorite señora or señorita, by their admirers. A secluded, pleasant spot is selected a few miles away from the presidio, where provisions, wine and music are collected beforehand; then each cavalier, with arm thrown affectionately around his sweetheart, on the saddle before him, seeks the rendezvous. Guitars and choral accompaniments soon are heard, and the *merenda* begins, and is kept up with the greatest possible fun and spirit: dancing, frolicking, drinking and love-making.

There are two or three singular dances of the country: one, called the *Son*, where a gentleman commences, by going through a solo part, to quick, rattling music, then waving a handkerchief to a damsel, who either pays the same compliment to another favored swain, or merely goes through a few steps, without relieving the first comer, who, in turn, is obliged to continue the performance until a lady takes pity for him. It not unfrequently happens, that when a particularly graceful girl is on the floor, making her little feet rapidly pat the ground, like castanets, to the inspiring music, that some enthusiastic *novio* will place his sombrero on her head, which can never be reclaimed without a handsome present in exchange. But, Heaven help us! the pranks and mischief indulged in on the return home; the tricks and tumbles, laughter and merriment; even the horses appear to enter into the play, and when a cluster of gay lads and lassies have jostled one another from the saddles, the waggish animals, fully appreciating the joke, stop of their own accord. The last affair of this kind I attended, was given by the best-hearted little fellow in the territory; and I am prepared to prove it—Señor Verde—he was an universal favorite, as well with old as young; for he was at different times taking a short *pasear* on every horse, laughing with the madres, and kissing the shy doncellas—*valgame dios*—but I had work in getting him into Monterey that night, for my cavallo carried weight—besides a big overgrown dame and myself, Verde hung on to the tail.

We were many weeks in Monterey, and I passed a large portion of leisure time either hunting with Juaquinito, or chatting and smoking during the afternoons with our excellent friends, the army men, at the Fort. But at last we began to tire of foggy mornings, damp nights, tough beef, lounging under the Consul's

piazza, sweltering dust, catching fleas, playing monté, and fandangos at Carmelo. The time was drawing near for our departure. The ships were provisioned and ready for service. Jack had become quite a soldier, and we consoled ourselves with the prospective excitement of a descent upon the Mexican coast.

CHAPTER XX.

WE sailed from Monterey on the 16th of October—rounded Point Piños, and, bidding a final adieu to Upper California, bore away to the southward: On the 25th, we found ourselves near Cape San Lucas, where, for three blessed days, we lay becalmed, all hands existing, as it were, in a warm bath of their own providing. The morning of the fourth, there came a breeze, and with it, under a cloud of canvas, one of our frigates, with the intelligence that she had bombarded Guaymas, and blown up the fortifications. No resistance had been made, and a corvette was left to guard a deserted town. It was certainly a severe instance of patriotism, where the Mexicans left their homes and property, choosing a precarious existence among the sterile mountains, rather than cry *peccavi!* to the Yankee banner.

Anchoring at San José, we learned that trouble was brewing on the Peninsula, and that some hundreds of men in arms were assembled at Todos Santos, a place on the seaside of Lower California, fifty miles distant. Nothing, certainly, was more preposterous than the forgetful policy of our Government, in expecting to hold two thousand miles of coast with a handful of men. The principal points on the Peninsula had already been occupied transiently by our forces; but notwithstanding proclamations had been issued, declaring the "Californias unalterably" annexed to the

United States, and that very many of the natives had warmly espoused our protection; yet the very moment the ships or force were withdrawn from a place, the disaffected patriots—and they were patriots—immediately sprang up, issued *pronunciamentos*, threatened foreign residents, and their own countrymen, who had befriended the invaders. As a consequence, the whole lower portion of the territory and the Peninsula were kept in a constant state of excitement and inquietude. Nor could we have reasonably expected aught else, without a respectable force to overawe them.

The second evening after our arrival, a small mounted party, of thirty muskets, from the flag ship, was ordered into the interior, to disperse the insurrectionists at Todos Santos. They had not been absent half a dozen hours, when a report was circulated, that a body of the enemy were lying in ambuscade on the route, to attack them. A great commotion ensued, and I was selected to proceed to the Mission and inquire into the truth of the rumor. Attended by our marine postmaster Richie, we procured horses on the beach, and after sliding over loose stones, winding around precipices, until quite dizzy at the narrow bridle paths, running full as much risk in losing our eyes by thorns of aloe or cactus, as our necks, in the darkness, by the precarious foothold of the beasts, we reached San José at midnight, and presented ourselves before the alcaldes. We found these worthies and their wives deeply immersed in *monté* and *cigarillos*. They were ignorant, as alcaldes universally are, of any treasonable rumors; but, on citing an old Indian woman and her son, who were the divining magicians of the place, we learned that, in truth, a number of evil-minded persons had been in town, tampering with those more peaceably disposed, in hopes of raising a sufficient force to cut

our little band to pieces. Upon concluding our inquisitorial proceedings, we returned to the ship. The next morning, news was brought from La Paz, a post some distance up the Gulf, and recently occupied by a company of the New York regiment under Lt. Col. Burton, that the disaffection had extended in every direction, and the Mexicans were resolved to make a last struggle for lost ground on the Peninsula. The same night we received more *violente extraordinarios*—break-neck expresses—stating that the little town near us was about to be invaded by the insurgents. There was so much truth in this, that a number of officers from the ships took to the road, “accoutred as they were,” and a very flimsy toilet some of them appeared in, on their five mile flight to the watering beach. Boats were armed, and companies detailed for service; but another violent extraordinary arrived, and for the time we remained passive. The next evening, a detachment of five-and-twenty marines left the ship for shore. We were a long time disembarking, as the surf was breaking ten feet high upon the open beach. Skirting along thickets around the town, we marched up a valley, through a deep sandy road, for more than two leagues, before reaching our destination. It was a little hamlet, called *cerrillos*, of miserable ranchos, lying upon the side of a hill, where we had hopes of meeting a party of *guerrillas*. Our arrangements were quickly made—men posted—pieces cocked—the houses summoned successively—but, alas! for our anticipations of a skrimmage, the birds had flown some hours before, leaving but a few old people and children in the place. I was sadly disappointed, for I had an extremely perilous path to explore in getting to my station—no more nor less than charging, full leap, through a large corral of sheep and cattle—with half a dozen fixed bayonets close at my heels—the bullocks

jumping right and left, in great affright, and I expecting every instant some rampant bull ahead to toss me into the air, or a sharp bayonet to stick me in the rear; nor did I feel relieved, until the muzzle of my carbine struck the door of the rancho, and I found breath to cry, halt! to the party. After a deal of praying and screeching, from the shrill throats of women and children, the door fell, and, by the glare of a flickering torch, an old lady tremblingly approached, with a baby in each arm, crying, *Somos pobres, señor, ave purissima! no hay mas que esos! tome ud un niño, por el amor de Dios?*—we’re poor, but take a baby, for the love of God. We generously declined the good woman’s kindness, and succeeded in allaying her alarm, by the assurance that we were in search of men, and not infants. Truly, it has a tendency to jar one’s nerves, this storming a person’s house with armed men in the dead of the night.

We had a dreadfully fatiguing march back, and had there not been many rivulets to quench thirst, some of us would have been thoroughly exhausted. Entering the town at eight o’clock, we learned with surprise, that the friends whom we went in search of had been making night hideous in the village itself, and only decamped towards daylight on our approach.

A few days succeeding our arrival, the ships were busily employed watering. In the southern arm of the bay is a small cove, partially sheltered from heavy surf by a jutting reef of rocks, where, during the rainy season, is the mouth of a mountain-torrent; then, the stream was not visible, but on digging a little way below the sandy bed, pure delightful water bubbled up, filtered through miles of coarse gravel. The large boats anchored a few yards from the strand, and the men amused themselves by swimming the casks off when filled. Nearly the whole population

of the Mission assembled there at daylight, offering fruit, vegetables, and other articles for traffic. Lots of girls and women were there, all far better dressed, and more comely than those we had been gazing upon so long in Upper California. I devoted my time to an old lady and two daughters, who had pitched a tent near by, and opened a shop for the sale of milk and eggs. Of the two damsels my adoration was the younger—Eugenia—a charming little brunette, who shared my dinner, and, by way of a frolic, cunningly squeezed lime-juice in my mouth when asleep. This style of existence quite enchanted us; and what with sucking oranges, dozing in the welcome shade, and bathing half the time in the water,—we fancied it somewhat resembled the pleasant life in the South Sea Islands.

One of the roads, from the watering ravine to San José, had much the appearance of an alley through a flower-garden: the foliage blazing in bloom, with a plentiful display of blossoming aloes and cactus, shooting up into the air like Grecian columns; many of the latter twenty inches in diameter. The town stands in a pretty valley, with red, sterile mountains toppling around it. One broad street courses between two rows of cane and mud-built dwellings, thatched with straw, having shady verandahs in front, constructed of frameworks of canes and leaves, answering very well to screen the burning rays of the sun, which sheds light and heat, with the force of a compound blow-pipe. At the upper end of the avenue, standing on a slight, though abrupt, elevation from the valley behind, was the *cuartel*, a small building, which at a later period was the scene of a gallant stand and siege, where a mere handful of our sailors and marines bravely repulsed twenty times their number of Mexicans.

Within sight of the village is a shallow, rapid brook, which

serves to irrigate many well-tilled plantations about the suburbs. The people were kind, and particularly hospitable, always welcoming us with the utmost cordiality. We usually dined at the house of an old Chinaman, who was a miracle of a cook, and dished us up beneath the shade—plover, curlew, wild ducks, and olives without stint—with which, and chatting, smoking, lounging from house to house, and *siesta*, we got through the hours pleasantly. On one afternoon, having somewhat soiled my outer man, in leaping into a puddle instead of over it, my newly-discovered sweetheart washed my trowsers and shirt, whilst I dozed away on a low cot frame, upon which was tightly drawn a tanned sheet of leather—and a capital, cool, comfortable apparatus it is in warm weather. We generally returned to the ships by night, as the unsettled state of the neighboring country rendered it impossible to remain; so, after rewarding pretty Eugenia with my handkerchief for her trouble, I turned my steps for the last time on San José.

The expedition that started for Todos Santos on our arrival, and for which serious uneasiness was beginning to be entertained, got safely back on the seventh day. They found a dull, barren region to traverse, and were not repaid by a sight of the guerrillas, who had all decamped for a rallying point near La Paz.

In consequence of the earnest solicitations made by the simple inhabitants of San José, for a small force to protect them from their brethren in arms, who were not so favorably disposed towards the North Americans, it was deemed advisable to comply with the request, and a detachment of twenty marines, a nine-pounder carronade, with four officers, under command of Lieut. Charles Heywood, U. S. N., were detailed for the service, and the next day occupied the town.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAZATLAN lies in latitude $23^{\circ} 12' N$. verging on the tropic, flanked by a broad belt, ten leagues wide, of the *Tierra Caliente*, with the lofty mountains that support the elevated terraces and grand plateau of the interior plainly visible in the background. The town is built upon a triangular space formed by three hills at the angles, the apex a bluff promontory, extending seaward, and beyond two small islets, barely divided from the frowning helmet of Creston. These salient points form together a bold, rocky partition, which with another parallel barrier to the eastward, breaks off the ocean swell, sufficiently to admit of a secure anchorage from all but southerly winds. This is called the New Port. Right and left of the town are curving sandy beaches; the one abreast the New Port, protected by a sand-bar, that incloses a safe haven for small vessels; then further, a wide *estero*, or inlet, runs inland, following the bend of the coast for sixty miles to the southward; while one channel branches away to the west, encircles Mazatlan, and passing some miles in a line with the sea, is only prevented from again meeting the ocean by a narrow strip of marsh and sand. To the right of the town commences a small patch of sand called *Olas Altas*, whereon some of the best buildings are situated; beyond is an abrupt dome-like elevation; and then farther still, is a narrow inden-

tation, formerly used as the Puerto Viejo; when the beach continues in a gentle curve, as far as the eye can reach, up the gulf, to the northward

In the year 1830, Mazatlan was a miserable Indian fishing village; but owing to its advantageous position in affording a better harbor, and fresh water, than existed for large vessels north of Acapulco—its facilities for communication with the rich mining districts of Zacatécas, Durango and Culiacan, besides the market opened in the populous provinces bordering upon the Pacific, it soon increased in magnitude to a fine thriving little city of ten thousand inhabitants, and became the most important commercial point on the continent north of the equator.

Sailing from the Bay of San José, in company with the frigate Congress, and corvette Cyane, we crossed the Californian Gulf, and made the land on the afternoon of November 11th. The sea breeze set in late, and the sun was down upon arriving at the Venados Islands. The ships were together, and having each a position assigned, the Independence passed ahead, and standing boldly in, anchored abreast the *Olas Altas* beach, within half musket-shot of the shore. The Congress came to anchor in the old port, commanding the old road and garita, while the Cyane brought her guns to bear upon the eastern face of the town, from the new anchorage.

All remained quiet during the night on shore; the boats of the squadron were gotten in the water; batteries in fighting order; guns cast loose and trained; besides whole hail-storms of round shot, shells, grape, and divers other sorts of deadly pyrotechny, piled in stacks and racks, around the decks, all ready at a moment's warning to knock the town to dust. At sunrise a flag of truce was sent to summon the authorities. The Commandante

Telles, in consequence of fatigue caused by galloping about the place, and brandy, did not appear, but delegated his officials to inform the American cartel, that he could not reconcile with it his honor to receive our officers, and to inform El Señor Comodore that he saw no necessity for surrendering Mazatlan, but the same time he should retire to his camp at the Palos Prietos, beyond the environs, where he would await the ruthless invaders.

Four hours were given for deliberation; we were told subsequently, that they anticipated four weeks, with the privilege of breaking off negotiations at the end of that period. Before the time had expired, the companies for landing were ready in the boats, and the artillery awaiting the stroke of the bell to begin the ball; but presently there came alongside a dapper little personage, with intelligence that the Mexican troops had entirely deserted the town, and no resistance would be offered by the inhabitants. After all the trouble we were a little disappointed, and even Uncle Ben Bunker, our worthy gunner, was quite exasperated, being obliged to stow away his fire-works, and secure the guns, for a more remote occasion.

The flotilla of twenty-nine boats had assembled around the flag ship, and, headed by the Comodore, we pulled between Creston and the Main, and made for the mole. Not a bayonet was visible. A concourse of persons lined the beach, who merely gratified their curiosity by scowling upon us, as the boats came to land and emptied their loads. In ten minutes our flag was flying over the town, and twenty-one guns saluted it from the Independence. Field-pieces were then disembarked, placed in position, the men wheeled into column, the band struck up, and away we marched through Mazatlan. The house-tops

were crowded with veiled faces; but upon so slight an acquaintance we found difficulty in putting in even a wink, except at rare intervals. We reached the Cuartel, a large square building for barracks and citadel, situated on a slight eminence in rear of the town, and commanding the main roads to the interior. The sailors and marines were soon quartered, guns planted, and all preparations made to resist an attack. Three hundred were detailed for garrison, and the remainder sent on board. From appearances, the Mexicans had departed with great precipitation, leaving many of their accoutrements, some hundred stand of rifles and muskets, saddles, and a few pieces of artillery. Their whole force was about eight hundred, more than half regulars, and had they chosen to stand their ground, we should have suffered severely, although not perhaps repulsed. Telles and his troops were posted a league up the road, near the forest of Palos Prietos, and it was stated that his intention was to assault us; but we experienced no alarm on that score, feeling assured that, after relinquishing all their advantages in position, they could have no further wish to retake them.

The first few days we were occupied making reconnoissances in the neighborhood. Two positions were selected for fortifications: the one, a steep hill, overlooking the estero; and the other, a lower eminence, entirely guarding the main and only approach for cavalry by land to the port. This was the Garita. Between these two points, in former times, a line had been marked out, faced by a broad and deep ditch, intended to connect the western branch of the inlet with the sea, thus cutting the town entirely off from the main land; but the excavation had only been completed as far as the Garita road, leaving, however, but a narrow causeway open.

Heavy ordnance, long twenty-four pounders, with carriages and wheels, mortars, and lighter guns, were brought ashore from the ships; and as they were drawn through the streets, by the stout arms and shouts of hundreds of sailors, the inhabitants fairly looked astounded. In a short time these heavy monsters were staring, with their dark cavernous mouths, from the esplanade of the Cuartel. Picks, shovels and barrows went briskly to work; ditches, walls and parapets were commenced, and went on unceasingly for many months.

Previous to our coming, a great number of the more respectable residents had retired to their estates, or the towns in the vicinity; but upon finding that the North Americans were not such outrageous invaders as they had been led to believe, gradually these families returned to their homes in Mazatlan. Meanwhile, a military and civil Governor and Lieutenant Governor* had been appointed, and an *ayuntamiento* called from among the citizens, with commissioners on our side, to arrange preliminaries for the municipal administration of the town. This proved to be a matter of very difficult adjustment. The *junta* were averse to removing the *alcobala*—a tax levied upon provisions and produce entering the gates—at all times a burdensome and unequal extortion, falling upon the poor: this was at last yielded, and it, of course, became a very popular measure, although with little real benefit; for the producers themselves were compelled to suffer severely from the rapacity of their own troops outside. The President of the Council was Señor Créspe, a very respectable, honest person; and could he have been induced to fill the post, saving a few illiberal ideas and fears of compromising himself with

* The last named appointment was ably filled by Lieut. Halleck, of U. S. Engineers, who, from his military and scientific knowledge, was of the greatest assistance to the expedition.

his former friends outside, all would have gone on smoothly; but he refused to serve, and Señores Pelaiz and Leon were appointed to preside over the civil tribunals. This caused dissatisfaction, as neither had a surplus of moral character to boast of; but as the commodity was scarce, the judgeships would have remained vacant a long while, before more suitable selections could have been found among the Mexicans. Nevertheless, the policy pursued by us became popular with all classes, and there were but few exceptions to the general wish, that our flag might float over them forever. What tended in a great measure to revive confidence among the wealthier inhabitants, was our manner of conducting business at the custom house. The scale of duties, as exhibited by the Secretary of the Treasury, was modified to suit this market, and, in the absence of all bribery and corruption, it restored a certain harmony of association among the merchants, which, necessarily, was interrupted by the Mexican policy of holding out inducements for every trader to undersell his neighbor; when all were constantly intriguing with the government *empleados* to get their cargoes through the customs, at a lower mark than usual. This system was done away with, trade was thrown upon an assured basis, and it consequently encouraged a more friendly intercourse. As a single instance of the rapacity and extortion practiced by the Mazatlanese authorities displaced by us, there were five-and-twenty officials employed within the custom house; and of a yearly revenue averaging nearly a million of dollars, not a rial ever went to the general government. In the first place, the Mexican tariff was frequently so heavy as to amount to prohibition, and to save time and the risk of smuggling, it was only necessary to throw a third or fourth of the duties into the commandante's or collector's hands, who, in

turn, made a smaller distribution to the cormorants beneath them. Telles had it in his power to have laid by half a million of money, but it all went like water through his fingers, and he fled as poor as he began.

There were no restrictions placed upon the liberties or pleasures of the people. They had justice by their own laws. We preserved order. Patrols and police parties perambulated the town night and day. After *oracion* had tolled, no person was permitted to enter or leave the Garita until sunrise, without the risk of a bullet in his body! for sentinels were doubled at night, and mounted pickets guarded the great ditch towards the *estero*. No arms were permitted to be carried by citizens, and both gentlemen and *paisanos* were obliged to leave them, upon entering the town, at the Garita.

There was but one church in Mazatlan, for the people are not piously inclined, and one Padre was all we ever saw; and him the girls called Father Windmill. The only good public edifice is the *Duana*. The houses generally are of one story, built of bricks, or adobies, and plastered over; but all the wealthy residents have fine, cool and spacious dwellings, with flat roofs, which command pleasant views of the sea and environs. The streets are wide, having trottoirs, tolerably well paved and lighted. There are two small plazas, many very handsome shops, cafés and *sociedades*. Altogether, we found ourselves in a modern little city, and much nearer civilization than in the mushroom settlements of California.

The climate is very warm in the morning, though tempered by cooling breezes from the ocean towards afternoon. After the summer rains have passed, much sickness prevails, owing to the

malaria that is generated from the wet, marshy plains and lagoons around the town. Congestive fevers and agues are then quite common, and the wealthier orders retire to the high lands of the interior.