

ble that more than one plank could be made from a tree: yet, by kind usage, and by respecting their prejudices, I have no doubt they will gradually be brought to know the superiority of our Mechanics and to obey their directions; but it must be effected by degrees, and with caution: compulsive measures must never be resorted to, and the workmen sent out must be particularly cautioned not to interfere in their religious prejudices.

We returned to dinner, and in the evening rambled along the banks of one of the numerous streams that unite near this place, and form a considerable river, which empties itself into the Pacific ocean.

The situation of Themascaltepec is the most delightful that can be imagined: its temperature is rather warmer than that of the capital, but I never found it unpleasant, and there is scarcely a vegetable pro-

duction that might not be cultivated here in perfection.

I know of no more desirable place for human residence: it wants only the re-establishment of the mines or manufactories, to make it again what it has been, the source and mart of abundance and riches. The various remains of haciendas, and of smelting and amalgamation houses, on the banks of its rapid streams, attest its former consequence; and if ever commercial enterprise, and the employment of British capital should be established in Mexico, no place I have seen can be better adapted for the purpose, as, independent of its other advantages, any quantity of machinery could be worked by its waters, and the neighbouring woods could furnish an inexhaustible supply of fuel.

Sunday being market-day, the town was crowded with Indians, who brought with

them great quantities of fruit, and other vegetable productions of the Tierra Caliente; among which were two or three kinds of raw cotton, and a quantity of sugar, in cakes, resembling bee's wax.

At the house of Don Jose Benitas was a meeting of Indians, to settle a contract for timber for the mine. The contractors, with three alcaldes, or chief magistrates of the villages, known by their silver-headed sticks, came to meet Mr. Wilcox, to arrange this important affair, and it was not done without much serious debating, and many long speeches, which the alcaldes delivered in a most deliberate and solemn manner.

In the evening we attended an itinerant kind of theatrical exhibition, consisting of interludes, rope-dancing, tumbling, &c. Some of the feats were exactly the same as those performed before Cortez, on his first arrival; and such as I have not seen in Eu-

rope. A fellow placed himself on the ground, raised his bare feet, and received on them a beam of wood, eight feet long, and eight inches thick, which he threw several times into the air, catching it again on the soles of his feet; he then caused it to spin round like the fly of a jack,—when, changing his manner of striking it, he made it turn lengthways, with great velocity throwing it from one foot to the other, so that the bells fastened to the ends of it kept time to the music. After amusing us awhile in this way, he rested a few minutes, when two boys were suspended to the ends of the beam, which he again balanced and threw with them into the air, receiving them altogether on his feet. They were then put into rotatory motion, and turned with such violence, that one of the lads fainted: this

put an end to the exhibition, which was attended by some of the first people in the place, who provided their own seats, though some families had only a mat spread on the ground.

Ices, dulces, &c. were served during the time of exhibition. The place was illuminated by two fires of candle-wood, raised about seven feet from the ground.

The company seemed highly delighted, and the behaviour of the lower classes was very orderly, although there was no lack of mirth, as the Indian who enacted the clown performed his part in a manner which would not have disgraced Grimaldi himself. His comical remarks excited the most boisterous merriment, in which I was obliged to join at my own expense, as he made several pointed allusions to a stranger who had arrived at Themascaltepec from

the other side of the world, to feast on humming birds, beetles, butterflies, and lizards.

The following day our party rode to an amalgamation house, the only one of consequence now in operation, about two miles up the river, on the bank of which it is situated. The superintendent showed us the whole process of extracting the silver from the ore, which gives employment to a great number of people, principally Indians. The ore, which was brought from a mine at some miles' distance, by mules, is of a yellowish clay colour, and not very rich: it is of that kind distinguished here by the name of colorado. It is first pounded by large heavy stampers, worked by water, and sifted through hides pierced with small holes, to answer the purpose of sieves; the powdered ore is next carried

into a large flagged apartment, and piled in heaps of a ton or more in each, and then mixed with salt, sulphate of iron, lime, vegetable ashes, &c. A quantity of mercury in proportion to the calculated quantity of the silver, is added, and suffered to remain some time, the whole being turned or worked together by Indians treading it with their feet. When they suppose the mercury has entirely united with the ore, it is put into vats, over which a stream of water passes: the amalgamated ore is then stirred up, and the earthy part carried off by the stream, and the mercury, incorporated with silver, remains at the bottom. The silver is afterwards separated from the quicksilver by means of fire, with a considerable loss. It has been proved by experiments made lately in Cornwall on ore sent from Mexico for the purpose, that the

same or nearly the same process used in smelting tin may, with considerable advantage, be applied to the more valuable metal.

Having obtained specimens of the ore, in its different stages of preparation, and the various processes used being explained, we rode through a very rich valley to Upper Themascaltepec, a small town of not very inviting appearance, about four miles from the lower town, and returned by another route to Mr. Wilcox's mine. The ride was altogether through a fertile country, and the farms and cottages presented an appearance of comfort not always seen. We killed several new birds, among which was a species of thrush, of a deep lead colour, whose note is not surpassed by any of that musical family which inhabit Europe.

I shot several humming birds in the

garden of the house in which we lived—a pomegranate tree in blossom was much frequented by them, and afforded me many opportunities of observing their manners.

The rocks round the town abound with an elegant species of lizard, of a dark blue and orange colour. I unfortunately engaged a boy to catch me half a dozen, for which I gave him a quarter of a dollar: he spread the report of this through the town, and the next day all the idle fellows of the place beset my lodgings with strings of lizards—the whole neighbourhood seemed to have been ransacked for them.

The appearance of the fire-flies in the evenings is very beautiful, and, to an European, surprising. Soon after sunset the air is filled with small luminous floating sparks, shooting in every direction, and vanishing in an instant. This was the first place

where I had seen them in great abundance; but my attempts to take them were unsuccessful.

The evenings spent in these regions in the open air are more delightful than those of the finest parts of Italy; and the appearance of the sides of the mountains round the town at this time was highly picturesque at night, as it was near the termination of the dry season, when it is the custom to burn the low brushwood and dry vegetables, to improve and clear the ground for a new crop. They were generally fired at night, when the sides of the hills became a blaze, which spread with rapidity, and resembled the burning lava of a volcano, surrounding the town for many miles with moving sheets of flame.

Mr. Wilcox having finished the business on which he came, we left this pleasant

place about noon, arrived at St. Miguel early in the evening, and experienced the same attention from the Indian inhabitants as before. I had furnished myself with a few segars for them, and they seem always gratified with any little attention from Europeans. Some horses, the property of travellers, had lately been carried off from the village, and they placed a strong guard over ours for their security. Many of them were at our door before daylight, to offer their assistance.

We left them early, intending to reach Lerma that night, but in ascending a very steep part of the road my saddle slipped off the horse, by which means I received a severe fall, and it was with difficulty I could reach Toluca; where having been bled, and rested till the next day, we proceeded to Lerma, and the following evening entered Mexico, much pleased with the magnifi-

cent country through which we had passed, and the simple people who inhabit it.

On my arrival I immediately prepared for making casts of the Aztec idols and sculptures which had been discovered about twenty-four years since and suffered to remain entire. The colossal figure of Teoyamiqui, the Goddess of War, was interred under the gallery of the University, but on an application from M. Del Rio, professor of mineralogy, the earth was removed from around it, to enable me to take an impression in plaster, a process which occupied several days, during which, as I have elsewhere related more in detail, the court-yard was generally crowded with persons drawn by curiosity to see this monstrous idol of the ancient Mexicans.

I next procured an order from the Minister of State, Don L. Alaman, for the

pavement of the great square to be removed, so as to enable me to make casts of the sculptured sides of the great sacrificial stone or altar. The operation of moulding this huge block of stone was attended with some trouble, as, at the depth of two feet, the water flowed into the excavation, and greatly impeded the work; to which the continual influx of the curious contributed not a little.

A scaffold was then erected by order of the bishop against the side of the cathedral, to allow me to cast the great Calendar stone, vulgarly called Montezuma's watch. It is thirty-six feet in circumference, but being flat, I was enabled to take it in several pieces, as without this it would have been difficult to have removed the copy to the sea-coast for embarkation. This cast was attended with much personal labour; for, as I could enlist none

who understood the process, to assist us, the whole trouble devolved on my son and myself; but the publicity which these operations gave to my pursuits were so far advantageous, that through them I had several statues, manuscripts, and other antiquities offered me for sale, which otherwise I never could have discovered.

Having prepared my casts for transportation, and finding a little leisure from my other avocations, I determined to visit those places in the neighbourhood most interesting to the antiquary and historian; as containing remains of the palaces, pyramids, or temples of the aboriginal inhabitants.