

who thought and felt the same, as I will show hereafter.

On account of the illness of Don Pedro's wife, we remained at this rancho three days, and on the fourth proceeded on our journey. We took the same road that we had previously taken for about three or four leagues, until we were near Magdalena, when we turned to the south. For several leagues the road was through a fine and beautiful valley, until we came to a small village, where we baited our horses and took dinner. We then pushed on over the mountains. After crossing these, Don Jesus pointed to the town where we were going. As yet I could see nothing but a large forest; not a house was visible. The country round us was level, and appeared to be well cultivated. The village now could be discerned among the trees. The road passed by two beautiful little lakes. About four o'clock in the afternoon we entered the town.

## CHAPTER X.

I become acquainted with the higher Classes.—Their Manners and Character.—Appearance of the Ladies.—Peculiar Mode of Salutation.—The Clergy.—Different Classes.—Their Revenues.—Character of the Priests.—Service for the Dying.—Crosses and Medals.—Description of the Country round Iztlan. — Mines. — Mode of extracting Silver. — Visit to a Silver Mine. — Account of a peculiar Tribe of Indians.—Causes of Indian Degradation.—Mode of Protection against the Cold.—Mexican Dogs.—A great Festival.—Theatrical Performances.—Placed in a Dilemma regarding Matrimony.—A singular Trait.—My Expectations are frustrated.—Character of Don Pedro Martinez.—Interior Arrangements of Mexican Houses.—Music.—Rumor of President Polk's Death.—How received.—Sad Results of the War.—Cause of the frequent Revolutions in Mexico.—Cock-fighting.

Soon after our arrival, the house was thronged with visitors, who came to welcome the return of Don Pedro. I was introduced to them all, and they seemed to regard me with much curiosity; many of them, probably, had never seen a foreigner before. In the evening my patron, as the Mexicans called him, paid a visit to several of his friends, and nothing would do but I must go with him. At every place where we called, the lady of the house would, after some conversation, bring me a glass of wine or a cup of chocolate. I was afterward frequently invited to their houses, and treated as though I had been a prince; not that they really considered me as a person worth minding, but as a man in distress. They considered I had claims on their sympathy, and they strove to

make me forget the troubles through which I had passed. I therefore enjoyed opportunities for observation that I had never before possessed.

The higher classes of this part of Mexico are early risers; and when they first get up, a cup of chocolate, with bread, is brought them. This lasts till ten or eleven, when a regular breakfast of meat, beans, and tortillas is served up. About three in the afternoon they dine. At five they take another cup of chocolate; and they sup immediately before they retire for the night, which they generally do about eleven o'clock. Knives and forks and spoons are seldom used in eating, and never except among the very wealthiest; they are too costly an article for common use. They take their meat in their fingers and tear it in pieces, and double up a piece of tortilla to answer for a spoon.

They are good cooks, and know how to please the most fastidious; but some of their habits are not in accordance with our views of cleanliness. I have seen women sitting at the door, looking over each other's heads, and every little while a quick, jerking motion of the hand, accompanied with a cracking noise of the nails, indicated their success in the hunt. When it is meal-time they go to cooking without washing their hands—a thing, in fact, which they often do only once a week. Yet they are neat and very tasteful in their dress.

The Mexican ladies are very kind-hearted, and make affectionate wives; but, unfortunately, they are often unfaithful. They are quick, violent, and impulsive in their feelings; and in this lies the secret

of their ruin. This feature is not confined to the lower classes, but is common to all, both rich and poor, high and low. The ladies of pure Spanish blood are eminently beautiful. In this place there were quite a number of them. Their complexion was of marble whiteness, showing a delicate and slight rosy color in the cheek, with bright, large, dark eyes and heavy eyebrows. Their voices possess a flute-like softness; and when heard from such lips, one will readily acknowledge the sweetness of the Spanish language. Yet the moral deformity mentioned above often spoils all their charms.

The Mexican women, as a general rule, are not handsome; they are, more or less, mixed with the Indian race, and want the clear complexion which we deem essential to female beauty; but they have large, dark, sparkling eyes, high-colored lips, and good teeth. Their manner, however, is their principal charm. Whenever I entered a house (which even a stranger might do and be sure of a welcome), the señoras would offer a seat, without rising, and would at once enter into conversation, with a very engaging piquancy and vivacity. After a short absence, a pretty doña immediately grasps her friend by the hand, and embraces him. This habit struck me at first as rather forward; but its every day occurrence soon showed me that it was only a common mode of recognition, and I soon became so used to it that I actually enjoyed it. But the real grace and gusto with which two dirty and ragged old beggars will thus embrace and hug each other is a singular sight. This practice is not confined to either sex. I may here re-

late how I was first victimized by this friendly embrace. During my residence in this place, I went to visit a friend at his rancho, some distance in the country. I remained there several days; and when I was about to leave, I went to shake hands with my kind and beautiful hostess, and bid her good-by. She would not be satisfied with this, but at once embraced me. This rather set me back; but, not willing to appear bashful, I embraced her also, and with a good will; and, in my ignorance, I proceeded to increase the fervor of my embrace with a few hearty kisses. I did not discover my mistake till a roar of laughter from behind led me to perceive my blunder. I was afterward very careful not to go any further than I saw others do; and by this watching, I soon learned to conform to their customs without offending good manners.

I now come to speak of a subject that I would rather omit. From the priests I have, with but one or two exceptions, received nothing but kindness. They are generally well informed on all subjects, and for the most part liberally educated; but they are bigots in every sense of the word. The clergy are divided into three classes: the bishops, who have control over a state, or perhaps more; the curas or curates, who have control over one, two, or more churches; and the common priests, whom the curates pay by the month, generally at the rate of from twenty-five to fifty dollars each. I am not acquainted with the province or peculiar duties of the monks, and therefore I do not mention them.

The revenue of the cura is derived from his mar-

riage, funeral, and baptismal fees. With regard to the amount of marriage fees, each cura regulates that in his jurisdiction; and it is from fourteen to one hundred dollars, according to the condition of the parties. It often happens that the bridegroom is not able to pay the fee, in which case, as the man of God is inexorable, the poor fellow goes home, and, with the friends of his intended wife, gets up a *fan-dango*, which answers the same purpose as a wedding. This is the cause of there being so few marriages among the poorer classes.

The baptismal fees are from three to ten dollars; this, also, is regulated by the cura. The burial fees are higher, ranging from thirty to one hundred dollars, and none can have the benefits of mass and a burial in consecrated ground unless these fees are paid; so that those who are too poor to afford this are compelled to bury their dead in the field or by the road side.

The revenue of the bishop is derived from a tithe or a per centage of the wealth and income of all the inhabitants. He claims a tenth part of the annual produce of all their stock (horses, sheep, and cattle) and lands, or an equivalent in money, and the poor laborer is forced to pay the tenth of his scanty earnings. This mode of taxation swells the income of a bishop to thousands of dollars annually. There are many, however, living in remote districts, who never pay his lordship their quota of tithes. In such cases the bishop has a right to take by force the portion belonging to him.

I have seen some priests in this place so intoxica-

ted as to be unable to walk alone, and they would seek company in the gutter, or cling to a lamp-post, and there remain until some passers-by took them up and carried them to their homes. In doing so they always took off their hats, and did not replace them until they had deposited their sacred burden in his own house. This abject deference paid to the priests is universal. Even the richest, who, if any, could claim exemption, never meet one without taking off their hats, and if they stop to speak, they remain uncovered till they pass on. If a priest enters a house, the inmates all rise and remain standing, unless he seats himself, when they do so likewise. By the discipline of the Church they are bound to a life of celibacy, but as they have passions like other men, and the articles of their faith do not much help them to subdue these passions, they indulge in the grossest licentiousness, and their characteristic appearance is that of a bloated and sensual class of men. I do not speak at random, but have abundant proofs of what I assert. It may not be the same in other countries—I hope it is not; but here, as I feel bound to state what I know, however repugnant to my feelings, I must say that these things are so.

I will now describe one of the ceremonies of their Church, as it shows the character of their religion. When a person is sick, and is supposed to be at death's door, the great bell tolls, the people all flock to the church, and wait for the appearance of the priest. His carriage soon drives to the door, and he enters, dressed in gorgeous robes. Candles are then distributed, which they light, and sally forth, the men

before and the women behind the carriage; and as they pass along, they say prayers for the benefit of the dying person. All take off their hats, and along the streets through which they pass, all who are not in the procession kneel, remove their hats, and go to praying with great apparent fervor. This they call *God going to give a through ticket to paradise*; but, from the noise and number of people engaged, it more resembles a motley crowd than a rational manner of serving the great Jehovah. When the priest passes in his stately coach, should a poor sinner be so stubborn as to refuse taking off his hat and kneel down, it is usually knocked off, and he is forced to kneel. It is truly surprising how the educated and thinking class of this people can be made to believe in these mockeries; but they adore their priest more than their God, and his word is absolute law.

The habit is universal among the Mexicans for both sexes to wear around the neck a medal or cross, suspended by a rosary. The medals, which are of brass, and of English manufacture, often bear the image and name of the patron saint of the wearer, but, more generally, they are stamped with the figure and name of "*The Lady of Guadalupe*," of whom they tell many miraculous stories. On the reverse of the medal is inscribed, "*Non fecit taliter omni nationi*," which a late writer on Mexico wittily translates, "*She never made such a fool of any other nation*." The crosses are often of silver or gold.

The love of ornaments and false jewelry prevalent among the lower classes is remarkable. Every woman has her fingers loaded with brass rings set with

glass; and such is the demand for these trinkets, that traders find them the most profitable articles they can carry out.

I will now give a brief description of the country around Iztlan. On one side of the village is an extensive valley, and several lakes can be seen within the circuit of two leagues. The village itself is well built, and richly adorned with handsome public and private gardens. The various kinds of tropical fruits are grown to perfection. In the rear of the town are vast mountains, raising their tops to an immense height; they seem to be piled one on another, and thrown together with the utmost confusion. I judged that their average height exceeds six thousand feet, because eight thousand is said to be the region of perpetual snow, and many of these were covered with snow, while there is little difference in their average height.

There are numerous mines of silver, several of which are extensively worked. Their method of extracting the silver deserves a short notice. It is brought from the mines by pack mules, and when enough is collected to enable them to grind to advantage, it is ground fine, and then placed in a vat filled with water. It is now stirred till all the dirt is washed out. Below the vat are earthen cups, placed at regular intervals, for two rods or more, so that, should any silver escape from the vat, these cups would catch it. When it is all washed out, the water is drawn off, and the silver is collected by means of quicksilver. From the smallness of their mills, it is a slow and expensive process.

I was one day invited by a proprietor to visit one of his mines on the opposite side of the mountain. A mule was furnished me for this purpose, and we started at an early hour. Our course was winding, to avoid as much as possible the steep precipices, of which there are many; and in some places it was so steep that I thought it was impossible to ascend; but the mule is a sure-footed animal, and ascended those places with the ease and agility of a deer. After a three hours' ride we came to the opposite side, when another beautiful valley was presented to our sight, and a large and beautiful town, called Aqualulco.

We soon reached the mine. Here a small hut was built to accommodate the miners, and around were large quantities of rock that had been blasted, ready to be packed off on mules. After partaking of a lunch, we entered the mine. The passage was narrow, so low that we could not stand upright, and so dark and winding that none could traverse it without a light, however well acquainted with it. In several places the vein ran into branches, and these had been worked to the termination. To prevent accidents from caving in, every cavity was propped up with heavy timbers as they advanced. The vein had been worked to the depth of a hundred yards, and its size varied from one to one and a half yards square. After they had blasted, the rocks were carried out in a sort of basket, made of thick, heavy hides.

This mine yielded, on an average, twenty dollars daily; and so long as it yielded that, they would not abandon it. The miners had a certain proportion, which made their wages better than working on a

farm. At three o'clock we mounted our mules to return. While we were yet on the side of the mountain, I got along very well; but when we came to the steeps, it appeared so dangerous to remain on the mule, that I dismounted and slid down, not being able to walk. By doing so I exposed myself to the ridicule of my companion, who descended in safety, and with perfect ease. We reached home about nine o'clock, greatly fatigued after so hard a ride.

These mountains, I am informed, are full of mineral wealth, principally silver and copper. The latter is seldom worked, as it does not pay the great expense of mining. Gold is occasionally found; but the veins are not so large as the silver, seldom exceeding one or two fingers, and they are generally imbedded in a whitish quartz rock. The gold is pure, never being alloyed with any other metal.

There is one peculiarity in these mines that struck me as something quite singular. It is, that where silver is found in large quantities, gold seldom occurs, at least not in the same mountain; and the reverse also holds true, for where gold is found in any quantity, silver is not. This feature may not be applicable to all parts, but I was informed by the oldest and most experienced miners that it is the case here.

At Iztlan I saw some Indians that were very different from the regular Mexican Indians. They lived about twenty leagues distant. The account I heard of them is so singular that I consider it worth relating. It is derived from a priest of this place, and therefore entitled to some credit. They are a large and powerful tribe; and from the best information

that can be obtained, they occupy one of the largest and most beautiful valleys in Mexico, which is completely walled in by high and almost impassable mountains. Living in this retired spot, they had never been conquered by the Spaniards. They have maintained their primitive language and forms of worship, and in nothing have they become assimilated to the Spaniards. No stranger is allowed to reside among them. Some Catholic missionaries had attempted to do so, to convert them to the Catholic faith; but they were expelled, though without violence.

These Indians are said to be in possession of some very valuable mines of gold and silver. They make annual excursions into the neighboring country to sell their wares. But few of them can speak any other language than their own. The party that I saw consisted of six tall, straight, athletic men, accompanied by an interpreter. Their articles for sale consisted of blankets, baskets, and silver-ware. Their blankets were the most beautiful of any that I ever saw, being made of the finest wool, and dyed of various and brilliant colors. Their silver-ware consisted of pitchers, cups, and vases, well shaped, beautifully engraved with hieroglyphics, and profusely ornamented with gold and silver. From the style of the workmanship, I was sure it could not have been executed by a Mexican artist, but that they themselves must have been acquainted with many of the arts of civilized life.\* I felt a great desire to visit this singular

\* In their manners and dress they appeared every way superior to the Mexicans, and their mechanical skill was certainly of a high order.

tribe, who had successfully resisted all attempts to conquer or convert them; and for this purpose, I pressed the interpreter to obtain this privilege for me of the man who appeared to be the leader. A shake of the head invariably showed the result of my application.

This short account of these Indians suggested many reflections as to the causes of the present degradation of the Indian population of Mexico. Originally they were conquered more effectually by the priests who had been sent from Spain, than by the force of arms. Being naturally fond of parade and show, the priests adapted their worship to their peculiar tastes; they introduced the greatest pomp into their religious services, held numerous festivals, in which was a grand display of fire-works, processions, &c. This was just suited to the capacity of the simple-hearted Indian; and their speedy conversion was the result. Intermarriages followed, making their subjugation more thorough and complete. This was a master-stroke of policy; and its success showed the wisdom and sagacity of its projectors. But where a tribe or nation has been successful in keeping entirely separate and distinct from their invaders, allowing and preventing all settlements within their borders, they have preserved their independence with the same language and system of worship that they had during the reign of the Montezumas. The further pursuit of these reflections I will leave to abler writers.

It was now the middle of January, and the weather was bleak and cold, the immediate vicinity of these snow-capped mountains causing it to be much colder

than otherwise it would be. The Mexicans obviated this by increasing their quantity of clothing, as less expensive than keeping fires, which they never use more than is absolutely necessary to do their cooking. Wood is a costly article, and is bought as they require it, by the sixpence worth. At this rate it costs at least ten dollars per cord. Charcoal is also much used in cooking, and sold at sixpence the half peck. At these rates, it is easily seen that fires can not be kept by the common people for the purpose of warming rooms or making them comfortable, but every Mexican wraps himself closely in his blanket. This is an article of universal use; it serves as a coat, umbrella, and bed, and nothing so truly indicates the wealth of the wearer as this. They may be had at prices ranging from two to one hundred and fifty dollars. The more costly kinds are extremely fine, and require from four to six months to weave them. A Mexican never goes from home any distance without his blanket; and if on horseback, he is usually armed with his sword. This latter practice, however, is more the result of custom than necessity. If a man is only going to his hacienda, where danger could not possibly be apprehended, he makes the same preparation that he would for a long journey.

I have not yet spoken of the immense number of dogs in this country. It seems to me to be beyond all calculation. They are said to be mostly crossed with the prairie wolf, and have a miserable, mean appearance; I do not know that I saw a fine-looking dog in all Mexico. The pet dogs are called "comanche," for what reason I know not. They are not

large, and are entirely without hair, presenting a disgusting and filthy appearance; and to strangers they are very annoying. I should advise every traveler in Mexico to provide himself with a revolver, for at sight of this they apprehend danger as readily as their masters. This is a safeguard against all evil doers, both of man and dog.

About this time occurred a festival which I had never witnessed before. The place designed for the exhibition was the *Plaza de Gallos*, or place used for cock-fighting. This was a large, round building, furnished with seats one above the other. There were two entrances to it, at one of which scenery was erected, and staging for the accommodation of the performers. Every thing possible was done to make a fair representation of a theater.

On the day appointed, this apology for a theater was crowded to overflowing, the aristocracy attending with anxious curiosity depicted on their countenances. The performance commenced at an early hour. When the curtain rose, there stood a man dressed with a long black robe, trimmed with broad silver lace; his head was girt with a wide band, richly studded with silver, and long, curling ringlets fell gracefully over his shoulders. Above his head waved a majestic plume. In a low, trembling voice, he began a colloquy; and he was soon joined by another man in a military uniform. Violent words were exchanged, which ended in a furious quarrel, when the curtain dropped.

This was the first scene. The second soon followed; for now all were startled by the sound of

jingling bells, and the discord of many voices attempting to sing. On looking at the entrance opposite the stage, we saw ten or twelve men coming, dressed in a most fantastic style, each one bearing a long pole, to one end of which was attached a bell. They advanced with slow and measured step, singing as they advanced, and keeping time with their music by bringing their poles heavily on the ground, and causing the bells to jingle. Their music resembled a congregation of owls giving concerts more than that produced by human voices. On coming to the stage, they stopped, held a short colloquy, and then ascended it. Some earthen pots were now brought in, filled with victuals. They all sat down to eat, and a more grotesque or ridiculous scene could scarce be imagined; each one tried to excel the other in playing the monkey or the fool. A good half hour was thus occupied, when they arose, sang another song, and the curtain dropped.

Another scene was now introduced. A young woman, whose beautiful dress set off her more than lovely face to good advantage, was alone on the stage. She commenced speaking in a low tone, when she was joined by her husband. They were on a journey, troubled with that worst of all complaints, want of money, begging charity at every door, and at every door refused. A donkey was then brought in, with which to pursue their journey. The lady mounted; but his donkeyship, either not liking the appearance of things around him, or being naturally a little mischievous, refused to stir. They beat him and pushed him, but all would not do. The more they wanted