

thence they sent us to a meson where we could stay all night. The landlord gave us a good room, and a nice mat to sleep on, and seemed to take great pleasure in making us comfortable.

By this time both my comrade and myself were out of shoes and clothing. I, however, was better off than he was, for I had some pieces of leather to tie on my feet; but he, poor fellow, was just about bare-foot, and his feet were now so very sore that he was almost entirely disabled from walking. I therefore determined to make some extra exertions to procure him a pair. I then started to go round the city and raise some money. I went into all the houses of the priests, showed them my passport, and they, be it said to their honor, gave with a liberal hand. From them I went to the merchants, and so successful was I, that in two hours' time I had raised some three dollars. I then went back to the meson with a pair of shoes.

On my arrival there, I saw two men apparently having high words about something; I soon found it was about us. One had said that we were spies, and should have been hanged as such long before this. The other defended us. Finally they came to blows; knives were drawn, and the affray might have terminated fatally to one or the other, had not the landlord at this moment entered and drove them both out of the yard. This scene alarmed me not a little, for I had good reason to think that if the common people felt unfriendly toward us, our lives were in great danger. I, however, thought best to be on my guard, and not betray any symptoms of fear or distrust. This course subsequently proved to be the best; for

in the evening, as I was going through the Plaza, a mob collected round me, and began to throw dirt and stones, crying, "Curse the Yankees." I paid no attention to them, but, seeing a priest a short distance from me, I went up to him and begged his protection. He at once knew me, having seen me before that day. He turned to the crowd that was following, and ordered them to be gone, at the same time addressing them in language stronger perhaps than became a man whose business it was to stand between fallen man and his Maker. But it had a good effect on his hearers, for they at once ceased their abuse and insults, and sneaked off about their business. My kind protector then invited me to his house, and gave me a cup of chocolate. He then asked what money I had, and also how much clothing, &c. By way of answer, I showed him my shoes; and as my shirt showed nothing of its former shape or color, he noticed that also. At the same time, he seemed anxious to make me forget the unpleasant adventure that I had met with in the streets. He then sent for a pair of shoes, and left me a moment. He soon returned with a shirt and a coat, and his servant brought in my shoes. This supply furnished me tolerably well, and I soon took my leave. To secure me from further abuse, the priest sent with me his servant as a guard and guide, and we soon reached the meson, where my comrade was anxiously awaiting my arrival. He had heard of this rabble in the Plaza, and, being of a timorous disposition, he concluded, as I did not return at once, that I had been killed.

I must here remark, that the conduct of this priest

was not an exception, or different from that of his class; they were all uniformly generous, and in various ways strove to relieve our necessities; and during all my travels in Mexico, I now can remember only one instance in which a priest turned a deaf ear to our application for assistance, and that one showed the miser and the brute in his countenance. But the character of the priests I will discuss at a future time.

I have hitherto said but little about the appearance of many of the towns that I passed through. The reason is this: there is a uniformity and sameness in them all, that would obviate the necessity of describing them. Leon, however, stands alone, and is in many respects different from the rest. It stands on a level, open plain, and for some distance around it there is nothing to obstruct the sight. Then large mountains rear their lofty heads, completely surrounding the valley; and, from the appearance of these mountains, there is no place presented to the eye where egress could be had from this city by any other way than ascending and descending them. There are some few cultivated fields, but the land is mostly barren.

The city is supplied with wood from the mountains. It is brought in on donkeys, which are very numerous here. I have often seen them moving along with a sort of rocking motion, loaded with hay or corn-stalks, and so completely covered up that nothing could be seen but the load they carried. We could see the load rock and move, but nothing that caused this motion, except sometimes the donkey's tail whisking about behind. They are gentle and

very docile. Children ride them without bridle or halter, just jumping on, almost always sitting on the hind quarters. They use a club, and guide the creatures by thumping them on either side of the head. This manner of guiding them does very well until some green fodder or other tempting morsel meets the brute's eye, when all the thumps and pounding on the head they can bestow avails nothing. Then all the rider has to do is to slide down over the tail, and by main force push him away.

These animals are never used except as beasts of burden; they carry water, wood, grain, and even furniture in removing. They are mostly owned by the poorer classes, who are not able to have mules or horses. They are generally driven in numbers. One man on foot takes charge of the whole, who, with a short club, thumps and pounds the refractory or the loitering ass, all the while uttering tesh! tesh! This sound comprises all the vocabulary for driving donkeys, and answers for *go on*, or *stop*. When they turn them, they go to the head and push them the way they wish to go.

The mules of this country are smaller than ours, and are used entirely for carrying packs; they usually carry a weight of four hundred pounds. Sometimes a good riding mule may be found; but this class commands an exorbitant price. It is customary for all owners of horses or mules to brand them; and these brands are good evidence of ownership, and can not be invalidated. When one purchases a mule or horse, he heats his iron, and joins it to one of the extremities of the other mark, and burns on the hide

the shape of the iron. Every man has a different mark, which is always recorded in the alcalde's office. In case a dispute should arise relative to ownership, reference is had to the alcalde, who examines the mark that was last made, and whoever owns this keeps the animal. I have seen horses with the neck and hind legs and hips completely covered with these brands. Should any one purchase an animal, and not put his mark on him, the last owner can claim him and hold him.

It is by means of donkeys and mules that commerce is carried on in the interior. They go in caravans, and frequently traverse the entire length and breadth of Mexico. This mode of transportation, together with the high duties, makes goods of all kinds very high.

I see that I have unwittingly wandered from my subject. I was giving a description of Leon. It receives its supply of wood from the mountains, and most of its provisions from other places, as enough is not raised in the valley to supply its wants. A good stream of water runs by one side of it. The place is regularly laid out, and well built. Round the Plaza the buildings are as well finished as any I have seen in Mexico. Its Cathedral is its greatest boast. This is a large and massive building; but, as I saw it only after sunset, and then very imperfectly, I can give no just description of it. I saw enough, however, to know that it is as large as any I have seen, with but two exceptions.

While here I had given me an American half dollar. This was the first coin of my own country that

I had seen for some time, and it brought back memories of the past. My old associations in the States were remembered at that moment, and the scenes through which I had passed since presented themselves to my mind as fresh as though they were of yesterday's occurrence. My mind then plunged into futurity, as though to ascertain what was yet in store for me. Long and gloomy was the road before me before I could possibly consider myself safe, yet I was not discouraged; and the confidence which had sustained me so far, I determined should not leave me now.

I had by this time become almost worn out, and it seemed as though I could stand it but little longer. The weather was getting hotter and hotter every day. Our course now was nearly south; the rainy season had passed, and the sun poured down its rays with intense heat. Our sufferings from this cause, added to that of thirst, were becoming very great. This may readily be conceived when I state the condition in which my feet were a few days before arriving at this place. I then had a pair of shoes; but so hot had the weather become, that my constant walking had blistered my feet all over; and so sore were they, that I was forced to cut the uppers off, and with strings tie the soles to my feet. In this condition I had walked several days. They were far from being well now; but they were so much better that I could, with some comfort, wear the shoes that were given me by the priest. My limbs were stiff and sore, a consequence of my great exposure; yet there was no rest. On, on we traveled; but how we were en-

abled to travel the distance we did every day is a mystery to me even now. Our daily marches ranged from seven to fifteen leagues.

To resume my narrative. Some little time after we had gone to sleep in the room given us, we were awakened by a loud rapping at the door. They seemed to be determined to break into the room. I got up, went to the door, and inquired who was there. No answer was returned. I had previously fastened the door, so that it could not be broken in or forced; yet I was a little alarmed when I remembered the violent altercation in the yard, just before night, relative to us; still, I determined to see who it was that was thumping on our door in this manner. So I took the sword that I brought from Calais, unbarred the door, and went out. Not a soul was to be seen. I then went back again, intending, should my nocturnal visitor come again, to let him stand at the door and rap till morning. I then bolted the door and went to sleep.

In the morning, when we got up, we found the yard nearly empty. The travelers had gone, and their servants were packing up the mules ready for a start. We were informed that the road to Lagos, whither we should go that day, was very much infested with robbers. It was mountainous most of the way, and very rough. The whole of it was a fit place for the rendezvous of bandits. We looked round to find some one that was going the same way, but none could be found. We then started alone.

For a short distance the road was level, but when we came to the mountains it was rough in the extreme.

It was all climbing hills, and then descending. For some distance there was scarcely any appearance of a track; in fact, we had to jump from rock to rock.

The distance to Lagos was fifteen leagues, and during the entire day we saw not a house or place fit for a human being to dwell in. Large herds of wild horses were seen pasturing around us on every side; we likewise saw several deer. These animals did not seem to be much alarmed at our appearance, but would stand and look at us, though at a respectful distance, as unconcerned as though they had been brought up by our own hand. Looking up the mountain on one side of us, we saw a large black bear slowly ascending, as though he thought the presence of man so near him was any thing but comfortable. This was the second animal of the kind I had seen in Mexico.

Our road now varied a little, inasmuch as it was not so rough. There was a foot-path, but on each side was dense chapparal, preventing us from seeing to any great distance; neither was it possible for us to lose our way, for out of the path we could not move ten rods without tearing our clothes and lacerating our flesh most sadly. I do not think that this is the main road from Guadalajara to Mexico; in fact, it could not be, for no stage could possibly be taken through here, and there is one running three times a week between those two cities.

The mail between the smaller towns is carried on foot. They have no post-offices, except in the larger cities. The alcalde, or the highest officer, always acts as postmaster. To show the amount of corre-

spondence that is carried on, I will relate one circumstance, though I shall anticipate by doing so. While in Amatlan, I saw the mail come in and opened; there were but three letters in it. This is a place of about one thousand inhabitants, and has a mail once a month. More of this hereafter.

Our road, during the latter part of the day, was more level, and the country showed some signs of being inhabited, as large herds of sheep and cattle were seen, though we saw not a house or cultivated field. Toward night we passed several droves of donkeys, which were going the same way that we were. At last we found one drove that was not loaded. Of the drivers we asked and obtained permission to ride, at the same time promising to pay them. We mounted and rode some ten miles. As we were much fatigued, this was a great relief.

At length we came in sight of Lagos, though yet it was a great way off. When within five miles of that place, the Mexicans wished to go another direction; I paid four shillings for our ride, and, with many thanks, we parted. At some distance we saw several large haciendas and ranchos; large and well-cultivated fields now cheered the eye; and this scene, in contrast with the portion we had come through, looked really beautiful and interesting.

About four o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at Lagos. Some time before reaching the city we passed by several extensive gardens, filled with large quantities of fruit of the most delicious quality. On each side of the road were high walls, but within these, oranges, lemons, and plantains grew to perfec-

tion, forming a perfect shade and pleasant walk. The odor from these various kinds of fruit was most delicious. But as yet not a house could be seen, as they were built back from the road, the trees and wall hiding them from view.

Just at the suburbs of the city there is a river some twenty rods wide, which we had to ford; but at this place it was very shallow, not over our shoes. Both above and below the city it is deeper, and the reason of its being so shallow here is because it passes over such an extent of ground. We soon waded over, entered the city, and inquired the way to the office of the commandante. On our way thither, while before a large and splendid building, we observed several gentlemen standing round. As soon as we came opposite, one of them addressed us in good English, and invited us to come in. We were taken into an office, when we discovered that the gentleman who had spoken to us was an officer of some rank in the army. He asked us where we were now from; we answered, from Mexico, and were now going to Mazatlan to take a vessel to our own country. He then asked if we were Irish. My comrade did all the talking now, and replied we were. He then asked whence we had deserted—from Monterey? Here I will remark that some thirty or forty had deserted from our army at Monterey. My comrade also stated that we first came to San Luis Potosi. He then inquired if we recollected the officer who received us at San Luis, and if we saw him now would we know him? My comrade was getting into rather a short corner; for I well knew that he had never been at

San Luis, and from the manner of his asking these questions, I suspected that our interrogator himself was there at that time, and did this duty. I also thought that I had seen him when I was confined in the jail in that city. From these considerations, as my comrade hesitated in answering, I replied, that if I was not much mistaken, he was the officer who did that duty. He then said that he was. We then, at his request, related many of our adventures since that time, all of which were true, but they applied to others, and not to us; I had heard them related, however, and, for the present, borrowed them. He then said that he would give us a letter to his father in Guadalajara before we went away, and requested us to call on him in the evening. We then took our leave, feeling quite elated at our good fortune.

On inquiring for the commandante, we were directed to a building across the street; we went in there, and found it to be a billiard-room. It was full of gentlemen, and they seemed to be very much interested in a game then playing. We soon saw the man for whom we inquired, showed him our passports, and asked him where we could sleep that night. He directed us to a meson a short distance off, and requested a young man to take us there. The person addressed started off with us; but, instead of going there, he went up to the further end of the town to his father's house. As we entered, the old gentleman arose and received us with the utmost cordiality. His wife seemed very much pleased with the privilege of entertaining us. The old gentleman, it seems, was a teacher of languages, and some of his

scholars were in when we entered; these he soon dismissed, and commenced a conversation with us. As I alone could talk Spanish so as to be understood, his conversation was mostly directed to me.

He asked about my country, its productions, climate, improvements, &c. By his questions, he showed a very good knowledge of the United States. I represented to him that the United States was my native country, though I was of Irish descent. It was a very painful task for me to prevaricate and evade the truth as I did. Still, self-preservation was an absolute master. He soon brought us some bread and coffee, and then took us to see his garden and fruit orchard, where the most delicious fruit was given us to eat. His whole grounds occupied some two acres; and the income derived from the sale of his fruit must have been considerable, notwithstanding the low rate at which it sold. The fruit grew at all seasons of the year, the trees being in blossom, and having green and ripe fruit on. Oranges were sold at the rate of sixteen for a sixpence, and plantains at the same rate. The supply never fails; and all kinds of fruit, of the very best quality, may be had for a mere trifle.

I could not but admire the tasteful manner in which this garden was arranged. Wide, graveled walks led through every part of it. In the center was a fountain, and around it were seats placed in a circular form. The whole was shaded by several large tamarind-trees. If any thing could reconcile me to a life in Mexico, it would be a residence in a place like this.

It was now after sunset, and it was time to go and see the officer who had so kindly offered us letters to his father. The young man, to whose kindness we were indebted for this receipt, accompanied us to his office. He was not there when we entered, so we sat down and waited his arrival. In about half an hour he returned, and at once proceeded to write the letter. He requested his father to procure us some employment, and mentioned our respective occupations. When he had given it to us, he said, "With this you will be sure to find employment."

We soon returned to the house of our kind friend. Some of the neighbors came to see us, and expressed much sympathy at our hard lot. I had not been received so hospitably since my captivity, nor had so much pains been taken to make me forget the perils and difficulties of my situation; and I can now look back on the kindness I here received as the only bright spot in a year and a half of the darkest gloom, a period during which there was not a moment that I could consider my life safe. After partaking of a substantial supper, a bed was brought us to sleep on, a luxury we had not enjoyed for some time.

Next morning the old man took us to several houses, and begged for money in our behalf. Among the rest, we called on some priests, all of whom treated us with marked kindness; one of them gave us half a dollar apiece, and some shirts. He also pronounced a benediction on us. Thence our conductor took us to the outside of the city to a slaughter-house, and introduced us to the head butcher. He gave us something, and then we went inside to all the work-

men, from each of whom we got a sixpence;* and there being some thirty workmen, we got quite a little sum. We then went to the stores, all of whom gave readily; and by ten o'clock in the morning we had some eight dollars, which was quite a fortune for us.

We now went back to the house, where a good breakfast was given us, and then made preparations for leaving. Our friends urged us to stay a day or two more, that our clothes might be washed, a thing which they needed very much. But my companion was obstinate and deaf to good advice, so we bid our friends a reluctant adieu.

* The currency mentioned throughout these pages is that of New York, of twelve and a half cents to the shilling.