

to be amongst them. Should any cattle-stealing occur within their district, they quickly unite to hunt down the thief. This is the case on the east coast at least, and the Indian population are here and there the sole exceptions.

XXIV.

HORSES, SHEEP AND GOATS.

In the shrubless plains of the states of Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Durango, Coahuila and Chihuahua the soil is almost everywhere poorly watered. In the rainy season, from June till October, these plains are covered with tall grass, but in December all begins to fade, the pools in the hollows dry up, and in the warmest months, April and May, water is frequently not met with for days, or at most brackish thick mud.

In these deserts the horses and mules are chiefly bred. These haciendas and their estancias are seldom sufficiently furnished with water, and are forced to have recourse to tanks, in which the rain-water is collected, or to bore deep wells.

It is infinitely more difficult to breed horses than horned cattle. The latter are impelled by instinct to seek for watering places, which they find in the deepest ravines, often wandering several leagues a day to a river or lake, and always returning before night to the favorite pasture. The horses, on the contrary, must be driven every day to water, as they would otherwise die of thirst. The mares always keep together in troops of forty or sixty (*atajo*), being led by a stallion, who often trots round the troop to hurry on those that lag behind, and who fights furiously with any other stallion that may chance to approach. It is a beautiful sight to see the herdsmen driving their *atajos* to the watering-place (care being taken that each *atajo* should be of one uniform colour): the herd rush neighing across the plain, the foals running briskly by the side of their dams, who carefully observe every motion of their offspring, in order to preserve them from harm. Near the well is the enclosure into which the animals are driven, when any work is to be undertaken with them. Wounds are there healed, the sick attended to, the inside of the ear freed from hair, the tails of the mares docked, etc.

Stallions are never used for riding and driving, and even the mares seldomer than in Europe; the wives of the country-people usually ride mares only. The Mexican horses are not very large, but much resemble those of Arabia in their build. The head is small, the nose slightly curved, the nostrils wide and delicate; large veins are exhibited on the head, the eye is bright, and the small ear very flexible. Although the legs are slight, the bones are strong enough. The hoof is small and hard, and is rarely shod; the black hoof is preferred.

Where horses are met with to such an extent, different breeds are naturally raised, which, however, may all be traced back to Andalusian and Barbary ancestors. The Mexican horse is hardy and requires little attention. It is saddled early in the morning, after having been watered, and makes a long day's journey without baiting, without resting, often in the steepest mountains or through scorching plains. On the saddle being removed in the evening, it is set at liberty for a moment, that it may roll in the sand, is then watered again, and the back washed, where the saddle has been; it is then supplied with dry fodder, chopped straw with maize or barley, enough for the whole night. Often it is not so well off, but after the day's journey is fastened to a long cord, to feed upon grass, or allowed to move about with the forefeet tied together. Curry and brush are known in the city only; the countryman rubs down his horse with a handful of maguey-fibres, or bathes it twice a week. The Mexican horse is not false; it is strictly speaking a domestic animal that knows its master, runs up to him in the field, lets itself be patted, and licks the salt offered to it from the hand. A horse that bites or kicks is a rarity. The horses are on friendly terms with the children, who creep under, and share their bread with them.

The mule is of a very different nature; it has no attachment to its master, has no feeling of honour, kicks and bites, is whimsical and obstinate, and needs both whip and spur. And yet it is an exceedingly useful animal for the country, conveying its burthen safely along the most dangerous mountain-passes, and in the plain content with little nourishment. Nearly all merchandize is conveyed by mules; on good roads one animal will carry four hundredweight, in the mountains three, and it is wonderful, how long they endure despite their heavy daily labour.

Mules are bred on the northern plateaux, and require more attention than horses. Good stallions are dear, and are often paid for at the rate of 500 dollars a head. A mule, however, is worth three times as much as a horse. Four year fillies are bought up from the pasture at from eight to ten dollars each; mules from 25 to 30 dollars. The large estates have often from 8000 to 10,000 horses and mules, and usually effect their sales in winter, in the larger towns.

The herdsmen of these troops are the boldest horsemen in existence. They lead a poor life, as their salary rarely exceeds five dollars a month, and a small measure of maize; they live in wretched huts, their feet bare, and seldom do they behold a village, or enjoy the pleasure of society. Still they would not change with any other mode of life. Half their time is passed in the saddle, and their delight is

to race with the other herdsmen, to cast the lasso, and to mount the untamed horses and mules. Their presumption has no limits; no fall, no wound deters them, and emulation moves them to attempt everything, however dangerous it may be. It is an everyday joke with them, when they have driven some hundred unbroken horses into the enclosure, to single out one which is to be mounted. He who undertakes it seats himself on the gate-post, has the herd driven out, and leaps like a tiger-cat on to the wild horse, without saddle or bridle. The venturesome rider holds fast by the mane, and away they fly across the plain, through thorn bushes, under prickly trees whose branches wound his back; but he does not fall; with one hand he unfastens his belt, and flings it round the horse's nose, so as to be able to turn it; and thus he brings back the foaming, steaming animal to the enclosure.

From his earliest youth, the Mexican is accustomed to being in the saddle. The infant is taken on horseback to church to be christened, the mother gives the child its nourishment on horseback, and the father places the little boy before him in the saddle. When three or four years old, he must sit behind his father, and hold fast by his belt. At eight years of age, the boy manages his horse alone, whilst the women and girls are firm and bold in the saddle, although they have not much to hold by. The Mexican women sit on the right side of the horse, and it is a piece of gallantry on the part of the young ranchero, to jump up behind the saddle without stirrups, to put on the fair one's hat, and to hold the bridle. The following anecdote, related me by an old servant, will show how well the daughters of the herdsmen ride:

"In my youth, I often came on my long journeys as arriero — I was then the *cargador* of an *atajo* — to an *estancia* of the state of Durango. The caporal (chief herdsman) was a friend of mine; but I was principally attracted to the house by his two daughters, as fresh as roses and as sprightly as colts. I was particularly struck by Josephita the younger one, my heart panted for her, and I had determined to ask her in marriage. The old man may have remarked my intentions, and was always glad to see me, as I invariably brought with me a good draught of catalan (Spanish brandy from grapes) and genuine Orizava cigars from the south; and being a good-looking youth, ready to spend my money, the girl was not ill-inclined towards me; indeed I have reason to believe she would not have said no, if the important question had been put. Once I happened to be there, and was gradually mustering courage; the old man would not let me go, and I was willing to be detained, although my people were in advance. My future papa promised to lend me one of his excellent horses, with which I could easily overtake my *atajo* next day. If one is in love, Sir, there is no need to ask twice. On the morning of my departure, a noble horse was brought me, whose restless eye announced that he would fly with me like a falcon. The whole family accompany me to the door, I take leave promising soon to come again, and with a languishing look towards my charmer, approach the steed, in order as a practised rider to vault into the saddle. But the moment I seized the bridle, the Satan began to rear, snorting like a tiger, and rendered it impossible for me to put my foot in the stirrup. My fair one then stepped forward,

saying: 'How, Don Manuel, you cannot ride this tame horse?' As she spoke she laid her hand on the bridle, vaulted into the saddle like a shot, gave the vicious beast a cut with the whip, galloped gracefully round the party, and riding up to me said jeeringly: 'You will surely be able to manage it now.' And so I was, but I was overwhelmed with shame, and felt so much respect for the horsewoman, that I never again entered the house."

In most of the larger farms where horses are bred, sheep-breeding is considered necessary. Several thousand sheep are kept, the profit from which generally covers the expenses of the estate, so that the sale of the mules and horses may be regarded as clear gain. Sheep-breeding is carried on in most districts, less for the wool, than for the tallow and flesh. The race is bad, and the wool inferior, although the extensive dry pastures, the mountain ridges covered with aromatic herbs, and the equable climate would be in the highest degree favourable to an improved breed. From egotism and petty jealousy the Spaniards never introduced the Merino breed to the colonies. Just as they prohibited the culture of the vine, of olives and mulberries in Mexico, in order to retain for the mother country the trade in wine, oil and silk, so were they determined to keep the trade in fine cloth in their own hands, without reflecting that the traffic in fine wool would have brought them in a far more considerable profit.

Only lately some enterprising Mexicans have procured at great expence a few superior ewes and rams from Saxony and the Pyrenees, by which, they have already, attained a finer mixed breed on their estates.

The shepherds go modestly on foot, or have an ass, which besides his Arcadian carries a pot, some salt and a skin with water. The chief property of the shepherd is a good piece of tinder, and a large calabash filled with water. For days he comes to no source, for weeks he has no shelter. In the arid plains, beneath the cloudless sky, the sun scorches by day, and at night a cold wind blows on the plateaux, which for the most part are situated at a greater elevation than the hospital of St. Gotthard. The shepherd always bivouacs beneath the stars, which he knows and observes like the ancient Chaldean; he encamps for the night behind a rock, in a cave, or beneath a gigantic cactus, and shelters himself from hail and rain during the wet season with his blanket only, and with a thickly woven mat, which replaces the tent. His shaggy dogs are his faithful companions, who at night warn him of the approach of wolves and cayotes (jackals), and by day collect the flock. The shepherd's principal weapon is the sling, in managing which he exhibits great skill. Frequently he uses it against the eagle, who is fond of fat lambs, and is driven off by the whizzing stones. When an eagle circles about the flock, the sheep huddle together, but the cunning bird soars so near the outer edge of the flock, that he generally drives a shier animal from the ranks, and destroys it. He does not carry off his prey, but tears it to pieces on the ground, and devours so much of it, that he can hardly move. The shepherd quietly waits for this favorable moment, creeps up, with the lasso in his hand, and catches the eagle, who vainly endeavours to soar into the air. Sometimes he has to do with the bear, who tired of vegetables,

has a fancy for mutton. He casts the lasso about his neck, on which Bruin rises on his hind legs, and seizes the cord with both paws. Always keeping the lasso tight, the shepherd approaches, strikes him with his heavy hunting-knife on the head, so that he is stunned, and presently despatched.

Towards the end of the rainy season the flocks are collected, the fat wethers and old ewes are selected and slaughtered. In a building set apart for the purpose, there is a range of large coppers, in which all the flesh is stewed down. The firm tallow, in masses of about two hundredweight, is packed in sheepskins, and forwarded to the cities, and especially to the mining districts, as tallow alone is burnt in the mines.

The slaughtering period (*matanza*) lasts usually a month, and is a holiday for the shepherds, fully recompensing them for what they must endure the rest of the year. They have, namely, to perform the slaughtering, skinning and cutting up, and receive as extra wages the head and the intestines of the victim. Of the intestines they manufacture bad gut-strings, of which immense quantities are used throughout the country; and fatten themselves and their families for a long time with sheep's heads and livers.

The cooked meat, from which the fat has been extracted (*carne de chito*), lies there in complete mountains after a *matanza*: it is bought up by the dealers and conveyed to the villages, where the Indians buy it at the market for a mere trifle; they seasoned with Spanish pepper, regard it as a delicacy.

Goats are reared in a similar manner, and are considered very lucrative. The goat is much hardier than the sheep, suffering little from change of climate and humidity. The steep, barren mountains, volcanic soils or limestone hills covered with thorns and creeping plants, constitute the paradise of the goats. In the summer they clamber up to the highest points of the Cordilleras, but in winter they are tended on the plains and on the spurs of the mountains.

During the summer the milk is used for preparing cheese; the small round goats' cheeses are sold throughout the country. As with the sheep, the chief profit is the tallow. Towards autumn, when the animals are fattest, the annual slaughtering takes place. A fat he-goat is calculated to yield twelve, a she-goat from eight to ten pounds of tallow, which is disposed of to the soap-boilers and candle-makers. The skins are for the most part sent to Europe.

The goat-herd is the poorest of all the herdsmen (mostly an Indian), but a great rogue, who cheats his master of many a kid. He feeds on the fruit of the cactus and all sorts of roots, but takes care always to be supplied with dried meat, and not to let his horn be quite emptied of pinole (the flour of roasted maize mixed with sugar). Sometimes he is seen to weave baskets and mats of palm-leaves, sometimes to carve wood.

We must also devote a few words to the swine, which are met with in great numbers. Moses and Mahomet forbade pork from wise considerations of health, and in the warm regions of Mexico a similar prohibition would not be unwise. The fat, soft flesh weakens the organs of digestion, already enfeebled by the climate, and

increases the disposition for fever and skin-diseases. The villager as well as the *ranchero* always keeps pigs about his house, which are seldom stied, but are allowed perfect freedom. They know their house, and never lose themselves, although they make long excursions in search of water and food. As long as they are not full-grown, they get merely the leavings of the kitchen, in order to accustom themselves to the house, and sleep in the open air, near their master's cottage. When older, they have a small sty, constructed with logs, and are fattened with maize. Both the European and the Polynesian race are bred; the latter is small, short-legged, with curly bristles; but becomes exceedingly fat.

The Mexican breeds swine chiefly for the sake of the fat. The bakers use considerable quantities, and soap is mostly manufactured from it. An immense quantity of soap is used in the country, partly because the linen is always washed in cold water, partly because the people bathe much, and invariably employ soap.

Swine are bred on an extensive scale in the districts where there is abundance of agricultural produce. Estates which grow vast quantities of maize, barley, horse-beans and pease, without having a market at hand for the produce, turn much of it to good account by fattening. In Guadalajara and Mechoacan, in the valley of Toluca and in the plains of Perote, many estates fatten a thousand swine annually and sell them in troops to the soap-boilers and ham-salters. The Mexican hams are far from resembling those of Westphalia; they are very fat, and are used in the kitchen chiefly for eking out the *olla podrida* and other dishes.

Where swine are bred on a large scale, the herds are driven every day to some marshy locality, and brought back in the evening to the enclosures, when a small quantity of dry food is spread before them. The full-grown porkers are removed to separate pens, where they are plentifully fed with pulse and barley; they are often driven out into the plain for a short time, more for the sake of exercise than to seek for nourishment. Here they soon grow fat, and are subsequently promoted to another pen, where the fattening is completed.

XXV.

MINING AND MINERS.

When at the beginning of the 16th century the Spaniards landed in Mexico, they first met with the natives in the valley of Sempoallan, not far from the sea. They were agricultural Totonacs, subject to the Aztecs; the chiefs wore gold and silver ornaments, which attracted the rapacious glances of the white adventurers.