

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. Alicrans. 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

Sombrereto. My animals were driven out of the eastern end of the town, the same direction that I had entered it. No sooner, however, had we become obscured by the houses, than we turned directly to the north, and having ascended a spur of a mountain that put us upon a plain, we hastily continued the same course for about two leagues, when Marcelino, who was well acquainted with the country, suddenly tacked due west, and after travelling one league, he resumed his proper direction of north. During all this time my interpreter and servants seemed to labour under much excitement, by continually straining their eyes to the rear, and over the table land. Marcelino said it was true, that he had no property to lose, but that the ladrones never spared the servants; for they called them poor lazy devils, and flogged them severely; while the master would be discharged, if he surrendered like a gentleman, with many thanks and applause for his industry and accumulation of money and valuables. Upon separating with him they would advise him to have at least as much for them, if they should again meet him, for if he should not, his fate would be that of his servants, if not death.

My journey, on this day, was uninterrupted, saving by fatigue, hunger and intolerable thirst; for we found neither pool nor stream of water. The country through which we travelled was uneven and rolling: but during the latter part of the day the plain became a dead level, and, from first, having to travel through the low musquito-growth, we came to a cove of broad shady trees, small, and thinly scattered over the land, which might be denominated a forest.

Just before the set of sun we hove in view of the castle of the Hacienda campus de los Muleros, (a place of mules,) yet every other kind of stock and vegetation was raised and cultivated there, for it was one of the finest estates that I had ever beheld. The sight of the premises was most congenial, for it was the first house that I had seen the whole day; although it was full five miles from me, it promised repose from my toils, at no very distant period, and I felt cheered with the hope. Presently we came upon a gang of small red wolves, common in Mexico, and then we approached a herd of many thousand sheep: at length we passed the ranchos of the place and arrived immediately in front of the great house.

One of my servants, who had been sent before me to the castle, informed me that the administrador had said, that there was no spare room for strangers; for the house was filled with corn, saving one apartment for himself and wife; and that I would have to seek lodgings in one of the ranchos. The servant also stated, that there was much excitement with

the people, resulting from the fact of two murders, that had been committed that day, near Muleros. I felt perplexed and disappointed in not being decently housed, for I had never yet lodged in a filthy rancho.

However, there was one other good building at the place, from which a well-dressed young Mexican came out, and invited me to accept a room in his dwelling. I thanked him for the offer, which I accepted. Mine host was a gay and conversant gentleman, who had but a few weeks been wedded to a bouncing black-eyed Mexican girl. He informed my interpreter that the proprietor of Muleros was a very inhospitable man, and that he believed that he had a part in all the many robberies and murders which happened in that quarter. As for myself, the scape-gallows look of the man was conclusive evidence of the truth of this assertion.

In the morning we resumed our journey in good spirits. My interpreter appeared not to be satisfied with the arms with which I had furnished him, and had secured some large round stones, which he called his Paixham balls, which he threatened to burst against the administrador, after his shots were expended, if he should attack us. There was a small and rapid stream, that flowed through the dominions of Muleros, and for several miles from its banks were cotton-wood trees of handsome growth, pleasing to the sight of the traveller in this hot, barren and thirsty country.

During that day several things occurred of a diverting nature. First, in passing by an extensive corn-field, I perceived up a distant tree, in the midst of the corn, a nest, and, as I really imagined, a bird in it, and observed to my interpreter that there was the largest soplote that I ever beheld. He laughed heartily, and informed me that it was nothing more nor less than a Mexican wrapped in his serapi, guarding his crop. Crops in Mexico are watched both day and night, to prevent the stock, and two-legged thieves, from molesting it.

Again, we had not proceeded much farther, before a man came galloping up to us, and commenced addressing himself to me. Upon inquiring of my interpreter what this individual wanted, he informed me that the countryman had supposed me to be a lawyer, and that he wanted my advice against his partner in a crop of corn, in a suit for damages. I directed him to say to the man, that he had mistaken my calling, but that Marcelino had been, on some occasions, my advocate, and he might do well, perhaps, to consult with him. The man thanked me for the intelligence, and instantly spurred to the side of my servant, and, for several leagues, the client and counsellor discussed the merits of the cause, while my inter-

preter rapidly translated the conversation for me, much to my entertainment.

The suit of the complainant, and the decision of the case by Marcelino, was only but one other evidence, to me, of the entire want of a proper understanding of right and wrong among the Mexicans. Fraud and dishonesty in transactions are so prevalent amongst them, that they have no proper conception of how to discriminate justice from injury: and in their honest convictions of judgments, as well as the case in regard to Marcelino, the impossibility of separating low cunning and chicanery from equity is a task too severe, resulting from their practices and habits of thinking—just in the same manner, as it is said, of a lawyer, who has long appeared for the commonwealth of any country, that his judgment is so biased against the commission of crime that he cannot be convinced that any are innocent, or that there are any palliating circumstances in their favour attending the acts they are charged with. Hence it is that mankind has to mourn under a heavy weight of civil and piously bigoted oppression, perverting to its peculiar uses the statutes of God, the broad basis of which are the only fundamental principles of reason and law.

I am aware that travellers often see things, which, to those who have never been abroad, are, as St. Paul says, "hard to believe," and hence I have let incidents escape me that might have informed and entertained the minds of many.

To those who have seen the large spurs of the Mexicans, what I am going to relate will seem not incredible. The countryman, having finished his discourse, put off in full speed to find, perhaps, other advisers. But one of my servants, being wickedly disposed, started after him, to bring him back for future sport. It was not long however, before he came back, calling lustily for help. My first thoughts were, that some banditti had made their appearance, but, as the poor man rode up to us, I soon perceived the amount of his distress. His heels were confined under his mule by his spurs being locked together; the long rowl of the right one having hooked itself to the chain of the left, that hangs under the foot. The man was as closely united to his animal as if he had been secured by lock and key; and the little *machacho* was not altogether out of distress, for the long prongs of the spur were continually jading him, and it could not be told when the tortured creature would take fright, and perhaps kill its rider. Amid the shouts and bursts of laughter of his compeers his shackles were unloosed, much to his relief. Such occurrences, my interpreter informed me, were not before unknown, for he had freed

others, whom he had overtaken on the road, who had suffered in this way for hours.

My journey, for the most of this day, was close to, and parallel with a mountain, from whence flowed many small streams. The sight of the mountain-brooks had an inconceivably delightful aspect, recalling to my mind the cooling fountains of the the Alleghanies, where my thirst had been so often satisfied by pure water,—the first, the second, and the third of these streams were, in their turns, stopped at, but with no satisfaction, for they were all strongly tinctured with copperas, deep green deposits of which enveloped the rocks, and covered the beds of the streams. As I could not relieve my dried and parched lips with the water, I resolved at least to wash my hands and face in it, but the Mexicans making so many objections to this, I desisted for their satisfaction.

The Mexicans never wash when travelling, believing it to be injurious to their health, and, indeed, they object to the constant use of water, being of the opinion that the dirt on their faces is less pernicious than the diseases engendered by the use of this liquid to remove it; this being a temperance carried beyond the principles of the societies of the United States; and thus I had to perish in the midst of plenty.

It was my intention to travel that day as far as La Ponta, but from the fatigue, which is better understood by those who have had to endure it, than the idea can be conveyed by description, I was advised by my interpreter to proceed no farther than San Causin, which place was then discernible, from our elevated position, some three leagues from us. With our quarters in view our pace was quickened, for there all our wants were to be supplied. We were thus progressing, when, suddenly, we discovered six men advancing in front of us. Overpowered with the toils of the day, I thought not, and cared as little, of danger that might be brooding, and, until it had been accomplished, did I perceive that my servants had driven my animals to one side, and my interpreter had also left the straight-forward road, apprehending some evil, as the advancing party were better mounted and equipped than any others we had met.

Not having acted in concert with the movement of my men, timorously resolving not to yield a foot, I passed them, brushing the very points of some of their spears, at the same time holding my finger on the trigger of my double-barreled gun, as it lay on my lap, which was pointed directly at them. My servants, all stopped to witness the rencontre, but it all passed away by hard looks. When I rejoined my party, my interpreter declared that he had never witnessed so fearless an

experiment, for he confidently believed that I would be killed. I told him that I was conscious of having committed no act of rashness, and that, in all probability, the incident had saved us from a battle, as the party we met were no travellers, for they were without animals, or baggage of any kind.

It is the rule in Mexico, for the weaker party always to give the way. Our companies were equal; but, as I had extra animals, I certainly was entitled to the road. And, if armed men, who are not travellers, do not give the road, it is conclusive evidence, as I had been advised, of their hostile intent. We arrived in safety at San Causin, a hacienda campus. The water was good; the tortillas, the frijoles, the chili and the stewed mutton, were all, to a hungry man, delightful; and sleep, on that night, was never more refreshing.

On the following morning, all of my men being in readiness to recommence the journey, which was that day to put me in the city of Durango, I gave orders that all of our guns and pistols should be discharged and reloaded, which had not been done since we left Zacatecas, as I felt desirous of witnessing the performances of our weapons. The volley we fired was equal to a commandant's salute, as we numbered about forty rounds, eight of which were from my own person and saddle.

At every place we stopped, accounts of murders and robberies were detailed. The ladrones of Mexico are like the mosquitoes on the Mississippi, the people saying always that, with them, there are few if any, but that a little way beyond they become very plentiful. I felt it my duty to be prepared, at whatsoever place it might befall me to meet with them, and we prosecuted our journey. We had not travelled more than five leagues before we came upon the corpses of two men, who had been murdered the day previous; one of them appeared to have come to his end by a bullet—the other had several shocking sabre wounds.

On this day I had to cross the same river twice. The last time I was ferried over in a dug-out, which cost me one dollar and a half, though my animals had to swim across with the Mexican who drove them. I had then travelled about fourteen hundred miles in Mexico, and of the few rivers that I had seen, none of them was above a moderate stone's throw across.

The country over which I had passed was thinly covered with musquito growth, and some cotton wood; but, upon being landed over the ferry, I was upon the plain of Durango, a beautiful level country. Although the table land was totally divested of timber, yet the mountains of Durango towered with the pine, the cypress, and other species of trees; and,

near to the city, Mr. Lakeman, an American, is the proprietor of an iron furnace.

On the 9th instant, at nine o'clock at night, I entered the city of Durango, and put up at the De la Santa Paula meson. The following morning, being Sunday, I determined that I would rest, being much fatigued after the last five days' travel.

I did not take my breakfast until ten o'clock, which being over, I felt desirous of recreation by walking; and, having invited my interpreter to accompany me, I entered the streets, for a promenade in the Alemade, if I could find it. The meson joined a large religious edifice, in which the inquisition was formerly located. It is called De Cadena Casa, the chain-house. From that building, for some few days in the year, a chain was extended across the street, during which time, if any individual committed any offence or crime against the law, and he could lay hands upon that chain, before arrested by the legal authorities, he escaped all further molestation or prosecution. Thus crime was encouraged through the instrumentality of religion. This custom had its origin from the heathenish sanctuary institutions, but it has been abandoned by the Christian church, in both Europe and America.

My walk extended round the principal plaza, upon the eastern side of which the government house is situated, where all the public business is transacted. It is also used as a garrison for the army. On the western side is the government palace, the residence of the governor and general of Durango. My way was then directed through the *de Comercio plaza*, the commercial plaza, where all kinds of fruits, provisions and merchandise were offered for sale—promiscuously spread upon the pavement; and in such places my interpreter informed me the ladrone vended such earnings as he desired to part with.

My interpreter took a fancy to a handsome gun, in the possession of a poor Mexican; and he said that he would prove to me that the man stole it, by his taking one-third of its value for it. The gun I supposed to be worth twenty dollars, but the man, after some jewing, agreed to take ten.

The Alemade of the city of Durango was as lovely and delightful a retreat as I had ever in my life enjoyed. A grove of trees shaded its clean walks and seats, whilst a fountain of water refreshed and cooled the atmosphere. It is located between the Plaza de los Torros and the town, and commanded a view of the plain, the city, and the extended mountains around, and a more picturesque scene I never beheld. The Convento of the patron saint of the town was

situated upon a romantic mound of earth and stone. The view from this edifice excels the imagination of poet and artist, and exceeds any other scene of the kind ever before exhibited to my view. The city of Durango appeared to cover about the same amount of space as the city of Mexico. The buildings are not so high, but are, otherwise, not less in dimensions.

Durango is a Bishopric, and the two high steeples of the cathedral towered far above those of the many other churches and convents of the place.

At Durango has long been established one of the nine mints belonging to the government. It was not a little amusing to see my Zacatecas servants comparing the coins of their own city with those of Durango; while one of them said, satirically, that the bird on the Durango coin looked more like a sopilote (buzzard) than the Mexican eagle. Another responded that he would be rejoiced if either of the fowls would build a nest in his pocket, and hatch young ones there. The inhabitants of Durango were fewer than I had supposed, judging from the extent of the city. I was informed that the population did not exceed thirty thousand.

While seated under a shade, in a retired part of the Alameda, my thoughts were interrupted by the natives actually stopping to gaze at me—and casting my eyes upward to the pure, bright, serene expanse of heaven—for scarcely in nine months does a spot of cloud as big as a man's hand appear in the skies of Mexico—then beheld the mountains sublimely reaching as it were to the regions of upper air—the massive compactness of a large city, in the midst of a plain beneath—the solemnity of the Mexican countenance, and the profound stillness of the whole scene; for from that vast multitude no sounds were sent up to break the sadness of nature, and the gloom of a dense town, my mind was filled with a pleasing melancholy, and from my heart I hoped that the time might come when the Mexicans would be happy, when the veil of delusion that hangs between them and that independence which the plastic hand of their Creator has endowed them with, would be split in twain; when their judgment would be untrammelled, and their conscience no longer made a commerce of! then, and not till then, could I imagine Mexico to be free, and enjoy the transcendent beauties and bounties of nature with which she has been blessed. For I am persuaded that there cannot be civil, without religious liberty; apart, they are a mutual aid to each other; united, they both degenerate and sink to a wedded corruption, too impure for the respect of man, and too vile to be acceptable to God! If

good ever came out of evil, it was by Tom Paine's works, during the American revolution; and if glory ever covered a benefactor of the human family, it was when Thomas Jefferson first set the example of dissolving the union of church and state, and penned, for the constitution of Virginia, the declaration of independence and the liberty of conscience.

The great silence that prevails in Mexican towns is remarkable, when the church bells are not ringing, and from the garrison the clang of the trumpet-horn is no longer blown. From twelve to three o'clock in the afternoon all is still, and from a distance no sound is heard; and, in fact, in the hot valleys, and the inhabitants so wrapped in sleep that a traveller might pass through the streets of a town without seeing a human being.

The city of Durango had, in the month previous to my arrival, suffered a heavy calamity, which resulted in the serious damage, more or less, and the ruin of four hundred houses. The cause of this destruction of property had its origin from the heavy rains that had fallen, which had so saturated the sun-brunt bricks, that the crumbling walls were not able to support the roofs, and of course they tumbled in. It was not in the knowledge of any one that, in the month of January, it should rain, and none of the inhabitants had ever experienced in the wet season so great and continued a fall of water as came so unexpectedly upon them. The sudden rise of the streams and small rivers was so rapid as to do much damage to the haciendas, also to drown stock, and wash down houses.

On my return to the meson, my servant brought me my dinner, and while myself and interpreter were eating, two gentlemen entered the room, one of whom introduced himself to me as Mr. James Moore, an American, from the State of Tennessee; the other was an Englishman, whose name I have lost. The latter individual appeared to have been indulging too freely that day, and as we were all seated, and I was finishing my dinner, I happened to look towards the Englishman, who I perceived had my large rifle pistol in his hands, with the muzzle pointed immediately at my head, for I could see down into the barrel, while his finger was pulling at the hammer. I politely informed him what he was doing, and requested that he would turn the weapon in another direction; or else lay it down; he replied that he had never killed any one, and well understood the use of arms. Thinking that the man would have some regard for what I said, I continued my repast of lettuce and stew; but no sooner had I taken my eyes from him than I heard the snap of the pistol, and without thought I sprung from my seat, while the first self-con-

sciousness I possessed was, that I had wrested the heavy weapon from his hand, and had it uplifted in the air above his head. So pending was the fatal blow, that my poised arm seemed to tremble over him, on the verge of the almost impossible checking of the deadly fall. The terrified man sat motionless and speechless for a time, and then, to my satisfaction, left the room; for in turns each of us had been on the brink of eternity. I never knew that pistol, before or since, fail to explode a cap, and would not for the world that the same experiment should happen. After some hours the Englishman returned, and, in his apologies for what had taken place, thanked me for his life, and the lesson I had taught him.

On Monday morning, the 11th instant, feeling sufficiently refreshed for business, I looked over my letters, and found that all were in my possession but one, addressed to Mr. Germain Stalknit, a German by birth, and a gentleman who had been highly recommended to me as a high-minded and honourable man. Such was the character of Mr. S., that notwithstanding I had mislaid or lost his letter, I determined to make him a visit, and introduce myself to him, and for this purpose I procured a guide to conduct me to his house.

On entering the great door of his palace, for palace indeed it was, if splendour and large dimensions can constitute such a thing, I was shown a door to the right hand, and upon going to it, I perceived two gentlemen in the endless employment (in Mexico) of counting dollars and weighing gold. One of them, who proved to be the gentleman that I was desirous of seeing, without my having first spoken, said, "Doctor Gilliam, I am glad to see you, be seated, and when my brother and self have finished our present engagement, I shall be happy to converse with you."

It was not long before the accomplished gentleman again turned to me, and I in my turn addressed him, by saying, that it was true he had given me my right appellation, but that I was a person whom he had never seen: to which he replied, "Are you not Doctor Gilliam, United States Consul to Monterey?" To his surprise, I informed him that I was the brother of the individual he had mistaken me for. It was all the same with the two German gentlemen, for they seemed to be as cordial and familiar with me, as if we had been intimate all our lives.

I acquainted Mr. Stalknit of my having once been in possession of a letter addressed to him from Zacatecas; but that on that morning I was unable to lay my hand upon it. I then presented him the letters I have before mentioned, and his politeness induced him to proffer his services in handing them to the individuals to whom they were directed. It proved that

Senor Don Fernando Ramires was the brother-in-law of Mr. Germain Stalknit. He insisted that I should dine with him that day, and said he would accompany me in the evening to Don Fernando's, and thence to the Government palace.

Such hospitality to a stranger, old Virginia like, can but be gratefully felt. I have heard the selfish object of extending kindness to the unknown, whom chance or business may have thrown in their towns or country, as if the world was made alone for them. By a liberal state of society, the stranger receives a benefit, while those, who in duty bestow it, are done no injury; and if time should prove that he was unworthy of attention, there is yet a pleasing reflection, that the subject has received a lesson in politeness, and perhaps is thereby instigated to refrain from evil company and bad deeds, and reform his manners. No well-bred community will slight, or indifferently treat an apparent gentleman, who in reality is as good as themselves. However, high life below stairs sometimes exposes itself, and is subjected to reproach, when otherwise it might have done honour to itself, at least have nothing lost.

Dinner being over, Mr. Stalknit conducted to the dwelling of Senor Don Fernando Ramires. My friend, without ceremony, entered the house, and I at once perceived that the large and elegant establishment was well furnished, being much in the style of the houses in the United States, the chairs and sofas perhaps having been imported thence by the way of Mazatlan. It happened that the proprietor was not in, and Mr. Stalknit said that he would take the liberty of showing me the library of the ex-Deputy.

I accepted the invitation, and was conducted to a large room, not under thirty feet long, by twenty broad and in height. It was filled all around, from floor to ceiling, as my friend informed me, with Spanish law books.

On a large table in the centre of the room, lay piles of documents, beside the open authors of his recent consultation. Having looked in the face of many of the old volumes which I could not understand, I was invited into an adjoining apartment, much larger, containing a greater number of folios. Mr. Stalknit related, that that was his general library, and contained works upon every branch of learning, and of several languages.

Fernando Ramires was certainly a great man, and a patriot, and as an evidence of his purity and good sense, he had that year resigned his seat in the House of Deputies, to which he had been elected for many years, publicly assigning as his reason, which was much for any man to do, at that time, in

Mexico, that he could no longer consent to serve under a usurping Dictator, who had trampled the constitution under his feet, and, by force of arms, driven the deputies from their seats.

If the people of Mexico, knew how to enjoy and maintain their liberties, such a civilian as Ramires would receive their suffrages as President, instead of their supporting, by their bayonets, a throne for ambitious military chieftains. But the libraries and wealth of this good man were not the most valuable of his possessions, for he was the father of a lovely and accomplished daughter, who could fluently converse in French and English as well as in Spanish. Her education and refinement, obtained by dint of application, were of the first order, and would have made her pre-eminently attractive in any country.

Our conversation and examination of books delayed us until the honourable lawyer entered his study. Upon being introduced to him, his manly and dignified bearing came up to every thing I had imagined of a man of his character. He had a round full bust, full face, eyes that sparkled with genius, high forehead, a little bald; his stature was about the common height. I conversed with him on the subject of legal business, for which he positively refused any remuneration. He gave me written instructions how to proceed, and requested that I should let him immediately know, if I required future aid.

He informed me, through Mr. S., who acted as our mutual interpreter, that he was studying the English language, and showed me a copy of Marshall's Life of Washington, and the Federalist, in English. He said he was desirous of knowing what was the best history of the United States, and I had the mortification of replying that there were none of the many histories of the country considered the best, and that its history was yet imbedded in the archives of the United States papers, as well as the lives of the prominent men. I told him, that so far as I was informed, the future historian had to bear off the palm of having written the best history of the Union. He seemed very desirous of obtaining information of my country, and asked me many questions appertaining to it. The evening having been consumed at Sen. Don Fernando's, my visit to the Governor was deferred until the next morning.

That night, after my return to my quarters, the keeper of the meson gave me warning of the *Alicrans*, a species of scorpion, and how to elude their sting. The lodger must, previous to his reposing, tuck all the bed clothing under the mattress of his carter, so that none of them may touch the floor for the venomous reptile to crawl upon. No portion of

the bed must touch the walls of the room, and the individual must sleep with his entire head and body covered, to prevent the fall of the insect from the ceiling.

The alicran is of a reddish complexion, and about the size and shape of a small lizard. Its legs are like those of a spider, and at the point of its tail is a short curved sting, no longer than that of a bee. No sooner does he touch a human being, than he hooks him with his poisonous weapon, always fatal, at Durango, to children, and most painfully distressing to grown persons; producing a delirium, and violent spasmodic affections, with frothing at the mouth. The alicran is more poisonous at Durango than in any other portion of Mexico. This fact cannot be attributed to any known cause, unless it should be from the mineral of the earth it lives in.

I was informed that there are families in Durango, who make their subsistence by catching these insects, the government paying them a premium for each one destroyed. After night the alicran catcher passes along the street with a torch in his hand, and the little reptile runs out of his crevice, attracted by the light; but he no sooner appears, than he is struck from the wall by a brush, and as soon as he touches the pavement, a handful of sand is thrown upon him, when the expert catcher dexterously picks him up and extracts his sting; after which he deposits him in a bottle alive, and receives his reward from the proper authority. Citizens, who wish it, have to pay extra for the search of their rooms.

On the 12th instant, I had the honour of being presented to Cesmo Sir Gobernador y Commandant General D Jose Antonio Heridia. The governor was a fine looking, intelligent gentleman, and received me with much courtesy. I did myself, on this occasion, the distinction of showing the general an American uniform. After some conversation, I retired, leaving him uninterrupted in his multifarious public duties. From the government house I went to that of Mr. John Belden, an American, of the city of New York, who had invited me to dine with him that day. Mr. B. had been successful in business, and had accumulated a large fortune; and whether or not to please himself or the Mexicans, I cannot say, he often wore costly diamond jewels, and hence he was called the Prince of Diamonds.

The people of the city of Durango, both foreign and native, seemed to be of a better order than any others I had seen in all Mexico. This, possibly might result from the circumstance of having such men as Ramires residing amongst them. The Bishop of Durango, also, was the only pious man that I heard

of during all my travels in that country. His name, I regret to say, has been lost with others from among my papers.

This celebrated and beloved Bishop is said to be truly religious. I was informed by a distinguished citizen that, sacred to his vow, he never had a female to enter his house, and that all of his servants were men; a fact unknown in relation to any other clergyman in the country. His father confessor accompanied him on every occasion, and regularly, three times a day, he made confession.

The Bishop was a man of deep sympathies and sensibilities, which was evinced by his grief at the death of an American, J. V. Crannell, M. D., for whom he had a high regard. It is said that the good man sat daily by the bedside of the doctor, and, upon his decease, gave special directions for his funeral ceremonies. I was informed they were very splendid, and it required two days to do the honours for the dead. The worthy Bishop did not himself, however, partake of this ostentation; but, with great distress, for thirty days confined himself to his room, suffering no one but his confessor to come into his presence. The priests, on the other hand, take good care to buy indulgences to live with their unmarried wives. It should not be astonishing that, with such highly honourable men as Ramires, and the Christian Bishop, the morals and manners of a community should be improved.

At Durango there is one college, having foreign and native professors. The public school system, as regulated by law in the department, I very much admired, as being the only one perhaps by which to compel education upon the people. They are taxed for the support of the schools, upon the more perfect plan of the Prussian district system, and it is made the imperative duty of every teacher to report to the Alcalde each parent or guardian, who has children of six years of age and upwards, who neglects to send them to school.

The parent or guardian, as the case may be, is then summoned to appear before the court, to show good cause why he does not send his children to school; and, failing to do so, is fined, or punished by imprisonment, until his child is permitted to enjoy its privilege and natural right. Would that the law of some of the States of the Union would thus compel unkind parents to educate their offspring, who are provided for by the law of the land, but are refused the boon by hard-hearted and unnatural parents.

My stay in the city of Durango was but four days, when much to my regret, I had to exchange my American dress for the Mexican *jaceti*, around about jacket. Long-tailed or frock

coats are never worn, excepting at the capital, or by foreigners; and, as a gentleman informed me, if a man should be seen riding in any other apparel than that of a *jaceti* and leather pants, he would be looked upon as a monster, and accordingly almost stoned to death. It is very important to conform to Mexican costume, both to gratify Mexican vanity, as also to disguise yourself as a native, for the traveller cannot know when he may hear the exclamation, "Death to all foreigners!" The handy and comfortable little jacket I did not at all regard, but it was the weight of iron and steel with which I was obliged to encumber myself and saddle; for to my belt was a powder-flask, a bag of bullets, two six and one single barrel pistols, a bowie-knife and a sword; while looped to the horn of my saddle was a double-barrel gun, holsters with two pistols, and my nine-inch barrel rifle pistol, hanging to my right, on the skirt of my saddle.

Such a formidable display of weapons might appear savage and intently bad in any other country, but such are the customs of Mexico; and notwithstanding I fell short of the full complement of twenty-six rounds; yet, as it was my intention never to surrender "like a gentleman," as the *ladrones* have it, I felt desirous to be as well prepared for battle as the best of them; or, as my interpreter often expressed himself, "it looked so respectable, for a Mexican would never deign to take his hat off to a traveller unarmed."

As in the journey before me I should be often obliged to *bivouac* in the open air, I had provided myself with a tent, as also an additional supply of London pickled salmon, and ham, crackers and jerked beef. At Durango I was advised to employ a guide, as no one could find the way to Canales, excepting those who had travelled the mountains. I did not discharge my interpreter here, for the reason that I found no serious complaint to lodge against him, and for fear that in an exchange I might not obtain a better one.

The governor of Durango having furnished me with letters to the Alcalde of Canales, and the prefect of Tamazula, recommending them to forward me in all my designs, and all other necessary preparations having been made, I gave the order *bamanos*, (let us go,) a word always used for the signal of a departure, and took up my line of march to Cacario. My friend, Mr. Stalknit, had at that time despatched ten loads of silver for Mazatlan, and I was recommended to join company with the conductor of it, which I did; and although his men were all armed well, with the exception of a boy, who carried a gun without a lock, yet I cannot say that I

considered it altogether prudent; for, while I might be of assistance to him, the money he had in charge was a superinducement for the attack of marauding parties.

While at Durango, the two brothers, Stalknits, invited me to a ride of two miles in the country, to visit their cotton factory. The buildings of their establishment were as commodious as any others I had seen of the kind in the Union, working twenty thousand spindles, and their complement of looms. The yarns of the factory were all wove into fabrics, with the exception of thread for sewing purposes. The conductors of the manufacturing department were all New Englanders.

A young lady who had been engaged at that factory for the last six years was desirous of returning home, and requested that if I should again take Durango in my way to the United States, that I should be her protector! My gallantry would not permit me to refuse, and I assured her that it would be a pleasure to me to play the part of knight-errant on her dangerous voyage home.

The wife of the principal superintendent, a lady of much intelligence, seemed to be very desirous of visiting her native country. She was a woman who had seen trouble, for she informed me that the only infant of her bosom, of two years of age, upon having departed this life, was refused the rites of burial, for the reason of its not having received Catholic baptism; which fact I do not consider egregious, as the creeds of some of the Protestant denominations deny to children admittance into heaven under any circumstances; when Christ himself said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But I will not dispute with priests. I will rather take the word of God, for I believe in the doctrine, "Let every man be a liar, so God be true."

The infant was preserved in a lead coffin, and deposited under her bed, until the period should arrive when she should lay it by the side of her kindred.

CHAPTER XVII.

Journey commenced. Camino Real. Cacario. Dining and sleeping. Separation from the conductor. Splendid view of the valley Guatemepe. Animals feeding on the plain. Distance on the table-land deceiving. Despatched my guide to secure lodgings. Countess of Guatemepe. Her hospitality. Prayers and a dance. Departure for Chinacates. Indian news. Dissatisfaction with my interpreter. My guide's rebellion. Disagreeable journey. Arrival at Chinacates. Six-barrel pistols. Ridge of the mountain. Conversed with an Englishman. Mexican artizans. A New Englander. Disgraceful transaction. Santa Argo. Indians committing depredations. Reflections. Solicitude for my men. Conversation with my interpreter. San Dilla. An old Mexican account of the Indians. Excitement in the village. My servant Marcelino. Advice of friends. My own deportment. Several small villages. Two mountains. Want of men at Catarine. Indians who had killed many travellers. Six mules loaded with dead men. Boca the mouth. Notice not to proceed farther. Some days delay at the Boca. Madre Montes. Separation from company. Bivouac. Battle at night. March for Canales. Recovered from injuries. Battle in the day. Death of an Indian. None of my men killed. Pursued my journey. Mountain scenery and travelling. Early history of the country. Frost. Reach Canales. Curiosities and freaks of nature. The Madre Montes. Despatched my guide to engage lodgings. Disappointment. Stake my tent. My interpreter complains. His suspicions. Proposition to me. My refusal. Buckled on my belt. Fell asleep. Marcelino. The ascent of the next mountain. Dreadful suspicion of my interpreter. Stupendous scenes of nature. White bear. A mountain that overlooked the others. Like Balboa beheld the Pacific. Extensive sublimity. Distant view of Canales. Two little boys. Departed brother.

My journey, or trouble, I would rather say, was commenced on the 15th instant, by crossing first a low rocky mountain, and then another of no better travelling condition, which consumed one half of the day. When we landed upon the plain of Cacario, I found it to be so perfectly level, that the *camino real*, (the principal road,) was often, for a mile at a time, full of water; while the land generally was boggy. At one o'clock, under a large cotton-wood tree, that stood in the midst of the plain, I stopped to "noon it."

While partaking of some refreshments I despatched Marcelino to a rancho close by for water, but on the way his