

CHAPTER XIV.

Zacatecas. Cargo animals and carter. Much disappointment. The hotel. Meson de la Calle de Tacuba. Confined atmosphere. Fire-places and stoves. Ice-creams. Ice-makers. Objections to the meson. Poor fare. Mules. Fleas. Mexicans do not kill fleas. New home, No. 43. English and American citizens. John Bull. Minor nobles. Merit. Love of country. Americans Mexicanised. Lion and the unicorn. Society of Zacatecas. Party of Americans. Indian news. Bold resolve. Narrow streets. Buried money. Romance of buried silver. Catholic country. Tolling of bells. My servant. Region of day. Mexican mesons. Mexicans do not dine altogether. Spanish gentleman. Conversation. Mexican lands. Unmasked myself. United States and Mexico. California. Oppression of Americans. Justice of my conclusions. From the position of Zacatecas. Mexico a country of great extent. Solicitude of General Thompson. Pleased with the face of the country. Allemade of Zacatecas. Monument to Signor Don Francisco Garceraer. Doctor Jenkins. Prisoners. Public improvements in Mexico. Punishment of crime. Penitentiary system. Possession of the host. Prostration of the people. A friar and his sheep. Burial of the dead. Nephew of Colonel Wilcox. System of the Mexican government. Iron of Zacatecas. Revenue of the country. Ward the dictator. Want of fuel. United States and Mexican manufactures. Competition.

On the 26th instant, it being the sixth day after my arrival at Zacatecas, my interpreter informed me that it was impossible for him to make all the arrangements for my journey that I required of him under ten days time. He said that there were no cargo-animals for sale in the city, and I would be obliged to hire my transportation from thence to Caneles, and it would require one more week to finish the travelling carter, which he had been making for me, and also that he found much difficulty in obtaining such servants as he could confide in.

I was much disappointed with the above intelligence, for it was my ardent desire to proceed on my long journey as hastily as possible, and it was a very uncomfortable reflection for me to have to hire my animals to Caneles, a distance of about one thousand miles. This would appear, to any person, to be as costly, if not more so, than to purchase the animals in the first instance; but, as the American had been a long resident in Zacatecas, and moreover had won my confidence by his gentlemanly deportment, I did not hesitate to believe him.

The Meson de la Calle de Tacuba had been a source of much annoyance to me; it was a one-storied building, having a court of a hundred feet square: the rooms were without any kind of windows; the simple ground-floors were cold; and when the doors were for any length of time closed, the atmosphere within had a confined and earthy smell, which always produced in me a suffocating sensation.

I never once beheld the comforts of a fire-place or a stove in all Mexico, and in Zacatecas, though it was neither hot nor cold, it was unpleasant to a northerner not to have a fire sometimes, to break the perpetual chill, and produce a glow on the surface. I had not seen a fire since I left the steamer James Madison at New Orleans.

As I have again alluded to the climate of Zacatecas, I will relate the fact of my hearing a huckster calling ice-cream for sale in the streets. At a loss to imagine how ice could be obtained there, as the place was too far from Orizava to have it transported thence, I inquired, and was informed that during the month of January, in the cold, deep glens of the mountains, where the rays of the sun least penetrated, the ice-makers, for they are so called, place large earthen vessels, of about the size and shape of an English tea-board, with a shallow amount of water in them, and, as a sheet of ice forms upon the surface, it is carefully skimmed off, and deposited in bulks for preservation. And thus a supply of ice was furnished for a short period in the year to afford a luxury for the inhabitants of that city.

My objections to the Meson de la Calle de Tacuba were also increased by the quantity of travelling past that place, and the rattling and trampling of the hoofs of the mules on the pavement, which was an annoyance intolerable to me. It must appear evident that, to an individual who had been used to better accommodations, it must have been a hardship to be obliged to put up with such poor fare, besides the inconveniences and want of comforts.

But such are the customs of the country, and individuals who have seen better days are bound to suffer; and incredible as it may seem to come, without in the least detracting from the Mexican meson entertainment—for nothing has been said of the eternal warfare the much to be pitied and fatigued traveller has to wage against the fleas; the houses are filled with these vermin, who do not hesitate, upon your entering into their apartments, to form an intimate acquaintance with you, skin deep; and indeed I have had them so remarkably social and fond of me, that they were hopping and skipping about upon my journal, while I have been taking my notes.

The common Mexicans do not on any occasion destroy these insects, for they say, as Uncle Toby did of the fly, that the world is big enough for them and the fleas too.

My interpreter, to reconcile me to my long delay at Zacatecas, rented rooms at a reasonable rate, each of which had a window, as well as a door to them, and having also a location upon the street and exposed to the sun. This I turned to an advantage, for whenever I found the shade too cool I had an easy refuge to the sunshine. Having become settled in our new home, No. 43 Calle de Aroiba—that is, the upper street—I determined to employ myself by walking the streets. As it was impossible for me to enjoy the society of the Spaniards or Mexicans, with any degree of pleasure, both for the want of acquaintance and my deficiency in their language, for the Spanish cannot be learned in a day, I satisfied myself by the delight I had in looking at the ladies as I passed along, and in turn being stared at as a stranger.

However, I did not find myself altogether without society, for there were many English here, and some Americans, to whom I was soon introduced. I always perceived that, wherever I met with foreigners, some peculiarities attached to them, and more especially as it regards the English and the Americans.

In the first place, John Bull invariably denounced himself *primo*, and never failed to swagger and play the aristocrat more than others, and if he was only a clerk at a hacienda *beneficio*, his deportment was more consequential and ostentatious among the republicans of Mexico, than even that of the Minister Plenipotentiary was at the capital. His pride always seems to consist in rendering himself as much as possible foreign to the people he resides among; and to one acquainted with English manners and customs, it was somewhat diverting to behold those minor nobles, with Spanish *mustache* and antiquated European dress, something French, and part English, stiffly holding themselves up as models of elegance and *debonair* of manners; it never fails to remind me of the pithy saying of "like master, like man," examples of which are often seen among the slaves of the south, in the United States. Their conversation is always interesting, by being flavoured with declarations of their relationship with my Lord Dowdy, or some Earl, or Baron—while their brothers or cousins are always better to do in the world than themselves, either being officers in the British army or navy.

The English are the most powerful people on earth, and I am glad that the inhabitants of the United States, and particularly those of the Old Dominion, are descendants from

them; but I am also rejoiced that the minds of my countrymen are elevated above that sycophancy which knows no merit, saving a name derived from those who never knew, or would deign to look upon them. I admire the love of country that dwells in the bosoms of Englishmen, and would to God that the hearts of all Americans were as true to the sacred principles of their constitutional liberty, as the English are to the Queen of Britain's isle. I must also add that in some instances I met with Americans who had become Mexicanised, who appeared to value more the lion and the unicorn, than the stars and stripes; and my interpreter being one of these, I had to remind him of his good whig parentage. It was nevertheless a comfort to me to meet with Americans or Englishmen, who could speak my mother tongue, for no one can imagine the unpleasantness, without experiencing the condition of having to travel in a foreign country, the language of whose people he cannot understand; for he then recounts his countrymen and friends, with whom he once so familiarly conversed, in the same manner as a person labouring under a burning fever is reminded of the cooling fountains from whence he has satisfied his thirst.

However the society at Zacatecas was good, and very agreeable. Among its number were two English physicians, who were very intelligent and polite gentlemen, but their professional services were said to be little wanted in that city, saving for casualties, as it was very healthy, being represented to be more so than perhaps any other city or country. It happened that, upon the day of my removal to No. 43, a party of three Americans arrived at Zacatecas, from the northern provinces, and confirmed the previous news, that the Camanches were making incursions upon the upper departments, killing and plundering the inhabitants to a considerable extent.

The Indians have on several occasions descended as far as between the cities of Zacatecas and Durango, on the very track that I should have to travel, and that too without resistance, for the reason that Santa Anna had withdrawn all the troops from the frontiers, to sustain himself in power at home, and to make the Northern provinces a wilderness, inhabited alone by barbarous Indians, to prevent Mexicans from making settlements, and thus cut off the emigration of foreigners to those regions; as also to seal more effectually the order prohibiting the residence of Americans in the Californias; and, therefore, if I should be so fortunate as to escape a cruel murder by the lawless Mexicans who infest the highways, I could have no good reason to anticipate protection

from the merciless Camanche Indians. But since I had commenced the hazardous undertaking, notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers that my enterprise was obliged to encounter, and as there was no retreat for me, unless I should be reckless of being covered with the shame of cowardice, I, upon every examination of myself, boldly resolved that I would perish, or else overcome every obstacle, and make good my residence at the far-distant port of San Francisco, where I would conceive it to be the best deed of my life to protect the commerce and the citizens of the United States.

The streets of Zacatecas are narrow, crooked and singular, owing to the city being confined by mountains. I could not at any time have an extensive view of any street, and for this reason it required that I should exercise myself the more by walking, so that I might see every thing desirable, and form an opinion as to what contrast Zacatecas bore to other towns that I had seen.

In my rambles here I was shown a mountain along the sides of which the old road ran, where it is said a large amount of money had been buried by a band of robbers, who long since infested Zacatecas; but as the banditti had been suddenly cut off, without leaving any one of them to divulge the secret where the treasure had been deposited, the present inhabitants had from time to time failed, in fruitless researches, and expenditure of large capital, in securing it. Many are the excavations made by the credulous yet visible, in the forlorn hope of finding perhaps that which had never been secreted.

There is no country in the world, and especially among superstitious nations but where there exist some romances of buried silver and gold. Doubtless the above legend was gotten up to excite the wonder of the curious, and encourage the ignorant to hunt for that which never had an existence, with the hope that they might be so fortunate as to discover a new vein of silver, nature's hidden treasure.

My visit to Mexico, being the first time I had ever been in a Catholic country, it was with some surprise that, wherever I went, the ringing of the church-bells predominantly attracted my attention—and not until I reached Zacatecas, did I come to an understanding of the different ringings and tollings. I had hoped that, when I left the city of Mexico, my slumbers and meditations would not again have been disturbed by having to listen to the unusual and hourly tolling of bells; but, upon my arrival at Zacatecas, it being the only town of any consequence I had stopped at for some days, I was obliged every half hour to put my finger to my ears, and shout out to my servant to know "*Si la diablo à Santa Anna habia arri-*

báge,"—If the devil or Santa Anna had arrived—which appeared to divert my man very much, when he would, with all the devotedness of religious feelings, to the great amusement of my interpreter, commence an explanation of the different sounds. Sometimes they were for mass—for the Mexicans receive this every morning at eight o'clock; and I have seen, on such occasions, the churches so much crowded, that many would be kneeling in front and around the building, catching, in the most profound reverence, every low tone of the organ, as well as the solemn voice of the distant officiating priest within. Sometimes the tolling was for the souls of some deceased rich person; for none but those who can pay, receive that honour. To an individual seated in his room, the slow and deep tones of the bells seem to be answered from cupola to belfry, as if each felt the distressing pang of death, until the distant echoings of the mournful sound would die away upon the ear, producing a sadness of feeling in the listener, while he could imagine that he beheld the first heavings of the bosom of the deceased, in the agonies of death, until the last breath had flown, and the pulse had ceased to vibrate, and all was over.

Notwithstanding there was a ceaseless ding-dong uproar going on; yet the most troublesome of all, at the same time I will confess it was sometimes a pleasure, was the announcing the approach of the meridian of day. The inhabitants are warned, for thirty minutes before the hour of twelve that the king of day was about to be poised just above them, by the bells, of most indifferent tones, wishing to ring, being irregularly struck by a wooden hammer, which produced smothered, distressing sounds, as if to give an alarm, but were half way prevented by not having full power of speech. At length, however, the blows would become more regular, and were answered by a distant bell, more audible, and yet another, and another, until a climax approached, when all the brass in the place seemed to be crushing to pieces—and precisely at the moment of meridian time, the brain is pained by the confused noise, as if the world was summoned to judgment then there is a sudden relief, produced by the big tom of the principal church giving, in deep sonorous tones, three taps, when all the bells are silent, as if called to order by the voice of majesty. Then is heard the time of day, the peal of 12 o'clock, during which the inhabitants will stand uncovered. The bells alone do not proclaim the advance of day, for the band of the garrison is ready, when the last stroke of twelve is sounded, to rejoice, with musical strains, in the march of diurnal time; after this there is a slight frolic among the bells

and the noise ceases. The rising and going down of the sun is likewise celebrated, which they call the *oration*.

In Mexican mesons the boarders do not dine together, but each one sends his servant for his meals, or goes himself into the public room of the *fonda* at any hour he chooses, and is there furnished with as many dishes as he may like to call for, and although there may be others dining at the same time, it is not one common mess where all are fed from the same dish, but each one has his peculiar dish, unmolested by any others. Happening to dine one day in this manner, I fell in company with an old Spanish gentleman who could speak English, and we had not been long in the room before we exchanged looks, when he enquired of me if I came by the way of the United States. I replied that I embarked at New Orleans for Vera Cruz. He said his residence was far from the Atlantic coast, and that it had been a long time since he received any intelligence from Europe or the United States. Having satisfied his inquiries as to the English Union Jack affair, he then wished me to tell him what was the tone of feeling of the people of the Union towards Mexico, and if the government did not wish to make war upon that country, saying, that he had understood that the American Congress was desirous of obtaining the Mexican lands, so that they might increase the revenues of the treasury.

Having heard the statements of the old gentleman, I did not hesitate to unmask myself, and informed him that I was a native of the United States, and not, as he supposed, an Englishman; and that I was from one of the middle States. I told him that the people of the Union sympathised with their republican brethren of Mexico, and rejoiced with them whenever they made an advance in liberal principles, for Americans not only loved civil liberty and justice at home, but admired the people of any clime who have followed the glorious examples of love of freedom and independence, which a Washington inspired his countrymen with; and that the people, as well as the government of America, could have no other feelings for Mexico, than those of kindness, notwithstanding passed wrongs in respect for the weakness and revolutionary condition of her neighbour; and that the United States chose rather to pity than to crush her; that the policy of the United States had never been that of conquest, and that she would sooner submit to some ills, than heap heavier calamities upon others; and therefore Mexico had nothing to fear from the ambition of the United States, so long as she did not infringe upon the laws of nations or break existing treaties.

I related to him that Mexico had never had cause to make

a complaint or ask an indemnity of the Union, but that on the contrary, my government had to suffer delayed negotiation with her, for reamuneration for the many spoliations committed by the Mexican authorities upon the commerce and the private property of citizens of the United States, all of which our people had endured, and no disposition was shown on the part of our government to retaliate by declaration of war, in consideration of which kindness, the Dictator and his Minister of War and Marine had issued a decree expelling Americans from three Departments and the Californias, without any known cause, or their having been suspected of molesting the peace of society.

I could but add that unbounded pity and mercy were alone the attributes of the deity, and that the government of the United States, agreeable to the dictates of human reason, would have a stopping point for her lenity in enduring accumulating insults, injuries and wrongs, which would have to be atoned for; and if the people of Mexico did not look to the misrule of their usurpers, the Union would have to take into consideration what course to adopt by which she might live in reciprocity of good respect with her sister republic; and that whatever her exasperated citizens may have done, the government has never encouraged a spirit of ill will in the minds of its people against the inhabitants of any country: it deals not in invective or threats, but rather attempts to persuade and entreat others to act justly, and in the timely moment its angry war-spirited eye is no more to be feared than disregarded. Texas was then free and independent, and if in future time she should wish to hover under the wing of the American Eagle, it would be labour lost, on the part of Mexico, to make objections.

The old Spaniard seemed to admit the justice of my conclusions, and replied that he was pleased to be informed, that the American people were not disposed to make war upon Mexico for the purpose of taking away the land from individual owners, and that for himself, notwithstanding the citizens of the Union, to his own knowledge, had often suffered, he was of the opinion that there was every good reason for the two republics to live in harmony, if it was not for the demagogues and aspirants to power in Mexico, who had not only distracted their own people, but were continually breaking treaties formed with other powers, or else in their recklessness, insulting nations with perfect wantonness. He said also, that he hoped their deeds would not be attributed to the Mexicans as a people, but to the military despotism, by which they were governed.

From the position of Zacatecas, it being the point where all travel to the city of Mexico, Tampico, or the northern departments, centered, it was agreeable for me, sometimes to find a countryman journeying in some direction of the compass, from the most of whom I heard complaints of the indifferent treatment they had received from the authorities. Whether these allegations were strictly true, I cannot, by my own knowledge, testify, for, I had not up to that period of my journey, had cause to complain of oppression from Mexican officers, and as for the reception which I had everywhere met with, from citizens as well as those in power, it had been of the most hospitable and polite character, though at the same time it might have had its origin in respect to the commission in my pocket, and not to the citizen of the United States.

It should be remembered that Mexico is a country of great extent, about three thousand miles, and that the few Americans who are scattered over it, might not only have their privileges infringed on, but their persons imprisoned without cause or remedy, as was the case in the department of Sonora, as before mentioned, at a distance of fifteen hundred miles from the minister of the United States, and for the reason of the wide separation from the legation, of the commission of a hostile act, the minister can never have an immediate knowledge of what has happened, so that he might remonstrate.

The unfortunate individuals who may have had their property or their liberties wrested from them, are almost effectually barred from all hopes of redress, in communicating the facts to the American legation, as there are now no consuls in the interior, for the reasons of the distance from the city of Mexico, and that letters by the mails from Americans are intercepted, as has been charged by the sufferers. Therefore, long after the committal of one of our citizens to prison, for without an alleged offence, it is only incidentally known by his execution, or a cruel death, consequent to the diseases produced by confinement.

The question may arise, why do not American citizens, when they have suffered the loss of property, visit the seat of government and urge in person their complaint? The answer is, that the individual, bereft of means, and broken hearted, in the first place, feels an indifference common to the unfortunate, and as Mexico is the most dangerous and expensive country in the world to travel in, he could never hope to meet the minister, if he met him at all, with respect. It most generally happens that ruined persons are obliged, under such circumstances, to use daily efforts for a living: precisely in the same manner as the unsuspecting, uncalculating, honest-hearted

citizen, who, to meet a momentary relief, is wheedled out of his estate by the usurer, and when all his property has vanished, before his benighted infatuation is awakened, he finds himself defenceless, being too poor for litigation; and thus, with a stubborn spirit, sinks to the scorn of the proud into his grave.

It may not be improper, at the present time, to express my unfeigned pleasure in having it in my power to testify to the marked solicitude which General Thompson felt for the welfare and the protection of his fellow countrymen: for during all my stay at the city, I can affirm, that in the frequent meetings I had with him, his deportment was always gentlemanly, familiarly easy, and ardently friendly to all Americans; while, at the same time, his every consideration seemed to be engrossed in the perplexing and vexatious negotiations he was obliged to carry on with a prejudiced and insulting government, located in the cranium of a Dictator, and his sycophantic myrmidons.

Notwithstanding some Americans have complained of cruel and barbarous treatment, yet I found some who, like myself, are, in general, pleased with the country and the climate of Mexico, as also satisfied with the polite and hospitable reception they meet with from the inhabitants, both foreigners and natives.

It was not until the 29th instant, that I visited the pleasant retreat of the Alemada of Zacatecas. This is a lovely and romantic place. It is sufficient in length, but not in breadth. However this is not to be attributed to a want of good taste on the part of the citizens, for the Alemade, confined as it is between two mountains, is the only level spot of land within the compass of the city. It is in the form of an elliptic circle, having round it a stone wall, and laid off with two promenades, and a carriage way around it. There is an abundance of shrub and flower on the borders of the walks, and the whole is shaded by trees, receiving their irrigation from a large fountain in the centre. On each side of the Alemade, a little rising the mountain, there is a church, which adds much to the picturesque scene. Upon looking up at one of those churches I discovered through the branches of the trees, a monument situated in the front of the edifice, and, on my ascending to the honorary pile, I perceived from the epitaph that it was erected in honour and to the memory of Senor Don Francisco Garcier, who was governor of the department of Zacatecas, when it was taken by Santa Anna, in 1833. The bronze bust of the patriot is said to be a good likeness of the original, and was cast from an impression taken in plaster of

Paris, by Dr. Jenkins, an English physician, who attended the deceased in his last illness. With him, the Zacatecans say, departed Rienzi, the last of the Romans.

On my return from the Alemade, I met a large body of prisoners, who, Dr. Jenkins informed me, were the united brethren, being all manacled together, two and two. I have ever noticed, in every town and village through which I passed, numerous gangs chained in a like manner, and it should be remembered that those poor wretches were not the volunteers for the army, but prisoners of war and of crime, suffering the penalties of their different offences. The sight of these human beings is truly distressing, for through the indifference of their garments could be easily perceived the weight of their irons.

The penalty in Mexico, for all misdemeanours against the law, is hard labour upon the streets and the public highways, excepting such as where the law or the will of the judge requires death. The public improvements are all indebted to the prisoners for their completion; for, if a street is to be paved, a road to be made, or a bridge to be built, the prisoner is the labourer, and in this way, the cost to the public is not taken so much into consideration as if the work had to be let out to the lowest bidder, and paid for, when finished, in hard dollars and cents; but, on the contrary, the Commonwealth, in its expenditures, is but collecting its dues, for the prisoners owe an amount of toil which is obliged to be liquidated, for they must return the price required of them for the wickedness they have committed; and ways are devised, as above mentioned, for them to comply with their obligations; and in this manner the public works have been pursued, for the Mexicans have never been famed for bridge, turnpike, or canal companies.

It has been a question which the mild institutions of the United States gave rise to, whether it would be better for the punishment of crimes not deserving death, to make scavengers and labourers of criminals upon the highways, exposed to public view, or else to confine them closely in dark dungeons for meditation and repentance, or keep them employed within the walls of the prison.

The moral influence with the penitentiary system has over the offender, is acknowledged to be the best that has ever been adopted in any country, to punish the guilty for his crime, and give ample opportunity for inward and outward atonement. Still it has been urged that the exposing method is better calculated to deter the innocent from falling into the examples of the criminal, by having the punishment of crime before their

view. It is contended by some that the guilty never reform under the chastisement of the law, and that degraded as he must ever be, by having suffered a penalty before the public eye, he never can feel encouraged afterwards to return to the paths of rectitude and virtue.

It is a source of complaint in some of the States that, owing to the considerable number of convicts who are kept industriously at work within the walls of the penitentiaries, the honest mechanic is injured, by glutting the markets with the articles of his peculiar manufacture; and that the penitentiary system is an injury to the citizen, who is obliged to pay out of his pocket a tax to support a competition in the business by which he derives his bread: and thus, undesignedly, the law, in its incongruity, oppresses the innocent in punishing the guilty. But, the statute, like all other human devices, has its inconsistencies: and in the mother of States I have seen in one of her corporations, the public authorities sell at auction the vagrant; and the policeman, for a trifle, becoming the purchaser, would bind the new-made white slave, and force him to labour on the public highways; while the laws of the same State, in commendable mercy, incarcerate in prison, from the odium of the gaze of the world, him who has committed the basest of offences. I only mention these facts to show that, in the wisdom of making laws, the vagrant is, in my opinion, more severely punished, in Virginia, than the thief or the murderer.

On my return to No. 43, I was aroused by the sound of a small hand-bell; and as there are no such pursuits as auctions in Mexico, I felt determined to know its meaning, and upon looking out I perceived the host on its way to some penitent upon a dying bed. For the benefit of those who have never witnessed a scene of the kind, I will attempt to describe it, and if I should err in any particular, I trust that the good Catholic brethren will excuse me, for I can testify to what I have seen, not that I understood the solemn performance.

When I had gained the front window of my room, I beheld a coach drawn by mules, called the Holy Ghost carriage, which is kept at a church exclusively for religious purposes. In it was seated a priest, on the back seat, reading a small book, and before him were two boys dressed in scarlet robes, holding burning candles in their hands. To the rear of the coach were formed two lines, of about ten in each, who all had candles, and between these lines was a youth with a bell which he tinkled slowly; while behind was a motley crowd, which looked neither religious, civilized, nor savage. As the whole procession advanced, all the people, both in the street

and the houses, fell upon their knees, with hands crossed upon their bosoms, from which position they did not rise until the holy father had passed. I was informed that, upon the arrival of the coach at the house of the afflicted, the right holy man would descend, and, with the cross in his hand, approach the bed-side of the deceased, where, after confession, the sacrament was administered, and having received the forgiveness and the benedictions of the father, the soul was prepared for the mansions of the blessed.

There was a friar who resided near my lodgings, of whom I observed that, whenever he rode or walked out, a sheep of pure long wool would always accompany him. So far from this being a ludicrous scene, it did appear to me as if there was a good moral lesson in the aspect of the friar and his favourite—for no one, of christian information, could look upon the innocent countenance of the one, and the pious face of the other without being reminded of the meek and lowly lamb who was slain for the redemption of mankind.

The friar belonged to the Guadalupe order, called the Gray Friars, who are the missionaries and preachers of the Gospel, and I was informed were the only clergy in Mexico, who could have any pretensions to virtue and piety. In consequence of the high estimation in which these friars are held, they are always shrouded in one of their gowns, if it could be obtained—and, indeed, it was believed, that death was in a great degree robbed of its sting, by the dying knowing that they were to be buried in a Gray friar's cloak, and a good purse do they have to pay, who are so fortunate as to secure this habit, more especially if it has ever been worn by the holy man.

Since I have alluded to the burying of the dead, I will mention an enormity of crime that I never heard had an existence in any other country than Mexico. The grave there cannot escape the ladrone, and therefore the dead are never buried with anything that might be accounted of utility or value, in order to prevent the otherwise inevitable disinterment of the deceased, as was the case with the remains of the nephew of the American consul general, Colonel Wilcox.

The gray cloak is too sacred and worthless a garment for the pious thieves to disturb, and besides, they are aware that they have to make confession of the deed.

The coffins at Mexico are not made like ours, peaked at both ends, but point at the foot, and expand to the head in the shape of a wedge. The poor are buried in what is called an "universal coffin," by the body of the deceased being carried to the grave in a box belonging to the public. When the corpse arrives at the grave, it is rolled out of the bier coffin

into its shallow home; and, in a state of nature, has the clods heaped over it.

Before closing this chapter, I wish to remark that I have devoted as much attention as to any other one thing, to the system of the government of the republic of Mexico, and I have attentively marked the deleterious effects of the different points of misrule upon the prosperity of the country. My exclusive object is to make a correct statement of the political and other affairs of unhappy Mexico that I may deem most prominent, so that those who are desirous may have a true detail of the state and standing of our sister republic; and this I cannot do without disregarding all application that may be made of the facts to our own government or any other.

My friend Mr. Scott, of the mint, said that iron in Zacatecas was worth twenty-five cents per pound, which was more than had to be given for brass, and that it was as necessary to weigh it to his workmen as silver, for they would as soon steal the one as the other. The high value of iron is alone accounted for, without a difference of opinion, to the protective system.

Prohibitory duties are indiscriminately levied upon all hardwares, by Santa Anna. There is an abundance of iron ore in Mexico, said to be of excellent quality; but, for the want of fuel, it cannot, but at a few places, be manufactured—and that only by rendering it more valuable than the precious metals. Stone coal has never been discovered in any portion of the country, and it would require the fostering care of centuries to cultivate forests sufficient to supply the land with that all important article, wood, which is necessary for manufacturing purposes. The revenues of the country being entirely lopped off by a commerce with foreign nations, the expenses of government were attempted to be met by distinct taxation, and the bonus exacted from the monopoly of manufactures.

It was said to have been no difficult matter to reward the Dictator's private pocket, that the public coffers might be defrauded of its just dues. The individual happiness of the people had never once been consulted, and in consequence of the inability of a majority of the inhabitants to meet the prices of wares and merchandise, the Mexicans were compelled to return to their garments of leather and skins, in which the first revolution found them.

But for the want of fuel Mexico, in justice to itself, can never become a manufacturing country generally, whereas if this natural deficiency were once removed, she might, with the hope of success, compete with other nations—for the price

of labour, the great obstacle in the way of the United States manufacturer, would be obviated, by its being abundant and cheap, perhaps as much so as with any other poor and oppressed people.

The farmer in Mexico never has to pay more than six dollars, one peck of corn, and a half a peck of beans per month for his field-hands; while the old, the young, and the females are obtained at diminished rates. I am persuaded, from my observations of that country, and the knowledge of my own, that nothing can be so self-evident as that neither the one nor the other can ever come into a successful competition with the old world, where fuel and labour are the most abundant of their resources—and that for either, or both of them, to attempt to carry out the principle, will only be to force their articles of manufacture upon their own population, as is the case in Mexico, at exorbitant prices; for European nations can afford to sell cheaper, and must for ages monopolize the commerce of the world.

CHAPTER XV.

My interpreter. Acquainted my interpreter with the knowledge I possessed. His remonstrance. Should depart in two days. Letter of introduction to Mr. John Kimble. Letters of introduction. Departed from Zacatecas. Caratilla. Unmanageable mule. Malanoche, the (bad night mountain). Upsetting of caratilla. My ribs injured and interpreter's collar bone broken. Confusion. Retrograde motion. No. 43. Interpreter notable for fatigue. My resolve. Second departure from Zacatecas. Demanded my cash. Money missing. Money found. My journey. March to Frisnillo. Ride in a Spanish saddle. House of Mr. Kimble. Opinions of Mr. Kimble. Egregiously imposed upon. Recommends an interpreter. Hacienda de la Beneficio Mineral. Expenses. Crushing machine. Grinding mill. Great Square. Quicksilver. Copper bell. Silver casted solid lumps. Mint. Weighing of the metal. The mines of Zacatecas and Frisnillo. Took leave of Mr. Kimble. Lost. Encounter with a Mexican. Two young men. My troubles. Coffee. Mr. K. and my interpreter. Interpreter an intelligent man. Departure from Frisnillo. Grotesque appearance. A band of robbers. Bones bleached on the plains. Uneasiness of my interpreter. Bound to Sain Alto. Become used to a Spanish saddle. Threw myself from my mule. Exchange saddles. Alcalde's cane. Administration of oaths. Sufferings increased. Eat heartily at Chili. Sain Alto. Dinner. Chocolate. Settlement of bill. Quarrel. Warm country. Maquey. Pulque. Three men upon the plain. My gloves. Tableland. A nipple of a mountain. Narrow defile. Sombrenete. Demanded water. Mule knocked the tumbler.

It was not many days after my removal to 43, that I made the important discovery that my delay in Zacatecas was not caused by the preparations making by my interpreter for my journey to the Caneles, but that, like an enterprising Yankee, who perceived a speculation that might accrue from the sale of a few stoves and clocks in that city, he had had some imported from New York, which had just arrived in time to save their distance from being rendered contraband, and he was profitably employed in selling his merchandise, so ingeniously smuggled, under the pretext of devoting his time in my employment.

When this fact was imparted to me I acquainted him, without delay, of the knowledge I possessed, and assured him that I should discharge him from my service. However, his re-