

holsters for pistols, not knowing whether in raising the hand to the *sombrero*, it is intended to salute or shoot you, as friend or foe; yet, the provinces of the Republic that I traversed were out of the beaten track of tourists, with portfolios and poodles—a country where one is *per force* obliged to rough it a little; and where in the first essay, as in my case, the novelty and excitement attending fresh scenes, varied scenery, strange forms, manners and habits, more than balanced the fatigue, insecurity and annoyances of the journey.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

My arrival happened on the 13th of June. The garrison had been very much strengthened, and a block-house was under construction near the estero, with the expectation of holding the town during the rainy season and bad weather, in the absence of force afloat. The news of the peace changed these plans, and preparations were commenced for evacuating the town.

My little post at the Garita had been relieved of its old garrison, and fallen into strange hands, so I took quarters with my good friend Don Guillermo and Señor Molinero, where we lounged all day in the cool patios, under the awnings, smoking away like Turks. Mazatlan was extremely gay, owing to the yearly festival that takes place on the *Olas Atlas*—a curving beach between two bluff promontories facing the ocean. I am ignorant if there be in the calendar a patron saint devoted to gamblers, or I should certainly believe that this jubilee was expressly dedicated to him.

There were a great number of bough and cane-built booths raised on the sandy promenade, all prettily draped with muslin and other light fabrics, each having a tasteful display of liquors and fruits, with little saloons screened off, and facing the sea, for either eating or gaming: further on were stout upright poles, firmly planted in the ground, supporting circularly swinging

coaches or wooden horses, some revolving perpendicularly, while others described the horizontal circuit: beyond were meaner *bar-racas* for the lower orders—gaming, mountebanks, juggling, eating, and maybe a little fighting.

Towards nightfall the population assembled on the *Olas Altas*, and the scene became very gay and animated—the *monté* tables were thronged—dollars and ounces of gold chinking incessantly—loto banks playing for prizes of dulces or licores—Indians with figured boards and dice, making more noise than their *confrères* in the trade, betting coppers or fried fish. The cars and horses were filled with delighted *paisanos*, who were enjoying the pleasures of city life. At the *fandangos*, too! were girls in their gayest dresses, dancing to the enlivening music of harps and guitars, bursting forth at intervals with some shrill chaunt or ballad, to relieve their nimble feet, perhaps, from exertions attending the *jarabie* or *jota*. It is altogether quite an attractive spot; and when one is tired of the *monté*, bowling at *Smithers'*, or dancing at the *fandangos*, there is the sparkling surf at your feet, where the energies may be revived for a cosy supper with some fascinating little *Mexicanas*, who are never known to decline a cup of chocolate and sweetmeats.

The influx of so many strangers from the surrounding country was not particularly advantageous to the morals of the *Mazatlanese* community: petty thieving and pilfering were all the rage. One evening some expert practitioner contrived to entice a valuable pair of pistols, clothing, and other articles from my table in the centre of a large apartment, by introducing a pole and hook through the iron grille of the window; and the same night my friend *Molinero* was robbed of his bed-clothes, while sleeping, by the same enterprising method. Indeed I incline to the belief

that one may have the gold from his molars picked out, if the mouth chances to be opened, in a crowd of these cunning leperos. My consolation was, in being aware that they had filched all worth stealing, and in being indifferent to future depredations.

The first night of my arrival I met our former little house-keeper at the *Olas Altas*, surrounded by a group of merry friends: "Ah! *dios!*" she exclaimed, "but they told me you were never to return—what *diablitos* those Yankees for telling such fibs. You have been gone just five *Domingos*"—they count by Sundays,—“and that *loco gringo amigo* of yours nearly ruined your horse, and came near breaking his own neck in the plaza—*gracias a Dios!*” Her breath being by this time exhausted, we made up a little purse, or *vaca*, and fortune befriending it at the *monté*, we sent her home, with enough silver to keep her *Cuartel* going for a twelvemonth. Early the next morning she was at my bedside, saying, *Digame de sus viajes*—tell me your adventures. To be relieved of her inquisitiveness, and get more sleep, I threw around her pretty throat a silver image and chain of our lady of *Guadalupe* which saved me any more exercises in the Spanish idiom until breakfast. And, by the way, ignorant people may indulge the idea that the Castilian tongue may easily be acquired “without a master,” but, so far as my individual experience goes, no study is comparable to its acquisition with a tutoress, who, with the charms of bright eyes, rosy lips, and clear natal enunciation, renders the task not only facile, but pleasurable. I would advise any person who wishes to become proficient in this beautiful language to pay his homage to some artless, unaffected *señorita*, who, although she may not be ultra-enthusiastic, will still seem pleased, and interested at all your blunders, correct you with a tap of her fan; and if you be

devoted, though stupid, will forgive all but flirtation with her *cuñada*—confidant;—guide your bungling feet in the dance, walk with you in the plaza, receive your little devotions of laces, gloves and flowers, and sing her sweetest low *cañoncitas* for your especial admiration.

The regret of the townspeople was universal at our approaching departure; and even the few who were at first opposed to the North Americans had become the warmest in our favor. The sailors had all embarked, and the marines remained to perform the concluding honors. On the 17th of June, in the afternoon, General Negrete, escorted by a number of officers and a small squadron of cavalry, entered the Plaza. Drums rolled, the soldiers presented arms, the American flag came down, the Mexican Eagle flew up over the Quartel, and amid the thundering of artillery from ships and shore, bowing of officers, and waving of chapeaus, the ceremony ended. Araya remained at the Presidio, having delegated his authority to the second in command.

I mounted my horse for the last time, rode through the deserted *garita*, and around the town. Many a kind adios was said, and although mine were laughed in return, I felt quite sad, for I had made happy acquaintances and friends, amid a class of people of all others, the wide world over, whose society and manners I have ever fancied, besides being relieved of the detestable monotony of shipboard; and I regard the half-year passed there as among the most contented of my existence, and shall ever refer with many a yearning to those pleasant days in Mazatlan. However, repinings are unavailing when a man's course in life is clearly defined, and he has no alternative but the almshouse on a dead lee-shore, and carrying a press of canvas to weather it; or else I might have

taken the law in mine own hands, and settled down comfortably in Mexico.

“Ay de mi! un año felice
Parece un soplo ligero,
Pero sin dicha, un instante.
Es un siglo de tormento.”

Farewell Mazatlan! adieu, ye black-eyed girls, who so detested the Yankees, and shed such pearly tears at their departure! Adieu to fandangos, bayles, and tiny feet! Good-bye, ye jovial, hospitable traders, and your ruby wine! Alas!—in one sad sigh!—Farewell!