

## CHAPTER XIX.

## A Public Execution.

THE very unusual circumstance of a public execution took place a few days before I left the city; it was for robbery and sacrilege. Two persons had been convicted about a year since, but their punishment was delayed till now.

About eleven o'clock they left the prison in the palace, (together with an accomplice, who was sentenced to imprisonment and to witness the execution of his companions,) preceded and accompanied by a strong military guard of horse and foot, the officers of justice, and many hundred persons, bearing the ornamental lanterns, with lighted candles, used in pro-

cessions. The criminals were each mounted and tied on an ass, and dressed in white woollen gowns and caps, with red crosses on them. They were tied down to the pack-saddle, from which an iron bar passed to the neck, and was united to a strong iron collar, and had a very heavy chain to one leg. They were attended by a number of priests and religious of different orders, who kept reciting short sentences and prayers to the wretched malefactors, who repeated them in as audible a voice as their situation would admit, but it was with difficulty that they could be supported on their animals.

The procession moved slowly through the crowded streets—the windows, balconies, and parapets of the flat-roofed houses were thronged to excess; on no occasion have I seen so many ladies, nor, in my opinion, to so much advantage.

The behaviour of the whole assembled city was strictly decorous, and the awful spectacle seemed to make a proper impression, and elicited more feeling than I expected to have witnessed. The ladies in general knelt as the prisoners passed: an awful silence prevailed, only interrupted by the muffled drums, and the exhortations of the priests; but thousands of fine black eyes were suffused in tears, whilst their mute trembling lips were engaged in prayer for the wretched victims of vice, now about to make a public atonement for their crimes.

On arriving at the open space near the Vera Cruz gate, the fatal apparatus appeared in view. It consisted of a high gallows, with a scaffold under it, on which were two upright pieces of wood, with a seat attached to each, on which the culprits, more dead than alive, were, after some preparatory prayers, successively placed, with

their hands tied before them. The executioner then put an iron circular bolt round their necks, which passed through the stake behind them, when the attendant priest requested the multitude to join in supplication to the throne of mercy for the unfortunate beings. The bolts were drawn tight by screws from behind, which in a few seconds terminated their sufferings, without the public witnessing the horrible contortions often seen in our executions. They were removed, and, a rope being put round their necks, they were drawn up on the gibbet, and their bodies exposed for a short time, during which one of the officiating clergymen delivered an impressive sermon on the occasion, and on the crime that had brought the sufferers to their disgraceful and untimely end: he was listened to with great attention, and at his conclusion the multitude quietly dispersed in the greatest

order. The bodies were put into coffins and delivered to their friends.

I must observe, to the credit of the populace, that the whole was conducted in the most solemn and decent manner, which I attribute to the effect of the religious feelings of all who were present. It formed a strong contrast to an execution which I once witnessed in France, soon after the revolution, when the rabble of Rouen behaved with the most disgusting ribaldry and obscenity.

## CHAPTER XX.

Domestic Animals :—Horses, Mules, &c.

MEXICO possesses a fine breed of light, active, spirited little horses, which are used only for the saddle; some are of great beauty and well broken in, being extremely elegant in their paces, and very sure-footed. The men excel those of most countries in the art of riding and managing these noble animals; but the usage they receive is very different from that in Europe—for they are hardly fed, lodged, and treated. Their principal food is chopped straw; the leaves and stalks of the maize, or Indian corn; and, whilst working, the grain of the maize, and sometimes barley. I have seen good green oats in the neigh-