

Americans could sweep over the grand plateau, and as easily conquer the fair city of Guadalajara.

At the time of my arrival, the state government felt assured of support, and besides having means at hand to prevent any insurrection, had dispatched a battalion of three hundred soldiers, with two pieces of artillery, to oppose Paredes. Nevertheless, preparations had been made to guard against any attempt nearer home, and on passing through a private apartment of an official residence, I observed a number of persons busily employed making ball-cartridges, but, as usual, they were too greatly disproportioned with powder, and as a consequence the Mexicans generally overshoot the mark.

CHAPTER XXXV.

I WAS duly installed in my former lodgings at the French fonda, and in the afternoon, being a holiday, went to the Plaza de Toros. The arena was spacious, but without the wooden screens within the circle to protect the tauridors and bandilleros, as is seen in the bull-rings of old Spain. The amphitheatre was well arranged, and capable of containing many thousands, with a separate enclosure, at a more elevated stand, filled with troops, with fixed bayonets, and commanding a good sweep around the audience. The exhibition was more of a cow-combat than an old-fashioned bull-fight; they are miserable, disgusting scenes at best, and the stranger ever takes sides with the tortured beasts against their brutal tormentors. Here the horns were sawed partly off, or blunted with leaden beads; in other respects the affair was conducted as elsewhere. As the military governor, Yañes, appeared beneath his crimson canopy, the music ceased; the gayly-dressed bands of picadores, bandilleros, tauridors, on foot and horse, headed by the Matador, with long toledo in his hands, bowed reverently before the General and Judges; then crossing themselves, a pause ensued; the dulce men, and cigar venders, old beldames with chairs, and boys with *sombra*—shade tickets—held their peace. The arena was cleared of all but the mounted prickers and scarfmen; a bugle sounded, low, heavy

panels within the barricade of the circus swung back, and in rushed the bulls. It is always to me the finest sight, when the fierce beast—before becoming blinded with rage—lightly stirs the ground with his fore foot, moves his head slowly from side to side—the eyes flaming in a sparkle of lambent jet—when with breath short and quick, with a wary glance around, he selects—poor fool—some light, fluttering object, instead of the arms that wave it, gives one deep angry bellow, and dashes forward. Then begin the leaping antics of his active enemies: they tease him to insanity, fire-work him, until the sulphurous flames blister his tough hide; hood him, prick him, stab him—he is killed; and the two white steeds, decorated with streaming red ribbons, bound in, and the slaughtered beast, with glassy eyes and lolling tongue, is dragged out. Sometimes, though rarely, the animal is terrified by his novel position, and no coaxing will make him show fight; then boys and vagabonds generally are permitted to leap the barricades, and chase the scared brute about the circus, with shouts and hisses, when he is driven out to feed the dogs. Then there are cheering *gritos* for particularly dextrous picadors, who, with long poles, and a short spike at the end, afoot, withstand the lunge of the bull, until the hide in the terrible exertion is nearly entirely loosened from the frame; or when the daring Matador, with a single vigorous plunge, drives the long blade to the very hilt, through a bloody sheath, into the tired beast. Again at *longo intervallo*, a few coins are flung into the circle, to reward the favored gladiators. All this, with plenty of dust, oceans of orchata, and a fair show of lovely faces, made up the bull fight.

Later in the evening I attended the kind Padre to the *Comedia*. The theatre was small, prettily painted, gilded,

carved, and particularly well-stocked with fleas. The audience was highly respectable, and the female portion still preserved my appreciation of their beauty on the former visit—there was less youth, but an equal degree of matronly comeliness. Unlike the saffron-hued damsels generally seen throughout Mexico, these *doñas* had rounded forms, rosy complexions, and such soft, languid eyes, and hair so smoothly banded or braided, that I often felt tempted to pass my hand over the satin tresses of a lovely woman seated before me.

The play was a most horrible tragedy—all about Moors, Guzmans and Granada. The actors magnificently dressed, heaving unnecessarily long respirations at every word—in fact a gasping species of elocution. The prompter, too, within his covered trap behind the foot-lights, wheezed like one far gone in the asthma, with a voice louder than the performers.

The audience puffed paper cigars—men, women and children—until the smoke became so dense, that nothing was perceptible on the stage, save alone the shining armor that encased the legs of a Moor.

The curtain fell at midnight; and after an hour passed in a brilliant café, sipping ices and punch, I returned to mine inn.

It was with unfeigned regret I parted with the gentlemen who had been civil to me at Guadalajara—particularly Señor Llamas and the excellent Padre—may they abide *muchos años*—in health and prosperity in their beautiful city.

On the 7th of June, escorted by my former antique guide, Cypriano, who quite reminded me of a knight of the dark ages, with lance and pennon, we got in the saddle, at nine by the evening clock, and pursued our path through the silent lanes and suburbs of the city. Without the moon to light our footsteps,

we were four weary hours at a snail's pace in reaching the Porton, or Garita, when, after much parleying from house-tops and gratings, the lazy, sleepy sentinels were persuaded to let down the chains, that barred the gateway, and we passed out upon the main road. The officer on guard informed us that the troops had, some weeks before, surprised and captured a number of the Ladrons, near Tequilla, and sixteen had already been executed, with a choice reserve of nine more that were to be shot on the morrow; all of which impressed me as extremely wise and judicious measures.

We went jogging along, having no change of beasts, for I had bought a stout spotted roadster, called by the natives *pinto*—painted—but by me Circo, because of his resemblance to those variegated quadrupeds commonly exhibited in the Olympic sports of North America. Towards daylight I took a nap beside a rivulet, and with the sun arose, and had a delicious dip in the pure water—all the reasoning powers of my ancient mozo to the contrary. And here I feel, in gratitude, called upon to say a feeble word in praise of Mexican guides. They, indeed, should be classed with *arrieros*! Their attentions are unceasing. I found them honest, obliging, good-tempered, and possessing a certain share of local and traditionary intelligence. They appeared to exist without sleep, too; for whenever I laid down, I pointed to the sun or stars, as a celestial clock, to mark the hours and true to the dial—was always awakened at the proper time, finding all ready for mounting, even to the spurs attached to my feet. *Ha dornudo vd bien? quiere vd tantito de pan? una copita de licor, pues!* says your guide, producing the morsel of bread or wine from the pouches of the saddle; but if neither be required, he will roll, and light you a cigarillo, and if he sees you enjoying

its soothing flavor, he throws up his hand and exclaims, '*Ay! mi alma! está bueno!* I've hit your fancy now;' and continues the route with renewed good humor, apparently amply happy that he has effected something to please you. Such a one was old Cypriano; besides having a fund of marvellous legends—upon every stone cross or mountain pass in Mexico—that very much relieved the occasional monotony and fatigue of the journey.

The ride was dreadfully oppressive with heat and dust, besides fear of robbers, which, after a by-no-means hearty breakfast on a water-melon I had no stomach for. An hour past noon we drew up near the environs of Tequilla, and remained sleeping by the side of the stream, until the declining sun warned us to be off. The horses and myself had been washed and fed, and with a cooler atmosphere, we toiled over bad roads, hilly, rocky and dusty, when soon after nightfall the twinkling lights of Madelena were visible, and we trotted into the Meson. The neighborhood had become quiet since my departure; the compadres dispersed, and the paisanos had thrown aside the weapons they dared not use. It was too late for a call upon the Alcalde, and my venerable guide ordered supper. The patron of the inn was not an obliging person—not anxious to add to the comforts of his guests. He had a pair of daughters flitting about the yard in loose undress, who busied themselves for an hour in the attempt to boil eggs to my liking; but after the fifteenth trial, some as hard as brickbats, and others hardly warmed, the effort was relinquished, and I contented myself with the national dish of frijoles, which is ever an excellent preparation, and invariably well cooked. Meanwhile, the surly patron kept a lynx-eyed supervision upon the erratic damsels; and they never came near the bench, laid for our supper, without he would snatch the dish

from their fair hands, and, with a rough push, cry "*Basta! basta! muchacha! anda!* Be off with you." Old Cypriano lost patience at last; and seizing his lance, swore by the Holy Virgin if he did not know how to treat a cavallero, who spent his cash like a king, he'd teach him—he would!" These threats had the desired effect; and calling off his handmaidens, he sent them to the *cocina*, sat down before the door, and left us in peace. I remained at the Meson until daylight, reclining on a large rough-built settee in the patio, with no other covering than a comfortable serapa between my body and a canopy of stars: certainly preferable to the close, damp holes within the building, where fleas and vermin parade in battalions on the look-out for wayworn travellers. Moreover, nothing can exceed the delicious atmosphere of the nights, in the *Tierra templada* of Mexico, soft, yet invigorating—clear, calm and refreshing. I speak, of course, of the dry season—with the rains one must seek a more modern habitation.

My venerable soldier had the *pinto*, grinding his last mouthful of grain beside me, ready for a start. I arose, as the sailors say, wide awake as a black fish, and swung into the saddle. *Vayase con Dios*—go to heaven, or the other place, just as the intonation implies—said the grum inn keeper. *Hasta nunca*—hope never to see your ugly phiz again—retorted Cypriano, as he gripingly counted out the rials for our entertainment; I threw something more weighty to the *muchachas*, who repaid me with kindly wishes.

With the fresh air of morning we left Madelena, and kept for some miles along the borders of a broad, shallow lake, of the same name, until the road diverged to the right, when we were obliged to forsake the good ground, and level country, for tedious labor, over mule paths and rugged mountains.

At Muchatilti we passed some ninety soldiers, horse and foot, barefoot, conveying a pack of rascally-looking thieves, and a small field piece. They were attended by twice this number of women and children, who at times relieved their liege lords of muskets or equipments, with the weight of camp utensils on their heads. On questioning a sergeant belonging to the detachment, he told me they generally marched four leagues a day, and in many places were obliged to throw the gun from its carriage, and transport each part separately for leagues at a time. This person also assured me, that he had served at the battle of Buena Vista, and with his company of infantry had marched twenty-eight leagues in forty-eight hours, with but a pint of parched Indian corn, and a quart of water per man! So far as marching, and powers of enduring privation go, I presume the Mexicans can do as much, if not more, than other nations. They are not deficient in courage either, when well officered and led—some of their bloody internal struggles attest it—but with us they proved sadly deficient in both.

I have but little knowledge of what constitutes the proper field for extended military operations; but from a few indifferent ideas picked up in other countries, as well as in this trip through Mexico, I think I may hazard the belief that in the line of march from Guadalajara towards the Pacific, there are seldom met with positions adapted to the operations of large bodies of troops, and save in the vicinity of large towns, an army of any magnitude would find difficulty in procuring subsistence; for the country is thinly populated, and but little land under cultivation, and though I should judge not totally impassible for artillery, it certainly seems an impracticable route for a numerous train, or heavy guns.

Making no longer stay at the brightly-stained inn of Mucha-tilti than was requisite to swallow a cup of coffee, and thrash a filthy Indian for being caught *flagrante delictu*—stealing a bit of silver from my bridle—we traversed the table-land beyond, and began zigzagging through defiles of mountains on the approach to the Plan de Barrancas. The sky became overcast—thunder was growling angrily in the distance, when we overtook a drove of mules, the arrieros urging them at speed down a valley to escape the fury of the impending storm. Descending to the base of a gorge, we crossed the rocky bed of a rippling brook, and removing the saddles from our horses, led them above, and secured them to a tree, whilst we ascended still higher, and sought refuge under the lee of a great shelving crag that had once formed part of the stupendous wall, five thousand feet above us. Rain began to fall in large heavy drops, lightning to glare, and thunder came nearer. The air was perfectly still; and the sharp whistles and cries of the drivers echoed and re-echoed from side to side of the chasm, as they hurried their beasts across the stream. By-and-by a strong gust of wind went rushing overhead, the thunder came crashing yet closer, the dark slate-colored clouds poured down in torrents, and lightning forked, flashing and vivid, made the narrow valley tremulous with noise and fire. The rain descended in unbroken sheets, and in an inconceivably short space of time, the bubbling brook had become a boiling torrent, swelling and leaping from rock to rock, until, at last, joining in the uproar of rain, wind, flame and thunder, the rocks themselves were loosened, and came rumbling and crashing down the steep gorges, and were swept away in the whirlpool of foaming waters. He who has never beheld a quickly-raised storm amid wild mountain passes, and the amazing power of

the elements, can have but a vague idea of Nature when clothed in all her angry grandeur and sublimity.

The nubarrada was soon over, but the whole face of the valley was changed: trees and undergrowth had been torn up by the roots or washed down—deep fissures had been cut wherever the red clayey soil gave play to the impetuous currents—masses of basaltic granite had been dislodged, thrown from their foundations, hurled some distance below, and either served to block up some open channel, or enlarge others; and the point where the path crossed the stream had been burrowed out into a deep, raging pool, which would in future be impassible.

One of the poor mules belonging to the drove, with his cargo of sugar, had been caught and carried away in the contending water; the arrieros cursed like infidels, and wickedly declared they had long before wished a like fate might befall him for his stupidity.

As the thunder went muttering to the adjacent mountains, and the flood was still deluging our devoted heads, I yelled into the ear of Cypriano, who all the while kept his cigarillo alight, that it was *una cosa rica*—a fine display—*tiene vd rason*—“there’s sense in that,” said the old man, “but wouldn’t you rather have a dry serapa and calconcillos?” So forthwith he wrung the moisture from my garments, and we prepared the horses for service. Leading them by a dangerous foothold down the course of the stream, we came to an enlarged basin, and halted on a smooth belt of rocks. Here the sun shown again warm and cheerily—we dried our reeking raiment, and I amused myself the while under a light cascade of turbid water.

At midday we had toiled slowly up the steep sides of the Barrancas, and four hours later, left the last link of the Sierra, and