

CHAPTER XII.

Being deceived a second time, I start for Tepic with Secretary Muirguir.—Ojala.—Common mode of Spinning.—Ahuacatlan.—Account of a Volcano.—Frequency of Robberies.—I am taken Sick.—Arrive at Tepic.—Long confined with a Fever.—Good Offices of Mr. Whiting and other Countrymen.—Mineral Resources of Mexico.—Abundance of Gold.—Agricultural Resources.—Farming Implements.—Advantages of Mexico for Manufacturing.—Climate.—Summary of the Condition of Mexico.—Journey to San Blas.—Musquitoes.—Condition of the Town.—Go on board the United States ship Lexington.—Sail for the United States in the Cyane.—Usages on board a Man-of-war.—Religious Exercises and Instruction.—Hard Subjects.—Valparaiso.—A singular Race.—Arrive in the United States.

I now became thoroughly convinced that it was not the intention of Antonio Parra to perform a single one of his promises to me. I had been so often deceived by him and others that I had no confidence whatever in their word. In fact, where they are not bound to its fulfillment by a pecuniary consideration, it never need be expected that they will do as they agree. Honor with them is a principle that has become obsolete; they have no more idea of the value of their word of honor than a horse has of gold. I therefore determined to go to Tepic, and accordingly borrowed a horse and saddle of my kind host to go to Amatlan for three or four days. I knew that my friend, Jesus Muirguir, intended to go soon, and it was my intention to go with him, and keep this horse

till I got to Tepic. The manner in which I had been deceived justified me in so doing.

Having gone to Amatlan, and made arrangements with my friend, we started the third day in the evening. We chose the evening because it was cooler traveling. Being obliged to cross the mountains, we followed a gulley for some distance, during which time we crossed a stream seventy times. The next morning, about break of day, we came to Izatlan, the place whence I had started the fall before with Don Pedro Martinez. Here we remained two days, and again started at night for Tepic.

On this night's tramp we lost our way, and wandered round for some time, but could not find it. We then tied our horses to the fence, rolled ourselves in our blankets, and went to sleep. Next morning we resumed our search for the road, but for a long time were unsuccessful. At last we espied a man on horseback, and hailed him; but he did not answer us, doubtless supposing us to be robbers. I then rode after him. He increased his speed, anxious to keep out of our reach; but at last I overtook him, and inquired the road to Ojala, the place whither we were going. He pointed it out to me, and we then pursued our journey. In two hours we arrived at the place of our destination, and went to the house of a friend, where we remained two days.

Here are two villages close together. One is inhabited entirely by Indians. The houses are built in the Indian style; but they have a beautiful church. The other one is a large and well-built town, containing three large churches. The surrounding coun-

try is very beautiful. For miles around it is perfectly level, and not a weed nor bush is to be seen. The mountains are full of mineral wealth; but a great want of enterprise is apparent in all parts of this country.

To commence farming operations in Mexico great capital is not needed. Labor is cheap; working cattle may be bought for thirty or forty dollars, and cows from four to ten dollars each, while all kinds of produce bear a good price. Good land may be had at very low prices. Near this village land may be bought for twenty dollars an acre, which, in the United States, would, under the same circumstances, cost from seventy-five to one hundred dollars. Mexico has also every facility to make it one of the best manufacturing countries, both of woolen and cotton goods. Of the latter there are several already in operation. The raw material is brought from the United States and South America, very little cotton being raised in Mexico; but any quantity might be raised, if they had enterprise enough to introduce and attend to it. Their usual manner of making thread is very old-fashioned. They have no spinning-wheels, but, as a substitute, they use a long, slender spindle, which they dextrously whirl in a common saucer. While it is whirling, they spin out the required quantity, which is twisted into a fine, even, and hard thread. When the spindle has lost its impetus, they whirl it again with the thumb and finger, as a boy would whirl his top. This is a slow method, but it is the only one in general use among the Mexicans. I question very much if a Yankee would have been long

contented with this slow process of making so important an article as thread.

We remained in Ojala two days, when we started again and traveled to Ahuacatlan. This I found to be a large and well-built town. It was Sunday, and the streets and Plaza were full of people; here we stayed till noon, and on going into the yard to get our horses, I found that mine had been stolen. I made inquiries, but no one knew any thing about him; so I started on foot, changing alternately with Don Jesus, who still had his horse in possession.

Near Ahuacatlan we passed a volcano. Volumes of dense black smoke ascended therefrom, and it occasionally roared a little, just to let the inhabitants know that it was still alive, yet it was comparatively quiet to what it had been in former times. Earthquakes are very frequent, and I experienced several shocks; but as no houses tumbled down, nor was any material damage done, I have not thought it worth while to mention them. I was told that at times this volcano threw up large rocks and lava in abundance; and a little further on I saw evidence of the devastations it had committed. Before us lay what had once been a beautiful valley; but now it was buried some thirty feet under lava, thrown out during some terrible eruption. This lava field extended in some directions as far as the eye could penetrate, and was about two miles wide. The surface was hard and craggy, and so sharp that it was impossible to walk over it. A road had been made over it by hammering down the sharp points, just wide enough for a coach to pass; and it was now worn

smooth. The scene was one of the wildest and bleakest that I ever saw. I now, for the first time in my life, had seen an active volcano, and its terrible effects. Much as I admire all that is beautiful and grand in creation, I desire to see no more scenes like this. I could not think that I was out of danger so long as I was in its vicinity.

We hastened on as fast as possible, intending to reach San Isabel that night. That afternoon we overtook a man with whom my comrade was acquainted, who also was going to Tepic. This was a welcome addition to our number, as the road was said to be infested with robbers. This word is of very common occurrence in the speech of this country. A Mexican can not go from home and return without being asked, "Did you meet any robbers?" A man can hardly lie down at night without apprehension of danger. And, in short, they are kept in such continual fear of danger, real or imaginary, that life with them is hardly a blessing.

In this instance the report did not prove to be false; for, as I was traveling ahead of my companions, I met two men in a thick part of the woods, who were mounted on two splendid horses. They seemed to have just darted out of the bushes, for they rode up to me with all speed, one on each side. Knowing that help would soon come, I made all the resistance I could. I picked up a large stone, threw it with all my force, and hit one of the men on the face. This staggered him a moment; but he soon recovered, and was about commencing other operations, as I could see by his getting his lasso ready to throw, when, on

looking up, they saw my comrades coming round a turn in the road. They then made off with all speed into the chapparal. After this I was more careful to keep closer to them.

We came to San Isabel some time after dark. It is but a large rancho, and presents nothing worthy of note. The next morning we made an early start, and that day suffered a good deal for want of water, of which there was a great scarcity; and the ranchos were "few and far between."

Toward night we again lost our way; and after wandering about some time in hopes of discovering the path, we saw a house just at the bottom of a hill, where we remained till the next morning. We were then only about eight leagues from Tepic, and made an early start, wishing to get there before night. When about two leagues from the city I was taken sick, but I did not give up until I had got within a mile and a half of that place. Being unable to go further, I went into a house and obtained permission to lie down for a while, my fellow-traveler promising to return before night with another horse and bring me in. I was attacked with a raging fever. The house in which I was resting was alone, and far from any other; and when I went in, it was occupied only by women. From them I received every attention; but some time after a man came in, who I thought was somewhat the worse for liquor. He urged me to drink with him; and as I could not, he began to abuse me. Then he tried to force some down. This kind of attention in my then state was any thing but agreeable. The women took pity on

me, and tried to make him leave me; but he became exasperated, drove them out of the room, then dragged me out, and there left me. I had just strength enough to crawl under the fence, and there I remained I know not how long.

After some time a Mexican gentleman came along, who, seeing me in that condition, inquired of the women in the house what the matter was. They told him, and also the treatment that I had received. He took pity on me, put me on his horse, and started on to Tepic. Just before entering the city I met Muirguir coming out with another horse after me.

I was taken to a meson, in a room of which I was left perfectly helpless. There was some great excitement in the city, and they were there the whole time, while I was alone, burning with a raging fever, and parched with thirst. If I wanted any thing, I was forced either to wait for them to come in, or to take my shoe and rap on the side wall of the room. Sometimes I was heard, and sometimes not. In this way two long and miserable days passed by, during which I suffered much for want of water. At the end of this time I called a boy into the room and offered him two shillings to bring an American to see me. He was gone about an hour, when he came back, and a gentleman along with him. I inquired if he was an American. He said he was. I then told him of my situation, my captivity, escape, wishes, &c. He at once ordered some tea and other things to be given me, and presented me with two dollars. He then left, promising to return the next morning with another gentleman, when they would do some-

thing of a more permanent nature for me. That night my fever abated, and I slept well. The next morning the two gentlemen came again to see me; and as I was still unable to support myself, they had me carried to the factory, where the director, whose name is John Whiting, hired my board, for which he paid three dollars per week. During part of the time he employed a nurse, and also got a doctor to visit me. I was on his hands a little more than six weeks.

While I was here, Lieutenant Beal, of the navy, of whom so much has been said, visited the factory. He was then on his journey across the country to Mexico.

As soon as I was able to mount a horse, it was thought best for me to go to San Blas, distant sixty miles. The United States ship *Lexington* was then stationed there, and was to leave in a few days. To Captain Bailey, of that ship, I had letters of recommendation and introduction from Captain Basil, of Tepic. A horse was furnished me, and a servant was sent along to take care of me and bring the horse back. Previous to starting, a purse of twenty dollars was made up for me.

The next morning, June 6th, I bid adieu to my kind friends. This was a hard task. I was a perfect stranger, yet they treated me as they would a brother. Mr. Whiting's expenses, on my account, could not have been less than fifty dollars. I had no claims on them further than those of humanity; but they fed me, clothed me, and when I was sick, ministered to my wants. What more could they have done? I feel perfectly satisfied that, had I not

fallen into their hands, I should not now be alive. My long exposures, and various fatigues and sufferings, had completely broken down my constitution, and even at this day I have by no means entirely recovered; but the prompt medical attendance that was procured me arrested the disease and saved my life. The consciousness that this is the case must be their reward. I am only sorry that I can not show my gratitude in a more tangible form.

Before resuming my regular subject, I shall make a few final remarks relative to the appearance and resources of this country. It is mostly very mountainous. Look where you will, lofty mountains meet the eye; these are full of many and valuable mines, some of which are worked, others not. Valuable mines are frequently discovered that were formerly worked, and stopped up at the commencement of the revolution. The earth that was banked up over the mouth caves in, and discovers to the passer-by a very valuable mine. It is well known that, before the revolutionary war, many valuable mines were worked whose locations are not now known; the entrances had been covered over, and all knowledge of their existence had passed away; but these are gradually re-discovered as the embankments cave in, and some of them are now worked to great advantage.

Gold is found in considerable quantities in the arroyos, having been washed there during the rainy season. This was discovered in the following manner: A shepherd was on the mountains tending sheep, when, coming to one of these arroyos, he discovered several bright yellow particles; this exciting his cu-

riosity, he gathered up some of the sand, washed it out, and then found that he had gathered several dollars' worth of gold. He kept this discovery a secret, and continued digging and washing. Some days he would get from forty to sixty dollars, and finally he had obtained some five hundred dollars before it was found out where he got it. When the secret was discovered, the people all flocked to the mountains, and the arroyos were filled with gold-hunters. For a while they were successful, averaging from two to three dollars a day. But the gold after a while became exhausted; and as they searched no further, they gave it up until the next rainy season, when they again resorted to the mountains.

The above information I derived from the American residents of Tepic. It was their opinion that gold might be found in great abundance in the river bottoms, and on all lands that are overflowed by the water from the mountains during the rainy season, the same as it is now found in California. In my humble opinion, the vicinity of Tepic might be a better place to go to with a view of digging gold. The climate is as healthy as that of California, while clothing and the expenses of living are at least more than one half cheaper. Had I not been so completely broken down in health, I should have remained here a while to test the value of my faith in these deposits.

The Mexicans, I was informed, never ascend the mountain very high, and search out only where they can dig out loose sand, which they wash; but in some of the valleys it was known that the soil has accumulated from one to three feet by the wash from the

mountains. This might afford a rich return to the laborer. Or rich veins might be discovered by going up the mountains, as the existence of gold there is fully proved by the rich deposits it annually sends to the valleys beneath.

This mineral wealth is not confined to the vicinity of Tepic, for in most of the mountains of Mexico mines of either gold, silver, or copper have been discovered. More has been found out by accident than as the reward of a persevering search. It is often the case, during the dry season, that a fire breaks out on the mountains, and burns off all the vegetable matter, leaving the rocks perfectly bare; then, if any one has industry and perseverance enough to make a search, he is generally richly rewarded.

Another great yet neglected resource of Mexico is its agriculture. Much of its surface is indeed unfit for tillage; yet even that which is not is greatly neglected. Their agricultural implements are few, and are, I should think, much the same as our great grand-sire Adam constructed. They yoke their oxen together by means of a straight stick of wood, which is firmly tied to their horns with a long strip of raw hide cut up for that purpose. Their plow is generally nothing more than a stick of wood pointed at one end, though sometimes it is pointed with iron. This is about two and a half or three feet in length. From the end of this rises another upright stick, used for a handle. Where this handle is attached to the plow, there is also fastened a long pole, which is fixed to the yoke. This simple apparatus serves the double purpose of a plow and a harrow. All the rest of

their implements are equally rude and inefficient. By means of these they manage to eke out an existence; but I venture to say that they do not obtain from the land one quarter of the produce which it would yield if it were in skillful hands and under a stable government. With proper attention to the seasons, and more thorough working and manuring, an abundance might be raised for exportation; and as produce commands a good price, a farmer might soon realize a handsome fortune.

Another great resource of Mexico is its manufacturing advantages. There are several cotton factories already in operation; and, from the prices their fabrics command, they are making an immense fortune. But many more are wanted; and, in addition to these, woolen factories are much needed. An abundance of water power is yet unoccupied; and wool may be had in abundance at a cheap rate. Sheep may be raised in any quantities at a comparatively trifling expense. Cattle can be raised to great advantage; and the making of butter and cheese might be a source of great profit.

The climate of Mexico is not, as a general thing, unhealthy. It is so only on the sea-coast and low lands; but as you ascend the table lands in the interior, the atmosphere becomes cool, pure, and bracing. This part of Mexico is, in my opinion, as healthy as any country in the world.

Who is to have the honor of developing the resources of Mexico? That this will never be fully done under the present rule, past history too plainly shows. It will evidently be those who, at some fu-