

CHAPTER XXII.

THE Mexicans remained encamped but three days at Palos Prietos, when, leaving strong posts of cavalry to blockade the roads, and intercept communication with the town, they retired to the Presidio of Mazatlan—a place eight leagues beyond—where they went into quarters. As yet they had committed no hostile acts, except making a bonfire of a number of their own launches, and small craft, that had been carried for safety up the Estero, to prevent them falling into Yankee hands. We could see the gay pennons of their lances constantly with the spy-glasses; and by this time having acquired a slight idea of the topography of the immediate suburbs, we began to extend our scouts further beyond the lines.

The skirmishing commenced on the 18th. With fifty men, we left the Cuartel at midnight; pursued a path parallel with the beach, and after resting some hours in ditches, and nearly devoured by musquitos, at break of day found ourselves a league from the garrison. Soon after, we discovered a body of forty horsemen moving along the road in direction of the town. We were obliged to break cover, and run smartly to a hedge that fringed the road, in hopes of intercepting their retreat, and were of necessity soon exposed to view. The lancers wheeled to reconnoiter, and then came on at a trot. We blazed away

with the muskets, when they increased their speed, until on reaching a thicket, they halted and returned the fire from their escopetas. This continued some time, the balls knocking the dust up in little puffs, but too far distant to do any damage, when hearing the sharp pinging song of a bullet, I turned my head and beheld a verdant reefer, with a cutlass strapped around his waist, one hand in his pocket, and the other scratching his cheek. "Hillo!" quoth I; "what's the matter?"—"Nothing but these musquitos," he replied, and continued attentively regarding the flashes from the bushes. While this little fusilade was going on, we espied two officers, who had probably ventured too far in advance of their troop, and were entirely cut off from the main body; we hailed them to surrender, but, without heeding the summons, they behaved quite coolly; moved slowly towards where a dozen muskets were gazing at them, and where they were obliged to pass an angle of the road, when having availed themselves of the last chance of even a leaf of shelter, with one arm clasping the horses' necks, they half swung from the saddles, and made a desperate rush to pass us. A hail-storm of balls and buck-shot rained around them; the horses plunged, evidently hit, and the hindmost rider fell from his seat, still clinging to the saddle, but the speed of the animals soon bore them to their companions and shelter. We afterwards learned that they had lost one killed and five wounded. Pursuit was useless, our heels being less nimble than horses, so we formed and returned to the barracks.

The night following this adventure we were out again, about three hours past midnight, with a single attendant, I became separated from my party, and after getting bewildered among swamps and thickets, just as day was breaking we reached

the beach. All right now, we thought, and trudging stoutly over the sand, we suddenly came full upon a Mexican picket. We dropped as if shot. It was early dawn, and we were not discovered. They were sitting on their horses, behind a little hillock, with the butts of their long lances resting on the ground; and for my part I already, in imagination, felt one, half through me; they were anxiously peering about, and we were certain that the first movement on our side would be attended with inevitable capture, with melancholy thoughts of perspective dinners on frijoles and paper cigars. So we remained quietly lying on the sand, until presently one exclaimed, with much emphasis, *compadre, no hay Yankis! corramos*—there are no Yankees, let us be off. A moment later, there was heard a sharp rattle of musketry, soon followed by a volley; uttering loud curses, they gave spur, covered us with dust as they galloped by, and disappeared in the woods. Regaining our feet once more, we plunged waist deep through a lagoon, crossed fields and fences, and reaching the main road, devoted all our energies to our legs. A mile of this healthful exercise exhausted our powers, and we paused for breath; but the troubles apparently were not ended. A party of horsemen came dashing along the road in our wake; running was out of the question, there was no more run left in us, so with a cocked carbine and pistol we stood the result. Our fears were groundless, however; and, upon seeing ladies in the troop, we took courage, and advanced to meet them. It was a Spanish family, returning from Rosario, who falling accidentally between the firing of the skirmishing parties, were nearly frightened out of their wits; indeed, one of the ladies had fainted, and been left at a rancho by the roadside, until a litter could be sent from town. They were not more rejoiced at having us for an escort

than we were to avail ourselves of their protection, and we all jogged bravely into Mazatlan. Our fellows returned soon after, having made a few prizes of arms, saddles, and camp equipage, but did no bodily harm to the enemy, who, as before, had fled.

On the night of the 19th, a plan was matured for surprising a body of infantry under command of a Swiss, the former captain of the port, named Carlos Horn; our spies reported his position in the small hamlet of Urias, about seven miles up estero. A hundred men, with a small field-piece, took the main road, while half this number were to embark in boats, pass beyond the Mexican post, land, and march down to meet the shore party.

We left the ships at midnight, and with muffled oars pulled silently up the river. On passing the hamlet, we saw the gleam of camp fires, and the cry of their sentinels arose, shrill and clear in the still night, *alerto! alerto!* The oars dipped noiselessly in the water, and, continuing up the estuary, we soon came to the spot indicated by our guides. Scarcely had the men formed on the beach, when we heard, first a few dropping shots, and then volley upon volley, from our friends to the left. After groping about some time to find the road, the guide discovered that he had mistaken the landing, and we accordingly reëmbarked. By this time, the firing from the shore party had ceased, and all was again quiet. Beneath the deep shade of overhanging foliage that fringed the banks of the estero, the boats were carefully pushed down the stream, until a narrow opening in the bushes gave a clear view of the broad level *marisma*, and we found ourselves directly in front of the village itself, with fires and lights flashing in all directions. Without attracting attention, the boats were cautiously drawn within the thickets, the sailors forming,

and lying down upon the sand. We were close to the Mexicans—their sentinels not twenty yards distant, and every word they uttered distinctly audible. Presently a body of horsemen came clattering over the hard beach. *Quien es!* sang out the guard. *Carlos!* said the watchword, and then began an angry altercation: “Why did you fly from those cursed Yankees, when you knew they were approaching?” *Porque mi Coronel, los Americanos rompieron el fuego contra la avanzada—y habia balazos aqui, y alla, y que podia hacer yo?* rejoined the speaker—They fired upon our advance, and the bullets were flying so thick, that, what could I do? “Where are they now?” said the Colonel. “Oh! they have retreated to Mazatlan again.” *Loco!*—you’re a fool—said the Colonel, with much disgust; “they’re only awaiting daylight, to be upon us—is all quiet at the water?” *Si Señor,* not a soul has passed. “Then let the men fall in, and go through their exercise.” It was about three o’clock; their men formed in ranks; horses were led out, and the troopers mounted; officers began drilling their companies, encouraging them to stand firm, and the Yankees would certainly be cut to pieces. Nothing was heard or seen, for an hour, but the heavy thud! thud! of the ramrods in loading, and glancing of sabres and small arms. During all their proceedings we remained motionless. By-and-bye the first grey streaks of dawn came slowly over the eastern hills—still we did not stir—the men, however, were becoming a little nervous, from resting so long in one position; and occasionally, the clink of a bayonet or noise of accoutrements striking together were audible; and just as the day was bursting forth, like a flash, as it does only in the tropics, a Mexican soldier, on duty nearly at our elbows—and who, by the way, disturbed our repose during the night by a bad cough, and talking

to himself—discovered us, and sung out, *Aquí está hombres!*—these were the last words he spoke—the signal was given along our ranks, “rise!—take aim—fire low.” As the smoke rolled upward, we saw a number of saddles emptied, and the *marisma* strewn with dead and wounded; although taken completely by surprise, the Mexicans were not as yet intimidated, and, shouting *viva Mexico!* they immediately gave us a heavy fire from carbines and escopetas; but our sailors had kneeled to load, and the leaden shower passed over. The firing lasted for some minutes, when the word was given to charge! Away we splashed over the *marisma*—their horsemen broke and fled, dragging off dead and wounded—the infantry did not make up their minds until the bayonets were nearly upon them, when they, too, dropped their muskets and plunged into the chapparal. Meanwhile the shore party was approaching, and had commenced a fusilade upon the advance post of the Mexicans, and very much to our relief, after putting them to flight, the cheers of our friends greeted us, for the field-piece was pitching shot far beyond the enemy, and a few stand of grape had already fallen about our heels. Sending small bodies into the thickets, we drove the discomfited troops to the hills, and then finding their cavalry had rallied up the road, pursued them a mile, exchanged a few shots, when, the field-piece coming up, they finally made good their retreat.

Returning to the hamlet, we collected a few articles of camp equipage—mules, horses, and arms; then digging a pit in the sand, we laid the corpses of the slain within, covered them decently over, and erecting a rude cross, put on our hats and retired. There was a vile old virago standing in the door of a rude rancho, who, during the whole skirmish, never for a moment ceased to curse *los demonios Yankees*; and although the walls of the house

were thickly spattered with bullets, she escaped unhurt; not so her comely daughter, who was grazed on the cheek. Our own force suffered pretty severely: one killed and twenty-two wounded, of whom two afterwards died. The Mexicans we learned had lost nine killed and eighteen badly wounded. These little affairs are capital sport during the flurry and excitement of action, amid the cheering and firing, noise and confusion; but when the fun is over, and the surgeons are busied with bandages and blood—pallid faces, splintered bones, streaming gun-shot wounds around—and, perhaps, a pair of lifeless legs dangling outside the carts near by—the scene presents a more gloomy aspect.

Placing the disabled in boats we began our march towards the port. Through the kindness of Mr. Canova, who filled the office of First Lieutenant to our company, I transformed myself into a dragoon, my friend having stumbled upon a black charger, ready equipped, which he placed at my disposal: moreover, I was somewhat bruised from the blow of a spent escopeta ball, that during the *melée* had struck me under the arm, knocking me over into the water, as if—as was strongly surmised by my friends—a jackass had kicked me. However, this was scandal, industriously circulated by the Lieutenant-Governor, who was himself sorely disappointed in not getting hit, after untiring exertions amid the thickest of the skirmish. Nevertheless, I lost a cutlass by the operation, and thought it no robbery to draw a long toledo-like weapon from the belt of a dead Mexican, which, with the image of his patron saint, and a bundle of cigarillos, amply repaid me for my bruises.

Some months later, in a conversation with the officer who commanded at Urias, he informed us that he had been aware of our coming from the merchants in town, and had requested reinforce-

ments from Telles, which, however, was not attended to; and a body of eighty cavalry, who had been detailed to charge the shore party, fled without discharging a carbine. He spared no abuse on the cowardice of his officers, but very highly praised the conduct of the soldiers.

We reached Mazatlan at noon. The day after, Telles marched to Urias, with his whole force and artillery; but, hearing a report that the Americans were coming to attack him with *bombas*, retreated the same day to Castillo, where he again encamped.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MONTH had elapsed since the occupation of Mazatlan, and we had all been busily employed upon the fortifications, and in acquiring a little knowledge of our new duties on shore: we dropped the sailor and assumed the soldier; forgot all about rigging and ships; talked of roll-calls, reveillés, parades, counter-signs, drills, sections, ditches, and parapets; the officers of the day, too, appeared in red silk sashes round the waist, with swords at their sides—sat in guard-rooms—sung out, “Sergeant, let that man pass,” or, “Corporal, let the fatigue parties fall in”—quite like generals of division. I had only been a week in barracks, at the Cuartel, and getting initiated in the mysteries of soldiership, when, the fever making sad havoc among our ranks, I was ordered to relieve the company stationed at the Garita, where the illness had been unusually severe. The position was a conical eminence, within three hundred yards of the sea beach, nearly surrounded by lagoons, and entirely commanding the main road to the port. The hill was originally owned by a gentleman, who, after building a decent little balconied dwelling thereon, for a summer retreat, eventually had the satisfaction of removing his family thence, in carts, to the more wholesome air of the town. In consequence of its unhealthy situation, caused by miasma that arose from the stagnant pools below, it was not considered a desirable post, not-

withstanding its pretty location; and I may as well add, that out of one hundred and seven officers and men who had been stationed there, I was the sole individual that was not taken ill with fever during the six months of our stay. Previous to my occupation, an energetic brother officer had already raised a breast-high stone wall, and three guns had been planted in battery. It was a place of much importance, and an equal degree of annoyance; for we were obliged, with a small force of thirty men, to be extremely vigilant, and were kept chattering, from morn until night, in examining hundreds who were passing to and from the port. The house was filled with fleas, too, whose attacks were far more troublesome than the Mexicans; however, after a hard war of six weeks, constantly deluging the floors with salt water, they migrated in a body, and we were never again molested. Workmen came, re-plastered and washed the walls, repaired windows and doors, restored cook-house and stable, so that in the end we found ourselves more pleasantly quartered than in any other position in town, and had no wish to leave. At the same time large working parties were detailed daily from the main barracks, who were employed digging a deep, wide ditch, throwing up an embankment, and raising a heavy stone wall immediately around what the peasantry designated our *casa blanca*—white house.

During this period the military force outside committed robberies unceasingly. A few miles beyond our lines the roads were strongly guarded during the day, but at night were left open—the lancers and cavalry retiring beyond our reach. Our force was too small to occupy the roads permanently, without imprudently weakening the garrison of the town; consequently, those thieving gentry, under the name of *alcobala*, levied tribute in the most impartial manner, upon all their poor countrymen

alike. We had frequently gone out in small ambuscading parties in hopes of picking off a few of the ladrons, but without any success. Scarcely a single individual out of hundreds who passed the Garita but had some bitter curses to lavish upon the *lanceros*; even the poor women occasionally were mulcted in their petticoats, until at last they all became exasperated, and many volunteered to conduct us to the retreats of their tormentors. The services of one brave paisano were called into requisition, who had been robbed of his hogs, which being valuable property among the peasantry, and his revenge being warm, we thought he could be trusted, and indeed a staunch and valuable ally he ever afterwards proved. The expedition was under command of Captain Luigi, and with fifty-five men we left the Cuartel, without beat of drum, at nine in the evening. Leaving the main road at the Marisma, we entered a pathway, closely sheltered by trees and foliage, and after two hours rapid marching, halted at a cluster of ranchos by the roadside. Here we could only learn that the Mexican cavalry had passed by at sunset; but during an examination of one of the huts, we laid violent hands upon a rude squint-eyed youth, who though half naked, and apparently stupid, had a bag of dollars tied up in the tail of his shirt; him we interrogated with a bayonet at his throat, and there were sufficient symptoms of intelligence in him left to assure us that if he himself were not attached to the party we sought, he knew the bivouac. With a *riata* around his neck, and carefully guarded, we again advanced. Four miles beyond, we reached the encampment; it was situated in a flat little meadow, a few feet lower than the road, and girdled nearly around by the gully of a water-course that hemmed it in on all sides. Our march had been so silent as not to create alarm, and strange to say there was not a sentinel awake. Embers of the

watch-fires gave sufficient light to distinguish the sleeping figures of the troops, with horses picketed near. We divided our forces into two parties, one commanding the pathway to the meadow, whilst the other poured in a deadly fire, and immediately charged across the ravine. Taken completely by surprise, they jumped up in great consternation, and in their flight received the bullets from our remaining muskets; before we could reload they were flying, like so many ghosts, across the field, leaving everything behind. On gaining the bivouac, we found it quite a picturesque little glade, shaded by lofty forest-trees, and beneath, were a number of bough-built huts, verging on the rivulet that crossed the road. We counted eight dead bodies: one poor youth was breathing his last. By the fitful light of a torch I tore open a bale of linen at hand, passed some thick folds over the welling blood of his wounds, placed a drop of brandy to his lips, and left him to die. They were sixty in number, and we captured all they had—carbines, lances, ammunition, horses, saddles, and clothing, besides their private correspondence.

There was one incident connected with this *escaramuza*, which was a source of deep regret to us. The wife and daughter of the commanding officer had, very imprudently, been on a visit to the encampment. When the attack commenced, they were sleeping in a hut, and immediately fled; but the child, a little girl of ten years, had been grazed by a ball in the foot, and told her mother the pebbles hurt her feet; the kind but unfortunate woman ran back, in the thickest of the fire, for the child's shoes, and, upon returning, received a mortal wound in the throat. She was found by her friends, and died the following day—

“O! femme c'est a tort qu'on vous nomme timide,
A la voix de vos cœurs vous êtes intrepide.”

Loading our men with such articles as could be conveniently transported, we burned or destroyed a large quantity of arms, munitions and merchandize, and then began our march towards the port. Such a motley throng as we presented! Some were laden, from the muzzles of their muskets down to their heels, with every possible variety of trumpery—bridles, sabres, flags, serapas, and even women's clothing; others, mounted on several saddles, one a-top the other, with bundles of lances and fluttering pennons secured to their horses. Our trusty guide, in lieu of the purloined swine, had heaped bale upon bale on his horse and individual person, until he appeared, in the midst of his plunder, as if seated on a camel: our gallant captain had contented himself with a key bugle, and a capacious uniform frock-coat, some sizes too large for him: I did better—for, coming upon the dead body of an officer, I removed a silver-bound saddle from his head, which, with silver-mounted bridle, handsome sabre, and a few other articles, I appropriated to myself. Indeed, I have never since wondered at the rage one feels for abstracting an enemies' goods and chattels on similar occasions—such an itching, too, beyond mere curiosity, to search people's pockets, that, in a few more guerilla excursions, I felt confident of becoming as good a free-booter as ever drew a sword. Three months after this affair, I became great friends with a Mexican officer to whom some of these equipments belonged. He assured me there had been six golden ounces concealed in the saddle, which I readily believed; for the leather-man, who renovated it in the port, remained oblivious six weeks after completing his task. Love-letters, miniature, and commission, I returned to my friend; but the handsome sabre—on the blade of which is engraved, *No me saques sin ras: r, no me*

embañes sin honor—Draw me not without cause, nor sheathe without honor—and saddle, I have retained, trusting that El Teniente Lira will acquit me of any other motive than that of possessing some trifling souvenir of our first meeting at Sigueras.

We reached Mazatlan at daylight, and after arresting two members of the municipal junta, who were occupying a seat in the council, and who, while expressing much sympathy for the Yankees, had written detailed accounts of the distribution and strength of the garrison, I retired to my cool cot at the Garita, and indulged in sleep.

Donning habiliments again towards evening, I mounted my horse, and in riding to the plaza, had the happiness to make the acquaintance of the fair wife of Telles, who was *en route* for the Presidio. Agreeably to request, I accompanied herself and suite beyond the Garita, when she informed me that her liege lord was highly indebted for allowing his weekly supply of cogniac to pass—because good liquids were rarely met with at headquarters—but that I would be doing him a service by retaining a large amount of dunning billets, that passed through my hands to his address. Promising to comply with the Colonel's wishes, I bid his lady adieu; but I am sorry to add, that politeness to the graceful señora was the innocent cause of my losing a beautiful horse; for it was quite dark on reaching the port, and instead of going where I originally intended, I paused a moment at the bowling alley, where, meeting some officers of a British frigate, I gave the bridle to a *lepero* to hold, and passed into the building; but scarcely had we crossed the threshold, when, startled by the report of fire-arms, we all rushed out, and found the poor animal raining blood from a bullet in the throat. The villain of a *lepero*

had shot him with a pistol from the holsters. A group of kind-hearted young reefers did their best to staunch the blood, and one little fellow even tied his trowsers around the wound; but all was unavailing, and in ten minutes my spirited blooded bay was dead. Oh! Mr. Smithers! you keep a good ten-pin alley, sing a good song, and your wife prepares good chocolate; you are, together, good fellows; but you should never, O! Smithers! transform your establishment into a knacker's yard. And you, my cruel *lepero!* had I ever got a sight of you along that weapon you handled so well—ah! I well nigh wept for sorrow that night, and did not recover my spirits for a fortnight.

The *escaramuza* at Sigüeros was the means of keeping the roads free for a few days; but in a fortnight the Mexicans had again taken position, and though falling back some distance, were yet enabled to cut off all communication with Mazatlan. The paisanos, as usual, complained sadly, and asked protection. Accordingly, an expedition was planned, under the guidance of a diminutive ranchero, who, after tracing paths and diagrams on paper without end, in hopes his individual services could be dispensed with, at last determined, with many misgivings, to lead the way to his habitation, where a troop of lancers were wont to enjoy themselves upon his bounty.

Early in the evening a battalion of an hundred marines left the garrison, but had barely been gone an hour, when a lot of frightened old women rushed to the Cuartel, and swore that a large body of troops were landing from the estero, for the purpose of sacking the town. Rub-a-dub, rolled the drums—the walls were manned—and rockets went fizzing and bursting in the air, for assistance from the ships. Meanwhile, I was despatched, with a small party, to inquire into the truth of the rumor. After making

a thorough examination along the river, and searing the last breath out of a poor fisherman, dying with fever, we were convinced the report was merely a ruse, a sort of counter-irritant, attempted by the town's people to alarm the troops outside, and call back our men. The marines had marched by the beach; and at midnight, with thirty muskets, I took the main route, and lay in ambush at the cross of the Culiacan and Presidio roads, for the purpose of intercepting the enemy's retreat, in case they fled towards headquarters at San Sebastian. For nine hours we were nearly flayed alive by muskitoes, and only recompensed for the torture by detaining some hundreds of people and their beasts. It was quite diverting to observe a simple pedestrian, stepping jauntily along, whistling blithely away—as the natives always do when travelling alone by night—when a look-out, perched high upon an overhanging branch, would utter a sharp *hist!* the traveller would falter, and perhaps thinking his fears had misled him, again pass on, and while faintly resuming his chirrup, another energetic summons would quite startle him, and ten to one but down he would fall, crossing his breast, and ejaculating a pious *ave purissima!* A tap on the shoulder would direct them in the thickets, where, squatting on the ground, they never thought of moving until permission was granted. Just at daylight, a stout brown *muchacha* came tripping by, and unconscious of our close proximity, seated herself on a rock, and unfolding a little bundle, began to comb her locks and attire in a gala dress, either for the Sunday mass, or to create a sensation upon entering the port. After carefully arranging the *camiseta*, and whilst in the act of throwing, as a woman only can do, her *basquina*—a worsted petticoat—over the shoulders, one of my ungallant scamps hit her a smart rap with a pebble. Giving one terrified scream, and

uttering a prayer to the Virgin, she dashed up the road; but, encumbered by loose drapery, soon measured her length, in the most ludicrous plight, upon the sand. We assisted her to rise, and perceiving our lurking-place, she laughed heartily, after indulging the gay sailor fellow who threw the stone with a specimen of the sinews in her stout arms. The women were, almost invariably, the vehicles for transmitting information concerning our designs in town, to their friends outside; among our multi-form duties at the Garita was that of opening all correspondence and perusing the contents. It was surprising how shrewd and accurate were many of their surmises, and the tender regard they still evinced for their forlorn lovers—at least on paper; and such imploring billets, too, from the banished *caballeros*, for their faithless *amantes* to join their fortunes in the camp, to rid themselves of the hateful Yankees. Yet with all their coquetry they still did their best to shield their former friends from danger, and so cunningly, too, as to be difficult of detection. On a certain night, while visiting the sentinels at the road, a negress came from the town, and in reply to the hail, as was customary with the natives, replied, *norte Americano!* On being told no one could pass before sunrise, she retraced her steps, and in attempting to steal past by another path, came near being shot, notwithstanding her cries of *norte Americano!* Upon making a third effort some hours later, my suspicions were aroused, and as we were desirous of preventing all egress at the time, to my shame be it said, I ordered her searched. Nothing was discovered, and to repay her for the indignity she had experienced, I gave her a kindly and paternal pat on the wool—there was the object of our search! a little crumpled bit of paper, on which was scrawled, *a la carrera, entre dos luces, los gringos!*—be off: the Yankees will be upon

you at daylight! But neither threats nor entreaties could induce the black courier to betray the writer.

Finding no signs of the Mexicans, we marched back to Mazatlan at noon. The marines shortly followed, having surprised the *lanceros*, and taken a number of horses, arms and prisoners. But a damp was thrown over the affair, by their bringing in the body of our little *ranchero* friend, Madariaga, who was accidentally killed during the fray. Poor fellow! he was intelligent, and we drank out of the same cup. The day after, while riding through the town, I saw tapers burning in a house, and upon entering, there was stretched the corpse—still in his bloody vestments—a bullet had entered behind one ear, and passed out at the other. A crucifix reposed upon the breast, whilst a common flat-iron lay on the stomach. Near by, his sister was gazing mournfully at the blue, pinched face, while close behind her stood an inhuman virago, anathematizing him from all the saints in the calendar, for having been a *traidor y espia de los compatriotas*—spy upon his countrymen. The Mexicans asserted that he had been deliberately assassinated, and rejoiced that he had received a worthy recompense for his traitorous conduct.

CHAPTER XXIV

TOWARDS the close of the year we had become quite domesticated in the town, and habituated to our new duties: the dullness that ensued upon the occupation had changed into animation, business, and bustle; the port was thickening with merchant-ships and coasters, and duties were rapidly rolling into the Yankee treasury; the merchants themselves had entered into arrangements with the Mexican officials outside, and the staple export of the province—logwood—came in on the backs of hundreds of mules daily, to fill the homeward-bound vessels for Europe. The laborious task of the garrison still went on, much to the disgust of Jack, who swore ditching and hod carrying was no part of a sailor's duty. The fever still continued, in a milder form; but few new cases ensued, although those who convalesced almost invariably relapsed, and were never entirely cured until going again upon salt water. The townspeople began to look less gloomily upon their invaders, and the men were not averse to finger Uncle Sam's cash; and the women, bless their sweet, forgiving souls, sought the main plaza in the afternoons, arrayed in tastefully flowing robes, and graceful *ribosas*, whilst their surprisingly diminutive feet beat time to the music from our bands.

Nor were they chary of flashing glances, or murmured salutations; and in the calm nights, when pianos and harps were disturbing the still air, it was not regarded as a novelty to behold a few blue-jackets, spinning around in dance and waltz at the fandangos, or, as the more tonnish were termed, *bayles*.

The native society of Mazatlan cannot certainly boast of a very elevated tone of morality. Indeed I have good authority for asserting that there were not fifty legitimately married couples in the town—rather a small proportion for ten thousand inhabitants: perhaps the marriage formula is considered a bore, and since even the rite within pale of the church is not so religiously respected as elsewhere, it appears unreasonable that they should place any legal check upon their domestic felicity. Still this system of *relatione*, as so generally practised in Mazatlan, appeared to work well, and we never heard of lawsuits for children. Occasionally, it is true, a jealous master would thrust a *cuchillo* into the tender bosom of his spouse; but what of that—it was *costumbre del pais*; however, these were the exceptions.

Among the lower orders, the women were invariably gifted with amiable dispositions, natural in manner, never peevish or petulant, requiring but little, and never happier than when moving night after night in the slow measure of their national dances. Even the men were not bad-tempered, though beyond comparison the laziest and most ignorant set of vagabonds the world produces. They were a quiet people also, never so far forgetting their natal sloth, as to go through the exertion of making a noise. Even their knife encounters were conducted with a certain show of dignity and decorum. For example, at the *esquina* of some street is a group of *leperos*—gentlemen throughout the Republic of Mexico, enjoying the same moral attributes as Neapolitan

Lazzaroni;—their property at all times on their backs, and residences precarious; they are playing monté on a coarse blanket or *serapa* laid upon the ground; one accuses another of cheating, and at the same time twits him with the most deadly insult a Spaniard can offer, possibly because it is so near the truth: *tu eres cornudo*; true or false, his antagonist calls on all the saints to bear witness to his innocence, springs to his feet, twists a serapa around the left arm, and, before one can say Jack Robinson, their keen blades are playing in quick, rapid passes, seldom giving over until deep and sometimes fatal stabs are interchanged; but if not seriously hurt they drink a cup of agudiente together, light cigarillos, and continue the game until another quarrel arises. These little passages of arms were of hourly occurrence, and the severest regulations were not sufficient to repress the evil, although there never was a solitary instance, during our stay, where a quarrel had arisen between the townspeople and the garrison. I chanced to be an eye-witness to one of these street skirmishes one evening, near the *Sociedad*. A fellow received a perpendicular cut, which severed nearly half the scalp, and the entire ear, leaving the mass hanging down the neck, like a flap to a pocket-book; it was properly dressed by a skilful surgeon, and the man was about again in six days. Indeed the climate was most efficacious for wounds, and remarkable and most extraordinary cures were said to be effected; two of a serious nature came under our observation. The first, a sailor-sergeant, who, while returning from his rounds, and walking up the Garita hill, not replying to the sentinel's hail from above, in a sufficiently loud tone of voice, received a musket-ball in his right breast, which wounded the lung, and passed out of the back, below the shoulder-blade: the case was aggravated by a severe

and lengthened attack of fever, but the man eventually recovered, and was entirely restored to health and strength. The second instance was a young Mexican officer, named Soriano, who was shot by a rifle-bullet at Urias, transversely through the breast, beneath the ribs. After suffering some months, under a quack, he was brought to Mazatlan, where he was successfully treated by one of our surgeons, with every prospect of speedy recovery.

Of late, we had had no guerillas worth mentioning, and were amusing ourselves by drilling a troop of sailors into dragoons; and truly it was a matter of as much satisfaction as mirth, to see how well the seamen accomplished their task; of course, it was great sport for them, but naturally fearless, and all well mounted, they soon were taught to dash recklessly at anything, from a stone wall to the fire from a battery, and in due course of time, became, for a sudden burst, quite equal to any Mexican emergency that chose to stand the brunt of a charge. We never had the opportunity of testing their cavalryship, but I think they would have made a creditable report of themselves. They were commanded by Captain Luigi, and at intervals I had the satisfaction of accompanying his troop on short excursions into the interior. One night we took a flying gallop down to Urias. On the way thither, over the level marismas, the Captain's charger plunged into a hole and the whole left file vaulted, or trampled, over him, but, as usual, he escaped with the loss of a little parchment from the visage, while the horse had a broken shoulder. On nearing the vicinity of our former *escaramuza*, I passed ahead with four men, and found the prize we sought, in a Mexican soldier, who proved to be the orderly-sergeant of General Urrea, the Governor of Durango. Our prisoner was quite taciturn at first, but on the assurance that he would certainly be hung the following morning,

and after profuse libations of *muscal*—a country liquor—he opened his mouth and confidence, informing us that he had left an escort at the Presidio, and when taken was awaiting some effects belonging to his master, from the port, to be carried to Durango. At daylight, the articles were seized; but, owing to the fact that some innocent persons were drawn into the transaction, the Governor good-naturedly signed passports for the whole party, including the soldier; although his master, the General, bore no enviable reputation, for the cruelties he had perpetrated upon American prisoners on the other side of the continent.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE new year dawned upon us, and January and February passed rapidly away. The popularity of the Mexican Commandante, Telles, was waning fast. A number of his own officers had pronounced against him—but this, with a few effective followers, was speedily put down, and the leader shot. However, a strong force from Culiacan was raised by the powerful family of Vegas, the legitimate Governor of Sonora—and from whom Telles had wrested the command of Mazatlan—in conjunction with a body of three hundred troops, under one Romero, from the opposite extreme of the province Tepic, and resolved to gain the ascendancy by destroying our blockaders. Upon the approach of these bodies, Telles' troops refused to fight against their countrymen, and nothing was left for their old captain but to succumb to circumstances; these ups and downs, however, being not uncommon in Mexico, the chagrin attending the disgrace is not taken seriously to heart. After a week's intrigue and negotiations, finding his enemies implacable, he resigned his authority, was then betrayed, arrested, sent to Guadalajara under a guard, where he shortly afterwards expired. His case excited much sympathy, for he bore the reputation of being brave and generous, lavishing all he received upon the treacherous friends about him, who flattered and cheated, until adversity stalked in, when away flew