

## CHAPTER XXIX.

JOURNEY CONTINUED—A MOUNTAIN PLAIN—LOST GUIDES—A TRYING MOMENT—AGUAS CALIENTES—A MAGNIFICENT VIEW—GOLD ORE—SAN SEBASTIANO—GUEGUETENANGO—SIERRA MADRE—A HUGE SKELETON—THE RUINS—PYRAMIDAL STRUCTURES—A VAULT—MOUNDS—A WELCOME ADDITION—INTERIOR OF A MOUND—VASES—ASCENT OF THE SIERRA MADRE—BUENA VISTA—THE DESCENT—TODOS SANTOS—SAN MARTIN—SAN ANDRES—PETAPAN—A FOREST ON FIRE—SUFFERING OF THE MULES FROM SWARMS OF FLIES—SAN ANTONIO GUISTA.

EARLY in the morning our mules were saddled for the journey. The gobernador and another friend of the cura came to receive parting instructions, and set off for Guatemala. The Indians engaged for us did not make their appearance; and, desirous to save the day, we loaded the mules, and sent Juan and Bobon forward with the luggage. In a little while two women came and told us that our Indians were in prison. I accompanied them to two or three officials, and with much difficulty and loss of time found the man having charge of them, who said that, finding we had paid them part of their hire in advance, and afraid they would buy *agua ardiente* and be missing, he had shut them up the night before to have them ready, and had left word to that effect with one of the servants of the cura. I went with him to the prison, paid sixpence a-piece for their lodging, and took them over to the convent. The poor fellows had not eaten since they were shut up, and, as usual, wanted to go home for tortillas for the journey. We refused to let them go, but gave them money to buy some in the plaza, and kept the woman and their chamars as hostages for their return. But we became tired of waiting. Mr. Catherwood picked up their chamars and threw them across his saddle as a guarantee for their following, and we set off.

We had added to our equipments *armas de agua*, being undressed goatskins embroidered with red leather, which hung down from the saddlebow, to protect the legs against rain, and were now fully accoutred in Central American style.

It was cold and wintry. We ascended and crossed a high plain, and at the distance of a league descended to a village, where we learned that Juan and Bobon had passed on some time before. Beyond this we ascended a high and rugged mountain, and on the top reached a magnificent plain. We rode at a brisk pace, and it was one o'clock before our "jail-birds" overtook us. By this time we were surprised at not overtaking our men with the luggage. We could not have passed them, for there

was but one road. Since leaving the village we had not seen a single person, and at two o'clock we met a man with a loaded mule coming from Aguas Calientes, the end of our day's journey, who had not met them. Mr. Catherwood became alarmed, fearing that they had robbed us, and run away. I was always careless with luggage, but never lost any, and was slow in coming to this belief. In half an hour we met another man, who told us that he had not seen them, and that there was no other road than the one by which he came. Since our apprehensions began, we had not been able to discover any tracks, but went on to within two leagues of our halting-place, when we stopped, and held one of the most anxious consultations that occurred in our whole journey. We knew but little of the men. Juan cheated us every day in the little purchases for the road, and we had detected him in the atrocity of keeping back part of the money we gave him to buy corn and *sacate*, and starving the mules. After a most unhappy deliberation, we concluded that they had broken open the trunks, taken out the money, thrown the rest of the contents down some ravine, mounted the mules, and made off. Besides money, beds, and bedding, these trunks contained all Mr. Catherwood's drawings, and the precious notebooks to which the reader is indebted for these pages. The fruits of all our labour were gone. In all our difficulties and perplexities we never had a more trying moment. We were two leagues from Aguas Calientes. To go on, rouse the village, get fresh horses, and return in pursuit, was our first idea; but this would widen the distance between us, and probably we should not be able to get horses.

With hearts so heavy that nothing but the feeble hope of catching them while dividing the money kept us from sinking, we turned back. It was four o'clock in the afternoon; neither our mules nor we had eaten anything since early in the morning. Night would be upon us, and it was doubtful whether our mules could hold out. Our prisoners told us we had been very imprudent to let the men set out alone, and took it for granted that they had not let slip the opportunity of robbing us. As we rode back, both Mr. C. and I brooded over an apprehension which for some time neither mentioned to the other. It was the letter I had written on behalf of the cura. We should again be within reach of Carrera. If the letter by accident fell into his hands, he would be indignant at what he considered my ingratitude, and he could very easily take his revenge. Our plans, however, were made up at once. We determined, at all events, not to go back to Guatemala, nor, broken as we were in fortune and spirit, to give up Palenque, but, if possible, to borrow money for the road, even if we set out on foot; but, O GLORIA ETERNAL! as the official bulletin said of



Carrera's victory, on reaching the top of a mountain we saw the men climbing up a deep ravine on the other side. We did not tell them our agony, but had not gone far before the Indians told all; and they were not surprised or hurt. How we passed them neither of us know; but another such a spasm would have put a period to our journey of life; and from that time, however tedious, or whatever might be the inducements, we resolved to keep by our luggage. At dusk we reached the top of a high mountain, and by one of those long, steep, and difficult descents, of which it is impossible to give the reader any idea, entered the village of Aguas Calientes.

It was occupied entirely by Indians, who gathered round us in the plaza, and, by the light of pine sticks, looked at Carrera's passport. Not one of them could read it, but it was enough to pronounce the name, and the whole village was put in requisition to provide us with something to eat. The alcalde distributed the money we gave him, and one brought sixpence worth of eggs, another of beans, another of tortillas, another of lard, another of candles, and a dozen or more received sixpence a-piece for sacate; not one of them would bring anything until he had the money in hand. A fire was kindled in the square, and in process of time we had supper. Our usual supper of fried eggs, beans, tortillas, and chocolate—any one of them enough to disturb digestion in a state of repose—with the excitement and vexation of our supposed loss, made me ill. The cabildo was a wretched shed, full of fleas, with a coat of dust an inch thick to soften the hard earthen floor. It was too cold to sleep out of doors, and there were no pins to hang hammocks on, for in this region hammocks were not used at all. We made inquiries with the view of hiring for the night the bedsteads of the principal inhabitants, but there was not one in the village; all slept on the bosom of mother earth, and we had part of the family bed. Fortunately, however, and most important for us, our mules fared well.

Early in the morning we resumed our journey. There are warm springs in this neighbourhood, but we did not go out of our way to visit them. A short distance from the village we crossed a river and commenced ascending a mountain. On the top we came upon a narrow neck of land, with a magnificent forest on both sides far below us. The wind swept over the lofty height, so that with our ponchas, which were necessary on account of the cold, it was difficult to keep the saddle. The road was broken and stony, and the track scarcely perceptible. At about ten o'clock the whole surface of the mountain was a bare ridge of limestone, from which the sun was reflected with scorching heat, and the whiteness was dazzling and painful to the

eyes. Below us, on each side, continued an immense forest of gigantic pines. The road was perfectly desolate; we met no travellers. In four hours we saw on our left, at a great distance below, a single hacienda, with a clearing around it, seemingly selected for a magnificent seclusion from the convulsions of a distracted country. The ridge was broken by gullies and deep ravines; and we came to one across which, by way of bridge, lay the trunks of two gigantic pines. My macho always pulled back when I attempted to lead him, and I remained on his back, and was carried steadily over; but at the other end we started at a noise behind us. Our best cargo-mule had fallen, rolled over, and hung on the brink of the precipice, with her feet kicking in the air, kept from falling to the bottom only by being entangled among bushes. In a moment we scrambled down to her, got her head turned up the bank, and by means of strong halters heaved her out; but she was bruised and crippled, and barely able to stagger under her load. Continuing along the ridge, swept by fierce blasts of wind, we descended again to a river, rode some distance along its bank, and passed a track up the side of a mountain on the right, so steep that I had no idea it could be our road, and passed it, but was called back. It was the steepest ascent we had yet had in the country. It was cruel to push my brave macho, but I had been tormented all day with a violent headache, and could not walk; so I beat up, making the best tacks I could, and stopping every time I put about. On the top broke upon us one of those grand and magnificent views which, when we had wiped off perspiration and recovered breath, always indemnified us for our toil. It was the highest ground on which we had yet stood. Around us was a sea of mountains, and peeping above them, but so little as to give full effect to our own great height, were the conical tops of two new volcanoes. The surface was of limestone rock, in immense strata, with quartz, in one piece of which we discovered a speck of gold. Here again, in this vast wilderness of mountains, deep in the bowels of the earth, are those repositories of the precious ores for which millions upon millions all over the world are tolling, bargaining, craving, and cheating every day.

Continuing on this ridge, we came out upon a spur commanding a view, far below us, of a cultivated valley, and the village of San Sebastiano. We descended to the valley, left the village on our right, crossed the spur, and saw the end of our day's journey, the town of Gueguetenango, situated on an extensive plain, with a mild climate, luxuriant with tropical productions, surrounded by immense mountains, and before us the great Sierra Madre, the natural bulwark of Central America, the grandeur and magnificence of the view disturbed



only by the distressing reflection that we had to cross it. My macho, brought up on the plains of Costa Rica, had long seemed puzzled to know what mountains were made for; if he could have spoken, he would have cried out in anguish,

"Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise."

Our day's journey was but twenty-seven miles, but it was harder for man and beast than any sixty since we left Guatemala. We rode into the town, the chief place of the last district of Central America and of the ancient kingdom of Quiché. It was well built, with a large church or plaza; and again a crowd of Mestizoes were engaged in the favourite occupation of fighting cocks. As we rode through the plaza, the bell sounded for the oracion, or vesper prayers: the people fell on their knees, and we took off our hats. We stopped at the house of Don Joaquin Mon, an old Spaniard of high consideration, by whom we were hospitably received; and who, though a Centralist, on account of some affair of his sons, had had his house at Chiantla plundered by Carrera's soldiers. His daughters were compelled to take refuge in the church, and forty or fifty mules were driven from his hacienda. In a short time we had a visit from the corregidor, who had seen our proposed journey announced in the Government paper, and treated us with the consideration due to persons specially recommended by the Government.

We reached Gueguetenango in a shattered condition. Our cargo-mules had their backs so galled that it was distressing to use them; and the saddle-horse was no better off. Bobon, in walking barefooted over the stony road, had bruised the ball of one of his feet, so that he was disabled; and that night Juan's enormous supper gave him an indigestion. He was a tremendous feeder; on the road nothing eatable was safe. We owed him a spite for pilfering our bread, and bringing us down to tortillas, and were not sorry to see him on his back; but he rolled over the floor of the corridor, crying out uproariously, so as to disturb the whole household, "Voy morir!—Voy morir!" ("I am going to die!—I am going to die!") He was a hard subject to work upon, but we took him in hand strongly, and unloaded him.

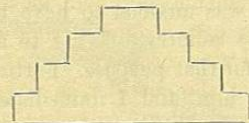
Besides our immediate difficulties, we heard of others in prospect. In consequence of the throng of emigrants from Guatemala towards Mexico, no one was admitted into that territory without a passport from Ciudad Real, the capital of Chiapas, four or five days' journey from the frontier. The frontier was a long line of river in the midst of a wilderness; and there were two roads, a lower one but little travelled, on account of the difficulty of crossing the rivers, but at that time passable. As we intended, however, at all events, to stop at this

place for the purpose of visiting the ruins, we postponed our decision till the next day.

The next morning Don Joaquin told us of the skeleton of a colossal animal, supposed to be a mastodon, which had been found in the neighbourhood. Some of the bones had been collected, and were then in the town; and, having seen them, we took a guide and walked to the place where they had been discovered, on the borders of the Rio Chinaca, about half a mile distant. At this time the river was low, but the year before, swelled by the immense floods of the rainy season, it had burst its bounds, carried away its right bank, and laid bare one side of the skeleton. The bank was perpendicular, about thirty feet high, and the animal had been buried in an upright position. Besides the bones in the town, some had been carried away by the flood, others remained imbedded in the earth; but the impression of the whole animal, from twenty-five to thirty feet long, was distinctly visible. We were told that about eight leagues above, on the bank of the same river, the skeleton of a much larger animal had been discovered.

In the afternoon we rode to the ruins, which in the town were called *las cuevas*, the caves. They lie about half a league distant, on a magnificent plain, bounded in the distance by lofty mountains, among which is the great Sierra Madre.

The site of the ancient city, as at Patinamit and Santa Cruz del Quiché, was chosen for its security against enemies. It was surrounded by a ravine, and the general character of the ruins is the same as at Quiché, but the hand of destruction has fallen upon it more heavily: the whole is a confused heap of grass-grown fragments. The principal remains are two pyramidal structures of this form:—



One of them measures at the base 102 feet; the steps are 4 feet high, and 7 feet deep, making the whole height 28 feet. They are not of cut stone, as at Copan, but of rough pieces cemented with lime; and the whole exterior was formerly coated with stucco, and painted. On the top is a small square platform, and at the base lies a long slab of rough stone, apparently hurled down from the top; perhaps the altar on which human victims were extended for sacrifice.

The owner of the ground, a Mestitzo, whose house was near by, and who accompanied us to the ruins, told us that he had bought the land from Indians, and that for some time after his purchase, he was



annoyed by their periodical visits to celebrate some of their ancient rites on the top of this structure. This annoyance continued until he whipped two or three of the principal men, and drove them away.

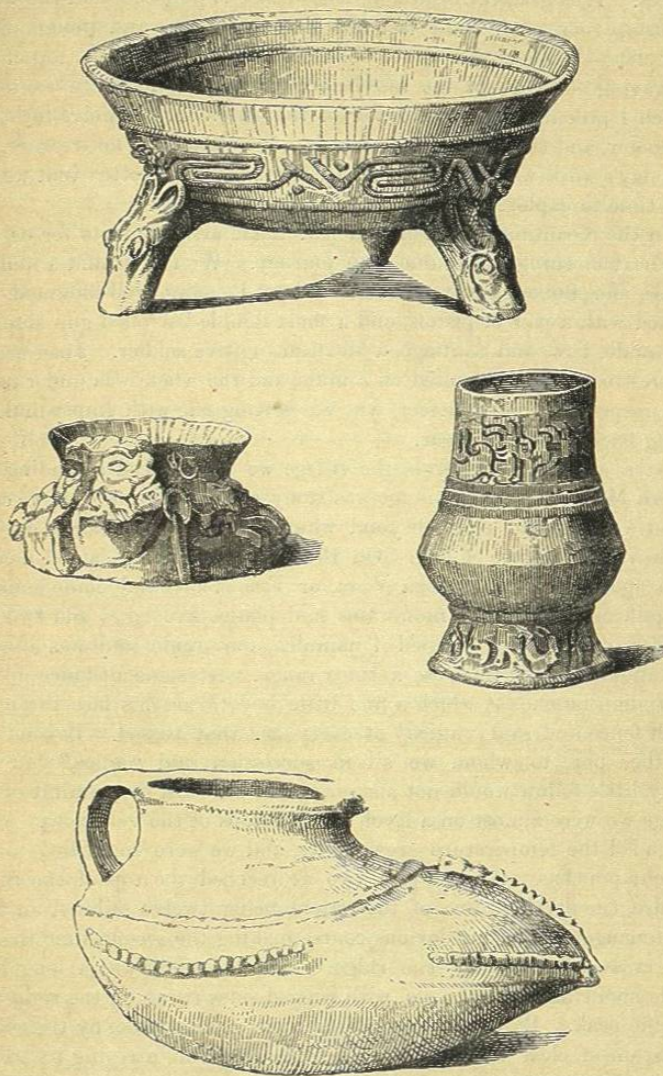
At the foot of the structure was a vault, faced with cut stone, in which were found a collection of bones and a terra cotta vase, then in his possession. The vault was not long enough for the body of a man extended, and the bones must have been separated before they were placed there.

The owner believed that these structures contained interior apartments, with hidden treasures; and there were several mounds, supposed to be sepulchres of the ancient inhabitants, which also, he had no doubt, contained treasure. The situation of the place was magnificent. We had never before enjoyed so good an opportunity for working, and agreed with him to come the next day and make excavations, promising to give him all the treasure, and taking for our share only the skulls, vases, and other curiosities.

The next morning, before we were up, the door was thrown open, and to our surprise we received a salutation in English. The costume of the stranger was of the country; his beard long: and he looked as if already he had made a hard morning's ride. To my great surprise and pleasure, I recognised Pawling, whom I had known as superintendent of a cochineal hacienda at Amatitan. He had heard of our setting out for Mexico, and, disgusted with his occupation and the country, had mounted his horse, and with all he was worth tied on behind his saddle, pushed on to overtake us. On the way he had bought a fine mule, and by hard riding, and changing from one animal to the other, had reached us in four days. He was in difficulty about a passport, and was anxious to have the benefit of mine, in order to get out of the country, offering to attach himself to me in any capacity necessary for that purpose. Fortunately, my passport was broad enough to cover him, and I immediately constituted him the general manager of the expedition, the material of which was now reduced to Juan sick, and but one cargo-mule sound.

At nine o'clock, attended by three men and a boy with machetes, being all we could procure at so short a notice, we were again among the ruins. We were not strong enough to pull down a pyramid, and lost the morning in endeavouring to make a breach in one of the sides, but did not accomplish anything.

In the afternoon we opened one of the mounds. The interior was a rough coat of stones and lime, and after an hour's digging we came to fragments of bones and the two lower vases in the plate No. 42. The first of the two was entire when we discovered it, but, unfor-



F. Catherwood.

42. VASES FOUND AT GUEGUETENAGO.



tunately, was broken in getting it out, though we obtained all the pieces. It is graceful in design, the surface is polished, and the workmanship very good. The last was already broken, and though more complicated, the surface is not polished. The tripod at the top of the engraving is a copy of the vase before referred to, found in the tomb, which I procured from the owner of the land. It is twelve inches in diameter, and the surface is polished. We discovered no treasure, but our day's work was most interesting, and we only regretted that we had not time to explore more thoroughly.

In the meantime Don Joaquin had made arrangements for us, and the next morning we resumed our journey. We left behind a mule, a horse, and Bobon, and were reinforced by Pawling, well-mounted, and armed with a pair of pistols, and a short double-barrelled gun slung to his saddle-bow, and Santiago, a Mexican fugitive soldier. Juan was an interesting invalid mounted on a mule, and the whole was under escort of a respectable old muleteer, who was setting out with empty mules to bring back a load of sugar.

At a short distance from the village we commenced ascending the Sierra Madre. The first range was stony, and on the top of it we came upon a cultivated plain, beyond which rose a second range, covered with a thick forest of oak. On the top of this range stood a cross. The spot was called Buena Vista, or Fine View, and commanded a magnificent expanse of mountains and plains, five lakes and two volcanoes, one of which, called Tujumulco, our guide said was a water volcano. Beyond this rose a third range. At some distance up was an Indian rancho, at which a fine little boy thrust his face through a bush fence and said "adios" at every one that passed. Beyond was another boy, to whom we all in succession said "adios," but the surly little fellow would not answer one of us. On the summit of this range we were almost on a level with the tops of the volcanoes. As we ascended the temperature grew colder, and we were compelled to put on our ponchas. At half-past two we reached the top of the Sierra Madre, the dividing line of the waters, being twelve miles from Gueténango, and in our devious course making the second time that we had crossed the sierra. The ridge of the mountain was a long level table about half a mile wide, with rugged sides rising on the right to a terrific peak. Riding about half an hour on this table, by the side of a stream of clear and cold water, which passed on, carrying its tribute to the *Pacific Ocean*, we reached a miserable rancho, in front of which the arriero proposed to encamp, as he said it would be impossible to reach the next village. At a distance it was a glorious idea, that of sleeping on the top of the Sierra Madre, and the scene was wild enough

for the most romantic imagination; but, being poorly provided against cold, we would have gladly exchanged it for an Indian village.

The occupants of the hut were a man and woman, who lived there rent free. Like the eagle, they had fixed their habitation where they were not likely to be disturbed. While the men were unloading, Juan, as an invalid, asked permission to stretch his huge body before the fire, but the woman told him there was more room out of doors. I succeeded, however, in securing him a place inside. We had an hour to wander over the top of the sierra. It belonged to our friend Don Joaquin Mon, and was what would be called at home a pretty substantial piece of fast property. At every step there was some fresh opening, which presented a new view of the grand and magnificent in nature. In many places, between cliffs and under certain exposures, were fine pieces of ground, and about half a mile distant a potrero or pasture-ground for brood mares, which we visited to buy some corn for our mules. A vicious jack reigned lord of the sierra.

Adjoining the occupied hut was another about ten feet square, made of small upright poles, thatched with branches of cypress, and open on all sides to the wind. We collected a quantity of wood, made a fire in the centre, had supper, and passed a social evening. The muleteers had a large fire outside, and with their pack-saddles and cargoes built a breastwork to shelter themselves against the wind. Fancy called up a picture of far-distant scenes: a small circle of friends, possibly at that moment thinking of us. Perhaps, to tell the truth, we wished to be with them; and, above all, as we looked to our sleeping places, thought of the comforts of home. Nevertheless, we soon fell asleep. Towards morning, however, we were reminded of our elevated region. The ground was covered with a hoar frost, and water was frozen a quarter of an inch thick. Our guide said that this happened regularly every night in the year when the atmosphere was clear. It was the first ice we had seen in the country. The men were shivering around a large fire, and, as soon as they could see, went out to look for the mules. One of them had strayed; and while the men were looking for her, we had breakfast, and did not get off till a quarter before eight. Our road traversed the ridge of the sierra, which for two leagues was a level table, a great part composed of immense beds of red slate and blue limestone or chalk rock, lying in vertical strata. At ten o'clock we began to descend, the cold being still severe. The descent surpassed in grandeur and magnificence all that we had yet encountered. It was by a broad passage with perpendicular mountain walls, rising in rugged and terrific peaks, higher and higher as we descended, out of which gigantic cypress-trees were growing, their trunks and all their



branches dead. Before us, between these immense walls, was a vista reaching beyond the village of San Andres, twenty-four miles distant. A stream of water was dashing down over rocks and stones, hurrying on to the Atlantic; we crossed it perhaps fifty times on bridges wild and rude as the stream itself and the mountains between which it rolled. As we descended, the temperature became milder. At twelve o'clock the immense ravine opened into a rich valley a mile in width, and in half an hour we reached the village of Todos Santos. On the right, far below us, was a magnificent table-land cultivated with corn, and bounded by the side of the great sierra; and in the suburbs of the village were apple and peach-trees covered with blossoms and young fruit. We had again reached the *tierras templadas*, and in Europe or North America the beauty of this miserable unknown village would be a theme for poetry.

As we rode through it, at the head of the street we were stopped by a drunken Indian, supported by two men hardly able to stand themselves, who, we thought, were taking him to prison; but, staggering before us, they blocked up the passage, and shouted, "Pasaporte!" Pawling, in anticipation, and to assume his new character, had tied his jacket around his waist by the sleeves, and was dragging one of the mules by its halter. Not one of the three could read the passport, and they sent for the secretary, a bare-headed Indian, habited in nothing but a ragged cotton shirt, who examined it very carefully, and read aloud the name of Rafael Carrera, which, I think, was all that he attempted to make out. We were neither sentimental, nor philosophical, nor moralizing travellers, but it gave us pangs to think that such a magnificent country was in the possession of such men.

Passing the church and convent, we ascended a ridge, then descended an immense ravine, crossed another magnificent valley, and at length reached the Indian village of San Martin, which, with loveliness and grandeur all around us, might have been selected for its surpassing beauty of position. We rode to the *cabildo*, and then to the hut of the *alcalde*. The people were all Indians; the secretary was a bare-legged boy, who spelled out every word in the passport except our names; but his reading sufficed to procure supper for us, and provender for the mules, and early in the morning we pushed on again.

For some distance we rode on a lofty ridge, with a precipitous ravine on each side, in one place so narrow that, as our *arriero* told us, when the wind is high there is danger of being blown off. We continued descending, and at a quarter-past twelve reached San Andres Petapan, fifteen miles distant, blooming with oranges, *sapotes*,

and other fruit-trees. Passing through the village, at a short distance beyond we were stopped by a fire in the woods. We turned back, and attempted to pass by another road, but were unable. Before we returned the fire had reached the place we left, and increased so fast that we had apprehensions for the luggage-mules, and hurried them back with the men toward the village. The flames came creeping and crackling toward us, shooting up and whirled by currents of wind, and occasionally, when fed with dry and combustible materials, flashing and darting along like a train of gunpowder. We fell back, keeping as near as we could to the line of fire, the road lying along the side of a mountain; while the fire came from the ravine below, crossing the road, and moving upward. The clouds of smoke and ashes, the rushing of currents of wind and flames, the crackling of burning branches, and trees wrapped in flames, and the rapid progress of the destroying element, made such a wild and fearful scene that we could not tear ourselves away. At length we saw the flames rush up the side of the ravine, intercepting the path before us. We spurred our horses, shot by, and in a moment the whole was a sheet of flame. The fire was now spreading so rapidly that we became alarmed, and hurried back to the church, which, on an elevation strongly defined against the immense mountain in the background, stood before us as a place of refuge. By this time the villagers had become alarmed, and men and women were hurrying to the height to watch the progress of the flames. The village was in danger of conflagration; it would be impossible to urge the loaded mules up the hill we had descended, and we resolved to deposit the luggage in the church, and save the mules by driving them up unburdened. It was another of those wild scenes to which no effect can be given in words. We stopped on the brow of the hill before the square of the church, and while we were watching the fire, the black clouds and sheets of flame rolled up the side of the mountain, and spared the village. Relieved from apprehension, we sat down under a tree in front of the church to the calm enjoyment of the terrific spectacle and a cold fowl. The cinders and ashes fell around, and the destructive element rushed on, sparing the village before us, perhaps to lay some other in ruins.

We were obliged to wait two hours. From the foot of the hill on which the village stood, the ground was hot, and covered with a light coat of ashes; the brush and underwood were burned away; in some places were lying trees, reduced to masses of live coal, and others were standing with their trunks and branches all on fire. In one place we passed a square of white ashes, the remains of some miserable Indian hut. Our faces and hands were scorched, and our whole



bodies heated when we emerged from the fiery forest. For a few moments the open air was delightful; but we were hardly out of one trouble before we had another. Swarms of enormous flies, perhaps driven out by the fire, and hovering on the borders of the burned district, fell upon the mules. Every bite drew blood, and the tormentors clung to the suffering animals until brushed off by a stick. For an hour we laboured hard, but could not keep their heads and necks free. The poor beasts were almost frantic, and, in spite of all we could do, their necks, the inside of their legs, mouths, ears, nostrils, and every tender part of their skin, were trickling with blood. Hurrying on, in three hours we saw the Church of San Antonio Güista, and in a few minutes entered the village, beautifully situated on a table-land projecting from the slope of a mountain, looking upon an immense opening, and commanding on all sides a magnificent view. At this time we were beyond the reach of war, and free from all apprehensions. With the addition of Pawling's pistols and double-barrelled gun, a faithful muleteer, Santiago, and Juan on his legs again, we could have stormed an Indian village, and locked up a refractory alcalde in his own cabildo. We took possession of San Antonio Güista, dividing ourselves between the cabildo and the convent, sent for the alcalde (even on the borders of Central America the name of Carrera was omnipotent), and told him to stay there and wait upon us, or send an alguazil.

The alcalde and his major had roused the village. In a few moments, instead of the mortifying answer "no hay," there is none, the provision made for us was almost equal to the offers of the Turkish paradise. Twenty or thirty women were in the convent at one time, with baskets of corn, tortillas, dolces, plantains, hocotes, sapotes, and a variety of other fruits, each one's stock in trade being of the value of three half-pence; and among them was a species of tortillas, thin and baked hard, about 12 inches in diameter, 120 for three pence, of which, as they were not expensive, we laid in a large supply.

At this place our muleteer was to leave us. We had but one cargo-mule fit for service, and applied to the alcalde for two carriers to go with us across the frontier to Comitan. He went out, as he said, to consult with the mozos, and told us that they asked six dollars apiece. We spoke to him of our friend Carrera, and on a second consultation the demand was reduced by two-thirds. We were obliged to make provisions for three days, and even to carry corn for the mules; and Juan and Santiago had a busy night, boiling fowls and eggs.

## CHAPTER XXX.

COMFORTABLE LODGINGS—JOURNEY CONTINUED—STONY ROAD—BEAUTIFUL RIVER—SUSPENSION BRIDGE—THE DOLORES—RIO LAGERTERO—ENTHUSIASM BROUGHT DOWN—ANOTHER BRIDGE—ENTRY INTO MEXICO—A BATH—A SOLITARY CHURCH—A SCENE OF BARRENNESS—ZAPOLUTA—COMITAN—ANOTHER COUNTRYMAN—MORE PERPLEXITIES—OFFICIAL COURTESY—TRADE OF COMITAN—SMUGGLING—SCARCITY OF SOAP.

THE next morning we found the convent was so comfortable, we were so abundantly served, the alcalde or his major, staff in hand, being in constant attendance, and the situation so beautiful, that we were in no hurry to go; but the alcalde told us that all was ready. We did not see our carriers, and found that he and his major were the mozos whom he had consulted. They could not let slip two dollars a-piece, and laying down their staves and dignity, bared their backs, placed the straps across their foreheads, took up the loads, and trotted off.

We started at five minutes before eight. The weather was fine, but hazy. From the village we descended a hill to an extensive stony plain, and at about a league's distance reached the brink of a precipice, from which we looked down into a rich oblong valley, 2,000 or 3,000 feet deep, shut in all around by a mountain wall, and seeming an immense excavation. Toward the other end of the valley was a village with a ruined church, and the road led up a precipitous ascent to a plain on the same level with that on which we stood, undulating and boundless as the sea. Below us it seemed as if we could drop a stone to the bottom. We descended by one of the steepest and most stony paths we had yet encountered in the country, crossing and recrossing in a zigzag course along the side of the height, perhaps making the descent a mile and a half long. Very soon we reached the bank of a beautiful river, running lengthwise through the valley, bordered on each side by immense trees, throwing their branches clear across, and their roots washed by the stream; and while the plain beyond was dry and parched, they were green and luxuriant. Riding along it, we reached a suspension bridge of most primitive appearance and construction, called by the natives La Hammaca, which had existed there from time immemorial. It was made of oziars twisted into cords, about three feet apart, and stretched across the river with a hanging network of vines, the ends fastened to the trunks of two opposite trees. It hung about twenty-five feet above the river, which was here some eighty feet wide, and was supported in different places by vines tied