

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-

monstrances prevailed over my objections, for he made himself out to be as pure as an angel of light; and, as I was obliged to have an interpreter, I resolved to be more watchful of my countryman, and cause him to answer my purpose, as a native, by giving him to understand that he had lost my confidence, and that I acknowledged no friend but my Toledo-blade, and my six-barreled pistols; for that my travels in the country had sufficiently satisfied me that reliance upon any other resource, for honest protection, was folly.

My interpreter assured me that we should take our departure in two days' time, for then, he said, my carter would be finished, with all the accompanying bed-clothing. He also stated, that he had purchased one horse, and hired ten mules for transportation; but as the plains on the way to Durango were of a champaign character he had put himself to the trouble of obtaining, for my comfort, a caratilla for us to ride in. And as he could not consent to be idle, he said, he would have time to make sale of some watches he had in his possession.

A few days after my arrival at Zacatecas I presented a letter of introduction I had been politely furnished with by an Irish gentleman in the city of Mexico, to Mr. John Kimble, of Frisnillo. Mr. K. I found to be a perfect gentleman, and a native of New Hampshire. During his residence in Zacatecas he had become wedded to a lovely Mexican lady. Although he was a resident of Frisnillo, where he was administrator of the hacienda mineral of that town, yet I was so fortunate as to meet him here, and present my letter. Through him I had to acknowledge my obligations for the favour of a letter from his lady to Ami Senora Da Fernino Bernal Lakeman, of the city of Durango. This lady is the niece of the late renowned General Bolivar, of South America, and the wife of an American. I was likewise indebted to him for letters from Don Antonio Castrillon, judge; to Al S'r. Sic'o D. Fernando Ramires, a distinguished lawyer, and ex-deputy of Mexico. The respected judge also did me the favour and honour to address a letter to Al Cesnio S'r. Gobernadey Comandante General D' José Antonio Heredia; and the Hon. Bocanegra, secretary of foreign relations for Mexico, had, previous to my leaving the capitol, tendered me another, with a request that he would do every thing in his power to forward my intentions. The prefect, Sr. Sic. D. Viviano Beltraur likewise honoured me with a letter of introduction to a distinguished lawyer, of the city of Durango.

Everything being in complete preparation, my interpreter and self took our seats in the caratilla for our departure, on

the morning of the first day of February, cheered with the hope that the journey would be a speedy and delightful one. However, on our very set-out, we experienced an ill omen, or mortification, produced by the obstreperousness of one of the cargo-mules, who would dash into every cross street and lane, much to the fright of the citizens he surprised, while the servants would spur after him with their lassoes, exclaiming angrily, *Diablo animal*, (devil animal). We at length succeeded in passing through the city, after having attracted crowds to witness our perplexity. No sooner had we passed the last house of the city than we commenced the ascent of the *Malanoche*, (bad night mountain,) and we had scarcely got half-way up it, than, in defiance of all the drivers, the diablo animal turned and ran into the city again, which manœuvre caused more vexatious delay. After a while, however, the mouse-coloured mule was recovered, when our journey was resumed.

The Malanoche is of great height, and travelled by a road constructed by an English engineer, and made by the prisoners. The top being gained, and our descent commenced, I perceived that all was not right, and quickly directed my interpreter to command the driver to halt, but, as soon, the wretched contrivance upset. We were sitting in the omnibus-fashion, face to face, and as the turn was to the right, the left shoulder of my interpreter lodged against my side so violently as to injure two of my ribs. The American received the greatest damage, his collar-bone being badly broken. I first succeeded in extricating myself, by passing under the heels of the harnessed mules, and immediately proceeded to tear away obstructions and rescue my interpreter, who, in agony, was calling loudly for help, which, when done, I had time to look about and behold the scene. Marcellino, the driver, was bleeding at the nose, while the other servants were speechless, standing by, as if they were at mass or a burial. The animals had scattered over the mountain-side, while guns, swords and pistols, as well as Bowie-knives, were strewed all around.

My journey was destined, from the misfortune that had overtaken me, to have a retrograde motion, and, with much anxiety for my interpreter, we hastened back to Zacatecas, my own distress measurably overcome by sympathy for his sufferings. Stopping again at No. 43, Dr. Jenkins attended and used his professional services for us.

The excitement of the occasion having subsided, my mind naturally reverted to the long journey before me, and the

difficulties to be overcome. My interpreter, with his fracture, would not be able to proceed, perhaps, for twenty or thirty days, which time, to be lost, would have interfered much with my arrangements, and I, therefore, determined not to remain for his recovery, whatever inconvenience or pain it might cost me; and I accordingly ordered the necessary preparations to be made for my departure on horseback.

Previous to my second departure from Zacatecas, disagreeable facts came to my knowledge, respecting my interpreter. In the first instance, having demanded my cash of him, which for safety and convenience, I had deposited in his carpet bag, I found a deficiency in the sum I placed there, of two hundred dollars, which I made known to him, but received an answer that the money had been expended for necessaries. I had been careful in paying out my cash to take vouchers for all my expenditures, and instantly called him to account for a general settlement. Having clearly demonstrated his dishonesty, I declared to him that I would bring before him the most respectable of the foreigners of the city, and, in his presence, prove the fraud and theft. The penitent man wept, and implored me not to expose him, for he was willing to return me my money; and he did make good one hundred and forty dollars, promising me the remaining sixty at the moment of my departure. True to his nature, however, he managed to secure that amount to himself, and, rather than be longer troubled, and detained by him, I was advised to consent to its loss, with mortified regret and vexation.

On the 4th instant, I commenced again my journey, my friend, Mr. Scott, accompanying me a short distance. The mountain past, the plain was a dead level. My day's travel was uninterrupted by any other incident worthy of remark. The road had also a company of troopers, who were on their way returning to Frisnillo, from having conducted a large amount of silver to Zacatecas. The soldiers upon the plain rendered travelling, upon that day, comparatively safe. By two o'clock I had ended my journey, and upon dismounting at the meson, I discovered that my ride in the Spanish saddle had greatly unmanned me; for, from the erect and forward inclined position I had for several hours been obliged to maintain, (for there are no changes or shifts to be made in one of these saddles,) my bones ached, while my muscles were all cramped.

Previous to my separation from Mr. Scott, I requested of him to direct one of my servants to conduct me, on my arrival at Frisnillo, to the house of Mr. Kimble. After having rested

a short time I accompanied my servant to the hacienda beneficio mineral; for that proved to be the residence of my American friend.

On my meeting with him, and acquainting him with the misfortunes that had befallen me, and my being compelled to travel without an interpreter, he appeared much concerned, and replied that, though I was not very unfortunate in parting with my first engagement, yet he considered it to be almost impossible for me to accomplish my journey without an interpreter, as there were numberless obstacles that I knew nothing of to meet me on the way, and being unacquainted with the Spanish language, my property and life were at hazard.

Mr. Kimble informed me that our countryman and the Englishman, of whom my animals had been obtained, had grievously imposed on me, but that I would have to make the best of a bad bargain. He said that the only individual he knew who could speak English, was an American, who had been in his service but a short period, and from his limited knowledge of him he could not recommend his services as being what I desired. But, as I would have no opportunity of employing an interpreter before reaching Durango, I was induced to take him along.

Mr. Kimble related that my countryman had some peculiarities, as he had been residing, in an obscure manner, for seventeen years with the lowest class of Mexicans, and had forgotten much of his mother-tongue. He therefore advised me to be upon my guard, and not to give him an opportunity of deceiving me.

I was conducted by the polite Mr. Kimble over his hacienda beneficio mineral, the largest one in the world, and where more silver was manufactured than at any other hacienda known. This mine is the only one worked to any profitable extent in the whole country that entirely belongs to a Mexican company. To give my readers an understanding of its magnitude, and the consequent expenditures of raising the ores, and reducing them to silver, Mr. K. assured me that it required an outlay of fifty thousand dollars per week to conduct its operation. The mine is worked by steam-power, the fuel costing fourteen dollars per cord.

The administrador conducted me first to the crushing apartment. In this extensive room were many tons of ore, deposited in the condition in which it was brought from the mine. The ore resembled fragments of stone, fresh hammered for a macadamised road, each piece large enough to pass through an inch ring. In this form it is thrown under the crushing

mill to be pulverised. This machine is similar to a powder mill, with the exception that the beams are heavier and closer together. Having gone through the process of crushing, the ore is removed to the grinding mills, and in this hacienda there are many.

The grinding mills are circular, and from ten to fifteen feet in diameter. They can propelled by any kind of power, but in Mexico that of mules is most generally used. The bottoms are of porphyritic rock of the greatest solidity that can be obtained. Over this solid disk are suspended three long heavy stones, also of porphyry. These are held to their places by chains, which connect them to three horizontal beams, extending from the shaft pivot that rests upon the centre of the disk. The stones have their front edges a little elevated, so as to receive the ore, when in motion, while the rear portion performs its duty by grinding it to an impalpable powder.

When the ore is put into the grinder, water is from time to time added to it, until, in the process of pulverization, it acquires a thick and paste-like appearance and consistency, which requires much time. The process of grinding completed, the ore is removed to the great square of the hacienda, which I should judge contains about two acres of land, where it is deposited in circular beds of about ten feet in diameter, upon the pavement of the square, in the same manner as a brick yard. Salt, or salt earth is, in suitable quantities, sprinkled over the pile, as also a little proportion of pulverized pine bark, and if this cannot be secured, dried manure is used as a substitute. The whole is then trodden by horses for some hours, until all the parts have completely acquired an admixture. It is then left for three or four days, when a substance, prepared from copper ore, called *micastral*, is added. The whole mass is then sprinkled with quicksilver in considerable quantities. It is then worked with horses for five or six hours, after which it is left until the next day, when a little water is added, being worked repeatedly from day to day until the whole has effectually amalgamated. When this is consummated, a suitable portion is deposited in an elevated stone vat, so that the water may escape. A large amount of water is again added to the ore, when the whole is rapidly mixed, by a fly wheel in the vat, propelled by mules, just like the pool of a paper mill.

In this process the amalgam of the mineral settles to the bottom, and when the whole mass has been thoroughly washed, the water is discharged, and the offal escapes. The deposited amalgam is cleansed by being filtered through canvas, until it assumes a plastic state, when it is made into forms of trian-

gular bricks, by means of moulds. These are set up into a circular mass, with interstices between each. A copper bell is then placed over the whole, in the presence of all the officers of the hacienda, which is then covered over with charcoal, and this is kept ignited for about twelve hours, by which time the mercury is all sublimated. Being allowed to cool, the silver is taken out in a pure state, ready to cast into bars.

It requires six pounds of quicksilver to obtain one mark of silver, including the incorporation and the bath, which is the amalgamation, and in the separation there is a loss of the same weight of silver, as of mercury, which is a fraction, besides an additional consumption of mercury, that has never been accounted for.

During the whole of the above process of extracting the silver, that is to say, from the commencement of the washing, until the fire is lighted around the bell containing the amalgam, the administrador has his officers summoned to attend, to prevent the secreting of the metal, but after the charcoal is ignited all is safe, for if those left to watch the fire, should raise the bell, the inhaling of the sublimed mercury, a certain result of the imprudence, would destroy life. The appearance of the amalgam, when the copper bell is lifted from it, is porous, like a honey-comb, which is caused by the quicksilver leaving the silver in sublimation. Thus it is perceived, that to make pure silver is no easy task, but requires days of labour from man, beast, and machinery, as well as the watchfulness necessary to be bestowed on it.

After the silver is cast into solid lumps, about the size and shape of pigs of lead, as seen in the United States, it is carried to the mint, when, agreeable to its weight, being previously assayed, its value in coin is received.

From the office of the administrador, it is next carried into the furnace room, where the pigs are melted, for the purpose of casting them into bars, eighteen inches in length, one and a half broad, and a quarter of an inch in thickness. They are then weighed to discover if they correspond with the original weight of the pigs. The bars are then put under the rolling mill, where they are reduced to a flatness, consistent with the dimensions of the coin to be manufactured. The thin slips of silver are then taken to machinery, where they are cut to different sizes of money, and from thence to the edging mill, which prepares it to receive the impression of the Mexican eagle, prickly pear, bee hive, sun, &c. From thence it had to pass through the pickling, or washing department, where the coin is cleansed, and receives its perfect brightness, and is rendered fit for use.

The silver, from the time of its being first melted into pigs, until it is washed, never passes from the hands of one workman into those of another, without the scrutiny of weight and counting. And thus it is, the invaluable metal, when scattered to the world, in its fluctuating passage, ever creates the greatest solicitude to its possessor, until it returns to nature, by invisible atoms.

When examining the rich mines of Mexico, the question has often arisen in my mind, what has, and does become of the vast amounts of silver and gold that the industry of man has rescued from the depth of the earth! It did seem to me that any one of the mines I examined, would supply the pockets of every living creature, continually, with small change. The mines of Zacatecas and Frisnillo are said to be about the oldest known in Mexico, and from their richness, and the length of time they have been worked, have produced an amount of bullion that would almost seem incredible. A gentleman, of high standing as a miner, informed me that it had been estimated that Zacatecas and Frisnillo had yielded two hundred millions of the precious metals. There are two kinds of silver mines, designated by the letters A and U, owing to the two different ways that veins of silver make their appearance generally.

Late in the evening I took my reluctant leave of Mr. Kimble, who assured me that he would visit me at the meson, when my intended interpreter should arrive in town from the country. Upon my leaving the mine, I discovered that my servant had not waited for me, and that I should have to find my way home alone to the meson in the heart of the city, which, I had no doubt that I could easily do. I returned by the same streets, as I imagined I came, until at length I could not remember where I was. I hastened from street to street, with the hope of coming to the well-known big door of my meson, but none that I beheld was the one looked for. The sun was setting, and I trembled at the thought of finding myself lost in the town of Frisnillo at night.

Although I felt a confusion at the idea of confessing my condition to any one, and had some apprehensions of consequences in letting my bewildered situation be known, I resolved to speak to a Mexican who was standing in the street. I accordingly said to him, *Tray game diligencia meson*; the man gave me a piercing look, and commenced making a long speech in Spanish, which I silenced by repeatedly saying, *No intendi, Senor*. He, with much surprise, again stared at me, then turned upon his heels and walked off. I was surprised at his behaviour, for I thought I had asked him in good

Spanish to carry me to the diligencia meson; but what the more surprised me was, that I showed the rascal a *rial*, which in all conscience would have paid him well for his trouble.

I proceeded but a little way before I met two well-dressed young men, who had the appearance of foreigners, and I determined to accost them in plain English, but they shook their heads. At length one of them replied by the interrogation, "*Parlez vous Francais*?" and with more mortification than ever, I had to give the negative answer. I then endeavoured, by signs, to make the gentlemen understand, and repeating often the name of the house I wished to find, one of them took me by the arm, and safely delivered me at the meson.

My troubles were not at an end then; for I was so much distressed that I could not find my own room; and not only were my servants wanting, but not a living soul could I behold upon the premises. I had to wait at least one hour before Marcelino, my principal man, arrived. He appeared to be as big a fool as myself, for I could not make him understand that I wished to be shown to my room. At last the thought occurred to me to say "*Cartera*," and with hastened delight he left me, and in a few moments returned, bearing my outspread cot upon his head. With much difficulty I turned him about, and following him to the apartments from whence he brought the *cartera*, I found my lodgings and my baggage.

Marcelino prepared me some coffee, of which I partook without any appetite; but, by the time I had finished it, my friend, Mr. Kimble, and an Englishman, whose name I have now forgotten, appeared, bringing with him my future interpreter. Mr. Kimble gave me such friendly advice respecting my journey; and, after having exhorted my new man to be faithful and brave, he left with his companion, both taking an affectionate farewell of me, with many hopes that I would triumph over every difficulty, and make safe my way to my port of destination.

My interpreter, although indifferently dressed, was a remarkably good-looking and intelligent man. One thing, however, was predominant in his physiognomy—dejectedness—which immediately won my sympathy for him, as I presumed that he had been oppressed by the misfortunes of the world.—His conversation was free, though he had a slight impediment in his speech—but he did not seem inclined to indulge in vivacity of thought, as all he said was in as solemn a manner as preaching, and very sensible.

Early on the morning of the 5th instant, I took my departure from Frisnillo. My servant, Marcellino, had mounted me on a beautiful little mule, which he recommended as being an

uncommon easy pacer, and it came up to his description, for it ambled along as gaily as though it did not carry a burden of one hundred and sixty-five, or seventy pounds. My company had a grotesque appearance. It consisted, besides myself, of five men all well armed, and ten animals. One of the mules carried my trunk and bedding, while another was loaded with my kitchen, thus leaving two for a change, or to meet casualties.

Every thing, so far as I was able to perceive, went on smoothly. My interpreter kept close to my side, and as often as he cast his eyes over the plain, and behind him, he would wish himself one day's journey from Frisnillo. He related to me the facts of an attack which a band of robbers had made, but two nights previous, upon a hacienda campus in sight of Frisnillo, when five of the ladrones and two of the rancheros were killed. He said that, notwithstanding he had never attended the lectures in the United States, yet he was a doctor in Mexico, and that some of the wounded in the late action were his patients. He affirmed that he cared as little about fighting as any other person, but that he craved a natural death, and abominated the thought of bleaching upon the plains. His uneasiness was considerable, and indeed had the effect of creating additional apprehensions with myself.

My journey, for that day, was as far as Sain-Alto, a distance of fully fifty miles from Frisnillo. We therefore had no time to lose, but kept our animals pacing onwards as briskly as they would go. Although the previous day's ride had somewhat disconcerted me, the set-out of this morning was not as disagreeable as I imagined it would be, and I was in hopes that I would soon become used to a Spanish saddle, and feel as nimble as the best of them; but, oh, Genius of Mazeppa! I had a different story to tell, for by the middle of the day I could bear it no longer, and in agony and anger, I threw myself from my easy-pacing mule, and tumbled upon the grass, while the little animal commenced feeding around me. Out of the stiff strong leathers of my new saddle, that held me in a position precisely as if I was laced in a rack before a Spanish inquisition for torture, I felt easy; and, from that moment, I had no doubt but that Spanish saddles, so called, were invented by Philip the Second, for the iniquitous purposes of the inquisition. I examined all the saddles of my men, and found that that of my interpreter was the oldest, and the leathers could in some degree be made pliable, so I proposed a swap with him, though my own was worth twenty times as much as his.

At two o'clock in the evening, we stopped at a house to

noon it. While reposing on a bed, I heard my interpreter say that we were safe, which caused me to inquire the meaning of his declaration. He replied that he saw hanging on the wall of the room we were in, the Alcalde cane, pointing to it as he spoke, and adding that he always felt safe when lodged in the house of an Alcalde. The commission of an Alcalde is accompanied with a cane, by order of the government, dressed off with a bunch of silk tassels, and a silver or gold head. The officer in authority cannot preside on any occasion without his cane; neither are the people bound to obey him without this insignia of his power in his hand. He is only the magistrate with his cane, without it he becomes the private citizen.

In Mexico oaths are seldom administered; but, when they are, the Alcalde crosses his fore-finger with his thumb over the head of his cane, and swears his evidence in the name of the commonwealth.

From the Alcalde's, where we made but a short stay, we pursued our journey. My sufferings increased with my fatigue, and in the evening I witnessed the going down of the sun without having arrived at Sain-Alto. At the hour of ten o'clock the town was gained, and I had the happiness of dismounting in the court of a large meson in that place.

My interpreter recommended me to eat heartily of chili, saying that it would strengthen and relieve me; and, notwithstanding that I knew the remedy was a hot one, yet, in despair, I felt sufficiently courageous to have taken arsenic, with the promise of restoration. My interpreter was fond of good eating, and had ordered a plentiful supper. By way of encouragement to me to partake of the stewed red pepper, he swallowed about a half pint of it. Thinking that the stimulating stuff would excite me, I did not further hesitate to commence upon it; but my fatigue was so severe that chili was tasteless to my palate, and I ate a hearty meal of it, which must have had some good effect—for that night, for the first time since my arrival in Mexico, I had a healthful glow upon the surface.

Early in the morning, I was aroused by the preparations making by my servants for a start; and, having taken chocolate, a woman entered to collect the bill. I observed Marcelino at a short distance from us attentively listening and looking on, and as soon as my interpreter informed me of the amount I had to pay, I handed it over to her; but my faithful servant instantly came forward, and, with angry gestures, and vehement articulation, commenced a quarrel with the woman and my interpreter, which finally resulted in Marcelino handing me back seventy-five cents, which I had overpaid. I felt

much pleased at what had happened, for my interpreter had been taught a lesson that if, through design or his ignorance, I was imposed upon, I was nevertheless not defenceless.

After we had mounted, and were leaving Sain-Alto, I perceived that my previous day's journey had brought me to a warm country, for many of the houses of that place were fenced in by the tall *organo*. This is a species of the prickly pear, and is not only beautiful to look at, but a curiosity in the vegetable kingdom. It is of a perfect deep green colour, and rises from the ground in a solid column, of an equal size, often reaching a height of twenty feet. It is regularly fluted from the bottom to the top, as if done by the exactness of an artist's line, rule, and compass.

The *maquey* also flourished here. It is this plant which, I believe, is said to blossom once in an hundred years. It is said that the colder the latitude, the later it will flower: but, in the climate of Mexico, it generally blossoms once in seven years. Mr. Prescott remarks of it:

"The miracle of nature is the Mexican aloe, or maquey, whose clustering pyramids of flowers, towering above their dark coronals of leaves, were seen sprinkled over many a broad acre of land. As we have already noticed, its blue leaves afford a paste from which paper was made; its juice was fermented into an intoxicating beverage, pulque, of which the natives to this day are excessively fond; they further supplied an impenetrable thatch for the more humble dwellings; thread of which coarse stuffs were manufactured, and strong cords were drawn from its twisted fibres; pins and needles were made of the thorns at the extremity of the leaves; and the root, when properly cooked, was converted into a palatable and nutritious food.

"The maquey, in short, was meat, drink, clothing, and writing material for the Azetic! Surely never did nature enclose, in so compact a compass, so many elements of human comfort and civilization."

The maquey is as luxuriant in its growth as that of any other plant that I have seen, sometimes measuring ten or twelve feet across the circumference; yet it is astonishing to behold, that it matters not as to the soil upon which it grows, it will present the same appearance of vigorous life. I have seen it growing on stone walls, where not a particle of earth could be detected by the eye, with the same admirable beauty as upon the rich soil. How then does this plant sustain itself? The regions of the upper table lands are arid and dry; for no moisture can be detected in the atmosphere, day or night, during the dry season, apart from the lakes and rivers. How then

does it exist? Is it possible that, without earth, clinging to the rocks to hold its upright position, it must receive its nourishment from the gasses of the atmosphere? Doubtless nature in its economy designed that the periodical south-west winds that sweep over the plains and mountains during the dry season, from the Pacific, brings with it moisture from the ocean, and thus supplies vegetation with hydrogen, although the human eye and feeling cannot perceive it. And too, the maquey excelling, if any thing, in its deep green aspect and symmetrical and heavy leaves, yields every twenty-four hours one quart or more of rich fluid called pulque. In whatsoever advantage this plant may be considered, I am compelled to decide that it is the wonder of vegetable nature.

After we had travelled about three leagues from Sain-Alto, my interpreter called my attention to three men, who had suddenly made their appearance upon the plain, and it was not long before they commenced a rapid speed towards us. Marcelino drew his sword, and fell back to my side. I jerked my gloves from my hands, and hastily threw them away, and in another moment we were all prepared to meet the worst. Our assailants supposing, perhaps, that their reception might be too warm, from the precipitous defence we were making, changed their direction from us, and, our march being resumed, they were soon lost to view. I informed my interpreter that he might have my gloves, if he would dismount and pick them up; but he declared that he had no intention of encumbering his hands when his life was in danger. The servants also all refused to take them, and in fact gloves are not used in Mexico when travelling, for no man can tell at what moment he may need the best use of his fingers. I determined also, that if I could not wear them, they should not be in the way, when I had a call for the bullets and cartridges from my pockets.

My journey, for that day, was over a table land, similar to that which I had, on the day previous, travelled. But towards the close of evening, a nipple of a mountain was pointed out to me, which had the resemblance of a Mexican hat, and was therefore called *Sombrero*. This peak overlooked a town of the same name. By the setting of the sun we had passed a narrow defile of the mountain, and arrived at the town of *Sombrero*, a place which had formerly been of some importance in Mexico, from the abundance of silver that had been extracted from its mines; but they becoming unprofitable, were deserted and the town left to decay, its inhabitants depending principally upon highway robbery for support. As I entered the town, and was passing a large building, I was hailed by a

custom-house officer. I informed my interpreter to say to the man, that I was an American officer, and he received in reply that all was right; for he was under the impression that I belonged to the army, and without further delay we made for the meson.

No sooner had I dismounted from my animal, than I demanded some water, for my mouth and throat were parched with thirst. A woman of the meson handed me a pint glass of the pure crystal element, and having taken it, I was handing the glass back to her, with the request that it should be filled again, when I supposed my wearied little mule, who was standing by my side, craving water as much as myself, knocked the tumbler out of my hand. The woman passionately demanded fifty cents for her satisfaction, but Marcelino interposed and quieted the difficulty for thirty-seven and a half. Food and sleep were my next wants, and, in their turns, I happily devoted myself.

## CHAPTER XVI.

What direction I would take. Departure from Sombbrero. Under much excitement. Fatigue, hunger and thirst. Hacienda Campus de los Muleros. Small red wolves. Sheep. Great house. Refused admittance. Hospitality of a young Mexican. His wife Paixham balls. Diversion. Countrymen in pursuit of a lawyer. Understanding of right and wrong. Servants feet locked under a mule. Many small streams. Unsatisfied thirst. Mexicans never wash when travelling. La Ponta. Proceed to San Casan. Arms discharged. My duty. Corpse of two men. Travel 1400 miles. River. Iron furnace. The city of Durango. De la Santa Paula meson. Breakfast. De Cadena Casa. My walk. Two plazas. Fire arms. The Allemade of the city of Durango. The Convento of the patron Saint. Durango, a Bishopric. One of the nine mints. My servant's comparisons of coins. A retired part of the Allemade. Reflections. Vale of delusion. Civil without religious liberty. Tom Paine. Thomas Jefferson. The great silence of Mexican towns. Ruin of 400 houses. Dinner. Mr. James Moore and an Englishman. Snap of a pistol. Narrow escape of life. Mr. German Stalknit. His mistake. Letters of introduction. Signor Don Fernando Remizes. Hospitality. Reflections. Dwelling of Remizes. Furniture. Libraries of the ex-deputy. His character. Suffrages for President. Introduction. Liberality. History of the United States. Alicraus. Harcourt. Courtesy of the Governor of Durango. Mr. John Belden. The People of Durango. Bishop of Durango. The Bishop's character. Cotton manufacture of the Stalknits. College of Durango. Education. Change of dress. Best of arms. To Bivouac. A tent. Letters of introduction from the Governor. Remizes. Ten loads of silver.

My interpreter informed me, that previous to our leaving Sombbrero, it would be prudent to deceive the people of that town, as to what direction I would take on my departure from it. I consented to his design of sending one of my servants into the streets to answer inquiries, by saying, that business had brought me there, and that I should on the following day go back whence I came. Marcelino preferred to perform the task, and on his return seemed to be delighted with his success. He said that he related to the people that my journey not only terminated at their town, but that it possibly was my intention to open a mine there; which information much delighted the impoverished citizens.

On the morning of the 7th inst. I took my departure from