

the gay birds who had made him their prey. One of these gentry did me the honor to present himself late one night at the Garita, claiming parole as a deserter from the Mexicans. He had been chief of the staff and cavalry, bore the name of *compadre*—adviser and rascal-in-general to Telles—but having had the sagacity to cram his filthy pockets with fifty thousand wheels of fortune, of course had no further wish to remain. He pointed out all the weak positions, avenues of attack, and general information concerning the force of the outsiders—more, I was convinced, to vent his spite on those whom he had already betrayed, than from regard to us. On parting, the gallant major favored me with a note of introduction to one of his lady-loves, coming from the interior, and remarked, with a pecuniary sigh, that when commanding my little post he never made less than a thousand pesos a month. It was upon the Mexican system—where the strong steal from the weak: but here was my captain of battalion, Mr. Mitch and myself—with all the trouble of guarding, examining, quarelling, and at times beating, hundreds of *paisanos* daily, and devil the *centavo* could we ever extort; on the contrary, our exchequer was at a deplorably low ebb, so much so that we were scandalously accused of playing *monté* for *quartillos*—fippennybits;—and we discussed the alternative of taking to the road, robbing a *conducta* of mules laden with money, or remaining in the port until peace should be declared, inciting a *pronunciamento*, and declaring ourselves commandantes of the province.

The united force of the Mexicans who had assembled in Rosario, amounted to one thousand, three hundred of which were cavalry, and seven pieces of artillery. They talked bravely of driving the Yankees on board the ships, and were constantly drilling and exercising their troops and guns. Vegas' proclamations were

clear and business-like; he established an internal *duana*, or custom house; declared a specified and moderate scale of duties—having the sense to perceive that soldiers must be fed, and although rich himself, he had no inclination for playing commissary at his own expense—and besought the merchants of the port to send their merchandize to the interior. All these warlike preparations caused us neither alarm nor trepidation. Our works were near completion, and we had twenty-six guns mounted, besides the additional security of some small hulks, moored at a ford of the estero, mounting a battery of Paixhans. The garrison had been slightly increased, and, altogether, we felt confident of holding the port against any odds. The merchants, however, were as yet shy of trusting their valuable property within reach of Mexican rapacity, and consequently, the troops were beginning to find themselves somewhat embarrassed. The commanders quarrelled, and Végas himself, being heartily disgusted, forthwith fell back, with troops and artillery, towards Culiacan, leaving a fourth part of his force, under charge of Romero—a miscreant, who had the reputation of assassinating his own colonel, at the storming of Chapultepec, for a beltfull of doubloons. Being thus left without the means of doing us any injury, they pursued the same annoying process as their brethren before them, by robbing their own countrymen, under the odious *alcobala*.

During all this time we never for a moment ceased keeping up a rigid discipline, and exercising the utmost vigilance; the severest punishment was impartially meted to all offenders;—and our knowledge of the topography of the country, for some miles round, being quite equal to the Mexicans', they had good reason to keep beyond our limits. At rare intervals, indiscreet persons would try to run the gauntlet into town, and one dark night, three

troopers, not seeing our guard, attempted to steal in by the beach: one was astounded, on not halting at the hail, at receiving a bullet through the shoulder, and they then turned bridles, leaving us a brass-bound hat and lance, as keepsakes. Indeed, once we came nigh peppering our own patrol; fortunately, but one ball only flew over Captain Luigi's head. It may have been a peculiarity of some of our sailor sentinels, that, at night, they immersed themselves breast deep in little pits, resting their muskets upon mounds of sand in front, at a dead aim upon whoever advanced along the roads. I do not know if this kind of tactics be tolerated by Regulation; but Jack, in his ignorance of minute detail, had to place reliance on his eyes.

Once, after hearing the report of a musket, I inquired of the sentry the cause. "Sir," said he, "the chap wouldn't stop, so I hailed him in the very best Spanish, and then fired; there he lies kickin', up the road, sir!" It turned out to be an innocent stray jackass, a bad linguist, who could only converse in his mother tongue. However, these little incidents convinced our neighbors that security did not throw us off our guard.

We still worked hard at the Garita—deepening the ditch—filling up embrasures, and raising the walls. It was fatiguing labor, for the heavy stone had to be wheeled from the base of the hill. Already strong frames of timber had been erected at angles in the walls, where three twelve-pounder short guns moved on quadrants, overlooking the parapet, and sweeping the hill in every part, while, near the centre of the little fortress, a beautiful long brass nine traversed on a circle, that could throw the iron messengers two miles over the plains below. The sides of the building facing the lagoons were planked up, enclosing spacious piazzas, and sheltering the men from nightly malaria borne along by the

land winds. The men were obliged to keep their quarters perfectly clean, and they slept comfortably in hammocks suspended from beams above. Everything went on regularly—they had long since given up bad habits of drunkenness—and out of the entire company, but two drew their allowance of spirits. Four old dames came with the early dawn, bringing coffee and chocolate, which they exchanged for surplus rations and the privilege of washing Jack's clothes. Liberty was occasionally granted to visit the port, and every day two or more were gunning around the lagoons, keeping the post supplied with quantities of delicious wild ducks and curlew, and, when the moon was full, numbers of terrapins. We had strict inspection, morning and evening. At nightfall, sentries were doubled on the hill and roads—the guard set—guns primed—matches lighted—and everything ready at a moment's notice. I am thus minute in describing these unimportant details about the Garita, for it was my first, and most probably, will be my last attempt at soldiership. Besides being a great source of pride and pleasure, it was the spot where I have passed many happy hours. Indeed, it was the only decent or habitable post pertaining to the garrison; and I deem it not amiss to state, that, had a twentieth portion of the quarter million of dollars collected by us through the customs, been judiciously expended in restoring the old Cuartel, and providing a few necessary comforts the sailors required, it would in a measure have repaid them for toils and hardships on ship and shore, where they were necessarily obliged to undergo many expenses, in a service apart from the line of their duty. And furthermore, a due regard to their personal comfort might have been the means of reducing the medical estimates, and at the same time, of saving many a poor fellow, whose bones now moulder beneath the sod. But notwithstanding

these drawbacks, it was gratifying to the officers who commanded them, to know, that, even amid the novelty of their position, they reflected credit on their country, and left an excellent impression behind them, among the Mexicans themselves.

Many of the officers who had been detailed for service at the Garita, were eventually obliged, on the score of health, to leave for more healthy posts; and in the end, Mr. Mitch and myself were the only ones left. Our quarters were immediately over the men, in a large square apartment, the ceiling taking the angle of the roof; two balconied windows faced the sea; another overlooked the port and estero, while a large, roomy piazza commanded a wide and extensive view of the surrounding plains, dotted by fields and ranchos, with a high wall of mountains in the back ground. When in the town the heat was almost insupportable; in our *casa blanca* it was never in the least degree oppressive. We always slept under a blanket, in white canvas cots, swinging from the rafters, curtained off by bunting. Bathing was our chief delight, and the green waves well nigh broke at the base of the hill, where we played in the foaming surf for hours each day. We had breakfast brought from the French hotel in the town, which incident happened about eleven o'clock, on a table screened off in the piazza. Coffee we sipped, with a spoonful of cogniac, before the morning's bath, to drive away the malaria. So we drank light bordeaux with the meal, and when nice fruit passed the Garita, made a selection, in lieu of the abolished alcobala.

Ah, dear Mitch, those were pleasant days! And do you ever recall our pleasant little suppers by night—our cosy confabs—our sage reflections—quiet moralizings and speculations upon the reverses of fortune, after an interview with Don Manuel—and our schemes for reform Ah, my boy, those bright days have

vanished. Then came the afternoon's *pasear*, with a troop of officers, or the good hospitable merchants of the port—showy horses, jingling trappings, coursing and capering along the sea-road;—to the plaza again in time for music, with a bow, or smile, as the case might be, to some gracefully-robed, tiny-footed doña; then a few prancing *vuelitas* to show off, around the square, when we gave spur for dinner.

Just without the range of our guns was a ranchito, owning for its mistress a jolly dame, named Madre Maria; it was not for her that we occasionally extended our evening's ride, but for a half-uttered *adios! Capitan!* from the pearly teeth of little Juanita. I believe there never was so much dirt and beauty combined. She was the sweetest mite imaginable, and of a style to have destroyed Murillo's slumbers. Then pretty Juana suffered from *calenturas*—fever and ague,—and I at times carried a little phial of quinine, and felt Juana's pulse and temples, but the jolly patrona would shake her head roguishly, and exclaim, jestingly,—*No es possible, Señor Chato, sin matrimonio*—you can't make love without marriage. *Ah! pico largo*, I would reply, *con razon, pero llama vd el padre Molino*—certainly, so send for Father Windmill. We had a private code of signals with Maria, to hang a "banner on the outward walls," in shape of a white petticoat, whenever the Mexican troops came within hail. She mortally detested them, for they made too free with her hen-roost, and muscal bottles; and on her weekly pilgrimages to the port, seated on a quiet mule, with pretty Juana behind, attired in her holiday dress, and Jesusita, the youngest and most diminutive piece of womanhood, tripping along the road beside them, they would pay us a visit at the *casa blanca*, with some little present, of eggs or fruit; and the brave old lady would invariably

beseech us for a loaded carbine *para fusilar los ladrones*—to shoot the scamps. Once I saw the signal with the spyglass, and attended by a friend rode out to the rancho; but it was a false alarm, caused by an old white horse standing lazily behind the pickets. We found the group of Maria and daughters washing in the lagoon, nearly all in dishabille: Juanita with naught but a flimsy *chemisetta*, not a ceinture around the little waist, revealing the most adorable *juste-milieu* form—between the bud and the rose—with rich masses of dark hair covering her shoulders, and rivalling in beauty the splendor of her eyes. I drove the old lady into the pond, for which indecorous behavior she launched a calibash of wet clothes at my head, then snatching up little Jesusa, just four years old, I bore her to the beach for a dip in the surf. “How rich you are,” said the little creature, as I commenced disrobing. “Why?”—“Because you wear stockings.” And this, indeed, is one of the distinctive marks of wealth among the lower orders throughout Mexico.

It not unfrequently happened, that reports were circulated, without much foundation, that the troops outside were about to attack the post, and as a consequence the timid farmers living in the environs became alarmed, and would send their families to seek shelter within the fort. At times we would be gratified with fifty or sixty women and children visitors, huddled together quite contented and merry about the piazzas. They had learned to place full reliance upon their invaders, and whatever course we adopted was looked upon as the only correct and proper mode of acting. While testing the range of our guns one morning, a carronade was accidentally discharged, and a stand of grape-shot struck the lagoon below, dashing a shower of spray over a group of old crones washing on the banks. I immediately ran down to see if

they were wounded, but I found them quite cool, and even surprised that I should have surmised such a thing. “Why?” said I. *Porque, Capitan, usted es capaz para qualquiera cosa*—because you Yankees have sense for everything.

On Sundays our receptions were more select; then the élite of Mazatlan extended their promenades around the works of the garrison, and would be induced to ascend the hill, and sip dulces or *italia* at our quarters in the *casa blanca*. The gentlemen would glance over the newspapers detailing revolutions or *pronunciamentos* in the interior, when casting up their eyes, with a simultaneous puff of cigar smoke, would exclaim—*Ay! pobre Mexico!* and one had the sense to observe, that the war was death to Mexicans, but life to Mexico. But of one fact no logic could convince them—that our worthy collector of the Duana returned all he received to the government—so wonderful a dispensation, that an honest *administrador* could be found in any position was entirely beyond their comprehension. The ladies were generally very curious and inquisitive, and after affording all the information we possessed, relating to domestic economy and dress, once a pair of lovely señoras, after mature reflection, apparently having made up their minds, favored me in this strain: “Without doubt, you North Americans are very good people, and you don’t beat your wives; but then you don’t know how to lavish money on ladies like our own countrymen!” But I interposed—“We feel obliged to pay our debts, and then pleasure afterwards.” “*Bah que importa,*” said they; “all we know is, that where you Yankees give a dollar, our people shower gold.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

Soon after the occupation of Mazatlan, I made the acquaintance of a young Mexican girl, of a respectable family in Guadaluajara, who had eloped with her lover, an officer stationed in this province. She was better educated, far more intelligent than the generality of her countrywomen, and with all the graceful, winning ways, peculiar to Creoles. She was living with an old relative, in a cottage near the skirts of the town, and I frequently sought her society, listened to the low, sweet *cançioncitas* of her native land, or, seated beneath the shade of a spreading tree in the inner *patio*, she would recite by the hour old legendary redondillas and ballads of Mexico, while her servant played with the sweeping masses of her jet-black hair: she was very proud of it, and often told me, that when she became poor, it would serve her for a *mantilla*. She had soft feminine features, pale complexion, lighted by large, languid, dark eyes. She was a tall and slender girl, but with the smallest feet I ever beheld. This was Dolores. Her mind appeared to partake of the mournful signification of her name, and, even during her gayest moments, she was always tinged with sadness. Poor Lola! she was thinking of her lover, who had left with the troops on our coming.

Returning one morning from a fatiguing night skirmish, the servant Tomasa met me on the road, and placed a note in my

hand from her mistress. It was simply a desire to see me. Without going to the quarters, I turned my horse's head towards the town, and soon dismounted at the house. The old aunt received me with some agitation, and I could see the shadow of Dolores reflected from an inner room. *Que hay Señor? Nada, una escaramuza, no mas! Y muertos? Quien sabe! puede ser un oficial de ustedes.*—What's the news? Nothing but a skirmish. Any killed? Yes, perhaps one of your officers. At this reply, Dolores entered the chamber, and with a quick low voice, asked, "and the color of his horse, señor? white!" She burst into tears, and sank to the floor. I afterwards learned that it was her lover, who, however, had only been slightly wounded. He had been in the habit of entering the port disguised as an *arriero*, and was expected on the morning alluded to. Had I known what he was capable of doing at a later day, he might have lost the number of his mess, instead of receiving a buckshot in the leg.

From this period, poor Dolores became more and more triste and depressed. She never was seen again in the plaza—the music had lost its charm—her books were thrown aside, and she would hardly mingle in conversation. Some weeks went by, and duty claiming all my time, I had not called for many days. Late one night, Tomasa came running to the Garita, and with breathless haste, told me that her mistress was very ill, and wished to see me. A few minutes' gallop took me to the door. The old lady was weeping, and poor Lola was lying upon a low couch, with blood slowly frothing from her lips—but I thought there was a gleam of pleasure in her eyes. She had burst a bloodvessel—at least I imagined so at the time, and I instantly despatched a boy on my horse for a surgeon. In the sequel I discovered the cause

Tomasa informed me, she had heard the Señora scream, and upon entering the room, found her lying insensible on the ground, deluged in blood, and on coming to, she had begged her to say nothing, but send for me. The fact was, that her lover had again stolen into town, and whether from idle jealousy, or natural brutality of disposition, had the dastardly cruelty to beat the poor unresisting girl, with the hilt of a pistol, until she fell lifeless from heavy blows showered upon her breast and shoulders. This was fully shown by the post-mortem examination. The miscreant fled, and many an hour of sound sleep he cost me, in hopes of getting a glimpse of him along the tube of a rifle.

At the time, there was a chance of recovery; and daily, after the hemorrhage ceased, I sat by her bed-side, and tried to encourage her with anticipations of returning health. *No! no! me voy á morir*—It is all useless, I am going to die!—counting with her thin fingers—“in three weeks! *Ay de mi!* for one last sight of my native land.” Sometimes I would read to her a Spanish translation of Sue’s *Mysteries of Paris*, and she never tired of saying of Fleur de Marie, *Pobrecita! que dolor!*—Poor thing! what sufferings! She was gradually sinking, but still her spirits rose, and her big black eyes became more and more luminous. It was sorrowful, indeed, to see a young girl, so beautiful and bright, just bidding adieu to life.

She had the best medical attendance, but another hemorrhage ensued, and the lamp of life was fading fast. At last, Tomasa came for me: *Dios de mi alma! la Señora se está moriendo*—My mistress is dying. I found the sick chamber filled with women, and a priest, while a number of tapers threw a strong light upon the nearly breathless sufferer. The padre soon accomplished his drawing work—a crucifix was pressed to her pallid lips—the bed

and floor sprinkled with holy water—a hasty *avé* was muttered, and they then withdrew. Fortunately, a sister had arrived a few days previously, and it was a great consolation to the dying girl. I drew near, and seated myself at the couch. She placed her limp little hand in mine—told her sister to sever a tress from her hair when she was dead—and drawing a ring from her finger, smiled faintly, saying, *acuerdese de mi amistad*—remember me kindly. An hour passed, and I was forced to leave—indeed, while every breath came fluttering to the lips, weaker and weaker—I could not bear to see the last—I whispered *adios*, kissed her pale forehead, and went away.

She expired just at midnight. During the whole period of her illness, she never once murmured a reproach against her lover, but left him a blessing when she died. If such beautiful devotion has not heaped coals of fire on his head, he is less than man.

The night following her decease, I was seated on a tombstone in the little cemetery near the port, when my eye was attracted by a flickering torch, and advancing, I met the corpse. We made five in all. The grave was open, and we lowered her gently down. All was still, save the convulsive sobs of Mañuela, and the rolling earth falling upon the coffin—the dew sparkled by the reflection of the blazing torch—the work was done—light extinguished, and mourners gone. Alas! poor Dolores! I have preserved your tress and ring, and time has not yet erased the remembrance of your love and sufferings from a stranger’s breast.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WE could not boast of an opera, or any grand theatrical displays in Mazatlan; but yet our sailor-troops, as sailors always do when unemployed, had contrived a Thespian corps, and weekly representations were given, by stout tars in whiskers and petticoats—and once a grand tableau in commemoration of Stockton's victories at La Mesa. There was a pretty theatre in town, where a little ranting was done, and there was the usual Sunday resort in the cock-pit, where a deal of dollars changed hands, but the greatest spectacle of any was in the arena, where we were favored by brilliant feats of horsemanship, by Mr. Bill Foley, of Circo Olimpico notoriety, in conjunction with his "ingin-rubber boy." He was a useful, amusing vagabond, who had passed more than half his life in Mexico, and went by the savage title of *El tigre del norte*. The Tiger, upon the claims of national relationship, applied for the office of collector to the port, but not being successful, he deigned to accept the high position of forage master to the troop, but whether owing to his prompt method of settling accounts, or the sphere not being sufficiently enlarged for his abilities, he threw up the commission in disgust, declaring his countrymen were the "ungratefulest people in the world," and again devoted his talents to dress, love, monté, and the arena. The last accounts of Bill, he was starring it away like a planet

in the interior of Chili. May bright dollars attend thee, Bill, in whatsoever portion of the globe thy destiny directs thee.

Added to these public *divertimientos*, there were the *societads*, where the necessary aliment of Mexican existence was in constant operation. This was monté—our usual resort was that of the gran sociedad, conducted by Don Manuel Carbia;—he was a diminutive old Spaniard, very shrewd and intelligent, and among his numerous occupations was that of a proprietor of launches, keeper of an almacén of ship chandlery on the Mole, divers pulperias, billiard-tables, restaurateur, and pawnbroker in general. Señor Carbo, as our beloved Colonel Jacobus called him, was never seen without a cigar between his teeth; it acted as a kind of safety valve to his vital organs, and it was strongly surmised that if he ever discontinued, for an interval of five minutes, he would inevitably choke to death. Seated behind the long green baize-covered table, with his implements of cards and dollars around him, the very chink of the coin lighted up his dark visage, like to a fresh cigar. He merely played for amusement—so he said—and although he amused himself considerably at our expense, yet we had no grounds for just complaint; he played, *bueno como caballero*—fair and above board,—and if we lost our cash, it was in striving to win his. Once if my memory serves me aright, when mounted on the *caballo*—the picture of a horse on Spanish cards—I kicked Don Manuel so severely, that his teeth chattered like a pair of castanets—but this did not often occur.

There was another odd character, who kept a *casa de bebida*, near the Cuartel, where the officers sometimes touched in passing. No one knew what nation claimed him as a subject—he was a fat mottled-visaged Boniface, whom the Mexicans—as they always nick-name every one—had christened the "Golden Toad." The

toad played melodiously on the flute, supposed to be a mild restorative to soothe the sorrows consequent upon the unfortunate state of his domestic relations.

The carnival was not carried on with much spirit, nor was Lent regarded with the same pious severity as in other Catholic countries. The Mazatlanese are not a pious people; there were, to be sure, a few processions, and fire-works, accompanied by a wooden piece of artillery, discharging salvos of sugar-plums, with nightly fandangos, but this was all.

Our intercourse and diversions were not restricted to native society, for we also enjoyed a pleasant association with foreign residents. The circle of our own countrymen was limited—the Consul, good Doctor Bevans—who gave us a grand feast on leaving,—and the Anglo-American house of Mott & Talbot. From all of these gentlemen we experienced the utmost civility; but to Mr. Mott and his amiable lady we stand indebted for many and repeated acts of kindness and hospitality, that never can be too gratefully remembered.

Not only in Mazatlan but all over the world, the great firm of “Mynheer and Company” chase the dollars with as keen a scent as the Yankees; and there is not a nook, however remote, where these thriving Germans are not filling their sacks, but still their thirst for gold does not prevent the pleasures of “faderland” from being re-enacted in their far-away homes. There was one jolly Belgian there—a large, handsome, jovial blade, ever on the vive for fun or punch,—his house, like himself, was lofty and capacious, with a cellar over the way, where one might wish to live until it became dry. And the Hern Hutter, too. Will eye of thine, my pleasant friends, ever glance at this tribute to your virtues? Let us recal those delightful evenings. Old Jack’s

oysters, and, mein gott! that delicious arrack—when shall we ever taste the like again?—with the piano tinkling, and the rich sonorous voice of portly Hausen chanting the solemn *avé purissima* until the very paving-stones rattled, and the lovely lips of his pretty wife were held in a painful state of wide-mouthed laughter. Where art thou, O! Hern Hutter! dost remember Piny and Luigi, even until the matins were tolling, when we mounted our steeds—your own the famous piebald charger—and never checked rein, until tumbling in the sparkling surf upon the sands?

Besides these warm-hearted fellows, there was another to whom my heart still yearns, and no time can ever banish the love I bear him. He was the beau-ideal of a John Bull—burly, surly, brave, obstinate, and strong in his likings or dislikings. We met at first, neither in a pleasant mood; I was the aggrieved person, for he permitted me to mistake him for a Mexican, and talk bad Spanish half an hour, when he coolly broke ground in Anglo-Saxon. But time removed first impressions, and in his little cottage by the shore, at his generous board, and in fact in very many ways he loaded me with favors and hospitalities, which I shall always recur to as among my brightest recollections of the past. And truly it is not in great cities, or teeming ports, where merchants are seen to social advantage; it is in out-of-the-way spots—far, far away—when least expected, that the traveller finds warm hearts and firm friends—and none more so than in Mazatlan.

I was a daily guest of Don Guillermo’s, at the cottage. Dinner over, and a rubber at whist, I usually strolled about the town—peeped in at the fandangos—perhaps a shy at monté—thence to arrack—music, jolly Hausen, and so home to my quarters. Though a sort of *vaut-rien* existence, still it was one quite

in consonance with my tastes, and since I am not at all competent for a clerkship, if any of my former friends can employ me as a smuggler, or in any other nautical and honest pursuit, I shall be most happy to comply with their terms.

For a short period, these my amusements were unpleasantly interrupted, and came within an ace of being finally closed in eternity. Sitting one night, in a moralizing mood, by my friend, Mr. Mitch, during a pause in conversation, we were startled by the long rolling sound of the drums, beating the alarm from the Cuartel. The sentries shouted from the walls, for the men to get under arms, and snatching up hat and pistols, we rushed out. The night was quite dark, with thick fog; besides, I was nearly blinded from a lighted room; and mistaking the stairs by a few inches, I walked off the piazza—a height of fourteen feet—falling, most fortunately, between three men coming out from below, with fixed bayonets, and escaped being impaled, by a slight wound in the wrist. I was picked up insensible, and my companion thought even burnt brandy would prove unavailing. However, on coming to, and being duly jerked about the legs and arms, no bones being fractured, I was found whole, with the exception of some severe contusions in legs, back and head. After all the row, the *generale* was only beaten by way of precaution. For some days I was confined to my cot, without being able to move, consoled, however, by lots of agreeable visitors—bottles of liniment—good cigars—alleviated by the sympathies of an admirable young nurse. There I was, reposing “in ordinary,” swinging backwards and forwards. From one window I could see green plains and lagoons stretching away to the distant hills; and from the balconies, long strings of mules, with their cargoes, and could hear the shrill whistles and cries of the arrieros, urging the perverse brutes in either

direction. The borders, too, of the lagoons were dotted with groups of women and children washing; and whenever I took a too long glance through the telescope, at some brown half nude figure, I was sure to attract the attention of my black-eyed nurse, who cunningly would place her finger before the lens. I always chose the mornings to study or write, when the clear, cool sea-breeze was beginning to fan the polished surface of the water, as the swell rolled rippling on in gentle undulations towards the beach—while swarms of pelicans sailed sluggishly along, until sighting their prey, when, with a dart like a flash, they parted the waves in concentric circles around, and rested contentedly on the water, packing away the little fishes in their capacious pouches. Then, if our little house-keeper was docile, and not mimicking the Colonel, for she detested the sight of a book, I would draw the table to my cot, and enjoy an hour's tranquillity. But when, later in the day, the breeze began to roughen the sea into light caps of foam, causing the waves to break heavily upon the shore, then the windows began to struggle and slam, books and papers to whirl across the room, until I was glad to put by everything, and say, *amigita canta*—sing, my little friend. She would purse up her roguish lips in mimic affectation, and then, in a lively strain, begin some provincial ditty—

“En la Esquina de casa,
Un oficial mi habló.”

Yet there are no alleviations that can recompense a person of active habits for being laid up, even in lavender. In a few days I was able to sit a horse, and soon after, perfectly restored.

Thieving and pilfering were practised among the lower orders, in an almost equal degree to knife combats. Leperos are thieves and liars by profession, and their coarse serapas serves to conceal

all their peccadillos. The Spectator tells us, that in the days of Charles II, a rascal of any eminence could not be found under forty. In Mazatlan they were more precocious. Eating, sleeping and drinking, they could easily dispense with, for a handful of beans and the open air was an economical mode of life, and cost little or nothing: but a few rials were absolutely indispensable to game with on feast days; and as the Leperos, as a body, are not fond of work, they exercised their ingenuity in appropriating property of others. I had escaped their depredations so long, that I fancied there was nothing worth filching in my possession, or innocently supposed there was some kind of freemasonry established between us. However, I was soon undeceived. One morning, according to custom, Miss Rita made her usual call, attended by some gay friends, and all attired in their prettiest robes and ribosas:—"Would I read an anonymous billet in verse?" *Si Señorita.* "You are appointed *Teniente de la tripa,*"—a ball given annually by the butchers. "Then, would I meet her at the grand fandango in the marisma?" Of course. "*Pues hasta la noche amigo mio!*" and away they tripped down the hill in high glee. In the evening after dinner at the cottage, in company with Señor Molinero, we strolled to the fields. A large marquée had been erected in the middle of the open space, and around were smaller affairs, with numerous booths, sparkling with lights, music and merriment. It was not a very select affair, and I took the precaution to loosen my sword in its sheath. Presently we entered into the spirit of the frolic, and were soon hand in hand with leperos and their sweethearts—sipping from every cup—whirling away in waltzes—dancing to the quick *jarabie*, and making ourselves particularly ridiculous when, presto! some expert thief snatched my sword blade from the scabbard. Search was instantly made,

but the successful lepero made good his prize, and escaped. The girls sympathized with me, and poor Rita cried, and, regardless of being vice-queen of the ball, insisted upon leaving—so bounding up before me on horseback, I landed her at her little cottage. The night was not half spent, so turning rein, I indulged my friend Señor Carbia with a hasty visit—not at all to his satisfaction, for the fickle goddess smiled upon me; but as a slight check to this good fortune, another watchful person had stolen a valuable pistol from my holsters while the horse was standing in the patio, with a man to guard him. At the time I would certainly have presented the ladron with my winnings for the pleasure of giving him the contents from the remaining weapon; but eventually I became more of a philosopher—was robbed at all times unmercifully, and looked upon it as a destiny. One of our good commissaries was also a sufferer. Being lodged in a small dwelling by himself, every few days he was regularly cleaned out of his wardrobe, and frequently obliged to fly trowerless to a neighbor's for a change of raiment. I once had the happiness to detect a youth in a petty act of larceny. Him I had carefully conveyed to the Garita, when the sailors made what they call a "spread eagle" of him, over the long gun. It was a summary process, and I sincerely believe, had a tendency to repress his rising predilections for the future.