

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

QUEZALTENANGO—ACCOUNT OF IT—CONVERSION OF THE INHABITANTS TO CHRISTIANITY—APPEARANCE OF THE CITY—THE CONVENT—INSURRECTION—CARRERA'S MARCH UPON QUEZALTENANGO—HIS TREATMENT OF THE INHABITANTS—PREPARATIONS FOR HOLY WEEK—THE CHURCH—A PROCESSION—GOOD FRIDAY—CELEBRATION OF THE RESURRECTION—OPENING CEREMONY—THE CRUCIFIXION—A SERMON—DESCENT FROM THE CROSS—GRAND PROCESSION—CHURCH OF CALVARIO—THE CASE OF THE CURA—WARM SPRINGS OF ALMOLONGA.

WE were again on classic soil. The reader perhaps requires to be reminded that the city stands on the site of the ancient Xelahun, next to Utatlan the largest city in Quiché, the word Xelahun meaning "under the government of ten;" that is, it was governed by ten principal captains, each captain presiding over 8,000 dwellings, in all 80,000, and containing according to Fuentes more than 300,000 inhabitants; that on the defeat of Tecum Umam by Alvarado, the inhabitants abandoned the city, and fled to their ancient fortresses, Excansel, the volcano, and Cexkak, another mountain adjoining; that the Spaniards entered the deserted city, and according to a manuscript found in the village of San Andres Xecul, their videttes captured the four celebrated caciques, whose names, the reader doubtless remembers, were Calel Kalek, Ahpoggueham, Calelahan, and Calelaboy; the Spanish records say that they fell on their knees before Pedro Alvarado, while a priest explained to them the nature of the Christian faith, and they declared themselves ready to embrace it. Two of them were retained as hostages, and the others sent back to the fortresses, who returned with such multitudes of Indians ready to be baptized, that the priests, from sheer fatigue, could no longer lift their arms to perform the ceremony.

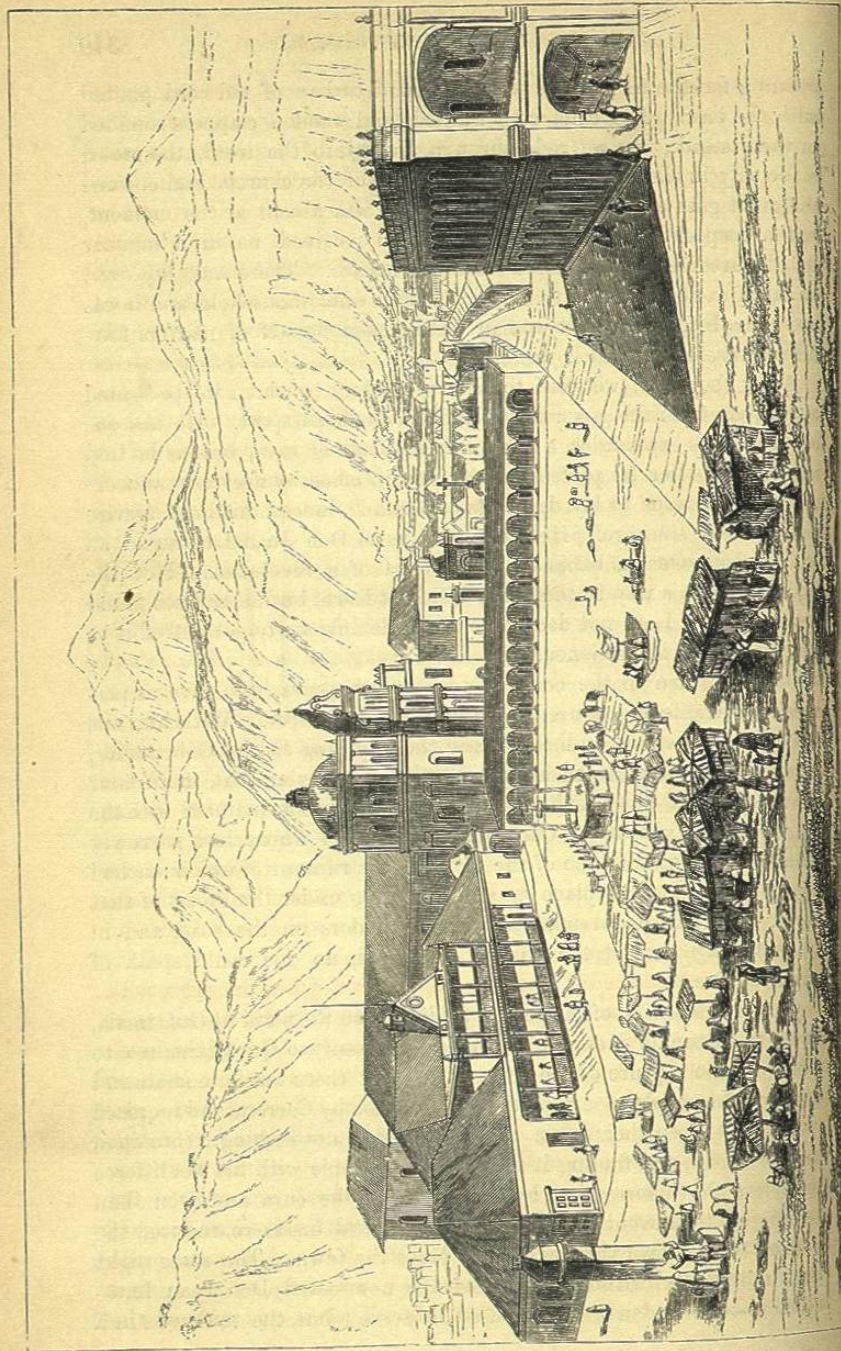
As we approached, seven towering churches showed that the religion so hastily adopted had not died away. In a few minutes we entered the city. The streets were handsomely paved, and the houses picturesque in architecture; the cabildo had two stories and a corridor. The Cathedral, with its façade richly decorated, was grand and imposing. The plaza was paved with stone, having a fine fountain in the centre, and commanding a magnificent view of the volcano and mountains around. It was the day before Good Friday; the streets and plaza were crowded with people in their best attire, the Indians wearing large black cloaks, with broad-brimmed felt sombreros, and the women a white frock, covering the head, except an oblong

opening for the face; some wore a sort of turban of red cord plaited with the hair. The bells were hushed, and wooden clappers sounded in their stead. As we rode through, armed to the teeth, the crowd made way in silence. We passed the door of the church, and entered the great gate of the convent. The cura was absent at the moment, but a respectable-looking servant-woman received us in a manner that assured us of a welcome from her master. There was, however, an air of excitement and trepidation in the whole household, and it was not long before the good woman unburdened herself of matters fearfully impressed upon her mind.

After chocolate, we went to the corregidor, to whom we presented our letters from the government and Carrera's passport. He was one of Morazan's expulsados, a fine, military-looking man, but, as he told us, not a soldier by profession; he was in office by accident, and exceedingly anxious to lay down his command; indeed, his brief service had been no sinecure. He introduced us to Don Juan Lavanigno, an Italian from Genoa, banished on account of a revolution. How the signor found his way to this place I did not learn, but he had not found peace; and, if I am not deceived, he was as anxious to get out of it as ever he was to leave Genoa.

On our return to the convent we found the cura, who gave us personally the welcome assured to us by his housekeeper. With him was a respectable-looking Indian, bearing the imposing title of Gobernador, being the Indian alcalde; and it was rather singular that, in an hour after our arrival at Quezaltenango, we had become acquainted with the four surviving victims of Carrera's wrath, all of whom had narrowly escaped death at the time of the outrage, the rumour of which reached us at Guatemala. The place was still quivering under the shock of that event. We had heard many of the particulars on the road, and in Quezaltenango, except the parties concerned, no one could speak of anything else.

On the first entry of Morazan's soldiers into the plaza at Guatemala, in an unfortunate moment, a courier was sent to Quezaltenango to announce the capture of the city. The effect there was immediate and decided; the people rose upon the garrison left by Carrera, and required them to lay down their arms. The corregidor, not wishing to fire upon the townsmen, and finding it would be impossible with his small force to repress the insurrection, by the advice of the cura and Don Juan Lavanigno, to prevent bloodshed and a general massacre, induced the soldiers to lay down their arms and leave the town. The same night the municipality, without his knowledge, nominated Don Juan Lavanigno a commandant. He refused to serve; but the town was in a



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violent state of excitement, and they urged him to accept for that night only, representing that if he did not, the fury of the populace would be directed against him. The same night they made a pronunciamiento in favour of Morazan, and addressed a letter of congratulation to him, which they despatched immediately by an Indian courier. It will be remembered, however, that in the meantime Morazan had been driven out of Guatemala, and that Carrera had pursued him in his flight. At the Antigua the latter met a disarmed sergeant, who informed him of the proceedings at Quezaltenango, whereupon, abandoning his pursuit of Morazan, he marched directly thither. Early intelligence was received of his approach, and the corregidor, the cura, and Don Juan Lavanigno were sent as a deputation to receive him. They met him at Tonicapan. Carrera had heard on the road of their agency in inducing the soldiers to surrender their arms, and his first greeting was a furious declaration that their heads should lie at that place; laying aside his fanaticism and respect for the priests, he broke out against the cura in particular, who, he said, was a relative of Morazan. The cura said he was not a relative, but only a countryman (which in that region means a townsman), and could not help the place of his birth; but Carrera forthwith ordered four soldiers to remove him a few paces and shoot him on the spot. The gobernador, the old Indian referred to, threw himself on his knees and begged the cura's life; but Carrera drew his sword and struck the Indian twice across the shoulder, and the wounds were still unhealed when we saw him; but he desisted from his immediate purpose of shooting the cura, and delivered him over to the soldiers. Don Juan Lavanigno was saved by Carrera's secretary, who exhibited in *El Tiempo*, the government paper of Guatemala, an extract from a letter written by Don Juan to a friend in Guatemala, praising Carrera's deportment on his previous entry into Quezaltenango, and the discipline and good behaviour of his troops.

Early the next morning, Carrera marched into Quezaltenango, with the cura and Don Juan as prisoners. The municipality waited upon him in the plaza; but, unhappily, the Indian entrusted with the letter to Morazan had loitered in the town, and at this unfortunate moment presented it to Carrera. Before his secretary had finished reading it, Carrera, in a transport of fury, drew his sword to kill them on the spot with his own hand, wounded Molina, the *alcalde-mayor*, and two other members of the municipality, but checked himself, and ordered the soldiers to seize them. He then rode to the corregidor, where he again broke out into fury, and drew his sword upon him. A woman in the room threw herself before the corregidor, and Carrera struck around her several times, but finally checked himself again, and ordered the

corregidor to be shot unless he raised 5,000 dollars by contributions upon the town. Don Juan and the cura he had locked up in a room with the threat to shoot them at five o'clock that afternoon unless they paid him 1,000 dollars each, and the former 200, and the latter 100 to his secretary. Don Juan was the principal merchant in the town, but even for him it was difficult to raise that sum. The poor cura told Carrera that he was not worth a cent in the world except his furniture and books. No one was allowed to visit him except the old housekeeper who first told us the story. Many of his friends had fled or hidden themselves away, and the old housekeeper ran from place to place with notes written by him, begging five dollars, ten dollars, anything she could get. One old lady sent him 100 dollars. At four o'clock, with all his efforts, he had raised but 700 dollars; but after undergoing all the mental agonies of death, when the cura had given up all hope, Don Juan, who had been two hours at liberty, made up the deficiency, and he was released.

The next morning Carrera sent to Don Juan to borrow his shaving apparatus, and Don Juan took them over himself. He had always been on good terms with Carrera, and the latter asked him if he had got over his fright, talking with him as familiarly as if nothing had happened. Shortly afterwards he was seen at the window playing on a guitar; and in an hour thereafter, eighteen members of the municipality, without the slightest form of trial, not even a drum-head court-martial, were taken out into the plaza and shot. They were all the very first men in Quezaltenango; and Molina, the alcalde-mayor, in family, position, and character was second to no other in the republic. His wife was clinging to Carrera's knees, and begging for his life when he passed with a file of soldiers. She screamed "Robertito;" he looked at her, but did not speak. She shrieked and fainted, and before she recovered, her husband was dead. He was taken round the corner of the house, seated on a stone, and dispatched at once. The others were seated in the same place, one at a time; the stone and the wall of the house were still red with their blood. I was told that Carrera shed tears for the death of the first two, but for the rest he said he did not care. Heretofore, in all their revolutions, there had been some show of regard for the tribunals of justice, and the horror of the citizens at this lawless murder of their best men, cannot be conceived. The facts were notorious to everybody in Quezaltenango. We heard them, with but little variation of detail, from more than a dozen different persons.

Having consummated this enormity, Carrera returned to Guatemala, and the place had not yet recovered from its consternation. It was considered a blow at the whites, and all feared the horrors of

a war of castes. I have avoided speaking harshly of Carrera when I could. I consider myself under personal obligations to him, and without his protection we never could have travelled through the country; but it is difficult to suppress the feelings of indignation excited against the government, which, conscious of the enormity of his conduct and of his utter contempt for them, never dared call him to account, and now cajoles and courts him, sustaining itself in power by his favour alone.

To return to the cura: he was about forty-five, tall, stout, and remarkably fine-looking; he had several curacies under his charge, and next to a canonigo's, his position was the highest in the country; but it had its labours. He was at that time engrossed with the ceremonies of the Holy Week, and in the evening we accompanied him to the church. At the door the *coup-d'œil* of the interior was most striking. The church was 250 feet in length, spacious and lofty, richly decorated with pictures and sculptured ornaments, blazing with lights, and crowded with Indians. On each side of the door was a grating, behind which stood an Indian to receive offerings. The floor was strewn with pine-leaves. On the left was the figure of a dead Christ on a bier, upon which every woman who entered threw a handful of roses, and near it stood an Indian to receive money. Opposite, behind an iron grating, was the figure of Christ bearing the cross, the eyes bandaged, and large silver chains attached to the arms and other parts of the body, and fastened to the iron bars. Here, too, stood an Indian to receive contributions. The altar was beautiful in design and decorations, consisting of two rows of Ionic columns, one above another, gilded, surmounted by a golden glory, and lighted by candles ten feet high. Under the pulpit was a piano. After a stroll around the church, the cura led us to seats under the pulpit. He asked us to give them some of the airs of our country, and then himself sat down at the piano. On Mr. C.'s suggesting that the tune was from one of Rossini's operas, he said that this was hardly proper for the occasion, and changed it.

At about ten o'clock the crowd in the church formed into a procession, and Mr. C. and I went out and took a position at the corner of a street to see it pass. It was headed by Indians, two abreast, each carrying in his hand a long lighted wax candle; and then, borne aloft on the shoulders of four men, came the figure of Judith, with a bloody sword in one hand, and in the other the gory head of Holofernes. Next, also on the shoulders of four men, the archangel Gabriel, dressed in red silk, with large wings puffed out. The next were men in grotesque armour, made of black and silver paper, to resemble Moors, with shield and spear like ancient cavaliers; and then four little girls, dressed in white silk and gauze, and looking like little spiritualities,

with men on each side bearing lighted candles. Then came a large figure of Christ bearing the cross, supported by four Indians; on each side were young Indian lads, carrying long poles horizontally, to keep the crowd from pressing upon it, and followed by a procession of townsmen. In turning the corner of the street at which we stood, a dark Mestizo, with a scowl of fanaticism on his face, said to Mr. Catherwood, "Take off your spectacles and follow the cross." Next followed a procession of women with children in their arms, half of them asleep, fancifully dressed with silver caps and headdresses, and finally a large statue of the Virgin, in a sitting posture, magnificently attired, with Indian lads on each side, as before, supporting poles with candles. The whole was accompanied with the music of drums and violins; and, as the long train of light passed down the street, we returned to the convent.

The night was very cold, and the next morning was like one in December at home. It was the morning of Good Friday; and throughout Guatemala, in every village, preparations were making to celebrate, with the most solemn ceremonies of the Church, the resurrection of the Saviour. In Quezaltenango, at that early hour, the plaza was thronged with Indians from the country around; but the whites, terrified and grieving at the murder of their best men, avoided, to a great extent, taking part in the celebration.

At nine o'clock the corregidor called for us, and we accompanied him to the opening ceremony. On one side of the nave of the church, near the grand altar, and opposite the pulpit, were high cushioned chairs for the corregidor and members of the municipality, and we had seats with them. The church was thronged with Indians, estimated at more than 3,000. Formerly, at this ceremony no women or children were admitted; but now the floor of the church was filled with Indian women on their knees, with red cords plaited in their hair, and perhaps one-third of them had children on their backs, their heads and arms only visible. Except ourselves and the padre, there were no white people in the church; and, with all eyes turned upon us, and a lively recollection of the fate of those who but a few days before had occupied our seats, we felt that the post of honour was a private station.

At the steps of the grand altar stood a large cross, apparently of solid silver, richly carved and ornamented, and over it a high arbour of pine and cypress branches. At the foot of the cross stood a figure of Mary Magdalen weeping, with her hair in a profusion of ringlets, her frock low in the neck, and altogether rather immodest. On the right was the figure of the Virgin gorgeously dressed, and in the nave of the church stood St. John the Baptist, placed there, as it seemed, only because they had the figure on hand. Very soon strains of wild

Indian music rose from the other end of the church, and a procession advanced, headed by Indians with broad-brimmed felt hats, dark cloaks, and lighted wax candles, preceding the body of the Saviour on a bier borne by the cura and attendant padres, and followed by Indians with long wax candles. The bier advanced to the foot of the cross; ladders were placed behind against it; the gobernador, with his long black cloak and broad-brimmed felt hat, mounted on the right, and leaned over, holding in his hands a silver hammer and a long silver spike; another Indian dignitary mounted on the other side, while the priests raised the figure up in front; the face was ghastly, blood trickled down the cheeks, the arms and legs were movable, and in the side was a gaping wound, with a stream of blood oozing from it. The back was affixed to the cross, the arms extended, spikes driven through the hands and feet, the ladders taken away, and thus the figure of Christ was nailed to the cross.

This over, we left the church, and passed two or three hours in visiting. The white population was small, but equal in character to any in the republic; and there was hardly a respectable family that was not afflicted by the outrage of Carrera. We knew nothing of the effect of this enormity until we entered domestic circles. The distress of women whose nearest connexions had been murdered or obliged to fly for their lives, and then wandering they knew not where, those only can realize who can appreciate woman's affection.

I was urged to visit the widow of Molina. Her husband was but thirty-five, and his death under any circumstances would have been lamented, even by political enemies. I felt a painful interest in one who had lived through such a scene, but at the door of her house I stopped. I felt that a visit from a stranger must be an intrusion upon her sorrows.

In the afternoon we were again seated with the municipality in the church, to behold the descent from the cross. The spacious building was thronged to suffocation, and the floor was covered by a dense mass of kneeling women, with turbaned headdresses, and crying children on their backs, their imaginations excited by gazing at the bleeding figure on the cross; but among them all I did not see a single interesting face. A priest ascended the pulpit, thin and ghastly pale, who, in a voice that rang through every part of the building, preached emphatically a passion sermon. Few of the Indians understood even the language, and at times the cries of children made his words inaudible; but the thrilling tones of his voice played upon every chord in their hearts; and mothers, regardless of their infants' cries, sat motionless, their countenances fixed in high and stern enthusiasm. It was the

same church, and we could imagine them to be the same women who, in a frenzy and fury of fanaticism, had dragged the unhappy vice-president by the hair, and murdered him with their hands. Every moment the excitement grew stronger. The priest tore off his black cap, and leaning over the pulpit, stretched forward both his arms, and poured out a frantic apostrophe to the bleeding figure on the cross. A dreadful groan, almost curdling the blood, ran through the church. At this moment, at a signal from the cura, the Indians sprang upon the arbour of pine branches, tore it asunder, and with a noise like the crackling of a great conflagration, struggling and scuffling around the altar, broke into bits the consecrated branches to save as holy relics. Two Indians in broad-brimmed hats mounted the ladders on each side of the cross, and with embroidered cloth over their hands, and large silver pincers, drew out the spikes from the hands. The feelings of the women burst forth in tears, sobs, groans, and shrieks of lamentation, so loud and deep, that, coming upon us unexpectedly, our feelings were disturbed, and even with sane men the empire of reason tottered. Such screams of anguish I never heard called out by mortal suffering; and as the body, smeared with blood, was held aloft under the pulpit, while the priest leaned down and apostrophized it with frantic fervour, and the mass of women, wild with excitement, heaved to and fro like the surges of a troubled sea, the whole scene was so thrilling, so dreadfully mournful, that, without knowing why, tears started from our eyes. Four years before, at Jerusalem, on Mount Calvary itself, and in presence of the scoffing Mussulman, I had beheld the same representation of the descent from the cross; but the enthusiasm of Greek pilgrims in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was nothing compared with this whirlwind of fanaticism and frenzy. By degrees the excitement died away; the cracking of the pine branches ceased, the whole arbour was broken up and distributed, and very soon commenced preparations for the grand procession.

We went out with the corregidor and officers of the municipality, and took our place in the balcony of the cabildo. The procession opened upon us in a manner so extraordinary, that, screening myself from observation below, I endeavoured to make a note of it on the spot. The leader was a man on horseback, called the centurion, wearing a helmet and cuirass of pasteboard covered with silver leaf, a black crape mask, black velvet shorts and white stockings, a red sash, and blue and red ribands on his arms, a silver-hilted sword, and a lance, with which, from time to time turning round, he beckoned and waved the procession on. Then came a led horse, having on its back an old Mexican saddle richly plated with silver. Then two men wearing long

blue gowns, with round hoods covering their heads, and having only holes for the eyes, leading two mules abreast, covered with black cloth dresses enveloping their whole bodies to their feet, the long trains of which were supported by men attired like the other two. Then followed the large silver cross of the crucifixion, with a richly ornamented silver pedestal, and ornaments dangling from each arm of the cross that looked like lanterns, supported by four men in long black dresses. Next came a procession of Indians, two abreast, wearing long black cloaks, with black felt hats, the brims six or eight inches wide, all with lighted candles in their hands, and then four Indians in the same costume, but with crowns of thorns on their heads, dragging a long low carriage or bier filled with pine-leaves, and having a naked skull laid on the top at one end.

Next, and in striking contrast with this emblem of mortality, advanced an angel in the attitude of an opera-dancer, borne on the shoulders of six men, dressed in flounced purple satin, with lace at the bottom, gauze wings, and a cloud of gauze over her head, holding in her right hand a pair of silver pincers, and in her left a small wooden cross, and having a train of white muslin ten yards long, supported by a pretty little girl fancifully dressed. Then another procession of Indians with lighted candles; then a group of devils in horrible masquerade. Then another angel, still more like an opera-dancer, dressed in azure blue satin, with rich lace wings, and clouds, and fluttering ribands, holding in her right hand a ladder, and in her left a silver hammer; her train supported as before; and we could not help seeing that she wore black velvet smallclothes. Then another angel, dressed in yellow, holding in her right hand a small wooden cross, and in the other I could not tell what.

The next in order was a beautiful little girl about ten years old, armed cap-a-pie, with breastplate and helmet of silver, also called the centurion, who moved along in a slow and graceful dance, keeping time to the music, turning round, stopping, resting on her sword, and waving on a party worthy of such a chief, being twelve beautiful children fancifully dressed, intended to represent the twelve apostles; one of them carrying in his arms a silver cock, to signify that he was the representative of St. Peter. The next was the great object of veneration, the figure of the Christ crucified, on a bier, in a full length case of plate glass, strewed with roses inside and out, and protected by a mourning canopy of black cloth, supported by men in long black gowns, with hoods covering all but the eyes. This was followed by the cura and priests in their richest robes and bareheaded, the muffled drum, and soldiers with arms reversed; the Virgin Mary, in a long

black mourning dress, closed the procession. It passed on to make the tour of the city; twice we intercepted it, and then went to the church of El Calvario. It stands on an elevation at the extreme end of a long street, and the steps were already crowded with women dressed in white from the head to the feet, with barely an oval opening for the face. It was dark when the procession made its appearance at the foot of the street, but by the blaze of innumerable lighted candles every object was exhibited with more striking wildness, and fanaticism seemed written in letters of fire on the faces of the Indians. The centurion cleared a way up the steps; the procession, with a loud chant, entered the church, and we went away.

In the evening we made several visits, and late at night we were called to a conference by some friends of the cura, and on his behalf. His troubles were not yet over. On the day of our arrival he had received a peremptory order from the provisor to repair to Guatemala, with notice that "some proper person" would be appointed in his place. We knew that the terms of the order afflicted the cura, for they implied that he was not a proper person. All Quezaltenango, he said, could answer for his acts, and he could answer to God that his motives were only to prevent the effusion of blood. His house was all in confusion; he was packing up his books and furniture, and preparing to obey the provisor's order. But his friends considered that it was dangerous for him to go to Guatemala. At that place, they said, he would be under the eyes of Carrera, who, meeting him in an angry moment, might cut him down in the street. If he did not go, the provisor would send soldiers after him, such was the rigour of church discipline. They wished him to fly the country, to go with us into Mexico; but he could not leave without a passport from Guatemala, and this would be refused. The reason of their unburdening themselves to us showed the helplessness of his condition. They supposed that I might have influence with the provisor, and begged me to write to Guatemala, and state the facts as they were known to all Quezaltenango. I had determined to take no part in the public or personal affairs of this unhappy revolution, but here I would not have hesitated to incur any trouble or risk to serve the cura could it have done him any good; but I knew the sensitiveness of the men in power, and believed that the provisor and the government would resent my interference. I proposed, however, to write to a friend who I knew stood well with the provisor, and request him to call upon that dignitary and state the facts as from me; and I suggested that he should send some friend to Guatemala expressly to see the provisor in person. Returned to a land of government and laws, I can hardly realize that

so short a time since, I was called in to counsel for the safety of a man of the cura's character and station. Relatively, the most respectable clergyman in our country does not stand higher than he did.

The next morning we were invited to breakfast with another friend and counsellor, and about as strange a one as myself, being the old lady who had sent the cura 100 dollars, before mentioned. The plan was discussed and settled, and in the course of the day two friends undertook to visit Guatemala on the cura's behalf. We intended that day to ascend the volcano of Quezaltenango, but were disappointed in our guide. In the morning we made purchases and provisions for continuing our journey, and as one of our mules' backs was badly galled, we requested the gobernador to procure us Indian carriers.

In the afternoon, in company with the corregidor, we rode to the warm springs of Almolonga. The road crosses a spur of the volcano, and descends precipitously into a deep valley, in which, about a league distant, stand the village and hot springs. There is a good bathing-house, at which we were not allowed to pay, being considered the guests of the city. Outside, in a beautiful natural reservoir, Indian men, women, and children were bathing together.

We returned by another road, passing up a valley of extraordinary beauty, and the theme of conversation was the happiness the country might enjoy but for wars and revolutions. Beautiful as it was, all wished to leave it, and seek a land where life was safe—*Mexico* or *El Norte*. Toward evening, descending the spur of the volcano, we met several hundred Indians returning from the ceremonies of the Holy Week, and exceeding in drunkenness all the specimens we had yet encountered. In one place a man and woman, the latter with a child on her back, were staggering so near the brink of a precipice, that the corregidor dismounted and took the child from them, and made them go before us into the town.

There was no place we had visited, except ruined cities, so unique and interesting, and which deserved to be so thoroughly explored, as Quezaltenango. A month, at least, might be satisfactorily and profitably employed in examining the many curious objects in the country around. For botanical researches it is the richest region in Central America. But we had no time even for rest.

I passed the evening in writing, packing things to be sent to Guatemala, among others my quezal, which, however, never arrived, and in writing letters, one of which was on account of the cura, and in which, intending, even if it fell into wrong hands, to be out of the country myself, I spoke in no measured terms of the atrocity committed by Carrera.