

it; he then gets some one with a violin, and with this music marches all over the town. This is considered a challenge, and in the afternoon the place is crowded to witness the combat. At these amusements I have seen thousands of dollars change hands at a single game. Judges are appointed to decide the game, and also to hold the stakes. Bull-fighting is another common amusement; but, never having witnessed one, I will say no more of it.

## CHAPTER XI.

Departure from Iztlan.—Arrive at Amatlan.—Visit to a Gold Mine.—Situation of Amatlan.—Hot Spring.—Mexican Names.—Practice of Medicine.—Office of Alcalde.—Judicial Cases.—Mode of Swearing.—Join an Expedition against a Band of Robbers.—The Result.—Career of a Murderer.—Schools.—Peonage.—Gambling.—Fandangoes.—The Carnival.—Lent.—Processions.—A serio-comical Scene.—Visit another Gold Mine.—A Rose in the Desert.—Remove to Garabato.—Remarkable Phenomenon there.—Disgraceful Scenes.—Stung by a Scorpion.

I WAS NOW very anxious to leave Iztlan, though where to go I knew not, as I had been informed that the American fleet was not yet at San Blas. I made frequent applications to my friend Don Pedro for permission and assistance to leave him and go to Tepic. To this he strenuously objected. He urged the dangers of the road, and the present impossibility of getting out of the country. It was useless to urge, for to let me go he would not consent; and, in order to induce me to remain, he now mentioned the subject of marriage with the young lady before spoken of. He said she was in favor of it, and her mother was anxious to have it take place. He further said that, with her wealth, I could live like a gentleman, and no longer be a beggar as I had formerly been. Our conversations on this subject were numerous, and at length I desisted entirely from mentioning it. His secretary, however, took part in my favor. He advised me to remain quiet for the present, for in a few

days Don Pedro was going to a distant place on some business, to remain several weeks, and he would manage it so that I should go with them, and thence I could easily get to Tepic.

I now appeared to be contented, and not in the least desirous of leaving. At length the day of departure came. My patron inquired if I wished to go to Amatlan. I told him I did. He then ordered me a mule, and in four days we were on the way. Previous to starting, Don Jesus procured a bottle of aguadiente, unknown to Don Pedro, who, knowing the habits of his secretary, would have opposed this strenuously.

The country, for a part of the way, was settled; but most of it was wild, rough, and uninhabited. Every little while the secretary would fall behind his employer and take a drink of the liquor, in which I sometimes joined him, for the liquor was excellent. The road was wild and gloomy, and I felt like a bird just let loose from a cage.

Our journey that day was eighteen leagues, and we did not arrive at our destined place until after dark. Just before reaching it I became separated from my friends, and as it was pitchy dark, I lost my way; I felt confident, however, that I was near the suburbs of the town, but where to go I knew not. I therefore resolved to trust to the instincts of the mule, and let him pursue the way he thought best, of course supposing that he would fetch up somewhere. After a few moments he stopped, and, for all I could do, he would not move another inch. I then dismounted to examine the ground, when I discovered that he had

stopped at the foot of a steep bluff, and one that he could not ascend. I searched for the path, but in vain. I then called lustily for help, and a man soon appeared. I told him my trouble; he put me in the road, and accompanied me to the alcalde's.

Here I found my friends, awaiting my arrival with some anxiety, and I also met several persons that I had seen at Izatlan. The alcalde was an old acquaintance, with whom I stayed. The next morning I took a view of the town. It is surrounded with high mountains, which are said to be full of valuable mines, but they are not worked: one, a gold mine, I visited in company with Don Jesus. It had not been worked for a great many years. It was about a hundred feet deep, and the vein was about as large as my finger. From the amount of metal it appeared to contain, I should think it might be worked to advantage; but the Mexicans are too indolent to do any thing with it further than to supply their most pressing wants, and hardly that.

I said that this mine is not worked, but I will state an exception to this remark. If a Mexican is sorely pressed for money, and can not raise it in any other way, he will take his drill, go to the mine, take one or two blasts, grind the rock, and separate the gold. In this operation he will frequently make two or three dollars a day. When again pressed with want, he will again resort to this laborious method of supplying his necessities. This is the full extent to which this or any other mine in this vicinity is worked. None seem to care for any thing above their present wants.

The town is situated in a sort of basin, and so low and small that a cool breeze is seldom felt. In addition to this, there is a hot spring close to one side of the village, and so warm that it will cook an egg in a few moments. The heat arising from this, together with the location, renders this one of the hottest places that I ever saw. But it is decidedly a fruit-growing place; cocoa-nuts, a fruit that I never saw growing before, are produced in great abundance. The trees are very tall and slender, tapering to a mere point. The fruit grows close to the top of the trunk. There are no limbs, and but few leaves.

With regard to the hot spring, different theories exist as to its cause. Some suppose that it is the action of different metals, others that a combination of acids and alkalis heats the water to its present degree. There is also a large creek passing through here, into which the hot water runs; and at the junction is an excellent place for bathing, the water being tempered to the proper degree of heat.

I have been often struck with the singularity of many of the names in Mexico. I here ascertained that they are of Indian origin. *Amatlan* is pure Indian, and signifies *the land of fruit*; *Etztlan* is *the land of roses*, and *Hicacatlan* *the land of fire*, there being a volcano near that city in active operation at the present time.

The little knowledge of medicine which I possessed was of the greatest advantage to me. I have been sent for a distance of five leagues to visit the sick, and liberally paid. Once I was called even a greater distance, to visit a man who had a cancer on his face.

It had grown to such a size that his whole face was completely disfigured; but for him there was no help for want of medicines. I could do nothing to speak of in any difficult case; yet the fact that they regarded me as a doctor insured me good treatment. I am thoroughly convinced that a physician might do a good business here. The pay is good; and in very few places only would he have any competition. He might have all to himself for a range of twenty leagues around him. The expenses of living are trifling; two shillings a day will pay one's board, and if he prefers keeping house, sixpence a day would be sufficient to pay for his provisions.

Having frequently mentioned *alcaldes*, I will now say something relative to the duties and responsibilities of that office, as I observed it in this town. I was now residing with the *alcalde* of this place, and had a good opportunity of observing them. He is both a justice of the peace and a judge. His decisions are nearly absolute, and subject only to the supervision of the supreme judge of the district. In criminal cases he generally passes sentence as he thinks proper, of confinement either in jail, or in the state prison, which is in this state at Guadalajara. While I was here, three were sent, under a strong escort, to the state prison. In very extraordinary cases, the prisoner has a regular trial, and is then sent to jail, when the *alcalde* sends a report of the trial and testimony to the first judge, who resides in Tepic. The latter pronounces sentence, which is carried into effect by the *alcalde*.

I will relate one instance that occurred under my

observation. A man entered a house, murdered a woman and two children, and cut the father of the children severely on the head with a sword. The murderer was arrested and brought before the alcalde. The case was then examined, when sufficient proof was found against him, and he was confined in jail. The wounded man was then inspected, to ascertain if his wound was dangerous. I was called on to do this duty. I soon ascertained that it was, under existing circumstances, likely to prove fatal, as no care whatever had been taken to dress it; and in so hot a climate, the chances were that he would never get well, and I gave my opinion accordingly. Several days were then occupied in making out a report, both as to the three murders, and the attempted murder of the fourth. With regard to the last, I signed my name as examining surgeon as to the dangerous nature of the wound; and, in fact, within two weeks, the poor man died. The report was sent to Tepic; but I did not remain long enough to hear the result of the affair.

Another instance of a different character will show the great power of the alcalde. A man was owing me for some professional services, and either would not or could not pay. I told the alcalde of it, and he wrote a letter commanding the debtor to come at once and pay me. The letter was given to a little boy to deliver, and the next morning early the man came and paid up, making all sorts of apologies for not having done so before.

When a person is sworn, the alcalde takes his staff of office and makes a cross with it. The person tak-

ing the oath does the same with his finger and thumb. By this cross he is sworn to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." During this ceremony all in the court room rise.

At this time a man came into the place and reported the appearance of a band of robbers at a hacienda some two leagues distant. In consequence of this report, the inhabitants were greatly alarmed, and the alcalde ordered out thirty horsemen, well armed with lances, swords, and carbines. A horse was also provided for me, as I was anxious to join the enterprise, an adventure of this kind suiting my mind, because of the fun and excitement always attending them. I was furnished with a sword, a carbine, and a brace of pistols. In about an hour we were ready to start. We passed over the ground at top speed, and in little more than an hour arrived at the place where the robbers had been. Some of the buildings had been destroyed, and all plundered of every thing that was valuable. The cattle and horses also were taken off. But the miscreants were gone.

The inhabitants had fled at the first appearance of danger, and secreted themselves. When they saw us coming, they returned and informed us of the road the banditti had taken. Instant and vigorous pursuit was now ordered. They had about half an hour's start of us, but we were confident of overtaking them. Previous to starting from the village, our orders were to arrest all strangers that we found without a passport; for the law is such that any person must have one to pass even from one district to another, otherwise he is liable to be arrested as a thief.

We now pushed on with renewed vigor, and in about two hours we came in sight of them. They discovered us at the same time, and at once began to separate. They left a portion of the plunder that encumbered them the most, and made all haste to cross the mountains. The excitement now became intense, both with the pursuers and the pursued. We followed up the mountain some distance, when we succeeded in overtaking a portion of them. On our coming up, they made a stand and fired two rounds, wounding three of our men. We returned the fire, and charged on them at the same moment. They numbered about the same as we did; and the conflict was now with the sword. It was short and severe; but we succeeded in capturing them, four being killed on our part, and five wounded. The loss on theirs was nearly double that number. The rest of their party was by this time so far ahead of us that pursuit was impracticable. We therefore tied together with a rope those that we had taken, and returned with them, and the mules, and horses, and other effects that had been stolen. We searched the prisoners, and found some money, which we divided as lawful prize, amounting to some ten dollars each. We got back to Amatlan about sunset, and our captives were put in jail, where they remained till I left. What became of them afterward I know not. This band had been very troublesome for some time; but now it was effectually broken up, as the remainder gave no further trouble.

At this place I accidentally became acquainted with an American who holds a commission in the

Mexican army. As his history is singular, I will here insert it, premising that I do not vouch for its truth, but give it as he related it. He was formerly a miner in Wisconsin, where, in company with another man, he owned a valuable mine. Some difficulty occurred with a third person, in which he killed the latter. He then escaped as soon as possible, and went to Pittsburg. He remained there until he had exhausted his funds, when he served for some time as a hand on a steam-boat. To get still further away, he enlisted in the United States service, and went to Corpus Christi. Thence he deserted, and joined the Mexicans at Matamoros. He received a commission in their army, and was in nearly all the battles with the Americans, in which he invariably chewed the bitter cud of defeat. He was with General Urrea at the battle of Maríné, on the memorable 24th of February, when I was taken prisoner. Fortunately, he did not recognize me. He gave me some additional information relative to that capture, which, however, need not now be mentioned. Never yet have I felt so strong a desire to take life as I did this man's. The miscreant, after taking part in one of the most horrible massacres ever recorded, made a boast of what he had plundered and what he had done. He lives, a disgrace to himself and to his country. He has been amply rewarded by the Mexican government for his treachery; so, in fact, have all the deserters. Still, many of them are in a miserable condition, without money, clothes, or friends, and despised by every honorable man. Though the Mexicans may give them some little assistance, they heartily despise the