

CHAPTER III.

A CANONIGO—HOW TO ROAST A FOWL—EXTEMPORE SHOEMAKING—MOTAGUA RIVER—BEAUTIFUL SCENE—CROSSING THE RIVER—THE LUXURY OF WATER—PRIMITIVE COSTUMES—HOW TO MAKE TORTILLAS—COSTLY TIMBER—GUALAN—OPPRESSIVE HEAT—SHOCK OF AN EARTHQUAKE—A STROLL THROUGH THE TOWN—A TROUBLESOME MULETEER—A LAWSUIT—IMPORTANT NEGOTIATIONS—A MODERN BONA DEA—HOW TO GAIN A HUSBAND—A KINGDOM OF FLORA—ZACAPA—MAKING FREE WITH A HOST.

BEFORE daylight I was out of doors. Twenty or thirty men, muleteers and servants, were asleep on the ground, each lying on his back, with his black *chamarro* wound round him, covering his head and feet. As the day broke they arose. Very soon the Frenchman got up, took chocolate, and, after an hour's preparation, started. The canonigo set off next. He had crossed the mountain twenty years before, on his first arrival in the country, and still retained a full recollection of its horrors. He set off on the back of an Indian, in a *silla*, or chair with a high back and top to protect him from the sun. Three other Indians followed as relay carriers, and a noble mule for his relief if he should become tired of the chair. The Indian was bent almost double, but the canonigo was in high spirits, smoking his cigar, and waving his hand till he was out of sight. The Pavons started last, and we were left alone.

Still none of our men came. At about eight o'clock two made their appearance; they had slept at a rancho near by, and the others had gone on with the luggage. We were excessively provoked; but, enduring as we might the discomfort of our clothes stiff with mud, saddled and set off.

We saw no more of our caravan of mules, and our muleteer of the barometer had disappeared without notice, and left us in the hands of two understrappers.

Our road lay over a mountainous country, but generally clear of wood; and in about two hours we reached a collection of ranchos, called El Pozo. One of our men rode up to a hut and dismounted, as if he were at home. The woman of the house chided him for not having come the night before, which he gruffly ascribed to us; and it was evident that we stood a chance of losing him too. But we had a subject of more immediate interest in the want of a breakfast. Our tea and coffee, all that we had left after the destruction of our stores by

gunpowder, were gone forward, and for some time we could get nothing. And here, in the beginning of our journey, we found a scarcity of provant greater than we had ever met with before in any inhabited country. The people lived exclusively upon tortillas—flat cakes made of crushed Indian corn, and baked on a clay griddle—and black beans. Augustin bought some of these last, but they required several hours' soaking before they could be eaten. At length he succeeded in buying a fowl, through which he ran a stick, and smoked it over a fire, without dressing of any kind, and which, with tortillas, made a good meal for a penitentiary system of diet. As we had expected, our principal muleteer was unable to tear himself away; but, like a dutiful husband, he sent, by the only one that was now left, a loving message to his wife at Gualan.

At the moment of starting, our remaining attendant said he could not go until he had made a pair of shoes, and we were obliged to wait; but it did not take long. Standing on an untanned cowhide, he marked the size of his feet with a piece of coal, cut them out with his machete, made proper holes, and, passing a leather string under the instep, around the heel, and between the great toe, and the one next to it, was shod.

Again our road lay on the ridge of a high mountain, with a valley on each side. At a distance were beautiful hillsides, green, and ornamented with pine-trees, and cattle grazing upon them, that reminded us of park scenery in England. Often points presented themselves, which in other countries would have been selected as sites for dwellings, and embellished by art and taste. And it was a land of perpetual summer; the blasts of winter never reach it; but, with all its softness and beauty, it was dreary and desolate.

At two o'clock it began to rain; in an hour it cleared off, and from the high mountain ridge we saw the Motagua River, one of the noblest in Central America, rolling majestically through the valley on our left. Descending by a wild, precipitous path, at four o'clock we reached the bank directly opposite Encuentros. It was one of the most beautiful scenes I ever beheld: all around were giant mountains, and the river, broad and deep, rolled through them with the force of a mighty torrent.

On the opposite bank were a few houses, and two or three canoes lay in the water, but not a person was in sight. By loud shouting we brought a man to the bank, who entered one of the canoes and set her adrift; he was immediately carried far down the stream; but, taking advantage of an eddy, he brought her across to the place where we stood. Our luggage, the saddles, bridles, and other trappings of the

mules were put on board, and we embarked. Augustin sat in the stern, holding the halter of one of the mules, and leading her like a decoy duck; but the rest had no disposition to follow. The muleteer drove them in up to their necks, but they ran back to the shore. Several times, by pelting them with sticks and stones, he drove them in as before. At length he stripped himself, and, wading to the depth of his breast, with a stick ten or twelve feet long, succeeded in getting them all afloat, and on a line within the reach of his stick. Any one that turned toward the shore received a blow on the nose, and at length they all set their faces for the opposite bank; their little heads were all that we could see, aimed directly across, but carried down by the current. One was carried below the rest; and, when she saw her companions landing, she raised a frightened cry, and almost drowned herself in struggling to reach them.

During all this time we sat in the canoe, with the hot sun beating upon our heads. For the last two hours we had suffered excessively from heat; our clothes were saturated with perspiration and stiff with mud, and we looked forward almost with rapture to a bath in the Motagua and a change of linen. We landed, and walked up to the house in which we were to pass the night. It was plastered and white-washed, and adorned with streaks of red in the shape of festoons; and in front was a fence made of long reeds, six inches in diameter, split into two; altogether the appearance was favourable. To our great vexation, our luggage had gone on to a rancho three leagues beyond. Our muleteers refused to go any farther. We were unpleasantly situated, but we did not care to leave so soon the Motagua river. Our host told us that his house and all that he had were at our disposal; but he could give us nothing to eat; and, telling Augustin to ransack the village, we returned to the river. Everywhere the current was too rapid for a quiet bath. Calling our canoe man, we returned to the opposite side, and in a few minutes were enjoying an ablution, the luxury of which can only be appreciated by those who, like us, had crossed the Mico Mountain without throwing away their clothes.

There was an enjoyment in this bath greater even than that of cooling our heated bodies. It was the moment of a golden sunset. We stood up to our necks in water clear as crystal, and calm as that of some diminutive lake, at the margin of a channel along which the stream was rushing with arrowy speed. On each side were mountains several thousand feet high, with their tops illuminated by the setting sun; on a point above us was a palm-leaved hut, and before it a naked Indian sat looking at us; while flocks of parrots with brilliant plumage, almost in thousands, were flying over our heads, catching up our words, and

filling the air with their noisy mockings. It was one of those beautiful scenes that so rarely occur in human life, almost realizing dreams. Old as we were, we might have become poetic, but that Augustin came down to the opposite bank, and, with a cry that rose above the chattering of parrots and the loud murmur of the river, called us to supper.

We had one moment of agony when we returned to our clothes. They lay extended upon the bank, emblems of men who had seen better days. The setting sun, which shed over all a soft and mellow lustre, laid bare the seams of mud and dirt, and made them hideous. We had but one alternative, and that was to go without them. But, as this seemed to be trenching upon the proprieties of life, we picked them up and put them on reluctant. I am not sure, however, but that we made an unnecessary sacrifice of personal comfort. The proprieties of life are matters of conventional usage. Our host was a don; and when we presented our letter he received us with great dignity in a single garment, loose, white, and very laconic, not quite reaching his knees. The dress of his wife was no less easy; somewhat in the style of the old-fashioned short-gown and petticoat, only the short-gown, and whatever else is usually worn under it, were wanting, and their place supplied by a string of beads, with a large cross at the end. A dozen men and half-grown boys, naked, except the small covering formed by rolling the trowsers up and down in the manner I have mentioned, were lounging about the house; and women and girls in such extremes of undress, that a string of beads seemed quite a covering for modesty.

Mr. C. and I were in a rather awkward predicament for the night. The general reception-room contained three beds, made of strips of cowhide interlaced. The don occupied one; he had not much undressing to do, but what little he had, he did by pulling off his shirt. Another bed was at the foot of my hammock. I was dozing, when I opened my eyes, and saw a girl about seventeen sitting sideways upon it, smoking a cigar. She had a piece of striped cotton cloth tied around her waist, and falling below her knees; the rest of her dress was the same which Nature bestows alike upon the belle of fashionable life and the poorest girl; in other words, it was the same as that of the don's wife, with the exception of the string of beads. At first I thought it was something I had conjured up in a dream; and as I waked up perhaps I raised my head, for she gave a few quick puffs of her cigar, drew a cotton sheet over her head and shoulders, and lay down to sleep. I endeavoured to do the same. I called to mind the proverb, that "travelling makes strange bedfellows." I had slept pellmell with Greeks, Turks, and Arabs. I was beginning a journey in a new country; it was my duty to conform to the customs of the people; to

be prepared for the worst, and submit with resignation to whatever might befall me.

As guests, it was pleasant to feel that the family made no strangers of us. The wife of the don retired with the same ceremonies. Several times during the night we were waked by the clicking of flint and steel, and saw one of our neighbours lighting a cigar. At daylight the wife of the don was enjoying her morning slumber. While I was dressing she bade me good-morning, removed the cotton covering from her shoulders, and arose dressed for the day.

We started early, and for some distance our road lay along the banks of the Motagua, almost as beautiful by morning as by evening light. In an hour we commenced ascending the spur of a mountain; and, reaching the top, followed the ridge. It was high and narrow, commanding on both sides an almost boundless view, and seemed selected for picturesque effect. The scenery was grand, but the land wild and uncultivated, without fences, enclosures, or habitations. A few cattle were wandering wild over the great expanse, but without imparting that domestic aspect which in other countries attends the presence of cattle. We met a few Indians, with their machetes, going to their morning's work, and a man riding a mule, with a woman before him, his arm encircling her waist.

I was riding ahead of my companions, and on the summit of the ridge, a little aside from the road, saw a little white girl, perfectly naked, playing before a rancho. As most of the people we met were Indians or Ladinos, I was attracted by her appearance, and rode up to the rancho. The proprietor, in the easy costume of our host of Encuentros, was swinging in a hammock under the portico, and smoking a cigar. At a little distance was a shed thatched with stalks and leaves of Indian corn, and called the cocina, or kitchen. As usual, while the don was lolling in his hammock, the women were at work.

I rode on to the cocina, and dismounted. The party consisted of the mother and a pretty daughter-in-law of about nineteen, and two daughters of about fifteen and seventeen. The reader is perhaps curious about costumes; but having given him an insight into those of this country, he will not require any farther descriptions. In honour of my visit, the mother snatched up the little girl who had attracted me to the rancho, carried her inside, and slipped over her head a garment which, I believe, is generally worn by little girls; but in a few minutes my young friend disencumbered herself of her finery, and was toddling about with it under her arm.

The whole family was engaged in making tortillas. This is the bread of Central and of all Spanish America, and the only species to be

found except in the principal towns. At one end of the cocina was an elevation, on which stood a comal or griddle, resting on three stones, and a fire blazing under it. The daughter-in-law had before her an earthen vessel containing Indian corn soaked in lime-water to remove the husk; and, placing a handful on an oblong stone curving inward, mashed it with a stone roller into a thick paste. The girls took it as it was mashed, and patting it with their hands into flat cakes, laid them on the griddle to bake. This is repeated for every meal, and a great part of the business of the women consists in making tortillas.

When Mr. Catherwood arrived the tortillas were smoking, and we stopped to breakfast. They gave us the only luxury they had, coffee made of parched corn, which, in compliment to their kindness, we drank. Like me, Mr. C. was struck with the personal beauty of this family group. With the advantages of dress and education, they might be ornaments in cultivated society; but it is decreed otherwise, and these young girls will go through life making tortillas.

For an hour longer we continued on the ridge of the mountain, then entered a more woody country, and in half an hour came to a large gate, which stood directly across the road like a tollbar. It was the first token we had seen of individual or territorial boundary, and in other countries would have formed a fitting entrance to a princely estate; for the massive frame, with all its posts and supporters, was of solid mahogany. The heat was now intense. We entered a thick wood and forded a wild stream, across which pigs were swimming. Soon after we came to a cochineal plantation, and passed through a long lane thickly bordered and overshadowed with shrubs and trees, close to suffocation. We emerged into an open plain, on which the sun beat with intolerable power; and, crossing the plain, at about three o'clock entered Gualan. There was not a breath of air; the houses and the earth seemed to throw out heat. I was confused, my head swam, and I felt in danger of a stroke of the sun. At that moment there was a slight shock of earthquake. I was unconscious of it, but was almost overpowered by the excessive heat and closeness of atmosphere which accompanied it.

We rode up to the house of Doña Bartola, to whom we had a letter of recommendation, and I cannot describe the satisfaction with which I threw myself into a hammock. Shade and quiet restored me. For the first time since we left Yzabal we changed our clothes; for the first time, too, we dined.

Toward evening we strolled through the town. It stands on a table of breccia rock, at the junction of two noble rivers, and is encircled by

a belt of mountains. One principal street, the houses of one story, with piazzas in front, terminates in a plaza or public square, at the head of which stands a large church with a Gothic door; and before it, at a distance of ten or twelve yards, was a cross about twenty feet high. The population is about ten thousand, chiefly Mestizoes. Leaving the plaza, we walked down to the Motagua. On the bank a boat was in process of construction, about fifty feet long and ten wide, entirely of mahogany. Near it a party of men and women were fording the stream, carrying their clothes above their heads; and around a point three women were bathing. There are no ancient associations connected with this place; but the wildness of the scene, the clouds, the tints of the sky, and the setting sun reflected upon the mountains, were beautiful. At dark we returned to the house. Except for the companionship of some thousands of ants, which blackened the candles and covered everything perishable, we had a room to ourselves.

Early in the morning we were served with chocolate and a small roll of sweet bread. While at breakfast our muleteer came, reiterating a demand for settlement, and claiming three dollars more than was due. We refused to pay him, and he went away furious. In half an hour an alguazil came to me with a summons to the alcalde. Mr. Catherwood, who was, at the moment, cleaning his pistols, cheered me by threatening, if they put me in prison, to bombard the town. The cabildo, or house of the municipality, was at one side of the plaza. We entered a large room, one end of which was partitioned off by a wooden railing. Inside sat the alcalde and his clerk, and outside was the muleteer, with a group of half-naked fellows as his backers. He had reduced his claim to one dollar, doubtless supposing that I would pay that rather than have any trouble. It was not very respectable to be sued for a dollar; but I looked in his face on entering, and resolved not to pay a cent.—I did not, however, claim my privilege under the law of nations, but defended the action on the merits, and the alcalde decided in my favour; after which I showed him my passport, and he asked me inside the bar and offered me a cigar.

This over, I had more important business. The first was to hire mules, which could not be procured till the day but one after. Next I negotiated for washing clothes, which was a complicated business, for it was necessary to specify which articles were to be washed, which ironed, and which starched, and to pay separately for washing, ironing, soap, and starch; and, lastly, I negotiated with a tailor for a pair of pantaloons, purchasing separately stuff, lining, buttons, and thread, the tailor finding needles and thimble himself.

Toward evening we again walked to the river, returned, and taught

Doña Bartola how to make tea. By this time the whole town was in commotion preparatory to the great ceremony of praying to the Santa Lucia. Early in the morning, the firing of muskets, petards, and rockets had announced the arrival of this unexpected but welcome visitor, one of the holiest saints of the calendar, and, next to San Antonio, the most celebrated for the power of working miracles. Morazan's rise into power was signalized by a persecution of the clergy: his friends say that it was the purification of a corrupt body; his enemies, that it was a war against morality and religion. The country was at that time overrun with priests, friars, and monks of different orders. Everywhere the largest buildings, the best cultivated lands, and a great portion of the wealth of the country were in their hands. Many, no doubt, were good men; but some used their sacred robes as a cloak for rascality and vice, and most were drones, reaping where they did not sow, and living luxuriously by the sweat of other men's brows. At all events, and whatever the cause, the early part of Morazan's administration was signalized by hostility to them as a class; and, from the Archbishop of Guatemala down to the poorest friar, they were in danger; some fled, others were banished, and many were torn by rude soldiers from their convents and churches, hurried to the seaports, and shipped for Cuba and old Spain, under sentence of death if they returned. The country was left comparatively destitute; many of the churches fell to ruins; others stood, but their doors were seldom opened; and the practice and memory of their religious rites were fading away. Carrera and his Indians, with the mystic rites of Catholicism ingrafted upon the superstitions of their fathers, had acquired a stronghold upon the feelings of the people by endeavouring to bring back the exiled clergy and restore the influence of the church. The tour of the Santa Lucia was regarded as an indication of a change of feeling and government; as a prelude to the restoration of the influence of the church and the revival of ceremonies dear to the heart of the Indian. As such, it was hailed by all the villages through which she had passed; and that night she would receive the prayers of the Christians of Gualan.

The Santa Lucia enjoyed a peculiar popularity from her miraculous power over the affections of the young; for any young man who prayed to her for a wife, or any young woman who prayed for a husband, was sure to receive the object of such prayer; and if the person praying indicated to the saint the individual wished for, the prayer would be granted, provided such individual was not already married. It was not surprising that a saint with such extraordinary powers, touching so directly the tenderest sensibilities, created a sen-

sation in a place where the feelings, or rather, the passions, are particularly turned to love.

Doña Bartola invited us to accompany her, and, setting out, we called upon a friend of hers; during the whole visit, a servant girl sat with her lap full of tobacco, making straw cigars for immediate use. Being the first time we had smoked with ladies, it was rather awkward to ask one for a light; but we were so thoroughly broken in that night, that we never had any delicacy afterwards, on that score. The conversation turned upon the saint and her miraculous powers; and when we avowed ourselves somewhat sceptical, the servant girl, with that familiarity, though not want of respect, which exists throughout Central America, said that it was wicked to doubt; that she had prayed to the saint herself, and two months afterwards she was married, and to the very man she prayed for, though at the time he had no idea of her, and, in fact, wanted another girl.

With this encouragement, locking the house, and accompanied by children and servants, we set out to pay our homage to the saint. The sound of the violin and the firing of rockets indicated the direction of her temporary domicile. She had taken up her residence in the hut of a poor Indian in the suburbs; and, for some time before reaching it, we encountered crowds of both sexes, and all ages and colours, and in every degree of dress and undress, smoking and talking, and sitting or lying on the ground in every variety of attitude. Room was made for our party, and we entered the hut.

It was about twenty feet square, thatched on the top and sides with leaves of Indian corn, and filled with a dense mass of kneeling men and women. On one side was an altar, about four feet high, covered with a clean white cotton cloth. On the top of the altar was a frame with three elevations, like a flower-stand, and on the top of that a case, containing a large wax doll, dressed in blue silk, and ornamented with gold-leaf, spangles, and artificial flowers. This was the Santa Lucia. Over her head was a canopy of red cotton cloth, on which was emblazoned a cross in gold. On the right was a sedan chair, trimmed with red cotton and gold leaf, being the travelling equipage of the saint; and near it were Indians in half-sacerdotal dress, on whose shoulders she travelled; festoons of oranges hung from the roof, and the rough posts were enwrapped with leaves of the sugar-cane. At the foot of the altar was a mat, on which girls and boys were playing; and a little fellow, about six years' old, habited in the picturesque costume of a straw-hat, and that only, was coolly surveying the crowd.

The ceremony of praying had already begun, and the music of a drum, a violin, and a flageolet, under the direction of the Indian

master of ceremonies, drowned the noise of voices. Doña Bartola, who was a widow, and the other ladies of our party, fell on their knees; and, recommending myself to their prayers, I looked on without doing anything for myself, but I studied attentively the faces of those around me. There were some of both sexes who could not strictly be called young; but they did not on that account pray less earnestly. In some places, people would repel the imputation of being desirous to procure husband or wife; not so in Gualan; they prayed publicly for what they considered a blessing. Some of the men were so much in earnest, that perspiration stood in large drops upon their faces; and none thought that praying for a husband need tinge the cheek of a modest maiden. I watched the countenance of a young Indian girl, beaming with enthusiasm and hope; and while her eyes rested upon the image of the saint and her lips moved in prayer, I could not but imagine that her heart was full of some truant, and perhaps unworthy lover.

Outside the hut was an entirely different scene. Near by were rows of kneeling men and women, but beyond were wild groups of half-naked men and boys, setting off rockets and fireworks. As I moved through, a flash rose from under my feet, and a petard exploded so near that the powder singed me; and turning round, I saw hurrying away my rascally muleteer. Beyond were parties of young men and women dancing by the light of blazing pine sticks. In a hut at some little distance were two haggard old women, with large caldrons over blazing fires, stirring up and serving out the contents with long wooden ladles, and looking like witches dealing out poison instead of love-potions.

At ten o'clock the prayers to the saint died away, and the crowd separated into groups and couples, and many fell into what in English would be called flirtations. A mat was spread for our party against the side of the hut, and we all lighted cigars and sat down upon it. Cups made of small gourds, and filled from the caldrons with a preparation of boiled Indian corn sweetened with various *dolces*, were passed from mouth to mouth, each one sipping and passing it on to the next; and this continued, without any interruption, for more than an hour. We remained on the ground till after midnight, and then were among the first to leave. On the whole, we concluded that praying to the Santa Lucia must lead to matrimony; and I could not but remark that, in the way of getting husbands and wives, most seemed disposed to do something for themselves, and not leave all to the grace of the saint.

The next day it was excessively hot, and we remained within doors.

In the evening we visited the padre, who had just returned from a neighbouring village. He was a short, fat man, and had on a white nightcap, a blue striped jacket, and white pantaloons, and we found him swinging in a hammock and smoking a cigar. He had a large household of women and children; but as to the relation in which they stood to him, people differed. He gave us more information in regard to the country than we had yet been able to obtain, and particularly in regard to Copan, a ruined city which we wished to visit. He was familiar with the history of the Indians, and understood thoroughly the character of the present race; and, in answer to our question if they were all Christians, said that they were devout and religious, and had a great respect for the priests and saints. With this he hitched up his bursting pantaloons, and lighted another cigar. We might have smiled at the idea of his confounding his comfortable figure with the saints; but he had so much good sense and good feeling that we were not disposed to be captious.

The next morning our muleteer came, but, through some misunderstanding, he had not mules enough to carry all our luggage. Rather than wait, we started without him, and left part of the baggage for him to bring on to Zacapa the next day.

Leaving Gualan, we had on our right the Motagua River, which had now become to us a friend, and beyond it the great range of the mountains of Vera Paz, six or eight thousand feet high. In an hour we commenced ascending. Soon we were in a wilderness of flowers; shrubs and bushes were clothed in purple and red; and on the sides of the mountain, and in the ravines leading down to the river, in the wildest positions, were large trees so covered with red that they seemed a single flower. In three hours we descended from our mountain height, and came once more to the river side, where it was rolling swiftly, and in some places breaking into rapids. We followed for about an hour, and rose again several thousand feet. At two o'clock we reached the village of San Pablo, situated on a lofty table land, looking down upon the river, and having its view bounded by the mountains of Vera Paz. The church stood at the entrance of the village. We turned our mules loose to graze, and took our meal in the porch. It was a beautiful position, and two waterfalls, shining like streaks of silver on the distant mountain side, reminded us of cascades in Switzerland.

We procured a guide from the alcalde to conduct us to Zacapa; and, resuming our journey, for two hours more had the same range upon our right. The sun was obscured, but occasionally it broke through and lighted up the sides of the mountains, while the tops were covered

with clouds. At four o'clock we had a distant view of the great plain of Zacapa, bounded on the opposite side by a triangular belt of mountains, at the foot of which stood the town. We descended and crossed the plain, which was green and well cultivated; and fording a stream, ascended a rugged bank, and entered the town.

It was by far the finest we had seen. The streets were regular, and the houses plastered and whitewashed, with large balconied windows and piazzas. The church was two hundred and fifty feet long, with walls ten feet thick, and a façade rich with Moorish devices. It was built in the form of a Latin cross. In one end of the cross was a tailor's shop, and the other was roofless. At one corner was a belfry, consisting of four rough trunks of trees supporting a peaked roof covered with tiles. Two bells were suspended from a rude beam; and as we passed, a half-naked Indian was standing on a platform underneath, ringing for vespers.

We rode up to the house of Don Mariano Durante, one of the largest and best in the place, being about a hundred feet front, and having a corridor extending the whole length, paved with square stones. The door was opened by a respectable-looking St. Domingo negro, who told us, in French, that Señor Durante was not at home, but that the house was at our service; and, going round to a *porte cochère*, alongside, admitted us into a large courtyard ornamented with trees and flowers, at one side of which was a *cabelleria* or stable. We left our mules in the hands of the servants, and entered a sala or reception-room, covering nearly the whole front, with large windows reaching down to the floor and iron balconies, and furnished with tables, a European bureau, and chairs. In the centre of the room and in the windows hung cages, handsomely made and gilded, containing beautiful singing-birds of the country, and two fine canary birds from Havana. This was the residence of two bachelor brothers, who, feeling for the wants of travellers in a country entirely destitute of hotels, kept a door always open for their accommodation. We had candles lighted, and made ourselves at home. I was sitting at a table writing, when we heard the tramp of mules outside, and a gentleman entered, took off his sword and spurs, and laid his pistols upon the table. Supposing him to be a traveller, like ourselves, we asked him to take a seat; and, when supper was served, invited him to join us. It was not till bedtime that we found we were doing the honours to one of the masters of the house. He must have thought us cool, but I flatter myself he had no reason to complain of any want of attention.