

CHAPTER VIII.

SEPARATION—AN ADVENTURE—COPAN RIVER—DON CLEMENTINO—A WEDDING—A SUPPER—
A WEDDING BALL—BUYING A MULE—THE SIERRA—VIEW FROM THE TOP—ESQUIPULAS—
THE CURA—HOSPITABLE RECEPTION—CHURCH OF ESQUIPULAS—RESPONSIBILITY OF THE
CURA—MOUNTAIN OF QUEZALTAPEQUE—A NARROW ESCAPE—SAN JACINTO—RECEPTION BY
THE PADRE—A VILLAGE FÊTE—AN AMBUSCADE—MOTAGUA RIVER—VILLAGE OF SANTA
ROSALIA—A DEATH SCENE.

HAVING decided that, under the circumstances, it was best to separate, we lost no time in acting upon the conclusion. I had difficulty in coming to a right understanding with my muleteer, but at length a treaty was established. The mules were loaded, and at two o'clock I mounted. Mr. C. accompanied me to the edge of the woods, where I bade him farewell, and left him to difficulties worse than we had apprehended. I passed through the village, crossed the river, and, leaving the muleteer on the bank, rode to the hacienda of Don Gregorio; but I was deprived of the satisfaction which I had promised myself at parting, of pouring upon him my indignation and contempt, by the consideration that Mr. Catherwood was still within the reach of his influence; and even now my hand is stayed by the reflection that when Mr. C., in great distress, robbed by his servant, and broken down by fever, took refuge in his house, the don received him as kindly as his bearish nature would permit. My only comfort was in making the lordly churl render an account of sixpences and shillings for eggs, milk, meat, &c., to the amount of two dollars, which I put into his hands. I afterwards learned that I had elevated myself very much in his estimation, and in that of the neighbourhood generally, by my handsome conduct in not going off without paying.*

My good understanding with the muleteer was of short duration. At parting, Mr. C. and I had divided our stock of plates, knives and forks, spoons, &c., and Augustin had put my share in the basket which had carried the whole, and these, being loose, made such a clattering, that it frightened the mule. The beast ran away, setting us all off together with a crashing noise, till she threw herself among the

* On my second visit, finding the rancho of Don Miguel deserted, I rode to Don Gregorio's. The don had in the meantime been to Esquipulas, and learned our character from the cura; and it is due to him to say, that he received me kindly, and made many inquiries after Mr. Stephens. The rest of the family were as cordial as before.—F. C.

bushes. We had a scene of terrible confusion, and I escaped as fast as I could from the hoarse and croaking curses of the muleteer.

Late in the afternoon, ascending a little eminence, I saw a large field with stone fences, and bars, and cattle-yard, that looked like a Westchester farm. We entered a gate, and rode up through a fine park to a long, low, substantial-looking hacienda. It was the house of Don Clementino, whom I knew to be the kinsman of Don Gregorio, and the one of all others I would have avoided, but also the very one at which the muleteer had determined to contrive a halt. The family consisted of a widow with a large family of children, the principal of whom were Don Clementino, a young man of twenty-one, and a sister of about sixteen or seventeen, a beautiful fair-haired girl. Under the shed was a party of young people in holiday dresses, and five or six mules, with fanciful saddles, were tied to the posts of the piazza. Don Clementino was jauntily dressed in white jacket and trousers, braided and embroidered, a white cotton cap, and over it a steeple-crowned glazed hat, with a silver cord twisted round as a band, a silver ball with a sharp piece of steel as a cockade, and red and yellow stripes under the brim. He had the consequential air and feelings of a boy who had suddenly become the head of an establishment, and asked me, rather superciliously, if I had finished my visit to the "idols;" and then, without waiting for an answer, if I could mend an accordion; then, if I could play on the guitar; then to sell him a pair of pocket-pistols, which had been the admiration of Don Gregorio's household; and, finally, if I had anything to sell. With this young gentleman I should have been more welcome as a pedlar than an ambassador from any court in Europe, though it must be admitted that I was not travelling in a very imposing way. Finding I had nothing to make a bargain for, he picked up a guitar, danced off to his own music, and sat down on the earthen floor of the piazza to play cards.

Within, preparations were going on for a wedding at the house of a neighbour, two leagues distant, and a little before dark the young men and girls appeared dressed for the journey. All were mounted, and, for the first time, I admired exceedingly the fashion of the country in riding. My admiration was called forth by the sister of Don Clementino, and the happy young gallant who escorted her. Both rode the same mule, and on the same saddle. She sat sidewise before him; his right arm encircled her waist; at starting, the mule was restive, and he was obliged, from necessity, to support her in her seat, to draw her close to himself; her ear invited a whisper; and when she turned her face toward him her lips almost touched his. I would have given all the honours of diplomacy for his place.

Don Clementino was too much of a coxcomb to set off in this way; he had a fine mule, gaily caparisoned, swung a large basket-hilted sword through a strap in the saddle, buckled on a pair of enormous spurs, and, mounting, wound his poncha around his waist, so that the hilt of the sword appeared about six inches above it: giving the animal a sharp thrust with his spurs, he drove her up the steps, through the piazza, and down the other side, and asked me if I wanted to buy her. I declined, and to my great satisfaction he started to overtake the others, and left me alone with his mother, a respectable looking, grey-haired old lady, who called together all the servants and Indian children for vesper prayers. I am sorry to say it, but for the first time I was reminded that it was Sunday. I stood in the door, and it was interesting to see them all kneeling before the figure of the Virgin. An old grey-nosed mule walked up the piazza, and, stopping by my side, put his head in the door, when, more forward than I, he walked in, gazed a moment at the figure of the Virgin, and, without disturbing anybody, walked out again.

Soon after I was called in to supper, which consisted of fried beans, fried eggs, and tortillas. The beans and eggs were served on heavy silver dishes, and the tortillas were laid in a pile by my side. There was no plate, knife, fork, or spoon. Fingers were made before forks; but bad habits make the latter, to a certain degree, necessary. Poultry, mutton, beef, and the like, do not come amiss to fingers, but beans and fried eggs were puzzling. How I managed I will not publish; but, from appearances afterwards, the old lady could not have supposed that I had been at all at a loss.

At a distance of two leagues from the hacienda we passed the house of the wedding party. The dancing was not yet over, and I had a strong fancy to see again the fair-haired sister of Don Clementino. Having no better excuse, I determined to call him out and "talk mule." As I rode up, the doorway and the space thence to the middle of the room were filled with girls, all dressed in white, with the roses in their hair faded, and the brightness of their eyes somewhat dimmed by a night's dissipation. The sister of Don Clementino was modest and retiring, and, as if she suspected my object, shrank back from observation, while he made all open a way for him and his guitar. I had no idea of buying his mule, but made him an offer, which, to my surprise and regret at the time, he accepted; but virtue is its own reward, and the mule proved a most faithful animal.

Mounted on my new purchase, we commenced ascending the great Sierra, which divides the streams of the Atlantic from those that empty into the Pacific Ocean. The ascent was rugged and toilsome

but in two hours we reached the top. The scenery was wild and grand, I have no doubt; but the fact is, it rained very hard all the time; and while I was floundering among mud-holes I would have given the chance of the sublime for a good Macadamized road. Mr. Catherwood, who crossed on a clear day, says that the view from the top, both ways, was the most magnificent he saw in the country. Descending, the clouds were lifted, and I looked down upon an almost boundless plain, running from the foot of the Sierra, and afar off saw, standing alone in the wilderness, the great church of Esquipulas, like the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and the Caaba in Mecca, the holiest of temples. My muleteer was very anxious to stop at a collection of huts on this side of the town, and told me first that the place was occupied by Carrera's soldiers, and then that he was ill. I had a long and magnificent descent to the foot of the Sierra. The plain reminded me of the great waste places of Turkey and Asia Minor, but was more beautiful, being bounded by immense mountains. For three hours the church was our guide. As we approached, it stood out more clearly defined against mountains whose tops were buried in the clouds.

Late in the afternoon we entered the town, and rode up to the convent. I was a little nervous, and presented my passport as a letter of introduction; but could I have doubted the hospitality of a padre? Don Gregorio's reception made me feel more deeply the welcome of the cura of Esquipulas. None can know the value of hospitality but those who have felt the want of it, and they can never forget the welcome of strangers in a strange land.

The whole household of the cura turned out to assist, and in a few minutes the mules were munching corn in the yard, while I was installed in the seat of honour in the convent. It was by far the largest and best building in the place. The walls were three or four feet thick; a large portico extended in front; the entrance was by a wide hall, used as a sleeping-place for servants, and communicating with a courtyard in the rear; on the left was a large sala or reception-room, with lofty windows and deep recesses; on one side of the wall was a long wooden settee, with a high back, and arms at each end; before it was a massive unpolished mahogany table, and above hung a painting of our Saviour; against the wall were large antiquated chairs, the backs and seats covered with leather, and studded with nails having large brass heads.

The cura was a young man, under thirty, of delicate frame, and his face beamed with intelligence and refinement of thought and feeling. He was dressed in a long black bombazet gown, drawn tight around

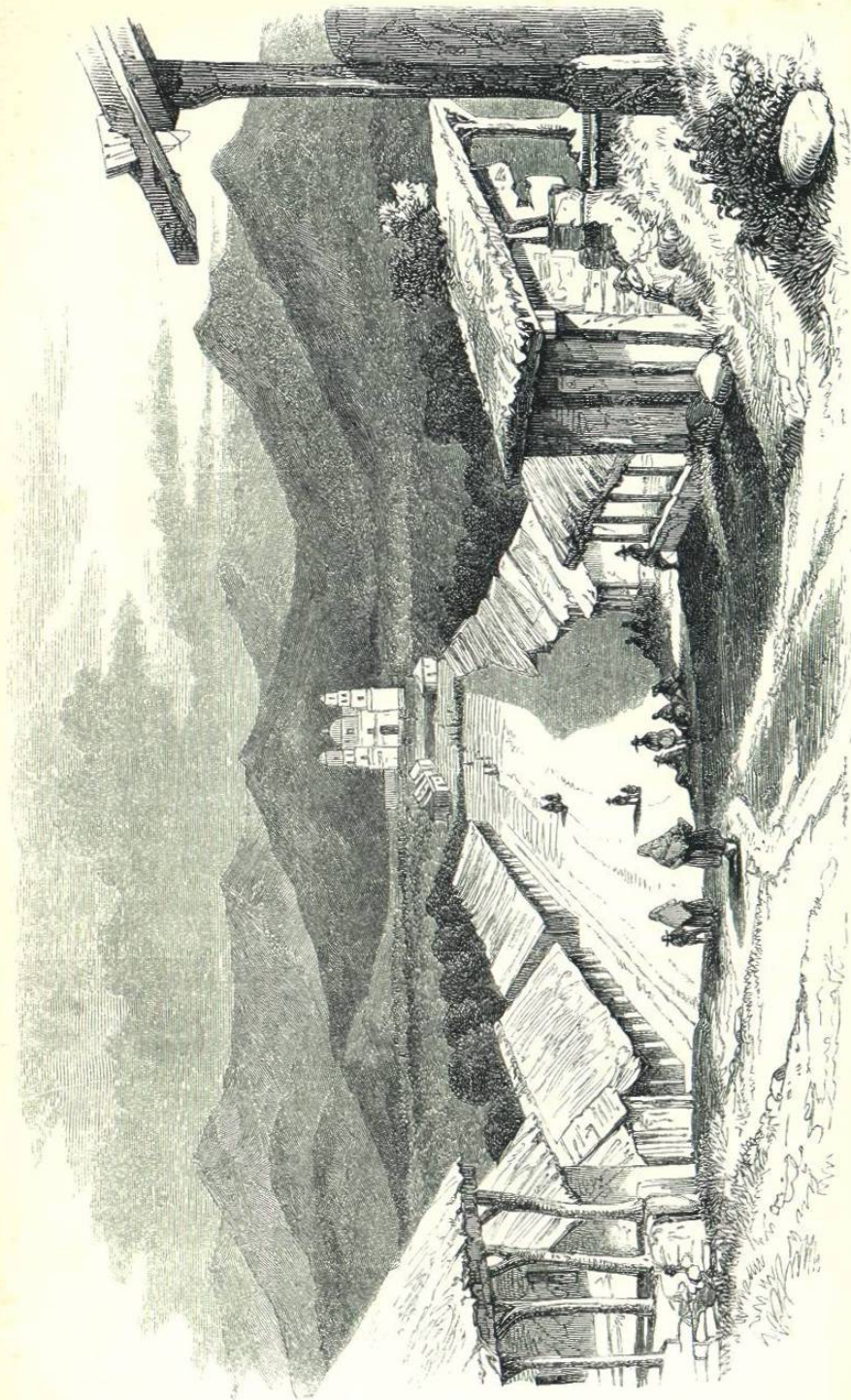
the body, with a blue border around the neck, and a cross was suspended to his rosary. His name was *Jesus Maria Gutierrez*. It was the first time I had ever heard that name applied to a human being, and even in him it seemed a profanation.

On a visit to him, and breaking the monotony of his secluded life, was an old schoolfellow and friend, Colonel San Martin, of Honduras, who had been wounded in the last battle against Morazan, and was staying at the convent to recover his health and strength. His case showed the distracted state of the country. His father was of the same politics with himself, and his brother was fighting on the other side in the battle in which he was wounded.

They gave me disagreeable information in regard to my road to Guatemala. Carrera's troops had fallen back from the frontiers of San Salvador, and occupied the whole line of villages to the capital. They were mostly Indians, ignorant, intemperate, and fanatic, who could not comprehend my official character, could not read my passport, and, in the excited state of the country, would suspect me as a stranger. They had already committed great atrocities; there was not a cura on the whole road; and to attempt traversing it would be to expose myself to robbery and murder. I was very loth to protract my journey, but it would have been madness to proceed; in fact, no muleteer would undertake to go on with me, and I was obliged to turn my eyes to Chiquimula and the road I had left. The cura said I must be guided by him. I put myself in his hands, and at a late hour lay down to rest with the strange consciousness of being a welcome guest.

I was awaked by the sound of the matin bell, and accompanied the cura to mass. The church for every-day use was directly opposite the convent, spacious and gloomy, and the floor was paved with large square bricks or tiles. Rows of Indian women were kneeling around the altar, cleanly dressed, with white mantillas over their heads, but without shoes or stockings. A few men stood up behind or leaned against the walls.

We returned to breakfast, and afterward set out to visit the only object of interest, the great church of the pilgrimage, the Holy Place of Central America. Every year, on the fifteenth of January, pilgrims visit it, even from Peru and Mexico; the latter being a journey not exceeded in hardship by the pilgrimage to Mecca. As in the east, "it is not forbidden to trade during the pilgrimage;" and when there are no wars to make the roads unsafe, 80,000 people have assembled among the mountains to barter and pay homage to "our Lord of Esquipulas."



33. ESQUIPULAS.

F. Catherwood.

The town contains a population of about 1,500 Indians. There was one street nearly a mile long, with mud houses on each side; but most of the houses were shut, being occupied only during the time of the fair. At the head of this street, on elevated ground, stood the great church. About half-way to it we crossed a bridge over a small stream, one of the sources of the great Lempa. It was the first stream I had seen that emptied into the Pacific Ocean, and I saluted it with reverence. Ascending by a flight of massive stone steps in front of the church, we reached a noble platform, 150 feet broad, and paved with bricks a foot square. The view from this platform of the great plain and the high mountains around was magnificent; and the church, rising in solitary grandeur in a region of wildness and desolation, seemed almost the work of enchantment. The façade was rich with stucco ornaments and figures of saints larger than life; at each angle was a high tower, and over the dome a spire, rearing aloft in the air the crown of that once proud power which wrested the greatest part of America from its rightful owners, ruled it for three centuries with a rod of iron, and now has not within it a foot of land, or a subject to boast of.

We entered the church by a lofty portal, rich in sculptured ornaments. Inside was a nave with two aisles, separated by rows of pilasters nine feet square, and a lofty dome, guarded by angels with expanded wings. On the walls were pictures, some drawn by artists of Guatemala, and others that had been brought from Spain; and the recesses were filled with statues, some of which were admirably well executed. The pulpit was covered with gold leaf, and the altar protected by an iron railing with a silver balustrade, ornamented with six silver pillars about two feet high, and two angels standing as guardians on the steps. In front of the altar, in a rich shrine, is an image of the Saviour on the cross, "our Lord of Esquipulas," to whom the church is consecrated, famed for its power of working miracles. Every year thousands of devotees ascend the steps of his temple on their knees, or laden with a heavy cross, who are not permitted to touch the sacred image, but go away contented in obtaining a piece of riband stamped with the words "Dulce nombre de Jesus."

We returned to the convent, and while I was sitting with Colonel San Martin the cura entered, and, closing the door, asked me if my servant was faithful. Augustin's face was an unfortunate letter of recommendation. Colonel McDonald, Don Francisco, and, as I afterward heard, General Cascara, distrusted him. I told the cura all I knew of him, and mentioned his conduct at Comotan; but he still cautioned me to beware of him. Soon after, Augustin, who seemed

to suspect that he had not made a very favourable impression, asked me for a dollar to pay for a confession. My intelligent friend was not free from the prejudices of education; and though he could not at once change his opinion so warmly expressed, he said that Augustin had been well brought up.

In the course of the day I had an opportunity of seeing what I afterwards observed throughout all Central America: the life of labour and responsibility passed by the cura in an Indian village, who devotes himself faithfully to the people under his charge. Besides officiating in all the services of the church, visiting the sick, and burying the dead, my worthy host was looked up to by every Indian in the village as a counsellor, friend, and father. The door of the convent was always open, and Indians were constantly resorting to him: a man who had quarrelled with his neighbour; a wife who had been badly treated by her husband; a father whose son had been carried off as a soldier; a young girl deserted by her lover; all who were in trouble or affliction came to him for advice and consolation, and none went away without it. And, besides this, he was principal director of all the public business of the town: the right hand of the alcalde; and had been consulted whether or not I ought to be considered a dangerous person. But the performance of these multifarious duties, and the excitement and danger of the times, were wearing away his frame. Four years before he gave up the Capital, and took upon himself this curacy, and during that time he had lived a life of labour, anxiety, and peril; cut off from all the delights of social intercourse that make labour welcome, beloved by the Indians, but without any to sympathize with him in his thoughts and feelings. Once the troops of Morazan invaded the town, and for six months he lay concealed in a cave of the mountains, supported by Indians. Lately the difficulties of the country had increased, and the cloud of civil war was darker than ever. He mourned, but, as he said, he had not long to mourn; and the whole tone of his thoughts and conversation was so good and pure, that it seemed like a green spot in a sandy desert. We sat in the embrasure of a large window; within, the room was already dark. He took a pistol from the window-sill, and, looking at it, said, with a faint smile, that the cross was his protection; and then he put his thin hand in mine, and told me to feel his pulse. It was slow and feeble, and seemed as if every beat would be the last; but he said it was always so; and, rising suddenly, added that this was the hour of his private devotions, and retired to his room. I felt as if a good spirit had flitted away.

My anxiety to reach Guatemala would not permit me long to enjoy

the cura's hospitality. I intended to discharge my muleteer; but, unable to replace him immediately, and unwilling to lose another day, I was obliged to retain him. The usual course was to leave Esquipulas in the afternoon, and ride four leagues; but, having seven mules and only four cargoes, I determined to make these four leagues and the next day's journey also in one. Early in the morning I started. When I bade farewell, the priest and the soldier stood side by side, pictures of Christian humility and man's pride, and both recommended me to God at parting.

We crossed the plain; the mountains of Esquipulas seemed to have gained in grandeur: in half an hour commenced ascending the Mountain of Quezaltepeque, thickly wooded, and, like that of Mico, muddy and full of gulleys and deep holes. Heavy clouds were hanging over it, and as we ascended it rained hard; but before reaching the top the clouds were lifted, the sun shone, and the plain of Esquipulas, with the great Sierra behind, covered with lofty pines, and clouds chasing each other over its sides, all blended together, made one of the grandest spectacles I ever beheld; and the great church still presented itself for the farewell view of the pilgrim. But the gleam of sunshine did not last long, and again the rain poured; for a while I had great satisfaction in seeing the muleteer drenched and hearing him grumble; but an unaccountable fit of good humour came over me, and I lent him my bear's skin great-coat. At intervals the sun shone, and we saw at a great distance below us the village of Quezaltepeque. The descent was very precipitous, the mud-holes and gulleys unusually deep; and the clouds which hung over the mountain were typical of my fortune. Mr. Catherwood, who followed on this road about three weeks afterwards, heard from the padre of Quezaltepeque that a plan had been formed to murder and rob me, on the supposition that I had a large amount of money about my person, which laudable project was defeated by my crossing in the morning instead of the afternoon, as is usually done.

We passed through Quezaltepeque without dismounting. It is usual, in dividing the stages to Guatemala, to make an afternoon's journey to this place and sleep. It was now but eleven o'clock, clear and bright as a September day at home. Leaving the village, we crossed a beautiful stream, at which some women were washing. Very soon we ascended again, and on the top of the mountain came to an abrupt precipice, forming the side of a deep ravine. We descended by a narrow path on the very edge of the precipice, part of the way on a narrow protruding ledge, and in other places by a path built against the rock to the bottom of the ravine. On the other side rose another

precipitous wall. The ravine was deep and narrow, and wild to sublimity. The stream ran through it over a rocky bed, and for some distance the road lay in this bed. We ascended by a steep and difficult path to the top of the other side of the ravine, and rode for some distance along its edge. The opposite side was a perpendicular mass of limestone rock, black with exposure, and in some places were patches of grass on a brown ground, lighted up occasionally by brief gleams of sunshine. We descended again to the very bottom of the ravine, and, crossing the stream, ascended almost immediately a narrow path built along the side of the precipice to the top, being on the same side from which we started. It is impossible to give any idea of the wildness of this double crossing of the ravine. It terminated abruptly, and at the extreme end, on a point, was a small hacienda, on one side looking directly up this awful opening, and on the other upon a soft valley.

At five o'clock we crossed the stream, and entered the village of San Jacinto, which was under the care of the cura of Quezaltepeque, who was then at San Jacinto. I rode up to his house and presented the letter of the cura of Esquipulas. My muleteer, without unloading the mules, threw himself down on the piazza, and, with my great-coat on his unthankful body, began abusing me for killing him with long marches. I retorted; and before the padre had time to recover from his surprise at our visit, he was confounded by our clamour.

But he was a man who could bear a great deal, being above six feet high, broad shouldered, and with a protuberance in front that required support to keep it from falling. His dress consisted of a shirt and pair of pantaloons, with button-holes begging for employment; but he had a heart as big as his body, and as open as his wearing apparel; and when I told him I had ridden from Esquipulas that day, he said I must remain a week to recruit. As to going the next day, he would not hear of it; and, in fact, very soon I found that it was impossible without other aid, for my abominable muleteer filled up the measure of his iniquities by falling ill with a violent fever.

At my earnest solicitation, the padre endeavoured to procure me mules for the next day, and during the evening we had a levee of villagers. The man upon whom he principally relied said that it was dangerous travelling; that two Ingleses had been arrested in Honduras, and had escaped, but their muleteers and servants were murdered. I could perhaps have thrown some light upon this story, but did not think it worth while to know anything about such suspicious characters. The padre was distressed that he could not serve me, but at length said that a man of my rank and character (I had shown him

my passport, and Augustin had fired the Balize guns) ought to have every facility, and he would provide for me himself; and he ordered a man to go early in the morning to his hacienda for mules; after which, fatigued with such unusual efforts, he threw his gigantic body into a hammock and swung himself to sleep.

The household of the padre consisted of two young men, one deaf and dumb, and the other a fool. The former possessed extraordinary vivacity and muscular powers, and entertained the padre by his gesticulations, stories, and sleight-of-hand tricks, and particularly with a steel puzzle. There was something intensely interesting in the kindness with which the padre played with him, and the earnestness with which he hung around his gigantic master. At times the young man became so excited that it seemed as if he would burst in the effort to give utterance to his thoughts; but all ended in a feeble sound which grated upon my nerves, and seemed to knit him more closely to the good-hearted padre. The latter was continually changing the puzzle, but the ingenuity of the lad could not be defeated. The poor simpleton meanwhile looked on with admiration. The padre offered him half-a-dollar if he could open it, and both he and the deaf and dumb lad laughed at the awkward attempts of the simpleton. The padre finished with a warm panegyric upon the worth of both, which the deaf and dumb boy seemed to understand and thank him for, but which he that had ears seemed not to hear.

The padre insisted on my taking his own c atre, or bedstead, which was unusually neat, and had a moscheto-netting. It was my best bed since I left Colonel McDonald's at Balize. Before I was up he stood over me with a flask of brandy. Soon after came chocolate, with a roll of sweet bread; and finding that it was impossible to get away that day, I became a willing victim to his hospitality. At nine o'clock we had breakfast; at twelve, fruit; at two, dinner; at five, chocolate and sweet-bread; and at eight, supper, with constant intermediate invitations to brandy, which the padre, with his hand on that prominent part of his own body, said was good for the stomach. In everything except good feeling he was the complete antipodes of the cura of Esquipulas. I had had some suspicion that my muleteer was not as unwell as he pretended to be; but his neglect of the padre's good fare convinced me that he was really in a bad way. I gave him some medicine, but I believe he suspected me, and was afraid to take it.

In the afternoon I took a long walk on the bank of the river, and, returning, met a party of women, dressed in white with red shawls over the tops of their heads. I have seen enough of fancy colours in women to remove some prejudices, but retain an old-fashioned predilection for

white skins; and here I remarked that the whitest women were the prettiest, though the padre did not agree with me entirely. Under the shed of a deserted house near by was an old Indian with ten or twelve Indian girls, teaching them the catechism. They were dressed in red plaid cotton, drawn round the waist and tied in a knot on the left side, and a white handkerchief over the shoulders. Other parties were out in different places, organizing for a village fête in honour of some saint; and towards evening, while sitting with the padre, now dressed in his long black gown, a procession advanced, headed by the oldest man in the village, with white hair and beard, and a lame man and two or three associates playing on violins. Before reaching the house they set off five or six rockets, and then all went up and saluted the padre, kissing the back of his hand; the women went inside, carrying bundles wrapped in clean white napkins; and when I went in to take my chocolate I found the table piled up with cakes and confectionary. Afterwards all went to the church for vesper prayers. I could but think, what subsequently impressed itself upon me more and more in every step of my journey in that country, blessed is the village that has a padre.

During the day, the deaf and dumb boy had contrived several times to make me understand that he wished to accompany me, and in the evening the padre consented to make him happy by giving him a journey to Guatemala. Early in the morning the convent was in commotion. The good padre was unused to fitting out an expedition for Guatemala. Many things were wanting besides the mules, and the village was laid under contribution. During the bustle, a single soldier entered the village, and created alarm that he was the pioneer of others come to quarter upon them. The padre told him who I was, and that the guard must not molest me. At length all was ready; a large concourse of people, roused by the requisitions of the padre, were at the door, and among them two men with violins. The padre directed his own gigantic energies particularly to the eatables; he had put up chocolate, bread, sausages, and fowl; a box of cakes and confectionary; and, as the finale, the deaf and dumb lad came out of the house, holding at arm's length above his head the whole side of an ox, with merely the skin taken off and the ribs cracked, which was spread as a wrapper over one of the cargoes, and secured by a netting. A large pot, with the bottom upward, was secured on the top of another cargo. The padre took a kind leave of me, and a most affectionate one of the deaf and dumb lad; and at nine o'clock, with violins playing, and a turn-out that would have astonished my city friends, I made another start for the capital. A low groan from the piazza reminded me of my muleteer. I dismounted, and, at the moment of parting,

exchanged a few words of kindness. His brawny figure was prostrated by fever; at times he had vexed me almost beyond endurance; but, with all my malice against him, I could not have wished him in a worse condition. The boy sat by his side, apparently softened by the illness of his master, and indifferent as to my going.

For the first time in a long while we had a level road. The land was rich and productive; brown sugar sold for three-halfpence a pound, and white lump, even under their slow process of making it, for fourpence, and indigo could be raised for one shilling a pound. I was riding quietly, when four soldiers sprang into the road almost at my mule's head. They were perfectly concealed until I approached, and their sudden appearance was rather footpad-like. They could not read my passport, and said that they must conduct me to Chiquimula. My road lay a little off from that town; and, fortunately, while under escort, the soldier whom I had seen in San Jacinto overtook us, satisfied them, and released me. A short distance beyond I recognised the path by which we turned off to go to Copan. Three weeks had not elapsed, and it seemed an age. We passed by the old church of Chiquimula, and, winding up the same zigzag path by which we had descended, crossed the mountain, and descended to the plain of Zacapa and the Motagua River, which I hailed as an old acquaintance. It was growing late, and we saw no signs of habitation. A little before dark, on the top of a small eminence on the right, we saw a little boy, who conducted us to the village of Santa Rosalia, beautifully situated on a point formed by the bend of the river. The village consisted of a miserable collection of huts; before the door of the best was a crowd of people, who did not ask us to stop, and we rode up to one of the poorest. All we wanted was *sacate** for the mules. The stores of the padre were abundant for me, and the deaf and dumb lad cut a few ribs from the side of the ox, and prepared supper for himself and the muleteer.

While supping, we heard a voice of lamentation from the house before which the crowd was assembled. After dark I walked over, and found that they were mourning over the dead. Inside were several women; one was wringing her hands, and the first words I distinguished were, "Oh, our Lord of Esquipulas, why have you taken him away?" She was interrupted by the tramp of horses' hoofs, and a man rode up, whose figure in the dark I could not see, but who, without dismounting, in a hoarse voice, said that the priest asked six dollars to bury the corpse. One of the crowd cried out, "Shame! shame!" and others said they would bury it in *el campo* (the field). The horse-

* *Sacate* means any kind of grass or leaves for mules. The best is *sacate de maiz*, or the stalks and leaves of Indian corn.

man, in the same hoarse voice, said, that it was the same if buried in the road, the mountain, or the river, the priest must have his fee. There was a great outcry; but the widow, in a weeping tone, declared that the money must be paid, and then renewed her exclamations: "My only help, my consolation, my head, my heart; you who was so strong, who could lift a ceroon of indigo:" "You said you would go and buy cattle;" "I said, 'Yes; bring me fine linen and jewellery.'" The words, and the piercing tone of distress, reminded me of a similar scene I had once beheld on the banks of the Nile. By invitation of one of the friends I entered the house. The corpse lay on the ground, in a white cotton dress extending from the neck to the feet. It was that of a young man, not more than twenty-two, with the mustache just budding on his upper lip, tall, and but a month before so strong that he could "lift a ceroon of indigo." He had left home to buy cattle, returned with a fever, and in a week was dead. A bandage was tied under his chin to hold up the jaw; his thin wrists were secured across his breast; and his taper fingers held a small crucifix made of corn-husks stitched together. On each side of his head was a lighted candle, and ants, which burden the ground, were swarming over his face. The widow did not notice me, but the mother and two young sisters asked me if I had no remedios; if I could not cure him; if I could have cured him if I had seen him before.

I left the bereaved family and withdrew. The man who had asked me to enter met me at the door, and gave me a seat among the friends. He inquired about my country, where it was, and whether the customs were like theirs; and very soon, but for the lamentations of the widow, many would have forgotten that a few yards from them lay a dead friend.

I remained with them an hour, and then returned to my hut. The piazza was full of hogs; the interior was a perfect piggery, full of fleas and children; and the woman, with a cigar in her mouth, and the harshest voice I ever heard, still brought in child after child, and piled them up on the floor. My men were already asleep outside; and borrowing an undressed ox-hide, I spread it on the floor at the end of the house; upon this I laid my pellen, and upon that I laid myself. The night before I had slept under a moscheto netting! Oh, padre of San Jacinto, that a man of my "rank and character" should come to this! The woman was sleepless; a dozen times she came out to smoke a cigar, or to drive away the hogs; and her harsh voice, and the screams from the house of mourning, made me rejoice when the cocks crew for morning.

CHAPTER IX.

CHIMALAPA—THE CABILDO—A SCENE OF REVELRY—GUASTATOYA—A HUNT FOR ROBBERS—APPROACH TO GUATIMALA—BEAUTIFUL SCENERY—VOLCANOES OF AGUA AND FUEGO—FIRST VIEW OF THE CITY—ENTRY INTO THE CITY—FIRST IMPRESSIONS—THE DIPLOMATIC RESIDENCE—PARTIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA—MURDER OF VICE-PRESIDENT FLORES—POLITICAL STATE OF GUATIMALA—AN EMBARRASSING SITUATION—THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY—MILITARY POLICE.

At peep of day I bathed in the Motagua. In the mean time the deaf and dumb boy prepared chocolate, and the corpse of the young man was borne to its final resting-place. I went over to the desolate house, bade farewell to the mourners, and resumed my journey. Again we had on our right the Motagua River and the mountains of Vera Paz. The road was level; it was excessively hot, and we suffered from thirst. At noon we stopped two hours at the village of Fisioli. Late in the afternoon we came upon a table-land covered with trees bearing a flower, looking like apple-trees in blossom, and cactus or tunos, with branches from three to fifteen feet long. I was in advance; and having been in the saddle all day, and wishing to relieve my mule, I dismounted and walked. A man overtook me on horseback, who touched me by telling me that my mule was tired. The mule, unused to being led, pulled back, and my new acquaintance followed, whipping her; and remembering the fable, and that I could not please everybody, I mounted, and we rode into Chimalapa together.

It was a long, straggling village, with a large church, but there was no padre, and I rode to the cabildo. This, besides being the town-house, is a sort of caravansary or stopping-place for travellers, being a remnant of Oriental usages still existing in Spain, and introduced into her former American possessions. It was a large building, situated on the plaza, plastered and whitewashed. At one end the alcalde was holding a sort of court, and at the other were the gratings of a prison. Between them was a room about thirty feet by twenty, with naked walls, and destitute of chair, bench, or table. The luggage was brought in, the hammock hung up, and the alcalde sent me my supper. Hearing the sound of a drum and violin, I walked to the house whence it issued, which was crowded with men and women smoking, lounging in hammocks, dancing, and drinking agua ardiente, in celebration of a marriage. The night before I had been present at a