

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN the month of March the first positive information relating to rumors of peace reached Mazatlan. It was agreeable news to a few former *empleados* of the customs and courts, all idle and disaffected vagabonds, but the majority of peaceably-disposed citizens and foreign residents were averse to our departure; they had so long been oppressed by Mexican misrule, intrigue, and extortion, that the law, order, and tolerant state of things existing under our sway, presented a too pleasing contrast not to sigh for a continuance of it.

One of the brothers, Vaso vil Vaso—gentlemen who stood deservedly high in public estimation—had been appointed Governor of the Province, and in defence of the conduct of his fellow-citizens who had remained, and accepted office in Mazatlan, he published a pamphlet in Guadalajara, giving a narrative of former grievances, with a truthful account of our proceedings; also speaking in high terms of commendation of the legality and justice that had characterised our policy since the occupation of the port.

The Mexican force outside evinced no disposition to molest us, and ere this we had discovered that it was time thrown away to pursue them: there was no fighting to be had, petty skirmishing was all that had been accomplished; want and desertion were

rapidly thinning their ranks; the commanders were at swords' points, and their only resources were derived from the miserable pittance extorted by the Alcobala—in fact, they were fast devouring one another. At this juncture, Vegas having withdrawn his guns and disbanded the troops in Culiacan, was threatened by Romero with an attack, in case the artillery was not sent back. For this piece of mutiny Romero was dismissed the army, and the military command of the province devolved on a respectable officer named Don Juan Pablo Anaya, who made his headquarters at the Presidio, with, however, but a mere handful of soldiers.

On the last day of March the official notification of the armistice was promulgated in the port. A few days previous, late in the afternoon, some arrieros informed me that a number of Mexican soldiers were collecting a little revenue, a short distance up the road, and then I perceived a signal flying from the rancho of Madre Maria. This was a heinous offence, to come within long range of our guns; so sending a small party by the beach, I rode out myself. We arrived a minute too late—the dust from their horses was just subsiding. The patrona was in a towering passion, said there had been a brace of officers, and four dragoons, making merry in the house; knocking the necks off poultry and bottles, and demanding toll from the paisanos. Juanita added, that one of the gentlemen had desired his *memorias* left at the Garita! a piece of politeness I was quite unprepared for. Returning to town, I forthwith went in quest of the Governor. He was afloat, nor was the Captain of the Cuartel to be found. What to do I knew not; it would have been a great breach of decorum not to repay the courtesies of my afternoon visitors, so I concluded to consult with a *compadre*. Towards

midnight I met Captain Luigi, who being in want of exercise, agreed to take the relief-patrol, and accompany me; the officers on duty, Mr. Baldwig and Earl, made up the party. Ten was our number, and the horses half wild with spirits. We had an inkling of the whereabouts of our *amigos*, as there was to be a grand fiesta on the morrow, some leagues up the Culiacan road, at the village of Venadillo; and as there was to be dancing and frolicking, it did not seem improbable that the Mexican advance-guard should bivouac in the neighborhood. There was a round white moon to light us, and away we leaped at a slapping pace towards the hamlet. A league this side we fell in with a couple of paisanos, one of whom not replying to our questions, with any due regard to truth, concerning the locale of the troops, was speedily forced to mount behind one of the patrol. In three bounds, he allowed himself to tumble to the ground, but having his intellect sharpened by a sound kick from the horse in the head, he then thought it advisable to cling on like wax; moreover, his fears induced him to tell a straight story, and we soon came in sight of the village. The entire place was filled with mules and jackasses, their loads of fruit, vegetables, and drinkables lying beside them, awaiting the great jollification of the succeeding day. In front of a large house, were seated on the ground some fifty or sixty curious persons, who, to save time, were attentively playing *monté*, on their *serapas*, lighted by paper lanterns. Dismounting a few rods in the rear, and leaving the horses in charge of two men, we silently approached the assembly, and taking position, I stepped up, and tapped a swarthy fellow on the shoulder; he turned around, and upon recognizing me, exclaimed with much astonishment, *Aquí están los gringos*—Holy Moses, here's the Yankees! The whole audience began leaping to their feet, but merely

pointing to the levelled weapons behind, we besought them to resume their seats, and not utter a syllable, or a carbine might accidentally explode, and drive a bullet through some one's head. Thereupon they again took up the cards; when clapping a pistol to an intelligent person's ear, we gave him five seconds to point out the stopping place of the Commandante. "Here," said he, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, "here, in the big rancho." *Y los soldados? Mas por alla en la arboléda! Quantos? Habra cosa de cincuenta dragones!*—Where are the troops? Up yonder in the grove!—about fifty. This was no joke, we thought, to be within musket-shot of five times our number; but since no alarm had yet been made, we resolved to seize the *Administrador*. We walked to the door, and struck a few heavy blows. *Quien es?* said a gruff voice. Another blow from the hilt of a sabre. *Soldados! fuégo!*—fire!—was the reply. Aha! so you have a guard, Señor, and we instantly placed a thick wall between our persons, that the balls might circulate through the door, and meet with no resistance or obstruction on the outside; but no report or explosion following the command, we detected the ruse, and assured the individual within, that if he did not make himself visible, we would return the compliment in earnest. This threat unbolted the door, and in a moment I slapped El Señor Valverde—that was his cognomen—on the shoulder; and after apologising for disturbing his slumbers, at so unreasonable an hour, through anxiety to return his visit in the earliest possible time, desired him to equip in all haste for a little excursion to the port. He could not forbear laughing, notwithstanding his fright. We gave him leisure to drink half a bottle of brandy, and put on a clean shirt; when he gave up his papers, and assured us, with a gratified smile, that he had that very day sent all the cash to head-

quarters. And now we said, "Amigo, where's your horse?" "Ah," he replied, "there is one here, but let me send to the corral for another." The next instant, we found him whispering to a small boy cruising around our legs; but pointing a naked sabre to El Señor's throat, we gave both him and the juvenile to understand, that whispering was not allowable in polite society, and he would oblige us by mounting the *cavallo* that stood ready at the door, without further ceremony. While this was going on, our friends, Baldwig and Earl, were inspecting the outbuildings, and came upon the captain of the troop in a very ambiguous position. He jumped up in his shirt, and flew away like the wind. There was now no time to be lost: collecting a lot of handsome arms and equipments, our horses were brought up, we leaped into the saddle, tossed two dollars to the patrona, who swore some one had stolen a sheet; said adios! to the monté men, who gave us shouts of viva! and appeared quite as well pleased as ourselves.

"Then ho! ho! hurry! hopp, hopp, hopp,  
Rode off the troop, with never a stop,  
Until all gasped together."

We came bounding back the twelve miles within the hour, and after giving Mr. Valverde a supper, were safely housed and asleep before daylight. But now it came the prisoner's turn to laugh at us. I had hardly opened my eyes the next morning, when an orderly came from the Governor! What's to pay now? thought I, and off I rode to the Cuartel. On the way I met Captain Luigi, with a most serio-quizzico expression of visage, just from an interview. After being announced, in I walked. "Good morning, sir." "So, sir"—a pause—"you had the presumption to detach a force from the garrison last night, and go many miles

into the interior?—I arrest you, sir—consider yourself arrested, sir—you and Mr. Luigi both, sir." "But, Governor," I ventured to remark, "let me explain; I thought you would be pleased, and a—" "No explanation, sir—pleased indeed!—when you knew the armistice had been signed!" However, in the end, the Governor, who was a good amiable gentleman, consented to believe that no disrespect was intended, and received our apologies. Whereupon we wrote a letter that brought tears to his eyes; he asked us to dinner, and so the affair terminated. Mr. Valverde had all his arms and chattels restored—very much to the chagrin of Mr. Baldwig, who had already apportioned a saddle unto his own keeping—got a good breakfast, and was escorted beyond our lines with *muchos cumplimientos*. The red-headed wretch never passed me afterwards without a face full of sardonic winks and grins. But from that moment, we resolved never to be again patriotic on our own responsibility; and our only consolation was in knowing that we had made the last prisoner during the war.

Some days after, one of our men deserted. He was intercepted by the Mexicans, and since the armistice had been declared, a message was sent to the Governor, expressing a willingness to give him up. I attended the flag of truce, as interpreter. Not finding the escort at the place designated, we were requested by a Mexican officer to proceed along the Presidio road. Passing Urias, we galloped on, league after league, until within a mile of headquarters, where we were politely received by a guard and an officer, sent to conduct us to the General. The old town of Mazatlan, or Presidio, is situated on a broad plain, with a rapid, shallow, limpid stream, coursing beside it. In times past, it was a place of some importance; and the ruins of large *almacens*, a dilapidated church, spa-

acious dwellings, barracks and plazas, still keep up the belief. Yet, as the port was found to possess such manifest advantages for all commercial purposes, the old town was nearly depopulated for the new, and the residents were even induced to leave their pure stream of water, for the brackish element nearer the sea. The road is excellent, and adapted for artillery, but every rood presents capital spots for ambuscades, and it would have required much caution to have approached and surprised the Presidio, as we had originally intended. As we forded the stream, and entered the town, the whole population turned out to behold *los Yankees*—dogs barked—mothers held up their children—and dirty troops tried to stare us out of countenance. We were conducted to a range of buildings facing the plaza, and presented to the commander-in-chief, General Anaya. He had a pleasant European visage—tall, well-made, dignified and gentleman-like in his bearing and address—numbering, may be, some sixty years. We stated the business which brought us to his notice, and after some few inquiries from his officers, he informed us, that the officer who had apprised the Governor was unauthorized to do so; that the deserter had already escaped—which was, indeed, the politest possible, and at the same time sensible way of telling us that we could not have him. He then cooled us off with a cup of claret and cigars; hoped all national difficulties were about to cease; regarded the United States as the mother of Republics; boasted that he had been present, and wounded at the battle of New Orleans, as aid to Jackson; and finally, turned us over to the kind offices of his staff. Our horses, meanwhile, had been well cared for, and three hours after noon we were escorted outside the lines, and reached the port at night.

The next day I was ordered to proceed again to the Presidio,

with a flag of truce, to communicate an official copy of our armistice, and request a conference, to arrange certain articles pertaining thereto. As we did not get there until late in the afternoon, the escort and myself were billeted for the night upon the Commissary General, Don Isidro Beruben, who did the honors of his house with great liberality and attention, to say nothing of the sweet smiles of his charming little daughter Chonita. We slept soundly and rose early, walked around the town, saw the graves of eight long bronze cannon, about three hundred troops exercised, and were introduced to scores of officers. They were all delighted at the armistice, and on tiptoe to get leave once more to visit the port, which they somehow regarded as a little Paris. They overwhelmed me with interrogatories about their friends and sweethearts: where were the *Manuélas*, *Madelinas*, *Antonias*, *Josephas*—*pobrecitas!* how they must have suffered! and were they all true to their old lovers? Of course they were—and I vouched for the truth of the statement.

As the General had not a reply prepared, we remained to a breakfast given by our host. There were some thirty officers at table—a number of generals, and all, I believe, colonels: the Mexican army is well manned in the higher grades. The breakfast passed off well, with no absurd toast-making, and an hour after its termination, Don Pablo requested many *memorias* to the American Commodore and governor, adding that he would be pleased to meet our commissioners, as soon as he was able to mount his horse, being at the time somewhat troubled with a complaint of the *barrica*. Then entrusted with a despatch, I had the honor of making my congé—*Adios señores! Adios amigo! hasta luego!* and so we parted.

There were one or two articles of the armistice that had been

signed in Mexico, which could not have been intended to meet the exigencies of ports on the Pacific, and at the conference which ensued, the Mexicans, in return for relinquishing the alcobala, demanded the privilege of collecting duties levied upon the coasting trade—it seemed a bagatelle that we might easily have conceded, for it was absolutely necessary that some means should be granted for their support. The commissioners, however, were not able to arrange the matter, and both parties separated in dudgeon. Anaya retired to the Presidio, the alcobala continued, and the merchants were extremely disappointed at the rupture; for having a large amount of goods destined for Durango and the adjoining provinces, which had already passed our customs, they were unwilling to risk the transit before some positive arrangement had been established between the two parties.

These official misunderstandings, however, did not prevent constant visits of the Mexican officers and their families to the port—a few of them were pleasant, conversible, intelligent gentlemen, but generally speaking, they were dirty, ill-bred persons, without moral principle, and the greatest liars in existence, and they invariably taxed one another with being cowards. On entering Mazatlan, they were obliged to register their names and report the time of departure. We were occasionally amused when they assured us they found great difficulty in the search for their *amantes*, and had not been received with the same ardor of affection that so long an absence would have justified.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

DURING the period of our occupation of Mazatlan, the remaining ships of the squadron had not been idle along the neighboring shores of the gulf. The Port of Guaymas, on the Main, had been closely guarded by a sloop of war; and notwithstanding the immense superiority of force, under the Mexican General, Campuzano—of five hundred regular troops—he had been at all times beaten, whenever attempting any demonstrations upon the town—on one occasion with the loss of twenty killed and forty wounded;—affairs which sufficiently damped their ardor, and warned them to keep beyond the reach of their invaders.

The Peninsula, also, had been the theatre of more serious struggles; and as the events attending their history were in themselves characterised by the utmost gallantry, reflecting the highest degree of praise upon the actors, who bore their plumes most bravely; and as they were, in fact, the only affairs of importance, which may be considered as shedding a ray of glory upon our arms, during the naval operations on the Mexican coast, I may be excused for relating them more in detail.

It may be recollected, that prior to the departure of the squadron from Lower California, through urgent solicitations made by the respectable inhabitants, a small detachment of