

CHAPTER VIII.

Departure from Lagos.—A mournful Farewell.—San Carlos.—Stratagem to procure a free Ride.—The Alcalde.—Departure from San Carlos.—Trouble with my Companion.—Arrive at Sayula.—Religious Celebration.—Leave Sayula, and mistake the Road.—Consequent Sufferings and Danger.—A singular Concert.—Regain the Road.—Meet old Fellow-travelers.—Stories about Robbers.—We disregard them, and are Robbed.—Generosity of a Bishop.—Join some Mexican Travelers for Protection.—Peculiar use of a Revolver.—Dexterity of the Mexicans in using the Lasso.—Value of Mexican Promises.—Delightful Scenery.—Arrive at Guadalajara.

On leaving Lagos, our young friend, whose name was Martiniano Silva, accompanied us nearly a mile from the city. We parted from him with much regret, for we had become attached to him on account of the many favors he had done us. He seemed anxious to do us all the good he could; and while we were on our way, he inquired if there was any one going that road with donkeys, hoping to get a chance for us to ride. But he failed; and he appeared to feel more disappointed than we did ourselves. When we separated, he embraced us both in the Mexican style; and after many wishes for our future welfare, he left us.

Our course was now south; before, it had been nearly west. The weather had become intensely hot; and as my long journeyings and great exposure had reduced me to a mere skeleton, I began at times to despair of ever reaching any sea-port, or effecting my

escape; I seemed to encounter new difficulties every day. When I first started I was well and hearty; but now the reverse was the case, and several hundred miles were yet to be traversed. But I pushed on with renewed resolution.

About an hour after we had parted from our friend, a Mexican lad came running after us with all speed, driving some donkeys. Our friend had directed him to hasten and overtake us, and to let us ride. We gladly took advantage of this opportunity, and rode about ten miles, for which we paid one shilling each. This lift enabled us to make some thirty miles that day.

The country most of the way was extremely rough, and, after leaving the city, I do not remember to have seen a single field under cultivation during the entire day until we reached a hacienda, where we stayed all night. This hacienda was called *San Fernando*; and, from the number of houses occupied by the peons, I judged it to be a large one. The proprietor gave us a welcome, and treated us hospitably.

Next morning we made an early start, and about noon we came to a stream of water, where we decided to wash our clothes. Our custom all along had been to wash them, and then put them on, and let them dry on our backs. If this service was not done well, it was done as good as we could do it.

We that day went fourteen leagues, and at night arrived at a small village called San Carlos. I here determined to employ a little stratagem, to avoid, if possible, walking the next day. After some study, I figured it all out to my satisfaction. I went to the

alcalde with my comrade, and presented our passports. After reading them, he gave an order for us to be accommodated with quarters at the meson. As soon as I had got the order, I asked him if he could give us each a donkey to carry us to the next town on the morrow. He replied that they might be obtained by paying for them. But this answer did not suit my purpose. So I replied, "Sir, you no doubt are aware that General Santa Anna issued an order to all alcaldes and commandantes to afford help and assistance to every one of this San Patricio company on their way to the Pacific Ocean, both as to money and, so far as lies in their power, facilities for traveling." This order was countersigned by the government, and was the last act they did before leaving Mexico. He said he recollected that order very well. "Well, then, sir," I said, "as an officer of that company, and by authority of this order, I demand for our journey to-morrow either mules or donkeys;" and added, "in proof of what I say relative to my rank, I can show you my commission;" and I began to fumble in my pockets, as though searching for it. He, however, said it was not necessary, as he was perfectly satisfied; and he at once wrote an order for two donkeys to be ready in the morning, and handed it to one of his constables, who immediately went out. The alcalde then invited us to drink with him, an invitation which we accepted.

In about thirty minutes the constable returned, and informed us that the donkeys would be ready by five o'clock in the morning. He then went to the meson with us, showed us our room, and gave orders that

we should be supplied with our meals free, or at least free to us. This was rather more than we had expected, but it was not the less acceptable on that account. After we were alone in our room, we had a good jollification over the success of our stratagem. Such an order had been given by the government, and the reason we had not tried its efficacy before was that we doubted whether it would be obeyed.

At the time appointed our donkey-driver was at the door, thumping away with all his might. We soon turned out, got our breakfast, and, mounting our little animals, quickly got under way. They were so low that our feet almost touched the ground; but we pushed on at as rapid a rate as possible, and that day traveled eighteen leagues. I would here mention that a Mexican league is less than the French, being only two and three quarters of a mile. Their weights and measures, also, are less, nearly in the same ratio. We that day passed several ranchos and haciendas. The country was quite well cultivated. We passed several large fields of sugar-cane, and at almost every house they had for sale an abundance of various kinds of fresh fruits.

My comrade was so overjoyed at our good fortune that we had gone but a little way before he began to drink, and before night he was very troublesome. I was several times so provoked with him that I was almost inclined to leave him behind. He was continually quarreling either with me or our driver. When intoxicated, he was as deaf to reason as a block; but when sober, he was so humble, and would ask my pardon so earnestly for what had occurred, that

I could hardly make up my mind to part from him. He well knew that he could not travel alone, as he could not speak Spanish; he therefore saw the necessity of keeping on good terms with me.

We reached Sayula about dusk, and at once made our way to the commandante, who gave us an order for a room at the meson; and as it was late, we did not go out again. The next day being Sunday, we determined not to proceed very early, so we went into a fonda or eating-house, and ordered a breakfast. While here there came to us another of the San Patricio company, named Michael Burns, who had been here some time. With him my comrade was entirely at home, and they both drank until they were quite intoxicated.

I soon saw that there was no getting away that day; and as there was to be a religious celebration in the afternoon and evening, I was very willing to stay. So, having secured my room and the things in it, I went down to the Plaza. It was crowded with people, and every thing which the country afforded was here exposed for sale. The town is large, and contains several churches and a convent. As I greatly needed shaving, I inquired for a barber's shop, and was directed to one. On inquiring for the barber, he soon appeared, dressed in the uniform of a captain of the infantry. The operation of shaving was presently finished, and I then asked him if he belonged to the army. He said he did. I told him that in my country an officer in the army would consider it a disgrace to officiate as a barber. He made some vague reply to this; and, as he seemed anxious for

me to go, I handed him the usual sixpence. He said it was not enough; he required another sixpence. This I thought strange; but, as he was a captain, I did not know but he had raised his price; so, without further parley, I paid it and left, feeling much honored at being shaved by a captain.

In the afternoon preparations were made for a grand display; music was played, soldiers were drilling, and banners flying all over the city, and at three o'clock the great bell of the Cathedral tolled. At that instant a carriage, drawn by four mules, drove up in front of the church, and a load of fat, jolly-looking priests got into the vehicle. Other ecclesiastics came up behind, on foot; then came a body of soldiers, and then a company of young ladies, carrying banners, followed by a crowd of citizens, the whole preceded by a brass band. The procession then advanced till it came opposite to the convent, where it halted. A large cross, with the body of Christ represented on it as large as life, was placed between the priests and soldiers. This was shaded by a silken canopy, borne by four priests on poles high above the image; then, at the sound of music, with slow and solemn tread, the procession commenced perambulating the streets.

The performance did not close till after sunset, when the coach again drove up to the door of the Cathedral. The priests alighted; the soldiers returned to their quarters, and all was again quiet for a few moments. In the evening there was an exhibition of fire-works. I now went back to the meson, and found that my comrade had slept off his drunken fit. As usual, he was very sorry for what he had done.

In the morning we made an early start. Michael Burns had left us at night, saying that he should go with us in the morning; but, from what I had seen of him, I resolved that he should not; so, when we started, we did not wait for his appearance. We advanced, as we supposed, on the road pointed out to us, which led us directly across the mountains; nor did we find out our mistake until we had been two days on our journey. We then thought it best to pursue the same route, as we were informed that it came in on the one we wished to travel in the course of five or six days. It took us an entire day to cross the mountains, guided only by a foot-path, and even this was sometimes so indistinct that it could hardly be traced.

On this route we saw several places where mines had been dug, but at the present time they were not in operation. The history of these mines I tried to ascertain, but failed. That night we stopped at a small village, where our arrival produced the greatest excitement. The people appeared as though they had never before seen a foreigner; they, however, did not molest us, but escorted us in great numbers to the office of the alcalde, who treated us with kindness, and gave us permission to sleep in the office.

Next morning we started about eight o'clock. This valley is small and well cultivated. It is thickly inhabited, and yet the inhabitants appeared, for Mexicans, to be well off. We traveled about ten leagues, when we came to a place to which we had been directed in the morning. It was a small yet beautiful town, situated in a valley surrounded on all sides

by high hills. Beyond these is a beautiful and fertile plain, abundantly supplied with water. The only drawback on this part of the country is the great scarcity of timber; this, in fact, is the case with a great part of Mexico.

On learning that we came from Sayula, they informed us we had come far out of our way. There was, however, another route by which we could get back into the road we had left without taking a back track; but we would have to cross the mountains again; and they added that this was, in fact, the only direct route to Guadalajara.

I had yet some five dollars, and I had reason to be glad that there was so much left; for in these small towns it was impossible to obtain any more, and for the two last nights we had not found the people so hospitable as formerly. Not a cent of money would they give us, and we procured provisions only as we paid for them. The alcalde of this place even charged us for the room we slept in.

In the morning we took the road pointed out to us, and were told that in four days we would be on our old road. There were no more villages to go through, and but few ranchos or haciendas. We followed our road, which was nothing more than a foot-path, as best we could through the chapparal, and that night we slept out of doors. We had either lost our way, or, what is more likely, they had deceived us as to the distance of the place at which we should stop, for we did not come to it until noon the next day. We were by this time faint with hunger, not having eaten any thing since the morning of the day

before. We remained here till the next morning, and before starting we bought provisions for two days.

That day we traveled ten leagues, and at night we encamped in the open fields at the foot of the mountains. The following morning we made an early start. Huge mountains lay before us, which we had to cross. A small path, barely discernible, was said to lead to the opposite side. Our ascent was toilsome in the extreme; craggy rocks and steep precipices hindered our progress, and in some places it was so steep that we were forced to pull ourselves up by the bushes. The path could no longer be traced, and our only guide now was the top of the mountain. We were in hopes, when we arrived there, that we would be able to see some place that would serve as a beacon to direct our course; but we did not get to the summit till toward night, and our disappointment can be better imagined than described when we found there were other and still higher mountains yet to cross.

Our water had given out, and no more could be found. We had lost our way in the midst of huge mountains, and were compelled to pass another night there amid the haunts of beasts of prey, such as the panther and jaguar, and of the most venomous reptiles. Not a place could be found where we could lie down, and the night was like Egyptian darkness. We had no means of building a fire, and our feelings were any thing but pleasant when the howling of the wolves, the screaming of the panthers, and the loud roaring of the jaguar sounded in our ears. As the only means of saving ourselves, we got on the top of a rock some ten feet high, and nearly perpendicular.

This would afford us, we thought, a better chance to defend ourselves. We had come to this rock before dark, but did not get on it until we heard the howlings of these animals. Here we passed a long, gloomy, and dreadful night. The idea of sleeping never entered our minds; nor could we have slept so long as this horrible concert was carried on around us.

Toward morning it began to cease, and by daylight all was still. This was decidedly the longest night that I ever experienced. We were constantly looking round to see if we could not discover some appearance of the approach of morning; hour after hour did we watch in vain; but at length the morning star appeared, and soon after a few dim rays of light shot upward from the sun, which before long rose above the horizon. We now breathed freer, and felt ourselves safe, though we were not relieved from our difficulties.

We now prepared to descend the mountain. This was much easier than to ascend, as we could slide, jump, or tumble, just as it happened; so we got to the bottom by twelve o'clock. Here we found a stream of good water, and a path between the mountains, which I thought must lead somewhere—if not to the place where we wished to go, at least to some rancho. We followed it some three miles, when the mountains diverged from each other, and a most beautiful valley presented itself, extending in length as far as the eye could reach, but not over three or four miles in width. At some distance ahead we saw a rancho. To this we directed our way, and soon arrived there. We procured a warm breakfast, and