

rather, they had never seen me before; we therefore did not expect the same kindness and hospitality that we had received while coming from Guanahuato. Still, we were not as yet molested, but we were constantly drawing nearer those places where it was represented that an unfriendly feeling existed.

The country was rough, rocky, and barren. Sometimes we traveled whole days without seeing a house, during which time we were often pressed for want of water, and none could be had; but we occasionally found a mud hole with a little thick, muddy water in it. This we drank with avidity, and thought ourselves lucky in finding even this.

One day, while on one of these gloomy routes, we met five men on foot. They passed us, and then wheeled round and seized us both by our arms. They bound us fast, searched our pockets, and took all the money we had, amounting to near five dollars, our blankets, and what clothes we did not have on. They then left us without as much as thanking us, and also without untying us. We waited a few moments until they were out of sight, and then set to work to free ourselves, which we finally did, and jogged on our way. How much lighter a man feels after having been robbed, even if it is but little that he has to lose. We certainly did; we breathed freer, and were certainly lighter by some ten or fifteen pounds a piece; but we were glad to come off so well. During the operation not a word was said; they had us perfectly secure, and they knew it. As they had arms, and we none, no resistance could be successfully made.

We traveled on a little faster than before, anxious to increase the distance between us and our late acquaintances. That night we came to a small village, which was merely a collection of huts. The inhabitants were a villainous-looking set of rascals, and we did not like to stay there; but, as it was some miles to another village, we concluded to brave the danger, and not try to avoid it by skulking in the fields. In the course of the evening, some men came to the house where we stopped for the night, and offered us liquor to drink. We accepted it, and drank some. My comrade drank heartily, and continued drinking until he was beastly drunk, notwithstanding the many cautions that I gave him. He only abused me, the Mexicans, and the whole nation. His language finally excited their anger, and they became roused to such a degree that I every moment expected them to fall on us, and perhaps kill us. There was one in the crowd who appeared to have some control over the rest. To him I appealed, showed him my passport, told him of my having fought in favor of his country in the battles of Buena Vista, and those near Mexico, &c., and I begged him to overlook and pass by the abuse of my drunken comrade. After some other conversation, in which I gained his confidence, he said that we should be protected; and he then ordered his associates to leave, and not molest us any more.

This place, I afterward learned, was the rendezvous of robbers; and there is no doubt that the robbers whom we had met lived in this same village, which may possibly have been the place where those

murders were committed which I have related on a preceding page.

The country through which we were now passing was rough and even mountainous. For several days we did not see a field under cultivation; and it was a rare case that we saw over two or three houses in a whole day's travel. How those few inhabitants managed to live was a mystery, unless it was by plunder. This was most probably the case; for, according to an old saying, a person that wont work must steal, and here work could not be had, because there was none to be done. Their houses deserve a description. They are simply poles stuck in the ground close together, the cracks between them being filled up with pieces of timber. The roof is thatched with straw, and sometimes covered with bark. The door is made by splitting some timbers in two, which are then fastened to a cross-piece with thongs, and set up in the door-way. They build their fire for cooking in the center of the room, and never have a fire unless for cooking purposes. The inmates are a wretched-looking people, as ragged as they can well be, and the most miserable and squalid of any human beings that I ever saw. This, thought I, is poverty. The floors of these houses are nothing but the earth trodden down hard. This also forms their bed; and I can say from experience that it makes a hard one.

That these people must sometimes starve, or, what is nearly as bad, almost starve, is, I think, from the nature of their circumstances, unavoidable. In some places in this part of the country the almost universal musquit bush does not grow, and, consequently,

the ordinary supply of wood is cut off. To remedy this great want, cattle dung is gathered and dried. This makes a very hot fire; and victuals cooked with this kind of fuel do not need as much seasoning as though cooked with wood; but its flavor is not quite so good. I have seen them burning lime with this article, which shows conclusively that it produces an intense heat.

Next morning we prepared for an early start. We paid our respects to the man who so kindly protected us the evening before. He gave my comrade a good piece of advice, hereafter to regulate his tongue so that it should no more abuse those whose hospitality gave us shelter; and he then stated that, but for his interference, we should both of us have been killed. This rather astonished my comrade, who was not aware of having been more than *gentlemanly* drunk. We, however, begged a thousand pardons for having unwittingly insulted them. We then started on our journey, amid the shouts and jeers of an ignorant and brutal rabble. Their principal shout was, "*The gringos are gone: hurrah!*" This word *gringo*, is a corruption of *green-horn*, and is supposed by the Mexicans to be the most opprobrious epithet the English language affords, and equal to the word *chivo* with them, which means a he-goat. You may call a Mexican by any term of reproach but this; use *chivo* even to a common beggar, and you will put him in a most furious and ungovernable rage.

It is utterly impossible for any one who has not seen it to imagine the difference which exists between the rich and the poor in this wretched country.

The rich, who rule every thing—even the minds of the poor—are generally most debased, morally; and they are, consequently, cruel masters. They have the power to punish to almost any extent, even death, and are served with the most abject deference by their peons or slaves. As slavery is not recognized, the word servants, perhaps, would be more proper. But, in effect, they are in a state worse than slavery. They are mostly bound to their masters for some debt, which the latter take care shall never be paid. They appear to have neither mind nor hope above their present condition, and will continue to work on from day to day, and from year to year, without receiving more than enough to keep soul and body together. When addressing their masters, they take off their hats, and speak in a hesitating and trembling manner, as though they were in the presence of a superior Being. There is nothing they will not do for money, even to the selling of their wives and daughters for a time. Instances of this kind are not rare, and have been related to me by indisputable authority.

The religious feeling which pervades all classes, young and old, is remarkable. Never do they pass a church without uncovering their heads, and turning their faces thitherward; and at the sound of the bell for vespers, every hat is removed, and all stand uncovered wherever they are, repeating a sort of prayer, in which all join until the sound is over, when each one resumes whatever occupation he might have been engaged in when interrupted. In some of their large towns and cities, where I have been on a Sunday, I have seen their plazas or squares filled with people.

There were perhaps thousands, all attending to buying and selling, with all the energy and activity they are master of; but when, at the closing of the services in the Cathedral, the large bell tolls, then all in the square kneel, facing the church, and at every stroke of the bell they will thump on their breasts with their closed hands. This is done simultaneously by all; and in so large a concourse of people, its sound very much resembles distant thunder. At the same time, all are praying, producing sounds not unlike the humming of bees. Of this, more hereafter.

We that day traveled through a country very much resembling what we had passed for the last five days; not a particle of land was cultivated but that on the banks of rivers or streams; and, except in such spots, it is of the most barren description, being principally composed of a hard, yellow clay, so poor that in many localities grass will not grow. I have traveled more than a hundred miles at a time without seeing sufficient grass to furnish one good meal for a horse, or a stone as large as a pebble. The road, except in a few places where it crosses gulleys and mountains, is excellent, being hard, and as level as a floor. On the banks of the streams the fertility of the soil is such as amply to repay the farmer, and the crops seem never to exhaust the ground. I have seen pieces that have been worked more than fifty years, with sometimes two crops a year, and yet the soil does not seem to be exhausted, and all this without spreading on it a particle of manure. Were the Mexicans not so excessively lazy, they might produce any thing they chose, and in any quantity; but

when the seed is put in the ground, they think they have done enough. If it should not come up, or the plant not thrive, they call on the Virgin Mary, or fall on their knees before their priest at the altar, tell him how unfortunate they are, buy a blessing, and go home with glorious expectations.

Our journey to-day was extremely rough, climbing hills and mountains, and then descending them. We passed a spot where three crosses were placed beside the road. From the date, it was evident that the murders were committed quite lately, and, from the inscription on them, it was certain that men of wealth had been murdered. It was in a deep ravine, between two hills, in a place completely darkened by the overhanging bushes, so that it was a very fit locality to commit such crimes. A little further two more were seen, making five in all. Our fears were now a little excited lest there might be a necessity to erect crosses over our bodies also, as, from the scarcity of houses and travelers, every facility was afforded to commit deeds of violence with impunity. However, we got along safe.

Soon after, we came to huge mountains, across which our road lay. This laborious task had well-nigh forced us to give out, as we were greatly fatigued by the journey we had already performed that day. But we pushed ahead, as there was no stopping-place within a distance of nearly fifteen miles, and the sun had already passed the meridian.

We here witnessed one of those strange phenomena that are so common among the mountains of this country. We had got into a deep valley; high mount-

ains encompassed us on all sides; we were sitting by the side of a stream, resting for a moment, when we observed a cloud, not large nor black, passing swiftly by. It was rapidly followed by another, and another, and yet another, each blacker than the one that preceded it. In an incredibly short space of time the heavens were blacker than Egyptian darkness; the clouds seemed to be too heavy to float in the air, and rested on the tops of the mountains. The scene was more than grand—it was frightful. Soon a flash of lightning was seen; others followed, clothed with more terrific brilliancy; all these came in rapid succession: thunder, long, loud, and heavy, seeming to make the earth tremble, came peal on peal, in quick succession, with a noise as though heaven and earth were coming together with a mighty crash. On the tops of the mountains it seemed to rain hard, but down where we were only a few large drops fell. This lasted probably twenty minutes, when the storm blew over, and we again proceeded on our journey.

That night we reached a small town by the name of Calais. It was after dark when we arrived there. As soon as we were discovered to be foreigners, a crowd collected around us and called out *gringoes! gringoes!* We went to the alcalde, presented our passports, and requested quarters for the night; he coolly read them, and then said that if we had any money, we could no doubt get lodgings; if we had none, he could not help us. The gaping rabble had followed us thither, and stood around the door as though in breathless anxiety to hear what this old worthy would say; and when he had given his de-

cision, they seemed to relish it mightily, for they immediately gave three cheers, crying out, "*Carrajo los gringos!*" This was followed up and repeated so often that it at length excited our anger, and to such a degree that we thought it best to check it at once. I then turned to them, and addressed them nearly to this effect: that we were going to the Pacific, were running away from the Americans, and that hitherto, without any exception, we had been well treated by the inhabitants of that country, and I was sorry to say that this was the first place where we had experienced any ill treatment. I now desired them, once for all, to understand that we would not endure any more of their abuse; that we were capable of protecting ourselves, and should do it, at whatever hazard.

These remarks quieted a few, but made others more tumultuous. They now commenced throwing stones at us, some of which hit and hurt us. As we were both armed with good heavy clubs, we went among them. Those that had thrown the stones we had marked, and we knocked them down, the rest remaining quiet. At this moment the alcalde came out and inquired what the matter was; all were eager to tell, and no chance was given us to speak. At length the alcalde told us to follow him to his office. We did so. When there, he examined us separately. We could not satisfy him, however, that we told the truth, and he began to say something about a carcel or jail. We asked him if he intended to put us in jail. He said he must, for riotous conduct. Our tempers had not yet got so smoothed down that we

could bear any indignity without expressing some little demur; and as I could best talk with him, I now rose. As we were in the office alone, and the doors fastened within, I had no fears of interference from without. I said in a bold, defiant tone, that as for going to jail, if he was determined on it, I and my comrade would go; "But mark you, Mr. Alcalde," said I, "there is, one day's journey behind, twenty men of this same San Patricio company. To-morrow night they will be here, and if I am in jail they will tear it down and free us; and as they are well armed, they will massacre you and all who make any resistance. Now, then, take us to the jail, if you dare."

This address had the desired effect. A coward I suspected him to be from the first, and a coward he now proved himself. He was at first in fear of the rabble, who commenced hooting at us as soon as we entered the village, and he was afraid of showing us that protection which, as a public officer, he was bound to do. He now said that he had no wish to molest us or cause us any inconvenience; that he would give us quarters for the night, and in the morning we might depart, as soon as we pleased, unmolested.

We then asked him to go to a meson or tavern with us, assign us our rooms, give us the keys, and leave orders that no one should give us any more trouble. To this he readily consented. When we went out of his office, the rabble was still standing around there, and these he ordered off. When we got to the tavern, he gave us our supper, showed us our room, gave us the keys, and ordered all the gates

shut, and not to be opened until we wished to go in the morning.

All was done according to the alcalde's orders, and we found ourselves much more comfortable than the proceedings attending our entrance into the town promised. The landlord we found to be a quiet, inoffensive sort of a man, and we conversed with him for some time on the events of the evening. He stated that this town was some distance from any other, and was the head-quarters of some bands of robbers. Then, speaking in a low whisper, he said that the alcalde always received a part of the plunder, and that he sometimes even headed an expedition. When he told this, I asked, with some astonishment, why the government did not take it in hand, and put a quietus on these proceedings. At this he shook his head, and replied, "*No hay fuerza en el gobierno*" (there is no force in the government). I then asked him if it was safe for us to travel in the morning alone. He said that the alcalde's myrmidons might possibly give us trouble, but that the alcalde himself would not; the threat of my coming comrades would restrain him from taking any action against us personally. I asked if there was any other way to get off in the morning than to take the main road. He said there was; that by following up close to the mountain, a foot-path led, by a circuitous route of some miles, into the main road. He also advised me to go along before daylight, so as not to be seen by any of the people, as their excitement knew no bounds when not restrained by absolute force.

This man so won on my confidence that I determ-

ined to follow his advice; and, as it was late, I started to go to my room, first requesting him to awaken us by two o'clock in the morning, which he consented to do. We found in the room given us an espoda, or short sword. This I determined to carry with me, and, if occasion required, use it hereafter instead of my cane. We threw ourselves on the mat, and in an instant we were sound asleep.

It seemed as though we had been asleep but a few moments before a loud thumping and rattling at the door awakened us. I inquired who was there. The friendly voice of our landlord answered that it was already two o'clock. We then got up, and prepared for a start. He first gave us a breakfast, for which he refused pay; then, as silently as possible, he let us out of the corral or yard. He followed us, and volunteered his services in showing us which way to take, and accompanied us some three or four miles. He then left us to go back, advising us to keep out of the main road for ten or fifteen miles, after which we might again take it, and also to travel as fast as we could. As this advice seemed good, we resolved to follow it to the very letter.

The path we were now taking was nearer and much rougher; but we jogged on, anxious to make the distance between us and the place we had left as great as possible, and in the shortest space of time passed two small villages, leaving them some way to the right on the main road. It was evident that our friend wished us to avoid these. After passing the second one, we might safely take the road again.

We saw on this mountain journey some armadil-

loes, the first I had ever seen; but as these animals have been so often described, I will say no more of them. Innumerable swarms of lizards covered the ground in this region; they were of a greenish color. They leaped out of our way in such large numbers that they looked more like a body of green grass than a collection of animals. I had frequently seen this species before, but not in such swarms.

The number of wild horses was another matter of curiosity. Large droves of them were feeding around us; they were of the mustang species, small in stature, but with frames firm and well built. All their movements were most graceful, showing their splendid forms to the best advantage. There was one among them that struck my fancy more than the rest: he was of a dark cream color, and of quite a large stature. When he first saw me, he looked a moment, gave a snort, ran a short distance, then stopped and looked again. I thought to myself how I would like to have a lasso around his neck, and a saddle on his back.

The Mexicans catch these mustangs, and break them to the saddle with great facility. It is done in this manner. The lasso is put over his head, the end being fixed with a noose. They then let him bound to the extent of the rope—about fifteen or more feet—when a skillful pull throws the horse upon his back. This is repeated, until the horse evidently understands that he is not at liberty, when resistance generally ceases. The man then gathers up his rope, and, with a light bound, vaults on his bare back. He then uses the rope as a bridle, and urges him on with whip and

voice until he is fairly wearied out. Then the animal is saddled and bridled, and he is again urged forward. One day is sufficient to break even the most stubborn mustang.

These ponies are used only for riding, being too small to work to any advantage. They are never over eleven or twelve hands high; and although well made, they are not capable of attaining great speed, although they have considerable wind. They are full of action, and capable of enduring great hunger and thirst. The Mexican saddle is large and heavy; the wood-work is massive, and the amount of leather is enormous. The stirrups are large, and made of wood; a large housing lies behind on the haunches, entirely covering them. If it is of leather, it is generally ornamented with silver, but it is sometimes covered with bear skin. The Mexicans always arm their heels with a huge pair of heavy, blunt spurs, with which they are constantly goading the animal's side. I have seen spurs the rowels of which were six inches in diameter, and the shank in proportion; and attached to this shank were little bits of steel, which the motion of the foot caused to jingle like so many small bells. But the bit is still more cruel. The part that goes into the mouth turns up in the form of a link in a chain; in the upper end of this is fastened a large ring, which goes round the under jaw, so that a sudden jerk is very liable to break it short off. And when the animal is under any speed, reining short up will throw him back on his haunches. This often destroys the horse's mouth, as the heavy saddle and accouterments spoil the back.

I have seen saddles and bridles that cost eight hundred dollars. A part of the seat, pommel, and stirrups was solid silver; but from ten to seventy-five dollars is a common price.

CHAPTER VII.

Patatlan. — Daring Scheme. — Career of Ciriacco Gomez. — Escape from his Proposal. — Departure from Patatlan at Midnight. — Arrive at Leon. — Incidents there. — Suspicions of the Commandante. — How removed. — Raising the Wind. — Rescued from Danger by a Priest. — Description of Leon. — Donkeys. — Mules. — Gloomy Prospects. — Nocturnal Alarm. — Road to Lagos. — The Mail. — Elysian Scene. — Arrive at Lagos. — A dangerous Acquaintance. — Unexpected Generosity. — Fruits. — Beating the Rounds.

WE pursued our way near the mountains until we were past the second ranch, when we took the main road. Being now beyond all danger from the alcalde of Calais, we jogged on until after dark, when we reached a place called Patatlan.

We here related the incidents of our journey of the two previous days, and showed our passports. On telling of our destitution, a private gentleman generously offered us a supper, lodging, and breakfast. On his hospitality, therefore, we trespassed for the night. Our new-found friend conversed with us until late at night; and we related to him the reception we had met with on the preceding night at Calais, as well as the dangers of the day before. In reply, he said that the road through which we had passed was indeed very dangerous, but not more so than a portion of the country through which we were yet to go. He said that the government was then so utterly destitute of the means to disperse these bandits, that