MISSIONARY ADVENTURES

IN

TEXAS AND MEXICO.

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

OF

SIX YEARS' SOJOURN IN THOSE REGIONS.

BY THE ABBÉ DOMENECH.

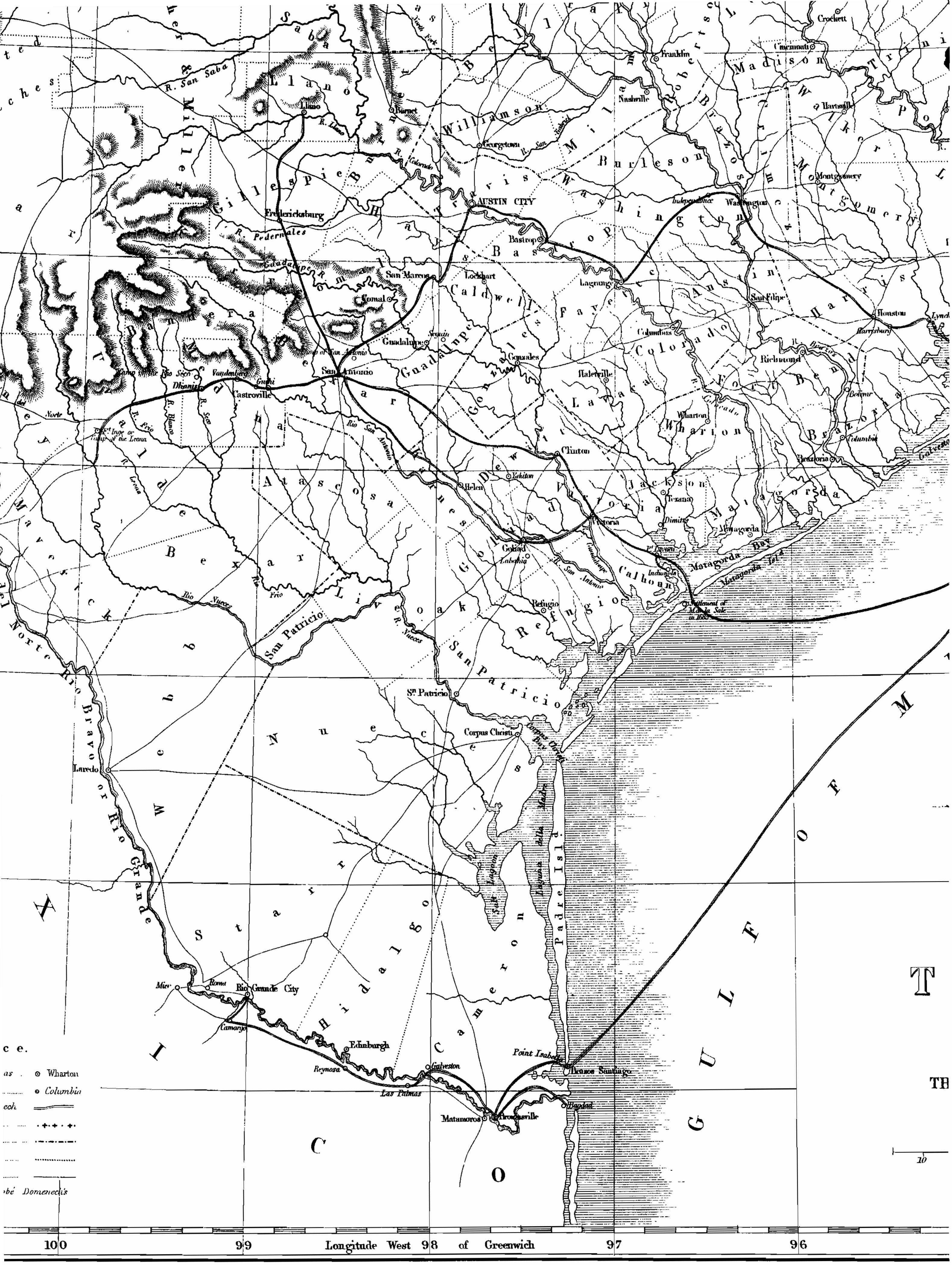
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

UNDER THE AUTHOR'S SUPERINTENDENCE.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, AND ROBERTS.

1858.



London, Longman & Co.

relish the inelaborate recitals of truth. Like the violet, it possesses no other charm than the sweet perfume of truth—it may be too, that like the early spring flower its duration will be ephemeral; but of what consequence to a secluded and suffering being is the glory of the world! No regret will accompany me into the calm of retirement should I only succeed in awaking in some generous souls a sentiment of pity and charity for those destitute Christian missions to which I have sacrificed the best years of my life—a sentiment which cannot in its nature be sterile, but must on the contrary be productive of the most abundant fruits, which will be no less delicious to the giver than to the receiver.

CONTENTS.

FIRST JOURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHAP. II.

CHAP. III.

SECOND JOURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHAP. IV.

CHAP. V.

CHAP. VI.

CHAP. VII.

CHAP. VIII.

days. I saw London for the first time, but feeling no desire to remain there, I re-embarked and hailed the shores of France the same evening. With what ecstacy I landed at Boulogne, and felt that my foot pressed once more my dear native land! I had to restrain myself or I would have embraced the gendarmes and custom-house officers, for they were the first Frenchmen that I met. I passed some hours with a family to whose care and kindness I had been recommended; and they received me in the most friendly way, loading me with delicate and thoughtful attentions. I was deeply moved at receiving unexpectedly such frank and cordial hospitality. France is the country where taste, politeness, and all the qualities of the heart, reach their culminating point. I wondered at hearing every one speak French, for my mother tongue had almost become a foreign language to my ears. I arrived at Lyons two days afterwards, and it was just ten o'clock in the evening when I knocked at my mother's door. How my heart beat! "Who is there?" "It is I." "It is my Emmanuel!" We fell into each other's arms and wept tears of joy—a mother's caresses are sweet at any age. I presented myself to my relations and friends the following day, but I was obliged to tell them my name, and to assure them of my identity before they could be persuaded to recognise in the hollow-cheeked, wrinkled, sun-burnt, wan and haggard being that stood before them, the young man who had been tolerably well-looking, hearty and strong, when he left them. My mother's heart alone recognised me.

END OF THE FIRST JOURNEY.

SECOND JOURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

A VISIT TO THE HOLY FATHER.—RETURN TO AMERICA.—A RATHER DIVERSIFIED VOYAGE.—DESCRIPTIONS OF AND IMPRESSIONS THEREUPON.—SERMONS ON BOARD.—AN IMAGINARY SHIPWRECK.—THE BRAZOS.—ISABELLA POINT.—BROWNSVILLE.—NEW MUNICIPAL STREET-CUTTING REGULATIONS.—OPINION OF MY PARISHIONERS ABOUT THE MISSIONARIES.

After a sojourn of three weeks at Lyons, I set out to see the Holy Father at Rome, to talk to him about my mission, and to present to him a pair of beautiful mocassins embroidered by our Indians. My entire worldly possession was a purse containing five francs, and the permission of the minister of marine to sail gratis in the government vessels. I reached Toulon on the 14th of October; and after traversing part of the South of France, sometimes a-foot, sometimes *en diligence*, as my means and necessity dictated, I embarked on the 15th, in the Veloce, with several infantry officers who accompanied a detachment of soldiers to Rome. The weather was fine, the sea calm, the voyage a charming one.

During the evening, by moonlight, I mixed among the soldiers, with whom I chatted a long time with no little amusement and cordial feeling. Arrived at Civita Vecchia I had the five francs in my pocket, but this was not quite enough to pay my way to Rome; and experience had already taught me that it is a far more diffi-

cult business to travel without money in a civilised than in a barbarian country. Still I did not lose heart at a trifle of this kind, but made up my mind to go to Rome on foot, by daily marches, like the soldiers.

In the eternal city, in vain I sought gratuitous hospitality. I put myself entirely into the hands of Providence for the payment of my expenses, and I asked an audience of the Holy Father, who at once acceded to my request.

I was very poorly clad, but at the Vatican a man is not judged by his dress. His Holiness received me with his accustomed benevolence. He would not have me kiss his toe, but gave me his hand. During my life I had never seen features so full of sympathy, so kind, or so venerable. Our conversation was a long one, and turned naturally on the missions, on the Indians in general, and on my own affairs in particular. I briefly told my adventures, and the Holy Father replied, "I see, dear child, that you are inured to misery."

"So much so," I replied, "that even in Rome it quits me not."

"How so?"

I then frankly avowed my pecuniary embarrassments, for my five francs had totally disappeared. His Holiness smiled, and seeing my confidence in God, said to me, "Since you travel on the business of Providence, His vicar shall pay your travelling expenses." And suiting the action to the word, His Holiness gave me a handful of gold. On my side I took out of my pocket the mocassins, which were folded in a morsel of torn paper, and presented them to the Holy Father, who examined the embroidery, and praised the ingenuity of the Indians. The noble simplicity and affecting benevolence of Pope Pius IX. are too well known for me to dwell on this *tête-à-tête*, the remembrance of which is still to me a sweet consolation.

On the 1st of November I left Italy for France, which I traversed in all directions. The revolution of February had alarmed men's minds, and shut up their purses, so that I had almost completely failed in my enterprise to put together some money for our poor and interesting mission of Texas. I was more successful, however, in my search for young priests ready to share our labours and trials; but the majority of them were poor, and their zeal ineffectual, as they could not pay their way to Texas. My health was still but very indifferent, my strength being very slow in returning; however, the distant lands, where I had run so many risks and supported so much fatigue, retained their attraction for my eyes. In the solitude of the new world I had contracted the habit of living constantly at danger's door; the grand scenes of nature, the deep emotions of the heart, had become for me wants of imperious necessity. Europe with its narrow prejudices, its niggard selfishness, and its dull bourgeoisie, appeared to me uninhabitable.

Every day I missed an illusion which made my heart at twenty-five buoyant with joy. Seeing the world at a nearer view and with more enlarged and less home-made ideas, I discovered in it every moment miseries and wounds, moral and physical, at which I recoiled. On the other hand the missions had no longer for me the charm of novelty which might at least counterpoise the bitterness of the trials to come. I knew how poignant sufferings and isolation are in these countries; and what strength and energy must be called

forth to keep one's self constantly united to God, and not to halt and stop short half way, fatigued and heart-fallen. Still I could not think of those poor colonists of Texas, with whom I had lived three years, whom I had directed by exhortations, enlightened and supported by the aids of religion, and to whom conscience whispered to me that I had been of service according to the measure of my strength,—I could not, I say, think of them without feeling a powerful desire to go and rejoin them at the earliest opportunity, in order to accomplish a task which I regarded as sacred. Hence I made up my mind to depart once more, and accordingly I left France on the 7th of March, 1851. My departure was a mournful one; the voyage was fated to prove a chapter of accidents.

I was on board the Franklin, which was about to make her first or second trip. We first called at Cowes, where we expected a visit from the Queen of England, who was anxious to see this beautiful vessel, and the next morning we were sailing on the "ocean wave." The wind whistled shrill and violent through the rigging; the waves, mountain high, buffeted us in such a manner that it was impossible either to sit or stand; and suddenly the storm gives way to a tempest. The billows break over the deck, and sweep clean away whatever they encounter; the masts crash; the paddles of the wheels are broken to pieces; the forecastle falls in. Every aperture on deck is carefully closed, yet we have fourteen feet of water in the hold! All along I continued to read in my overflooded cabin, while I heard above the din of the tempest, the oaths of the seamen, the cries, the prayers, or the wailings of the passengers. During the forty-eight hours that this tempest raged, I felt as if every moment would be my last.

On the seventh day of our voyage, the wind abated somewhat, and I ventured on deck. It was covered over with ice, and immense icicles of dazzling brilliance hung from the spars and the paddle-box. The carpenter of the *Franklin*, suspended over the deep by means of ropes, was repairing the damage. In the evening we observed huge icebergs floating as the currents bore them. On the banks of Newfoundland the sea was covered over with millions of sea-birds gracefully poising themselves on the waves; and at last we arrived at Hudson's Bay, which is truly magnificent. The heavens were serene, the sun genially warm, the sea calm and mirror-like, without a breeze to ripple its surface. At our ease we gazed in admiration on the enchanting shore of this bay, one of the most beautiful in the world, as it is ornamented with pretty little towns coquettish in their beauty, elegant and graceful country residences scattered over the green and blue rising grounds of Long Island and New Jersey.

Lake Erie being frozen over, I was obliged to make a stay of fifteen days at New York. I afterwards embarked in one of the monster steamers that ply on the Hudson as far as Albany. Thanks to a spirited sailing match we made this distance—about 156 miles—in a few hours, and for the trifling sum of one piastre. The two contending boats weighed anchor at the same moment, and set out in a spirit of proud rivalry. We sailed twenty-five, at times twenty-seven, miles an hour; and yet our captain, not quite satisfied with this speed, had casks of oil and grease thrown into the furnace. The fire seized the vessel twice. At forks of the river the rival boats endeavoured to cut clear a-head in order to shorten their way, and in this manœuvre they often became en-

tangled, with the danger of both going to the bottom, while there were from seven to eight hundred passengers on board. The contest was becoming quite a serious matter, and our lives were in jeopardy at once from smoke, fire and water. We hold a hurried meeting, discuss the crisis, and send a deputation to the captain, praying him to desist from this dangerous course. He replied with Jack-tar-American politeness:—

"You be d—d; for what you pay, you may as well all go to h—ll." At the same time he bawls out to the fireman, "Fire—fire, you there— more lard in the furnace." Our position had become truly fearful, when one of the passengers put an end to it by levelling a musket at the poor helmsman of our rival, and discharging its contents into his body. The poor fellow let go the wheel and dropped down frightfully wounded.

Arrived at Albany, I took the train to Buffalo, having run these 345 miles in twelve hours, but not without accident. The train that preceded us had got off the rails, and the way not being yet clear at the scene of the disaster, despite all the efforts of the engineer, we drove into a carriage on the line and had three of our company severely injured. At Buffalo, notwithstanding a violent gale that threatened a tempest on the lake, I embarked for Sandusky, where we arrived after a horrible passage of forty-eight hours and having twice struck on the sand-banks. All along the passengers held themselves ready, provided with a chair or some kind of life-buoy, expecting every moment to be hurled into the lake. From Sandusky to Cincinnati—a distance of 225 miles—I travelled by rail. Perhaps in the United States there is no other line more varied or picturesque in its scenery. When I was at Cincinnati,

the wife of the first colonist who cleared those charming undulating tracts was still to be seen there. It is certainly one of the handsomest cities of the United States, and the Germans have made it one of the richest. The vine produces there a very good quality of grape; and it is the only part of the United States where the tree is extensively cultivated.

We went down the Ohio in a magnificent steamer; and two days after our departure we came into collision with a vessel going up the river. She went down at once; but we succeeded in saving sixteen of her passengers. It was in April, and the weather was heavy, forcing one into a musing mood, with its chilling cheerless blasts murmuring as they came. I got on deck, and threw myself down before the pilot's cabin, preferring this icy solitude on deck to the stunning talk of the saloon, where the passengers blistered their tongues with eternal gossip about huge stoves that gave out more smoke than heat. By degrees I saw unfolding itself before me one of those panoramas of wild and primal beauty that has always for me a charm, new though melancholy.

Beautiful hillocks encircled with trees, and uniform in their proportions, lined the banks of the Ohio, forming a double range of vast and monotonous undulations, which, like monster embankments, confined the stream to a narrower bed and set bounds to its course. The yellowish waters of the river rolled along slowly, and wound round here and there into a thousand graceful forms. A scarcely perceptible down of early verdure graced the tops of the trees which nature had scattered over these hillocks in such profusion. You would have imagined them two armies of giants encamped in an antediluvian

valley. Here and there you observed, either on the Kentucky or the Ohio side, certain cleared spots, planted with the germs of some future American towns; you distinguished houses of wood or of brick, separate or in groups, on each side of one or more dirty streets, in which a multitude of hogs wallowed in the luxury of mire. The sight of these few houses, red or white as they were, resting on the river's bank and waiting for a destiny, for a future, made me sad. However, these embryos of cities, these miniature germs of cities in the distance of time, are mutually connected by a *cordon* of huts made of planks or blocks of trees, and present considerable interest from their very situation. In presence of these diversified pictures of nature and of man my imagination roved away in the regions of an undefined melancholy—for in America, as everywhere else, I found man blotting out the sublime poetic creations of primitive nature to make room for the prosy work of speculation, which, whatever may be its commercial usefulness, will be ever, for the intelligent traveller and tourist, a winding-sheet of ice thrown over those delicious thoughts that spring from the sublime scenes of solitary nature.

I remained several hours reclined, indulging in my reveries: when I thought of going below, the sun had already sunk behind the rising grounds; the branches of the trees and their slight tufts of verdure stood out in relief against the green-blue sky like summer clouds; the river grew broader, forming itself into a large lake, of a dark hue and gradually of a shapeless outline; a graceful island was espied in the middle of the river on the verge of the horizon; a light white vapour, resembling a scarf of delicate gauze, enveloped the distant island in its unsubstantial folds; and, as it rose above the trees, it reflected,

in a mysterious manner, the golden hues of the setting sun. This freak of nature had just added a new feeling to that chaos of diversified impressions which, for the last few hours, had brought into play all the poetic chords of my soul. Meanwhile it was piercingly cold, and while eye and imagination roamed abroad, my teeth chattered, and yet I felt not that I was chilled and frozen.

On entering the saloon I saw my fellow-travellers gathered round an Episcopalian bishop, who was developing a rather singular thesis: he was attempting to prove that as there is no water in the moon there can be no men there; for men cannot live without water. I would have asked him to prove that there was no water in the moon, but I feared my demand would be deemed out of place by the preacher—I say *preacher*, for his eloquence took quite the shape of a sermon. After him two Presbyterian ministers preached on the inferiority of the Indian races to the whites, and on the impossibility of bringing the former within the pale of civilisation. These two had resided in one of the American forts on the Red River, and had seized the opportunity of preaching to some of the Indians who came to demand payment for their ceded territory. It is well known that the American Government has driven some of the Indian tribes from their lands allowing them, in consideration, some wretched annual pittance. This brace of ministers told us that the Indians were brutalised by their indulgence in alcoholic drinks, and that the gospel had no salutary influence on their lives.

In proof of their assertion they related that they themselves were witnesses to some payments made them by the American Government, for which these naked savages, instead of buying clothes, procured umbrellas, hats, and

eau-de-vie. When a Protestant minister is on board a steamer he rarely escapes being asked to preach, no matter what about. These casual sermons no doubt entertain the passengers, but they are devoid at once of solid interest and moral effect.

According as we were making progress down the river we were passing, too, apace from winter to spring-time; the trees were putting on their mantle of green and the shrubs bedecking themselves with flowers; the light downy tufts, scarcely presenting a shade of verdure on the Ohio banks, were changed along the Mississippi into a dense and fragrant foliage, while the temperature increased in proportion. Opposite Wicksburg about thirty trusses of hay, left by negligence near the furnace of the steamer, took fire; and to escape being roasted alive in the midst of water, we all ran to the pumps, and eventually mastered the flames.

Arrived at Louisiana I felt as if borne again to the burning life of the tropics; the poplars, the sycamores, the wild vine, the different plants were in all the pomp of vernal beauty, while the air was fragrant with the rich perfume of flower and forest, and yet it was only the month of April. At last, we arrived at New Orleans, but not having wherewithal to go to Texas, I returned to Lafourche, to collect among my friends. The kind Archbishop of New Orleans added so much to my store, that on the 5th of May I resumed my journey, and two days after, favoured by excellent weather, I arrived at Galveston. The Bishop of Galveston exchanged my mission at Castroville for a new one on the western frontiers of Texas, which are bounded by the Rio del Norte, commonly called the Rio Grande, which has its source at the base of the Sierra-Verde, and empties itself into the

Gulf of Mexico. This new destination put me about a good deal; for it not only separated me from my sterling friend and colleague the Abbé Dubuis, but it also shut me out completely from my old acquaintances. I did not relish solitude very much; for in these countries, more barbarian than civilised, it presented dangers and *ennuis* which, without the special aids of grace, the most iron will could not support. I pleaded my ignorance of Spanish, which is the language of the mass of the Catholics of these portions of the country; but I had to yield to the pious urgency of the venerable prelate, who promised to send me a co-operator at his earliest opportunity; and on the 4th of May I embarked in the teeth of a frightful tempest, which was nearly making short work of us all an hour after our departure. I confess that, being too well aware of the rickety state of our craft, the tempest had no great charms for me, especially as I had had already no small experience of its nature and workings. Hence the hoarse raging of the waves was to me quite monotonous.

On the first night we witnessed a scene, the burlesque of which can be more easily conceived than expressed. The steward of the steamer had fallen asleep on a sofa in the cabin, while a servant, having no bed to lie on stretched himself near the sofa, and was soon wrapped in a profound sleep. The storm that still continued to rage exercised, no doubt, a certain influence on the steward's dreams; for he dreamt that the craft was shattered by the tempest, and that he was cast among the waves, having no hope but in a plank which he spied just before his eyes, and which he seized and held to with all his might. At this moment a huge wave struck the boat a-starboard and flung us all clean out of our berths. The steward,

without awaking, fell plump on the servant, and imagining him the safety plank of his dream, grasped him by the neck, crying out at the same time, "Oh! thank God, I have hold of it—it shall not slip from me."

The servant, startled out of his sleep by this fearful gripe, cried out "Help! assassin!" Attracted by the cries of both combatants, we moved at once to the rescue of the assailed, but we left out of our calculations the heaving of the boat, which sent most of us bang down upon both the steward and the servant. To complete the confusion, in rushes a lady in a strange and disordered costume, all in tears, and alarmed out of her wits by the pelting storm. She flung herself at the feet of the steward, crying out, "Captain, Captain, save me—land me somewhere and I'll give you ten thousand piastres."

The steward, now quite restored to consciousness, laughed in his peculiar way, and observing the lady, briskly answered, "I'm not the captain; and as for the matter of that, why for all the gold in the world we could not put you ashore, for we are a good way off from land."

At last we arrived at Brazos Santiago. A stranger, unacquainted with the extension accorded to the word *town* in the United States, would be at a loss for a trace of one in a few wretched huts scattered along the shore. I think I have already observed that the coast of Texas is girt around, almost in its entire extent, by a string of various sandy islands, of very unequal length. The spaces between them are called bars, and the bays formed by them with the mainland are so shallow that vessels cannot land their passengers or cargoes except in boats and flat-bottomed craft. Brazos is

situated at the eastern extremity of one of these islands, and only four miles from the mouth of the Rio Grande. Besides the few huts already referred to, there are some large wooden structures, got up at the time of the Mexican war, as dépôts of the American army. These edifices are now abandoned ruins. In summer the heat is suffocating; the absence of trees or verdure, and the reflection of the sun's scorching heat from the sands, would make the place uninhabitable were there not a sea breeze morning and evening to temper the burning heat of the atmosphere.

A boat conveyed us from Brazos to Point Isabella, the nearest inland town in this quarter, and the entrepôt of goods coming from the United States, and destined for the frontiers of Texas and the interior of Mexico. It is just a similar place to Brazos, slovenly, sorry, and chiefly inhabited by Mexicans, whose huts are pitched without taste or order on the strand. You never fail to meet there a number of *arrieros*, or Mexican car drivers, whose huge vehicles drawn by oxen are waiting for goods to be conveyed to Brownsville. The region about Point Isabella has an elevation of some yards above the level of the bay, and forms an amphitheatre of sand and yellowish earth, which feeds at intervals a few tufts of grass and stunted brushwood, the prey of the scorching sun. Along the horizon the eye is relieved by no variety; all is a parched desert.

The passengers were provided with two vehicles drawn by four horses. Once seated we were off at a gallop. My next neighbour was the director of the bank at Brownsville, a native Mexican, by name Couthway. He was also a bit of a naturalist, a man of no common intelligence, as well as of distinguished mien and

manners, such, that I formed for him a sincere attachment during our passage from Galveston to Brazos. Though a zealous Episcopalian, and aware of my character as a Catholic missionary, he on his side formed for me a friendship proof against the changes of time and place. By his warm introductions he procured me a gratifying reception in the easy society of the frontiers; he spoke to all his friends and acquaintances of what he was pleased to call the liberality of my character, which was nothing more than common Christian charity, and the simple practice of the spirit of the gospel. Thus, let me confess it, this worthy friend smoothed down afterwards not a few difficulties that lay in my path, in securing for me the confidence and esteem of the bulk of the people with whom it was my destiny to be in daily contact.

The route from Isabella Point to Brownsville lies for some distance along the bay; then turning to the left it enters a vast marshy plain, indented with natural salt-pits, and often presenting the phenomenon of the mirage. This plain at its north-western extremity joins that of Palo-Alto, in which was fought the first battle between the Americans under General Taylor and the Mexicans commanded by General Arista. The success attending this first campaign of the Americans, which was of two years' duration, was owing, in a great measure, to their superior artillery. The high road runs through the middle of the battle field.

Leaving behind us the plain of Palo-Alto, we entered a thick-set brushwood, formerly frequented by the Indians, who butchered there a whole Irish family, the ruins of whose dwelling are still visible to the left of the road. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century this part of Texas was called Costa-Deserta by Spanish historians.

The Indians themselves never seemed to take to it much. We next passed by the Resaca De La Palma, equally remarkable for a bloody encounter, of which it was the scene on the day following that of Palo-Alto. The Mexicans give the name of Resaca to a dried-up bed of a river, and of such there is no small number along the bank of the Rio Grande. At last we arrived at Brownsville, my future place of residence.

During the war of intervention the American Colonel Brown constructed a fort in front of Matamocas, a Mexican town, where he fell, and lies in the fort which bears his name.

Around this dreaded tomb some French and American merchants settled down, as well as a number of Mexican families, and thus Brownsville was founded. At my arrival the town had been standing four years, and already did it reckon about five or six thousand in population, chiefly Mexicans.

The site of Brownsville is most favourable for transit commerce; situated on the extreme limits of Texas, it despatches goods to all the Mexican towns, north and east. It is situated in ninety-eight degrees (Greenwich) west longitude, and twenty-eight north latitude, about thirty-five miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The yellowish sandy waters of the Rio Grande wash, in their course, the gardens of the town and its amphitheatre-shaped quay. The soil consists of fine white sand, which, in north winds, rises in whirls so thick as to darken the atmosphere, and render all intercourse in the streets impossible. As a set-off the rain, which in these quarters falls suddenly in immense torrents, makes rivers of the streets, which foot-passengers, horses and cattle wade through without faltering. The vicinity is

fertile and the vegetation of tropical luxuriance. You meet with neither birch nor fir-tree, even the oak is rare, but in every direction rise the date tree, the fan-branch palm tree, the ebony, the aloe, the Cocus Mauritia, the colossal fern, the cactus of every denomination. The woods abound with wild vines and odoriferous plants, countless flowers of countless brilliant colours, forms, and enchanting perfumes, and over this rich fecundity of earth expands a sky without speck, a sun cloudless and glorious.

The church of Brownsville rose opposite Brown's fort, in the midst of a wild, uncultivated, unenclosed country. It was of wood, and could accommodate about three hundred people. The belfry was not unlike a cage surmounted by a cross. I contrived, after a time, to cover the shapelessness of the walls and all the inside with certain paintings on cotton. The presbytery formed part of the building, which consisted of a square structure of four chambers, one being the sacristy; but there was not even a particle of furniture in it; and hence the first night I was happy to sleep on the boards. Next day a young officer of the garrison gave me a settee bed, bed linen, blankets and a few chairs, offering me also his table and his purse. I really had need of these kind offers, being almost penniless at the time, and I therefore gratefully accepted them. Without them I hardly know how I could have settled down in my destitution. This good officer's name was M. Garresché, a Frenchman by birth, and an excellent Catholic.

The aspect of the city is pleasing enough. The greater part of the houses are made of brick, but well-shaped and surrounded with gardens. Along the thoroughfares it is protected by façades, which are half hidden

from view by Chinese lilac, willows and acacias, which give at once shade and perfume to the houses. The streets are wide, and at right angles, though they were not so at all times. In the beginning, each colonist and merchant fixed his hut wherever he liked. As the town developed itself, the necessity of a municipal organisation became manifest, and its action was inaugurated by an ordinance relative to the proper direction of the streets. The sheriff, who was quite a practical man, though a downright brute and knew no compromise, — of whom by-and-bye — was charged with the execution of the decree. He proclaimed that within the space of eight days every house should be on the line drawn by the surveyor-general, and that all those that were not promptly changed must be taken down forthwith. All knew what kind of man the sheriff was, and that his menace was no vain parade; hence during the week all the houses were one great wreck, some receding, others projecting, as the sheriff's tape directed.

The ground was sandy and irregular, so that every moment houses going in opposite directions came into collision. Thus obstructed in their course several encountered on the same point, and the general circulation being thus obstructed, and the sheriff being no joker when things were not up to time, angry cries, disputes, and serious encounters became the unhappy consequence. Nearly all the wooden houses were in line on the appointed day; but as to the reed and branch huts, there they had to stand, the prey of about twenty merciless hatchets, under the orders of the sheriff.

My new mission was of large extent. All around Brownsville swept by a radius of 60 miles, the popula-

tion was very dense, and for about three hundred miles northward numerous towns succeeded each other on the banks of the Rio Grande, as well as several establishments which it was my duty to visit. I was not obliged to diverge much from the river, but for a long way I had to ascend its course. Unlike my former mission its Catholic population did not consist chiefly of Germans and Alsacians. Mexicans were my principal charge, they forming the mass of the population, while the territory had been lately annexed to the United States.

In my first mission the vices that Abbé Dubuis and myself had chiefly to encounter were avarice, roguery, and drunkenness. In the second, I stood single-handed against ignorance, superstition, indifference and immorality. True, indigence was no longer my inseparable associate, but the vices and the incurable indifference of my flock were enough to break my heart. Besides I was completely ignorant of Spanish, which was indispensable to my success.

Notwithstanding this latter inconvenience I set about my reconnoitring visits the day after my arrival, and my reception was, throughout, warm and cordial. The truth is, the arrival of a priest is quite an event in these quarters; and let me add, Mr. Couthway's good offices had their full share in procuring for me this hearty reception. Catholics, Protestants and Jews, all alike bade me a kindly welcome, and offered their best services. By these friendly demonstrations I did not allow myself to be blinded to the fact that such are for the most part of a personal nature, and go as easily as they come, the moment the man gives way to the priest. Nevertheless I accepted these marks of kindly interest

with satisfaction, and promised to avail myself of them when occasion required.

The great bulk of my parishioners had no idea of the devotedness of the missionaries, or of the great motive power that impels them on. It is true that with men who only value and seek out here below the possession of money, as a means of procuring the mere animal enjoyments of life, the heart and soul are closed to those moral and intellectual sentiments so full of secret, mysterious joy. The apostolic life, with all its sacrifices, sufferings and devotedness, is a book shut up from them; and thus they could not realise how I had a second time travelled over a space of nine thousand miles, exposed to every peril and fatigue, for the sole purpose of improving their lives, and instructing them in their religious duties.

So much trouble, they thought, was poorly repaid in the object. Many among them who, for reasons I know not, at once displayed a sympathy for me, and with a certain interest would inquire: "But what have you done to be sent here?"

"No one has sent me; I have come of my own accord."

"What! you have not been obliged to quit France for some grave reasons?"

"For no reason in life, except to instruct you. If a priest acts wrong, the church strips him of the power to exercise his ecclesiastical functions, but she sends him nowhere."

"Then you have come here as soldiers go to war, for advancement, and to become a bishop?"

"It is the last of my thoughts. The episcopate is too heavy a load, and too dangerous a charge to be the object of my ambition, and good priests never seek or desire it."

Then, as did the disciples of Jesus Christ, they shook their heads as a mark of incredulity, and thought within them, "This language is hard to be understood."

By means of those visits I obtained valuable information respecting the country and its inhabitants, and was soon settled down in the business of my mission; but, alas! affairs were far from presenting the colour of the rose. I frankly avow that I felt alarm at the task before me. How much labour would it cost me to implant in these souls, I do not say the very elements of religion, but even a sense of order, reason and morality! Still I was aware of how gentle, gracious, and open to persuasion, were the Mexican people, and I entered on my task with courage, knowing that heaven would not fail to send its powerful aids, and that even in the event of failure, the Master whom I served would take into good account my efforts and my labour.

CHAP. II.

THE BARILLEROS. — THE BAR-ROOM. — FERVOUR OF BROWNSVILLE PEOPLE. — STATE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY IN GENERAL, AND OF TEXIAN IN PARTICULAR. — APPLICATION OF LYNCH-LAW. — EXECUTION. — MORALITY OF THE CIVIC AUTHORITIES. — THE SHERIFF. — TWO BLOODHOUNDS AS KEEPERS OF THE PRISON. — THE FREE-MASONS, AND THE BURIAL OF AN IRISHMAN. — THE MAGISTRACY IN THE NEW STATES OF THE UNION. — PARTIALITY OF THE JUDGES. — LAW PROCEEDINGS. — ELECTIONS. — A FASHIONABLE DOCTOR.

In paying my visits I was struck with the animation of Brownsville. I was made to understand that this was due to a number of Rancheros, or frontier farmers, who came in every day, either on horseback or in carts, to buy provisions and make other purchases for themselves, their families, and their friends. The streets were sadly cut up by the constant tread of horsemen, richly mounted indeed; by the *Arrieros*, who loaded and unloaded their goods; by the *Barilleros*, called elsewhere *aguaderos*, or water-carriers. These poor fellows dress almost like the Lazzaroni of Naples. A shirt open in front and exposing the chest, with the sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, cotton drawers turned up above the knees, and sometimes a hat made of palm branches, make up the entire wardrobe of the Barilleros. It is they who furnish the inhabitants with water, bringing it from the Rio Grande in casks having two axles attached to their ends. To these axles is fitted a cord, by which the Barilleros draw the casks like rollers

without much fatigue or inconvenience, to escape which the Mexican seldom fails in ingenuity.

I likewise remarked a great number of people drunk, sprawling asleep in the sun before the grog-shops where they get intoxicated. These taverns, called *bar-rooms*, are often the theatre of scenes that disgrace human nature. On one occasion, an Irishman of a respectable family fell foul of an American merchant naturally of a quarrelsome temper. The friends on both sides decided that recourse to arms could alone make amends for the offence. A duel was at once decided upon, and took place in the very tavern. The Irishman got a pistol not charged, and of course fell. Such is their notion of fair play in America.

The greater number of those I saw drunk were Mexicans who are not much accustomed to spirituous drinks, and Americans belonging to the temperance societies. These societies, though numerous in the States, are far from reducing the number of drunkards; for though their members promise to abstain from wine, they nevertheless indulge in other fermented liquors.

The news of my arrival soon spread among the ranchos around Brownsville; and reckoning upon a large auditory on the following Sunday, I got my letter of appointment translated into Spanish, adding a few words of invitation to my parishioners to come and see me, that I might thus the sooner learn the spiritual wants of their different localities. In reality the church was crowded with Mexicans, Europeans, and Americans, of every shade of religion. The reading of my letter gave them satisfaction, and from that day forth I had numerous visits. During the week, M. and Madame Garreschè were the only ones who visited the church.

The fervour of the Catholics did not go quite so far; but I rang the mass bell, said it, and served it for the most part alone. To try how far religious ceremonies might attract the people, I organised, in a hurried way, a kind of choir, and endeavoured to celebrate the month of May with the ceremonies usual in France. May being nearly ended, my success was very poor; for out of a population containing about ten or twelve thousand, in the neighbourhood of Brownsville, only twenty-five celebrated the communion.

At Brownsville, as well as along all the frontiers of Texas, and I may say the entire extent of this vast State, and in all the new States of the Union, the population presents the oddest and most heterogeneous medley to be met with in the United States. American society almost defies analysis or description,—so changeful are its features, so diversified its character. Hence it is little known. Novelists and historians have sketched it, but always insufficiently; for to present a perfect likeness of a society so unstable and diversified would be quite impossible. For a certain time in the same locality the picture might hold; change time and place, and it ceases to be a likeness.

Not to speak of the vast regions themselves, at every point so different in aspect, in climate, in productions, in interest, and in internal government, crowds of European emigrants scatter themselves every year all over the Union, already a confused mixture of all nations — Spaniards, Anglo-Saxons, French, Mexicans. The Americans, strictly so called, are so unlike each other in their education, tastes, and ideas, that you would never take them for the same people; so that, to comprehend these singular anomalies,

you must bear in mind the constitution of these colonies before the era of their independence. On one side individuals remarkable for their acquirements, intelligence, and upright character, who would shine in the brightest European circles, are met with; others so depraved that our very galleys could hardly supply their equals in crime, or criminal history, monsters more hideous. Between these extremes, there are to be met with qualities and vices which supply the pen of the historian with curious details, and develope themselves by public and singular acts, not alone in the grand political party questions, but in the minor and local ones of general and civic administration.

The Americans of the Texian frontiers are, for the most part, the very scum of society — bankrupts, escaped criminals, old volunteers, who after the treaty of Guadulupe Hidalgo, came into a country protected by nothing that could be called a judicial authority, to seek adventure and illicit gains. The great towns of the Union have some kind of police, but along the frontiers of the new States the law has little sway. It is evaded or resisted, and there is no armed force to make it respected.

Before the municipal organisation of Brownsville, Lynch-law was in full force. The inhabitants were obliged to have recourse to this extremity as the only means of providing for their own safety. The judgments of the people, no doubt, had the merit of impartiality in the punishment of the guilty; but they had the one great fault of precipitation, a man being hung for inflicting a wound, without any inquiry whether the wound was serious or otherwise.

One evening, during a fandango, an American who

was half drunk, quarrelled with a Mexican, drew him out of the dance, and stabbed him in the abdomen. The Mexican cried murder, and, besmeared with blood, crawled as far as the ball-room door. At sight of this unfortunate sufferer, the dancers set off in pursuit of the American, who had run towards the Rio Grande in the hope of escaping by swimming across it. But he was too late. He was arrested as he was on the point of flinging himself into the river, and, well handcuffed, he was confined in a wooden hut, under strict vigilance during the night. Next morning, the people were summoned with sound of trumpet to pronounce sentence. One man (the future sheriff) stepped aside a little, and without judicial charge or display of oratory shouted, "Let those who vote for his death step this way. Let the rest remain as they are." This laconic, savage address was received with a stunning hurrah! and the prisoner was condemned to death! The crowd proceeded at once to the prisoner, whom they placed on a cart, and the crowd moved on to the shambles, no gallows as yet being erected. This place, infected with the blood and remains of slaughtered animals, was a small space, without roof or shade, roasted by the sun, and the resort of dogs which fought for the bones of the animals. It was situated near the church. The cart stopped beneath the posts that were used to hang up the slaughtered oxen. The future sheriff seized the cord, and set about making the fatal noose; but it would seem that he was doing the thing unhandily, for the culprit, whose hands were now set free, said to him, "Let me do it. You don't know your business." And seizing the rope, he tied the knot, and put it round his own neck. Having done so, he thus addressed the crowd:

"Good sirs, listen to wholesome advice. If you wish never to have the rope about your necks, don't get drunk. It is drunkenness that has put me into this cart. Now I have a last favour to ask of you. Do not put my name in the papers, that my mother may remain as long as possible ignorant of her son's fate." After these few words, which made a deep impression on the crowd, he cried to the horses to move on, and in an instant his body hung from the posts, where it remained suspended in mid-air for a few minutes; and the Mexican who had been stabbed, died early on the following day.

Subsequently these executions, which had become of very frequent occurrence, assumed a more solemn character—a minister of religion being present to assist the criminal. Still barbarism did not divest itself of all its rights. One day I witnessed the execution of three at the same time, two Mexicans and an American. The latter in a mock-fight had fired his revolver at his adversary, while some one behind him attempted to seize his arm, but the trigger was pulled, and the ball struck one of the assistants. The day of the execution the friends of the American, to soothe the pain of his last moments, made the unfortunate man drunk, and he walked to the scaffold staggering, humming a ditty, with a cigar in his mouth, and accompanied by a Presbyterian minister, a Catholic priest assisting the Mexicans. The ropes being arranged and the criminals placed on the fatal board, the Catholic priest knelt down and begged the crowd to pray for those who were about to suffer. The prayer over, the Presbyterian minister made a long discourse, during which the criminals had to wait in suspense before being launched into eternity. I could never endure those

horrid tortures of soul, and always contented myself with accompanying the criminals to the place of execution, exhorting them on the way with all my strength to die like true Christians.

In Europe these judicial procedures of Mexico will, no doubt, be judged with severity; nevertheless, the habits of the people are so very different from ours, that what we judge harsh and cruel, they often regard as perfectly humane. What shocks our usages, our reason, and sentiments, seems sometimes, in the solitudes of the new world, not only quite natural but indispensable; for the requirements of these solitudes are in proportion to their civilisation.

On the frontiers of Texas, where human life is little valued, the inhabitants have little personal protection except in their arms. Hence they always go armed. To put down those evil-doers who would not submit to the regular organisation of justice, the inhabitants did not hesitate to entrust the execution of this expeditious code to officers of the halter, whose antecedents were of a nature to strike terror into the most intractable. But were those that deserved it most brought to the gibbet, the very functionaries would be the first, and they would be followed by a goodly number of judges, barristers, and doctors, headed by the sheriff himself.

This was a man of immense stature and of Herculean proportions. His expressionless features bore the impress of cruelty. He carried at his waist a six-barrel revolver, and in his hand a cow-hide lash, making frequent use of both. Whenever he went in pursuit of any malefactor it was not certain that he would bring back his prey; but it was improbable that the prey would ever return out of his company. One day that

he gave chase to a robber, the plundered dealer inquired on his return if he had found his man.

"Yes," the sheriff coolly answered; "I could not fetch him back, but it is all the same—he'll steal no more."

Soon afterwards the robber's body was discovered in a chaparal with a ball in his heart, and half covered with shrubs and moss. Honest folks could not find a more energetic officer of justice. As we have seen, the sheriff made no secret of his exploits, which were notorious, and every succeeding week revealed new feats of this kind, which, true or false, served to increase his reputation and render him more terrible to the evil-doers.

The prison of Brownsville was a small plank cabin, erected opposite the church, and surrounded by a hedge of briars. Though all the prisoners were chained down, many broke their bonds, and escapes were of no rare occurrence. To diminish their frequency the sheriff intrusted the prison-gate to the keeping of two blood-hounds of the bull-dog breed, of proverbial ferocity, such as chase the negroes, and were employed by the Americans against the Indians and in the war of Florida.

Several times as I was returning from attendance on the sick, and passing in front of the prison, these dogs would bound over the hedge in pursuit of me, and I owed my escapes to my fleetness alone. I went to wait on the sheriff to inform him of the constant danger I ran from his dogs, and I begged him to have them chained at night, or at least to prevent them from getting into the streets. He laughed heartily at my complaint. Then I observed—

"My dear Sheriff, I will run no more risks; when next your dogs attack me, I will kill them. When

my path is crossed by a tarantula or a serpent which attempts to bite me, I make no scruple of crushing it at once. You are therefore warned."—"Eh! eh! indeed."

And he retired with a somewhat incredulous and defiant air. The opportunity to prove that I spoke quite seriously was not slow in coming. A few days after, I was called at about eleven o'clock at night to the bedside of a dying man. I went with my pistol, as usual, in my pocket, and my life-preserver (*assommoir*) in my hand, prepared for any contingency. Passing close to the prison I saw the dogs clearing over the shrubbery hedge, and making towards me; but I was quite resolved to make short work of it with them, and splendid moonlight enabled me to take aim. In two seconds, I broke the skull of one and the jawbone of the other, which slunk away yelling horribly. Now at rest as to the consequences of my nocturnal journeys, I proceeded to visit the dying man, satisfied that on my return I no longer ran the risk of being torn to pieces. Next day the sheriff came to my house, in a great fury, with the whip in his hand, perhaps resolved to make goodly use of it. But I watched him closely, for I expected the visit.

"It was you killed my dogs," he said.

"Yes," I coolly replied; "you had your warning, which you disregarded—you only laughed at it; and, as the proverb says, 'I would rather kill the d—l than be killed by him.'"

His rage now knew no bounds. He raised his whip to belabour me, but instantly snatching my pistol from my pocket, I put the muzzle of it to his breast, and coolly said, "Sheriff, I am no Mexican; and if you value your life treat me as a gentleman."

My determination had its full effect. He became pale as death, his lash fell from his hand, his anger ceased, and he made an attempt to smile.

"Come, Sheriff," I observed, "give me your hand; let us be friends."—"With all my heart!" he replied, and with that he gave me a vigorous shake of the hands. "Ah! you are a man—I am quite pleased with you. Should any one fail to treat you with due respect, he shall have to do with me, rest assured of that. 'Sdeath, *diable*, man!" he then exclaimed, with a rather comical and half-serious air, "you are more determined than I thought. Before picking a quarrel with you, a man should take his measures of precaution." "Ah! my dear sir," I replied in the same tone, "your courage, *entre nous*, is mighty great before cowards; but as you value your personal safety, do not rank me in that category, as, when there is question of my honour and of my rights as citizen and minister of religion, be assured of it I shall never be intimidated by any man; and to be treated with true respect I shall ever have a firm hand and an unblenching eye."

The sheriff kept his word; and from this day forward he showed himself a stanch friend to me.

The Americans, in order to have strangers bow to their good pleasure, do not hesitate to have recourse to violence. But they yield with as much readiness the moment that their menaces, impotent to frighten, are met with energy of language and attitude.

Let me illustrate this by another personal example. An old Irishman, who lived in the United States with his only daughter, came to Texas to dispose of some land that belonged to him on the banks of the Rio Grande. Having realised two or three thousand dollars by the sale,

he was preparing to return to the United States when he fell ill at Brownsville, and died in the course of a few days. Before his death, one of his nephews apprised me of his illness and begged of me to visit him. I instantly complied. The dying man was a Freemason, but, anxious to receive the consolations of religion, he renounced his Freemasonry before two witnesses, and received the last sacraments. The nephew observing that the pretended friends of his uncle were not quitting his bedside — the money was in the Irishman's trunk — remained near the corpse. But under pretence that he gave himself up to drink he was thrown into prison and loaded with irons. The same day four of the principal personages of the town and the heads of the Masonic Lodge came to me and said, the deceased having been a Catholic, they were anxious that I should perform the burial service with all due pomp, considering his wealth, and that the entire Lodge, with its *insignia*, would assist at the ceremony. Having no wish to discuss a question of profane interest that nowise concerned me, I replied that I was ready to impart all due solemnity to the service under the circumstances, but that I could not admit the Lodge into my church, if they bore the emblems of a society condemned by the Canons of the Church. I added, too, that this demonstration of the Lodge was neither consistent nor becoming, as the deceased had renounced Freemasonry in the presence of witnesses. But those gentlemen answered that they were the only competent judges of what was becoming in this business, and that, freely or by force, they would have the burial according to their belief. Seeing the conversation assumed the form of menace, I replied in a similar tone.

"You are aware, gentlemen, from the history of

the sheriff and his dogs, that I will not be bullied; I am master in my own house; the church is my domain, and not public property; no one can enter it against my will; in matters of right and duty, I shall never yield, especially to force; and take my word for it, that no Freemason with his emblems shall enter into the church: he or I shall fall in the attempt. I know the ways of the country too well to be ignorant, that the day I should waver in the discharge of my duty would be only the first of a series of insults and outrages to myself; and I respect my coat too much to dishonour it by mean or cowardly conduct."

"But what is to be done then?" they replied, in a milder tone. — "Listen to me. I only see two means of accomplishing your wishes in accordance with ecclesiastical discipline; and rest assured that I do not act from caprice, but from a sense of duty. Were I to yield to your demands, I might possibly secure your friendship. In any case, I would have the remuneration attendant on this ceremony, while, in refusing, I make for myself enemies of the most influential persons of the town, and deprive myself of a pecuniary aid which would not come amiss. Now, then, let this be your course. Come to the church without the badges of your society, and I shall allow you in; for I am not bound to inquire into personal character before admission into the temple. Satan himself might come, were he so minded, as I am not obliged to know his features in order to keep him out. Should this expedient not meet with your approval, you can go in procession in due time from the corpse-house to the cemetery, where I shall be present also to bless the

grave. Thus I shall have satisfied my conscience, and the deceased will not be deprived of the prayers of the Church." This last expedient was adopted as the most conciliatory, and we parted friends as before.

In the United States, as in Europe, every man is at liberty to choose what profession he will; but examinations, diplomas, and certificates of capability are things unknown there. Each one can at any moment abandon commerce to become judge, physician, barrister, statesman, or even minister of religion. If his new profession is not lucrative enough, or fails in its charms, he abandons it for another; and sometimes he is engaged in several at the same time, especially in the new States of the Union. The consequence is that the judges, barristers, physicians, representatives, and ministers of religion, are for the most part incredibly ignorant. When they enter on their functions they study, as they can, some easy elementary work on their duties, and then imagine themselves thoroughly instructed, an illusion far more dangerous than simple ignorance. Thus, those who have to place themselves in such hands for any business whatever, do so only at their imminent peril.

The magistracy is far from giving adequate guarantees for the security of the public; and in criminal matters it is barefaced as it is revolting. Let the criminal be an American, and though he were the worst ruffian in the town he is let off scot-free, with a mere promise to pay a sum of money, which of course he never pays. Should the crime be of too glaring a nature to escape punishment, the perpetrator, be he robber or murderer, gets off with imprisonment, a mockery in its duration;

and he is often enabled to evade all punishment by leaving the town which has been the theatre of his crime. This shameless partiality of the American judges is the best justification of Lynch-law. And hence this Draconian code is in full force in all the new States of the Union. As to Germans, Irish, and Mexicans, the civil law is enforced in their cases with all its rigour. Even frequently, where the crime remained to be proved, they would in the first instance be thrown into prison in irons, there to await their sentence, or rather their condemnation, in which the sentence most generally is terminated.

Towards the Irish and Mexicans excessive rigour used to be employed, savouring glaringly of bigotry and religious hate, which required no stimulus in a sentiment of cowardly cruelty towards the weak, by whom retaliation was impossible. I saw at Brownsville Mexicans whom the sheriff was flogging to death with his ox-hide lash. They were bound, half-naked, their arms extended across the prison door, and then scourged on the sides and loins with the most brutal violence. To save the expense of their support, pending sentence, they were not sent to prison, but were sent back untried, having their frames lacerated with stripes. Some died from the effects of these barbarities.

I could never comprehend the Mexican's submission, supporting, as he did, at once the cruelty and the contempt of a nation which he sovereignly detested, had I not been so often the witness of his incredible *nonchalance* and imperturbable meekness. In these badly-organised regions, the Mexican might have an easy vengeance on his persecutors, who are quite the minority on the Texian frontiers; but vengeance is not in his heart; he would

rather forget an injury than take the trouble of avenging it.

Still there is no lack of courts of justice. Some are stationary and periodical in their sessions; others are itinerant, and courts of appeal. Every village, yclept town, has its magistrates for civil and criminal cases. Over them is a more important tribunal, which despatches annually a Judge of Appeal to the principal places of the country of Texas. The man that came to Brownsville was a large handsome Yankee, neither over unpolite nor unreasonable. He even decided equitably enough in the rare moments of his sobriety. I met him one day, in a tavern, surrounded by Americans, who were bidding him welcome, glass in hand, and I heard him propose the following toast in a thick voice:—"To justice modified by circumstances." The maudlin auditors hailed the words with raptures of applause. After this successful feat he went, as best he could, to dispense "justice modified by circumstances."

From judges of this stamp, people can hardly expect "*Just Justice*," and hence they dispense it for themselves. When drunkenness is the only defect of a judge, you may hope, according to the adage "*In vino veritas*," that out of many sentences, some few may be fair, and yours among the number. But when to drunkenness is added ignorance of the law, of the nature of a contract, of the general rules on which property and society itself rest secure; and when to drunkenness and this ignorance too, is further added venality, fear of the strong hand, and party feeling, then it is only a Mexican, a simpleton, or a coward, that would appeal to law for justice. The Americans, and the Europeans who know how things stand in these still savage regions, dispense with magis-

trates; and the dispensers of justice never interfere in the disputes of such people, knowing well the consequence of their intermeddling.

Property questions were in Brownsville, as in the greater part of Texas, the prolific source of quarrels and litigation. In Texas, and especially towards the frontiers, when you wish to acquire a territory, the simplest and shortest method is to select one at will near some river or water-course, and then to install yourself without further formality. You can take chance for the right of prescription afterwards. The greater part of the Kentucky Americans, and of those of the Eastern parts who have established themselves in Texas, are proprietors by no other right. If need be, the pistol, the carbine, and the bowie-knife establish the right.

The title of first occupier has an irresistible value in these countries. It cannot be denied, however, that an incontestable title is a thing to be found with the greatest difficulty. Those of Spanish origin are reckoned the safest; yet do they too fail to be respected. After the annexation of Texas to the United States, speculators furnished themselves with Spanish titles, true or forged as they might be, to dispose of, both in Europe and in the United States, immense tracts of land that they had never seen, and which had been already long occupied. Besides this, the American government distributed three hundred and twenty acres of land to emigrants, and six hundred and forty to school-masters, ministers of religion, and married colonists, established in Texas before 1847. After the Mexican war, it made a new distribution to volunteers and soldiers: but, as the registries of the civil administration had been kept very negligently, it happened that among the lands thus distributed, and

considered as free, no small share had already its legitimate possessors, and others were uninhabitable from their situation. Then the new arrivals spread around the country, settling down wherever they pleased; and hence multitudes of law suits, so confused and interminable, were left to the discretion of judges who decided rather according to the persons of the litigants than to the justice of the cause.

Viewing the manner in which the Texian judges are elected, we cannot be surprised that impartiality is not considered by them a duty. Towards the close of my residence, an important case occurred, and made much noise. It was nothing less than to know whose was the site of the town. This case was to be heard after the election of the new judges. The validity of title was quite a secondary consideration in an affair of such importance; all depended on the number of voters in favour of one or other of the canvassing parties. Hence no means were left untried on each side to obtain votes; and we witnessed a renewal of those singular and tragi-comic scenes that stir up the population of the United States on occasions of important elections. Liberty in voting is, however, recognised in the new as in the older States, but everywhere is it rendered null and a sham, by force, intimidation and corruption.

Tables are placed in the streets, garnished with bottles, full of whiskey, which is liberally distributed to such as take a ticket bearing the name of a certain candidate. Those who had formed no opinion, drank freely in both camps. Both sides had their colours, one red, the other blue, and no man was without his colour either on his hat or in his button-hole. The horses and the dogs bore their colours also, the former on their manes, the latter on their

tails. Even Mexicans who took no interest in either side, and had merely come on commercial business, were supplied with the party colours. Things were carried so far that a supply of palm-leaf hats was procured, decorated with the distinguishing hues, and given gratis to such as accepted the tickets. Then came the processions, red and blue; and now the question was which party would have the longest and most splendid *cortége*. As a natural consequence, you might meet every evening in the streets numbers of electors drunk and battered; and not rarely might you recognise among their number the future magistrates for whom so much fuss was made, and so many bottles emptied.

Medical science is not much better represented in the United States than the magistracy. The doctor most in vogue in Brownsville was a Yankee, who in the time of the Mexican war had to perform the amputation of a leg. He knew not how to set about the matter, neither had he any surgical instruments, wherefore he got a butcher's saw, and with horrible skill began to saw this leg as he would a fagot of wood, though he had never even assisted at an amputation. The patient expired in the middle of this torturing operation. When Brownsville was founded, this doctor thought it desirable to become porter—a lucrative but tiresome occupation; but he soon returned to pestle and mortar. He killed so many, and so quickly too, that he had again to renounce his profession; and yet by force of intrigue and audacity, he got himself named representative to the Congress of Austin. The session at an end, he returns to Brownsville, and, unable to vanquish his fatal *penchant* for his early occupation, he becomes doctor again, after conning over some treatises on medicine. His therapeutic acquirements were of such an order, that for a woman who died of consumption, he prescribed a strong dose of sulphuric acid, "*in order to burn the pulmonary tubercles.*" Two days after, I buried the poor woman. For a disease of the bowels he ordered *injections of melted Spanish wax.* His remedies, as well as the exploits of the sheriff, afforded amusement; but the unfortunate patients could not be amused by them. Yet was he *à la mode*, and took so great a fancy to titles and offices, that at the next election he stood for the vacant judgeship.

CHAP. III.

A WORD OF DOUBLE MEANING. — THE MINISTER, AND HIS THREE UNMARRIED DAUGHTERS. — A RENEGADE. — GENERAL AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY IN THE UNITED STATES. — DEMOCRACY. — THE FRONTIER MEXICANS. — VISIT TO MATAMOROS. — SOUVENIRS OF OLD MEXICO. — MEXICAN LIFE. — THE RANCHEROS. — TROUBADOURS. — POESY OF THE PEOPLE. — RELIGION OF THE RANCHEROS. — RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AT THE FRONTIERS. — MARRIAGE OF THE LAST SCION OF THE MONTEZUMAS.

HAVING spoken of the magistracy and medical science in the new States of the Union, particularly in Texas, I am bound to say a few words about my opponents, the Protestant ministers of the frontier, without fear of being censured for partiality. The individuals of whom I am going to speak are no eccentric exceptions of a particular locality; they are the types of a class in all these countries.

I think I have already observed, in the early part of this journal, that the Methodists and Presbyterians constitute the largest sects among the Americans. Their ministers are likewise the most ignorant and the most intolerant. Those whom I met at Brownsville were hardly better adepts at theology than was the doctor, whose feats I have recorded, in pathology and therapeutics. The Methodist minister, for want of an audience, left the frontier shortly after my arrival at Brownsville. The Presbyterian was hardly more fortunate; for he alienated the minds of his co-religionists by equivocal conduct in a rather serious case. For want of a church he

had to preach in his own house, which was constructed of very slight boards. One day he proposed to his hearers to erect a brick building large enough to accommodate all the Presbyterians of the town; the project was agreed to; and for its prosecution he received three thousand dollars. But instead of building a chapel, as his parishioners expected, he made himself a very elegant house, in which himself and his large family were lodged most comfortably. The word *house* had a double meaning which the Presbyterians did not forget to him. Henceforth he was completely abandoned — his family and a few friends now constituting his entire auditory. His discourses were for the most part diatribes against the Pope and Papacy, subjects highly relished by the Presbyterians, as already observed. At the time of the siege of Matamoros, of which by and bye, he remained two entire hours on his knees on the roof of his new house, his hands stretched forth like those of Moses on the Mount, imploring the protection of heaven on the arms of the invaders. Notwithstanding his hatred of Catholic priests, he never was hostile to me personally; whenever I met him in the street, I saluted him, and he politely returned my greeting.

One of his *confrères*, more lucky than himself in pecuniary matters, had three daughters, who for years past were of an age to be married. The minister seeing no one propose for their hand, determined to wait no longer in the matter of their settlement in the world. With this view, he put in execution an idea essentially American. One Sunday he preached on the subject of marriage, amplifying the text in Genesis, "Increase and multiply." He proclaimed to his audience that this was a Divine *precept* and not a *counsel*. He descanted with

eloquence and warmth on the bliss of the hymeneal state, and ended his sermon by offering his three daughters, with three thousand dollars of fortune for each, to whomsoever would espouse them. He added that he would receive the names of the candidates after service; and that his choice would fall on those who would furnish the surest guarantee of moral character. A wag of an Irishman who happened to be present (they are always everywhere), did not wait for the time prescribed by the minister to make his voice heard, but asked him to put his name on the list FOR TWO. The meeting burst into laughter; and there was no rival found to the ambitious aspirant.

There was also at Brownsville a renegade who kept a school for boys and girls. He received from the Bible Society of New York an annual sum of five hundred dollars, to distribute bibles and pamphlets abusive of Catholicism among the Mexican population. Though I bore him no ill-will, he treated me with no kindred feeling. He hated me by instinct, and proved his hatred at the first opportunity. Several pious Catholics came to complain that this renegade taught Protestantism in his school, and was striving to corrupt the faith of the Catholic children. I waited upon him, and begged that he would confine his instructions within the domain of letters, otherwise, I said, I should be obliged in conscience to warn the parents, and thus the Catholic children would be all removed. He gave me a very ungracious reception, and went the length of menace. The families were consequently warned, and the children were sent to another school, taught by a Mexican. My friend, quite enraged as he became, went to the public market-place on the next Sunday, and held forth against

all priests in general, and myself in particular,— becoming eloquent on idolatry, the inquisition, and what not in this strain. He continued his sermons a month, and got them printed. At length, however, he lapsed into silence, for his harangues had no effect. I was liked in my parish. From the day of my arrival, I was placed on a footing of freedom and independence that secured me the esteem of the people; hence it was no easy matter for him to do me harm. As to that, indeed, Protestant ministers are no great obstacle to the propagation of Catholicism in Texas; for they are always too violent against us missionaries, and violence is never an efficacious means.

If isolated individuals present striking types, interesting as studies of manners, the general character and spirit of the population are not a whit less curious, as they reveal themselves in all their naked reality in public assemblies and political discussions.

In America, as you are free in the choice of a profession, so are you in the expression of political opinion. Hence, since the invasion of Cuba by the Americans, under General Lopez, agitators have multiplied demonstrations, and pushed on enlistments. In Texas these manœuvres were quite easy; for individuals ready for enrolment for any expedition, and for casting the die of life in the hope of pillage, have been always numerous. There have been at Brownsville several meetings, where all Americans were invited to pronounce on the great question of the hour. Some few, moderate and upright in their views, endeavoured to speak against the illegality of this usurpation; but a score of pistols were aimed at their heads, to keep their tongues more quiet.

At the risk of offending the blind and prejudiced

admirers of the United States, I affirm, with those writers who have studied impartially the history of that country, from the date of its independence to our own days, that, dating from the presidency of General Jackson, liberty has not reigned in the United States but in a very limited and relative way. The republic, as founded by Washington, can only be recognised in its outward forms. It is not a democracy that rules — it is demagogy. The opinion and will of the masses, ignorant, vicious, intolerant, passionate as they are, sway by pressure, violence, corruption and lawlessness. It is the blind masses that are everywhere masters at elections, and their vote, ever guided by a name or an idea, is never bestowed on probity and intelligence in matters of government. Hence, from the country magistrate to the President of the Union, every place is the prize of a vote. Vice reigns uncontrolled; you would say it was protected, especially in the new States; but there is very little personal security for the peaceful man, for the virtuous and the independent, in his political and religious opinions. Americans must have a clear stage for themselves, but to others they would not extend the smallest latitude. What American would dare to say to his countrymen, "You are in creed the most superstitious people on earth; in politics the most inconsistent, if not intolerant; in opinion the most despotic; in science, arts, and civilisation, the most behind; in morals the most corrupt; in liberty the slave of a popular despotism; towards your black and coloured slaves, the most pitiless and barbarous?" No citizen would now dare to use this language, though many believe it; for those who, seeing the work of Washington falling to pieces, have striven to point out

to their countrymen by word and pen the abyss towards which they were rushing, have dearly paid for their upright patriotism. Persecutions, blows, fire, have been their reward.

What a strange anomaly! Europeans, political historians and novelists, who have never lived in the United States, have said a good deal about the democracy of the country. If it exist, it is not the fault of the Americans, for they do their best to become aristocrats themselves. Equality is much less palatable there than people think in Europe. Take at random, even in the new States, on a steamer or in the street, any two men, and ask each what he is, you will find him captain, major, colonel, general, judge, *esquire* (Heaven knows of what). None will be a simple citizen.

These are the impressions that will be made on keen conscientious observers, who may study the manners and character of the people with a view to be instructed. Rest assured that those who observe things in a different light have fixed notions formed beforehand, or else have lived too short a time in the country to master its true character. American manners, as illustrated in Brownsville, did not engross my exclusive attention. The picture that I have drawn of this singular population, a picture, alas! but too true, was a forewarning to me of the difficulties which I had to encounter in the discharge of my ministry. Side by side with the Yankees, there was, as I have said, a very numerous Mexican population. Among the frontier Mexicans I found a stolid ignorance to remove, religious views to be modified and ceremonies to be purified from every heterogeneous alloy opposed to the solemnity of Catholic worship. The task was no easy one, for the

people stuck fast to their usages, which had in their favour all the strength of long observance. Yet was I not discouraged. I knew that the Mexican people, notwithstanding their faults and indifference, are docile and intelligent, and that if Heaven deigned to bless my efforts and fatigues, I might be the instrument of diffusing some little happiness over this corner of the earth, to which Providence had sent me. I knew that with God we can do all things; without Him, nothing. I reckoned on His aid to overcome the obstacles that stood in the way of the pure light of the Gospel; and my confidence in God was not vain. With a certain sweetness of manner, and a toleration of whatsoever was free or permissible; an impartiality and charity, in my relations with those of different religious persuasions, caste, or character; with energy and firmness in the discharge of my duty, I soon perceived that there was a means of taming and bending all these different natures, half savage and wholly ignorant though they were.

The great bulk of the Americans who live on the banks of the Rio Grande, from its mouth to Passo del Norte, even those of the towns, are of Indian or Indo-Mexican origin. The Spanish race is quite in a minority on those frontiers. They are of middle height; their features are for the most part regular, sometimes distinguished and noble; their eyes are large and bright, their hair long, black, curled, and frizzly, their skin brown, but soft, their teeth very white and beautiful, their hands and feet very small, their visage round. They are mild, passive, and apathetic. The Mexican's chief passion is his horse, the play, and the dance; cock and bull-fighting are his delight. Among the amateur

taureadors are found even women, who know how to bring down the bull with dexterity, grace, and boldness. I saw three of them at Matamoros, whom no small number of bulls valiantly prostrated had rendered almost celebrities.

To obtain a more accurate idea of Mexican life, I visited Matamoros, which is situated in Mexico opposite Brownsville. My ministry might one day or other bring me in contact with the parish priest, the authorities, and the inhabitants, among whom are reckoned several French and American merchants. Matamoros is not far from the river, and is the most important town of the frontier. I begged the Mexican consul at Brownsville to act as guide and introducer. This worthy representative of his country placed himself without demur at my disposal, accompanying his good services with a cigarette, which I quietly puffed while I asked him questions about the persons that I intended to visit. A few strokes of an oar took us to the opposite bank, where a shed is erected as a shelter for the custom house agents and some soldiers. These soldiers were dressed in brown, and wore a police cap, which admirably harmonised with their yellow, round, and beardless faces, and gave their mien more of the savage than of the soldier. The officers were well clad and had a very *distingué* air. These soldiers sleep nearly the entire day in a grove of the palma Christi planted near the shed. Judging from this specimen of Mexican soldiery, I was not surprised at the success of the American arms directed against them; but the cavalry have a more martial appearance. They have the stamp of being congenial to the soil, a feature not the least important or interesting of its character.

My heart bounded with joy as I trod this wonderful soil, abounding in silver and gold, blessed with a climate the most delicious on earth and a vegetation the most luxuriant. I felt all the poetry of youth spring up within me, inspired by the memory of the Spanish conquests in this rich and beautiful land. Imagination carried me back to the days of Cortez and good Las Casas, the apostle of the Indians, whose woes he so ably pleaded and bitterly bewailed. I repeopled, in thought, Palenca, the city of the desert, the ruins of which, discovered in the midst of a virgin forest, not quite a century ago, still cover a surface of eight leagues; and Mitla, the city of the dead, hardly inferior in extent to Palenca. I saw crowds from Cicimecos, Toltecs, Aztecs, and Tlaxcallians going to Papeutla, to Teocalli, and other immense temples of Yucatan, of Teotihuacan, of Anahuac, of Cholula, and of Tenuctitlan (now called Mexico), to offer sacrifices to Viltzlipultzi, the supreme God; to Tlaloch the god of vengeance, and their Neptune; to Ametochtli, their Bacchus, who carried on his head a vessel of mortar-shape into which they poured wine; to Quetzalcoat, their Mercury; to Matlalmy, goddess of water, who was represented in an undress of azure hue; to Tescatlipuca, god of providence, who wore glasses to see better with. But empires are blotted out and disappear like individuals. New times, new manners. Feather cinctures and pearl collars have been replaced by a less primitive costume. Time carries off every day another stone from these immense ruins of a people itself not less immense than they, whose ancient civilisation has left gigantic *manuscripts* of marble and granite, which defy the eye and mind of modern science. While my imagination thus carried me back to the days

when Mexican currency was cacao-nut, I was seated in a vehicle. Several were stationed in this spot, and two light and spirited horses whisked us over the short mile that separated us from the town in a few minutes and deposited us in the Plaza-Major.

This place is a perfect square, embellished with a garden in the centre, and encompassed with a double range of large Chinese lilacs forming a pleasing promenade. The western side of this square is formed by the church, a modern edifice, vast in its proportions, but presenting nothing remarkable in structure. Opposite the church are the buildings and offices of the *Ayuntamiento*. The houses, like those of the other two sides of the square, are simple in their architecture, of red brick, two stories high, and furnished with an iron balcony. The roofs are flat, forming a terrace which serves rather as a place for drying clothes than for family gathering. Behind the houses are gardens more or less extensive, where the orange-tree, the pomegranate-tree, the peach-tree, the palm-tree, the fig-tree grow. The streets are wide and at right angles.

During the greater part of the day all seems a desert. The shops are half closed and every one remains within doors. But at the first sound of the *Angelus*, a little before sunset, the windows and doors are thrown open, the streets fill, the ladies appear on the balconies in robes of bright muslin, the Plaza-Major is crowded with promenaders who saunter about, chat, laugh, and smoke till midnight. All is animation; the merry laugh and joyous word re-echo all around; the rich man on his balcony, the poor on his cabin sill, feel happy alike to live and to shake off the inaction of the day, while the cigarette sends up its tiny cloud in every direction.

Everywhere do chocolate and coffee with little cakes present their allurements with the balm of the evening air. The chatting becomes more noisy; and it would seem that people wish to make up for lost time, for during the day little is spoken. You would say that the sun stays the words on the lips and deprives of the power to pronounce them. The conversations turn mostly on poetry, on religion, on love, horses, music and dancing. Scandal and politics engage but little this sequestered people, favoured with a sky the most beautiful, a climate the mildest in the world.

My first visit was to the parish priest, a charming young man, who employed his private fortune and the revenues of his parish, for the succour of the poor and the completion of his church. He received me with warmth and cordiality, and offered me his services with a flowing heart. The prefect and civil authorities also loaded me with polite attentions. I ended my visits by paying one to the commander of the frontier Mexican forces, General Avalos, who had then an immense influence in the government of the country. This man, of whom I shall say more by and bye, was enormously corpulent. He seemed to me false and crafty, while his person inspired me with aversion, and subsequent events proved the justice of my first impressions.

On both banks of the Rio Grande, the Mexicans who do not live in towns or sell merchandise are *rancheros* (farmers). *Rancho*, which means *farm*, is often taken for a number of farms or a village. The country people are just as indolent as their countrymen of town. They have all the characteristics and all the defects of an infant people. Voluptuousness is surely their damning vice; but it is not so much the effect of depraved

morals, as of ignorance and effeminacy. I could never know how a ranchero lived, for he labours little or none; the very shadow of labour overpowers him, and he comprehends not activity, save in pleasures. In other respects, he is very frugal; under this mild and temperate sky, he can sleep wherever he will; in open air, under the shade of the fig tree, or mesquite tree, more agreeably than under the shelter of a roof. He lives on coffee, chocolate, *tortillas*, small flat cakes baked on the ashes or on heated flags; and on *tassajo*, beef sun-dried and cut up into slices which keep a long time. The rich rancheros enjoy the luxury of rice, spices, lamb dressed with dried raisins, sometimes even the *tamales*, a favourite dish of the Mexicans, a mixture of chopped meat, vegetables, spices, and dried fruits, rolled up in the shape of a cigar and dressed in a maize leaf. At Tampico and in the greater number of the towns of the interior, young girls prepare and sell tamales in the markets. After the mid-day repast, the Mexicans have their siesta, which lasts according to the season several hours.

When the ranchero is not either resting or amusing himself, he mounts his horse and canters over the plains and through the woods, to see his herds, to visit his friends, to buy provisions, or assist at a feast, a baptism, a marriage, or join in the fandango; but the ranchero never walks. Had he only half a mile to go, he does so on horseback. His horse, of which he is very proud, is his inseparable companion. He is content with a wretched hut for his residence, while he decorates his saddle and bridle with gold and silver ornaments. At home he is all filth, mounted on his horse he wears the gayest attire. Then he dons his broad-

brimmed hat, lined with green and trimmed with an edging or chain of gold. He wears a clean embroidered shirt, and blue velvet trousers with broad facings of black, beneath which, through the extremities, may be seen his wide white drawers, while a blue scarf of china crape encircles his waist, and huge silver spurs clank at his heels. The ranchero tills the soil to some extent, but herds of oxen, horses, goats, and sheep make up the bulk of his fortune. This kind of income costs him little labour; and therefore does he like it so much. The pasture lands are rich, fair, and numerous; and the cattle roam over them at large. From time to time the ranchero goes to see them, to know what horse he may sell at the next fair in order to buy dresses for his children's god-mothers — what oxen will furnish most tassajo, and what lamb will meet the expense of a marriage or baptism-feast.

Many of the rancheros, without the slightest instruction in music, play the guitar or mandoline with no less taste than talent. With this accompaniment sometimes they sing their native melodies and romances, which relate chiefly to love subjects, the beauties of tropical nature, or the memories of their forefathers. There are several ballads of the old Spanish troubadours still in great vogue. It was often my pleasure to hear the rancheros sing in the evenings near the hut where I was taking rest, during my excursions in the solitudes of the interior. Their voices are sweet and their songs racy with the poetry of nature. The greater part of their nights they pass in dancing, singing, relating fantastic stories as history, while they smoke their cigarettes beneath some favourite tree. During the long winter evenings, while sitting on the prairie grass, I have obtained

some scraps of precious interesting information listening to some of these narrators. You still meet in this part of the frontiers a kind of itinerant troubadour who goes from rancho to rancho, singing to the accompaniment of the mandoline, setting the young folk to dance, telling about all he has heard and seen in his travels, and as payment receiving hospitality and a few reals.

What chiefly characterises the country Mexican is extreme meekness of disposition — apathy, listlessness, carried to amiability. You also discern in his character a most lively appreciation of the beauties of nature. On a fine summer night I was reclining on my hammock beneath a gallery of boards and wild osier which I had built up against the presbytery. From my hammock I could gaze on a pretty garden which I had laid out during my leisure hours; and to the rear of this garden I could also observe that of Fort Brown. Isidore, an old Mexican soldier and my man of all work — cook, butler, sacristan — came and seated himself beside my hammock, and while with cool *nonchalance* he puffed clouds of azure smoke from his cigarette, he in a loud tone, and heedless whether I slept or not, directed towards me the following monologue on the beauties of the heavens and the earth. "See, Señor Don Emanuel, what a charming night it is! what sweet mellow temperature! what pure and balmy air! what silence in all nature! how this silence of night ravishes my soul! Do you hear the cry of the widow (a long-tailed bird), as she flies along and flutters in the distance? Whither does she roam, poor bird? Why does she not sleep beneath the thick broad shade of the ebony tree? Mystery of God!" added he, and lapsed into a profound reverie. In an instant he resumed: "Do you

see those myriads of stars whose twinkling splendour lights the plains like the timid doubtful twilight? And those majestic palm trees, whose graceful branches gently poise themselves against the clear blue sky, seeming as if at night time they bear fruit of fire, suspended from every branch? And those stars that fall and fade away, leaving behind them a light narrow cascade of diamonds? Oh! how wonderful are the works of God!"

This was not the first time I had thus heard those poor people speak. Yet how few of them can read or write. I was wrapt in amazement and delight at the poetic rapture of my old soldier; indeed I could not have conveyed my own feelings better, at the view of this picture, at once so simple and sublime, of one of the most charming nights at the tropic.

Novel writers and tourists have greatly exaggerated the faults of the Mexicans. These gentlemen get up adventures at will; stories of robbers and bandits, from whose hands, however, they always escape safe and sound; intrigues wherein the poignard and a dark mystery play their parts. Such things as these no doubt impart a certain interest to a recital; but truth obliges me to say, that these dramatic stories are not to be relied on. It is true there are many robbers among the poorer Mexicans, but they rob from necessity, and do so in a very clumsy way. As to all that people talk about assassinations in Mexico, it is characterised at once by exaggeration and inaccuracy. A murder is commonly the consequence of what begins in a playful quarrel. The vengeance of an injured husband does not arm him with the knife, for he is no jealous husband, but allows his helpmate as much liberty as

he assumes for himself. At Brownsville, and along the entire Texian frontier, murder is very common; but if the Americans have just claim to the credit of half of them, and if we only reflect on how they have treated the Mexicans, we shall be rather surprised that the Mexican's vengeance is so easily satisfied. As to crime, however, we need only say, that neither Europe nor America need be jealous of Mexico.

As to religion, the rancheros had only vague ideas about it, with some obscure recollections. They hardly knew more than two sacraments, baptism and matrimony, and they made no scruple of dispensing themselves from the latter, while they valued confession only at the hour of death. Marriage was divided into two distinct ceremonies, one of which, corresponding with our espousals, was called *las tomadas de las manos*, the taking of hands. This was the simple marriage. The other was the more important and definitive act, called *velacion*. At this ceremony the spouses are covered with a veil, and the priest recites prayers over them. The spouses, their parents, and the witnesses carry lighted tapers, called *vela*, in allusion to the very name of the ceremony. Then the bridegroom deposits on a plate a few coins; the priest blesses them, and gives them back to him, and he hands them to the bride as the price of her liberty. In reality, this ceremony is regarded by the rancheros as the true sacrament of marriage. Frequently married people called on me to marry them to others, pretending that they had been united only by the "taking of hands."

The funerals of children were always accompanied with public rejoicings. The *angelito* (little angel), as they called the remains of the young person, was

dressed in white and ornamented with flowers; and sometimes wings were added, with a crown of gilt paper. The dressing ended, the remains were placed on a chair or under a table, covered with white linen, and strewn with votive flowers. A friend or parent took the light burthen on his head or shoulders, while a procession was formed to the church, and preceded by a band composed of a big drum, a violin, and a clarionet, which played polkas, waltzes, and contradanses. The procession was followed by a crowd of urchins, pelting squibs and rockets, and laughing like young demons as their missives fell on the parents or their invited friends.

But if neither the belief nor the practice of the rancheros was without reproach, the fault was not entirely theirs. Before the war of Mexican Independence, the most isolated villages and inhabitants had visits from the Spanish missionaries regularly enough, though the great distance made those visits both few and far between. These missionaries could only impart the most elementary instruction, accommodating themselves to the understanding of their little flocks, so as to strike the senses by the form of worship, rather than open the mind by instructions more complete. The ceremonies of the Church used to borrow from time and place certain peculiar features to which those people attached great interest and importance. It is much easier to go to church and join a procession than to reform one's life. As the Spanish missionaries ceased their visits, all pertaining to doctrine and morality fell into the shade. Ignorance, indifference, the passions, soon made the lessons of the priest to be forgotten; but what struck the senses was more tenacious

of its hold. The substance was lost in the form, and external practices, as is natural to the Mexicans, became the chief objects of attention — the most worthy of the affection of a poor people. This religious decadence was a sad sight; but by God's grace aiding the energy of man, many obstacles are being overcome. My task at Brownsville, though more fatiguing, was not so irksome, however, as at Castroville.

I had the honour to bless the marriage of the living descendant of Montezuma with a rich proprietor of the state of Cohahuila. She was twenty-four years old; her features were quite handsome, very regular, noble, and withal sweet; her gait easy and listless. The olden glory of her race revealed itself in her entire figure. I asked her some questions about her position. She told me she was an orphan, without a relative even to the remotest degree; and that of all the wealth of her house nothing remained to her but some lands in Texas. These lands were of vast extent it is true; but since the annexation of Texas to the United States, her right to proprietorship had been contested and assailed in a variety of ways.

She had been offered 6000 dollars for her inheritance, and fearing to be stripped of all, she accepted this miserable sum, and married the man she loved. Such is the simple history of the last heir of a great name, of the last scion of that great and powerful monarch whose treasures knew no bounds, and who perished the victim of the cruel cupidity of the Spanish conquerors. She went with her husband to continue in obscurity, her existence unknown, indeed, to the world, but withal peaceful and happy.

CHAP. IV.

A TOUR OF OBSERVATION. — THE BANKS OF THE RIO GRANDE. — REYNOSA. — REYNOSA-VIEJA. — AN ISRAELITISH BEDFELLOW. — RIO GRANDE CITY. — PROJECTS. — MEETING A RATTLE-SNAKE. — ROMA. — THE ALAMO. — THE BATHERS. — MIER. — EMBARRASSING PRESENTS. — A USEFUL APPARITION. — DEPARTURE FROM ROMA. — TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH NEW INDIANS. — CAMARGO. — A SURPRISE. — RANCHERO MARRIAGE. — SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP. — THE AURORA IN A WOOD.

A MONTH after my arrival at Brownsville, having made some progress in speaking Spanish, I undertook a tour of observation among the populations scattered along both banks of the river. I had to penetrate northward as far as a small American settlement called Alamo, from Brownsville about three hundred miles. I embarked on the steamboat *Comanche*, which was to ascend the river with merchandise for several settlements along its banks.

The Rio Grande, as I have already said, takes its rise at the foot of the Sierra Verde, one of the two great southern ramifications of the Rocky Mountains. It drains and fertilises an immense valley for several hundred leagues in its southern course, and before disemboguing into the Gulf of Mexico, it makes a thousand windings. Sometimes, on occasions of great floods, the sand is carried down in masses, and opens for the waters new beds, while the old thus detached become lakelets, often very graceful in their aspect. The banks are flat, and more wild, indeed, than picturesque.

Some woodlands, rather sparse of trees; tracts covered with long dry grass or reeds; numbers of reeds; sometimes a tract of fine white sand, in which the scattered herds of cattle, that come to slake their thirst in the stream, lie half buried while they ruminate; or steep, low banks, constantly eaten into by the water; here and there the little hut of a ranchero, whence issued a thin spiral of white smoke; such were the principal features that successively relieved the monotony of these cheerless solitudes.

In the day time the heat was quite suffocating — we were smothered in an atmosphere of fire. In the evening we would take our mattresses to the after-deck, to enjoy the freshness of the night breeze. After three or four days of uninterrupted steaming, the boat stuck so effectually, that no exertion could get her off. The captain had to discharge her cargo, in order to lighten her, and set her afloat. All of us disembarked, and were obliged to pursue our journey by land. This mishap modified my itinerary in a rather singular way. To reach Alamo by land, I had to travel more in Mexico than Texas, for this part of the Texian frontier is quite destitute of roads. In Mexico, on the contrary, you have still the old Spanish highways; so that often the shortest and even the only route between two Texian ranchos is to cross the Rio Grande and travel the Mexican territory, and to recross the Rio Grande again near one's destination. Here, then, I was going to make one of those long journeys on horseback, to which I had been so much accustomed during my first mission; but in this I had fewer dangers and privations to encounter.

We first directed our course towards the Mexican hamlet of Reynosa. These small frontier towns present but little interest. The church of Reynosa is of stone, of oblong shape, having a massive steeple, square in form, and heavy-looking in construction. Some houses are built as in the time of Fernand Cortez, with *adaubes*, large bricks baked in the sun. Here we crossed the Rio Grande for Texas, where we secured horses in an American establishment called Edinburgh.

Having taken a modest breakfast, we returned to Reynosa, the Spanish priest of which procured us a guide, and we continued our journey under a scorching sun. The road was lined sometimes with odoriferous trees and the perfumed wild vine; sometimes it intersected an arid desert soil, or calcareous tracts, whose only vegetation was the cactus, the nopal, or certain plants full of thorns and destitute of leaves: neither bird nor animal appeared to enliven either with song or gambol these burning solitudes.

My fellow travellers were Jewish merchants, Methodists, and free-thinkers. I could not escape one of those religious controversies so much sought after in America; but so much were we overpowered by the heat, that no one entered warmly into discussion. The words died on our lips, without our having the power to articulate them. The horses jogged along slowly in single file like geese. Perspiration issued abundantly from every pore, and trickled down our bodies. We could scarcely breathe, so that at last we were obliged to await the freshness of the evening breeze.

At length the trees assumed a reddish tint, the shadows became longer while they turned eastward, the

leaves gently oscillated in the rising breeze, and the crowing of a cock and the lowing of herds announced a rancho. We had arrived at Reynosa Vieja, which was a large square formed by the huts of the principal inhabitants. Each angle terminated a roadway carpeted with light tufted grass. The environs were well cultivated; and the population of this immense rancho lived in ease and comfort. At the time of our entrance, men and cattle were enjoying the refreshing breeze, here and there beneath the trees that lined the court and the pathways.

We went to take up our quarters in the outer court of one of the most wealthy proprietors of Reynosa Vieja. Our horses were unsaddled and secured for the night, before no stinted quantity of maize straw, one of the best descriptions of fodder in the country. While supper was getting ready, one of my fellow travellers introduced me to several rich rancheros. Everywhere they received us with unaffected cordiality, offering us cigarettes, chocolate, and little delicious honey-cakes. It was in this rancho that I learned for certain that the Mexicans used to bury their money when they had no immediate use for it. It was a habit peculiar to the old Spaniards; and in the towns, as well as in country places, you often meet with vessels full of dollars and doubloons, hidden in the walls or under the trees. The population of Reynosa Vieja, numbering, as it did, certainly not fewer than one hundred families, was left almost entirely to itself in the matter of religion. It had hardly ever a visit from a priest, for the people had to go to Reynosa in cases of marriage and baptism, and they died without sacraments. I also learned that several families scat-

tered all over these frontiers were in the same sad condition.

An hour after our arrival, one of the guides came to announce supper, which consisted of boiled fowl, rice, and dried raisins, all dressed with pepper and other spices. The tortillas supplied did the duty at once of spoon and of bread. This supper was refreshing enough, and at its close we were each fortunately served with a cup of milk. We had the good luck to find some mattresses in the rancho, and these we stretched out in the outer court; but not having quite enough of them, we were obliged to take each man a bed-fellow. Mine was a young Jew of the name of Moses, who, before falling asleep, said to me, while he laughed,

"Have you suspected that you are going to sleep with a Jew?"

"No. And you, have you dreamt that your bed-fellow is a Catholic priest?"

"Not the remotest idea of it; you now inform me for the first time."

"Think you, then, that our slumbers will be the less tranquil?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, good night."

"Good night."

And I soon heard him snorting like a steam-engine just getting under way. As for me, notwithstanding the fatigue of a long journey on a bony horse, under a burning sun, sleep I could not. I saw glittering over my head those myriads of stars that I so often gazed upon with admiration during my first peregrinations. Among the constellations I looked out for the Shepherd, which in my boyhood in France I loved so to gaze upon, when

nature, shrouded in the mysterious veil of twilight, had only this solitary star twinkling overhead to light its track. The palm branches beneath which I lay gently vibrated in the air; the temperate breeze, breathing gently as it came, embalmed by the sweet odours of the woodland flowers, carolled in the distance, while it imparted to the sycamore leaves a voice of song strange and full of harmony resembling the melancholy sighs of many Æolian harps. I breathed these evening perfumes with the utmost delight, and listened attentively to the languishing murmuring of leaf and breeze, cut short at intervals by the plaintive cry of the widow bird as she hopped from tree to tree. At length I fell asleep wrapped in golden dreams.

We were awakened before daylight by the neighing of our horses, already saddled by the guides, and set out notwithstanding the darkness, which scarcely allowed us to see our way before us. From Reynosa Vieja to Camargo the route is forced with no small difficulty through acacias, nopals, brushwood, all quite thick set in these quarters. Towards midday we halted again, to bait our horses and have some refreshments ourselves. Goat's milk was the entire bill of fare of our dinner. We reached Camargo, but instead of halting there, we struck out to the right, by a narrow pathway winding through a thick woodland, which brought us opposite the Rancho Davis. Again we crossed the Rio Grande, here both wide and deep, for it is, after receiving several tributaries — the Rio de San Juan, the Rio Alamo, and the Salado — further enlarged by the Rio Sabinos, which comes down from the Sierra Madre.

The Rancho Davis is now better known under the name of the Rio Grande City. It is a vast assemblage of

American stores and Mexican huts, where smuggling progresses on an extensive scale. The Mexican government cannot afford for it a sufficient number of soldiers and customs officers; and hence the productions of the United States make their way into Mexico with little difficulty. Thus do the American dealers at the Rancho Davis realise immense fortunes. The United States government supports at Rio Grande City two or three companies of the regular army, whose quarters are to the south of the city. The barracks, depôt stores, officers' houses and gardens cover an area of several acres. I had letters of introduction to the Commandant of the fort and to the doctor, and presented them at their addresses; but being an eyewitness of the barbarous treatment that the Irish Catholic soldiers are now subjected to, I left with disgust, and never again set foot in the garrison. I saw an Irishman dying in chains in his bed!!!

The town is protected from the eastern winds by a chain of hills of diluvian formation. Trees and verdure are rarely to be seen, so that the heat reflected from the river sand, and from the rocks and gravel of the hills, makes the place a veritable furnace. One should possess the incombustible nature of the Salamander to live there any length of time; and despite its excellent site, I question if it will ever assume any considerable development.

One of my free-thinking companions offered me the hospitality of his house; and not knowing where to put up, I gratefully accepted his offer. Anxious to erect a church at Rio Grande City, I sounded the inhabitants on the subject. Catholics and Protestants vied in seconding my views, and offered aid with their

purses for the purpose. This eagerness was natural enough, for a church gives importance and character to a new settlement, as it does moral improvement to its people. Several Mexicans of Camargo and the frontiers were anxious to settle at Rio Grande City, where things were cheap, but the immorality of the people held them back. Besides, they had great repugnance at being deprived entirely of the succours of religion. The erection of a church would remedy these two evils, and hence the general eagerness to co-operate with me when the plan of the building was drawn and the outlay calculated. But I could find none who would undertake the direction of the work, or assume the responsibility of its completion; and, for my own part, not being able to absent myself very long from Brownsville, I could not assume the responsibility. Thus, with many and deep regrets, I had to defer the project to a future time.

Having devoted several days to journeys in the neighbourhood of Rio Grande City, I set off alone for Roma, an American settlement more northward. My route was a winding road, between the Rio Grande and a chain of hills that issue from the Sierra Verde and other ramifications of the Rocky Mountains. At this latitude, the plains of Western Texas disappear; the country is diversified, yet its general aspect is melancholy. The mesquite tree, the acacia, the wild strawberry, the carob, and a countless family of the cactus, are the only ornaments of these arid stony hills. Sometimes your way lies on a whitish rock, which so reflects the sun's rays as almost to scorch the eyes. Should a plant succeed in working its way through some sheltered fissure more fertile than the surrounding desert, it soon expires under the devouring heat. As a compensation, however, should you meet with

a ravine or stream, or more moist soil, you find the vegetation incomparably rich and fruitful. In some of those ravines I found gigantic *polipodiums*, *aspleniums*, and other species of fern, which the prolonged droughts render very rare in Texas. A death-like silence prevails in this desert; even the voice of a bird, or the roar of an animal, hardly ever relieves the profound stillness. The only living thing that I met during my journey filled me with pleasure. It was—must I say it?—a rattle-snake. I had seen none of them since my return to America. Were its bite not mortal I could have dismounted to embrace the creature, for it brought Castroville back to memory. After this meeting, I pursued my journey musing pensively.

I arrived at Roma towards evening, and took up my abode with one of the principal dealers, who was a Jew like the rest of them in this settlement. It is a jumble of stores and wooden cabins, mud and reed huts, flung here and there on a hillock, half roofed or half unroofed. The inhabitants are for the most part Americans. The Mexicans are poor and few in number, but they are most anxious to have a priest to instruct them in their duties, to support them in their misery, and to close their eyes at the supreme moment of death. But, first of all, a church was needed, and the Mexicans promised me all the materials, while the ten Jewish dealers, who formed the financial aristocracy of Roma, offered me each five hundred francs. But there, as at Rio Grande City, when on the point of putting our design into execution, I could find no one who would undertake the management of the work. Although this journey to the interior was necessary for me to learn the wants and religious condition of the districts depending on my

jurisdiction, I could not abandon the numerous population of Brownsville to become architect and master-mason for two or three months.

My next visits were to Alamo and Mier. I begged of the pastor of the latter town to see the Catholics of Roma and its neighbourhood from time to time. I was accompanied by the sheriff of Roma, an amiable and cordial young man. The route, as it reached the top of the hills, opened before me a view of immense extent: to the east the boundless plains of Texas were lost in the white-blue haze of the horizon, and to the west the blue mountains of the Sierra Madre raised their peaky heads. Despite the distance, you could easily distinguish their enormous masses, and their fantastic peaks, gilded by the rays of the sinking sun. Northward the hills on which we travelled were lost in a semi-circle of distant ridges, while all around our eyes fell upon an ocean of golden light.

Before arriving at Alamo, we had to ascend and descend a veritable chaos of small round knolls, pitched in a crowded fashion on the western ridge of the hills. We travelled over very fertile and well cultivated tracts. Alamo is a small American village of recent origin, taking its name from the nearest Mexican river, which falls into the Rio Grande. It is eligibly situated, and time may be spent there agreeably enough. On one side, the Rio Grande waters the gardens; on the other, gigantic sycamores, with their net-work of branches, form a kind of dome over house-roofs, that protects them, as a parent, from the raging heat. We crossed the Rio Grande in a flat-bottomed boat. At this point the right bank is of a sandy nature, and rather elevated. The table-land on which

lies the route to Mier, is covered over with sedge, copse, and mesquite trees. Here and there you meet a solitary rancho, truly wretched-looking. The road is intersected by numbers of pathways formed by the cattle as they go to drink at the river. Before arriving at Mier we had to cross a wide but not very deep stream, in which a number of people of every age and each sex were bathing. At first sight I thought they were gold-nugget seekers, but I was soon undeceived. On the Mexican frontiers, ideas of social propriety and decency are still in their infancy.

In its site Mier does not yield to any town of the frontiers. It is a town of amphitheatre-shape, perched on masses of rock, moderately elevated, with its church spire, palm, and aloe trees, cut out in profile against the azure firmament, while it still retains its Mexican complexion. You clearly see that the Anglo-Saxon race has not penetrated thus far. We had to ascend stairs hewn in the rock; nor did our horses perform the escalade without considerable danger. Like all Mexican towns, Mier has its square, in which are situated the church and the principal residences; and from it ramify a number of fine wide streets in different directions.

Our first visit was to the pastor, who received us most kindly, at once offered us the cigarette, chocolate, and sweet cakes, and even made me a present of one of those necklaces of blue Venetian pearls worn by the Mexican priests. He also wished me to accept a deer and a young ass. You may well wonder that I refused, but my refusal took the *curé* by surprise, for it seems he set a high value on those two animals. I explained to him how difficult it would be for me to traverse a distance of more than 300 miles, encumbered

at once with a horse, an ass, and a deer; and I represented all the dangers to which they would be exposed, were anything untoward to occur to myself. The fear that his deer and little ass might suffer too much on the journey, decided the good *curé* not to press his offer further.

I paid two or three more visits in the town, but as I was obliged to smoke a cigarette, and swallow a cup of chocolate in every house that I visited, I had to regulate the number of my visits by the state of my appetite. I observed that in Mier, the people's skin is fairer than in other towns of the frontiers, and both sexes are mostly strikingly handsome. Their features are regular, delicate, and of a decidedly noble cast; and they speak the Spanish more pure, correct, and less corrupted with Indian words or phrases.

It was far advanced in the night when we quitted Mier. Not being able ourselves to decide which of the several pathways was the one leading back to the Rio Grande, we allowed our horses to guide themselves. After an hour's journeying we saw at a distance lights, which we took for the fires of Alamo. We were mistaken, however, for our horses, by a circuitous route, took us back to Mier, while we were confidently trusting to their instinct. Each of us was screwing his wits as to the means of escaping a second like misadventure, when all of a sudden we saw quite close to us the shadow of a man, whose costume resembled that of the Apollo Belvidere. It was a péon Mexican, who was returning from the fields on his way to Mier. We inquired the way to Alamo amid this labyrinth of bye-ways; but, instead of answering us, he took the bridle of my horse, conducted us up the plateau, accompanied us for ten minutes, and

said, in parting, "Let the horses take their own course," and vanished like an apparition.

We arrived at the banks of the river without accident about midnight; but the ferryman had left his boat, and gone to sleep in his cabin. I had to parade before him my titles and character, in order to induce him to transfer us to the left bank. The night had grown brighter, with the breeze fresher and more balmy. The road was wide, so that our return would have been quite an agreeable promenade, had not prosy sleep closed our eyes to its charms. By the time we had arrived at Roma, it was rather late to call at the house of my Jewish host, to pass the remainder of the night there. The sheriff begged of me to remain with himself, but, having lost the key of his hall door, we had to enter by a window. However, we lost not much time or labour in this piece of gymnastics. The sheriff had only one bed; and this, in spite of all my opposition, I had to accept, the sheriff sleeping on the boards, wrapped up in his blanket.

Every day brought me a new proof that the French Missionary in America secures without any difficulty the sympathy of Jews and Protestants in numbers, by only manifesting a certain amount of confidence and frankness, while he remains inflexible in the performance of his duties. Those poor people, who have not the happiness to profess and to practise Catholic doctrine, insensibly shake off their prejudices against ourselves and our religion, when we unfold to them a benevolent heart, notwithstanding the difference of our religious tenets. A different manner of acting would not be consistent with either prudence or religion; it would only have the effect of souring still more our opponents, and of

widening the chasm that separates us from those whom it is our pious wish to draw within the bond of unity.

As my financial resources were just running out, I resolved to return to Brownsville and took my leave of the sheriff. Poor young man! Afterwards he fell by the hand of an assassin in the discharge of his duties. In all sincerity I thanked the worthy merchants whose hospitality I had enjoyed, and I set out for Rio Grande City.

I followed the first path I met with, and it brought me to the river; but I had missed my way. To recover it I boldly struck into a thicket, never minding the thorns and the scratches, nor the fragments of my clothes which they kept behind, hanging from acacia and mesquite branches. I trotted along a whole hour, and had made no more than half a mile, when all of a sudden I found myself in the presence of nine Indians, three of whom were women; the other six were armed with arrows. I grasped my pistol, and cried —"Halt." They halted like soldiers at the command of their officer. One of them came near and addressed me as a Mexican. The sound of this tongue excited within me a lively pleasure. I drew breath, knowing that I had to do with Manzos (good) Indians.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

The Indians told me that they were in quest of game, but the scarcity of it on the Mexican frontier drove them as far as Texas.

"I am," I replied, "chief of prayer on the banks of the great waters. I have come into the interior to visit the worshippers of the Great Spirit, and I return to my cabin."

He eyed me with astonishment.

"Why does not the chief of prayer follow the great road quite near him? The way of the long grass is not quite easy."

I durst not say that I had lost my way lest he might be tempted to murder me, in order to have my horse and arms.

"True," I replied, "the way of the long grass is not easy, but the breath of the Great Spirit makes the leaves of trees move there. It gives a freshness to pale faces, and mesquite branches prevent the fire from the heavens from injuring the traveller."

During this dialogue the rest of the Indians had drawn closer, and the oldest of them asked for tobacco. I had neither money nor tobacco: I told them so; and left them at once, saying my good bye and wishing them a prosperous chase. Meanwhile I bethought me that they said the great path was close by. By *great path* they meant, no doubt, the high road. I turned to the left, and in truth I soon found myself in the right road. The meeting with these Indians had made me feverish, I avow; I could never gaze on those figures of vermilion hue, prussian blue, and copper, without experiencing a smothering heart ache. I went to the bottom of a ravine where a stream flowed quietly in a rocky bed overgrown with moss, and having cooled my lips, and stayed my excitement, I remounted without delay, and soon arrived at Rio Grande City.

I stayed no longer here than to say good bye to the inhabitants, then crossed the Rio Grande and directed my way to Camargo. I was alone, and on foot, and the road by which I had to travel ran through a wood. It was a wide and handsome road; but, with sand and heat, my progress was slow indeed, and tiresome. The

town is only a few miles from the river; yet, by the time of my arrival, I was quite exhausted.

Camargo resembles all the towns of these frontiers. Indeed, you would say they were all built on the same plan by the same architect. The worthy pastor, poorly accommodated and fed as he was, in a hut formed of stakes sunk in the earth and interwoven with branches, which were over-laid with a kind of glazed earth, gave me bed and entertainment from Saturday till Monday. On Saturday I assisted at the high mass, when the sacred music was played on a large drum, a trombone, two clarionets, and several violins. However, all did their best; and this singular orchestra produced no mediocre effect in this old and simple church. A great surprise awaited me. During the elevation they commenced playing the *Marseillaise*. In such a place and at such a moment the selection was rather queer. True, throughout all America, the *Marseillaise* is quite the rage; and often in drawing-rooms and on board steamers I have been requested to chant this revolutionary hymn. Perhaps, it was to do me honour that it was sung this very day in the church of Camargo.

The pastor procured for me a guide and two horses, and, on the following Monday, I set off at three o'clock in the morning, notwithstanding the darkness. The road was wide and solid; and we stepped along briskly, in order to make the most of the day before the heat set in. I was two hours *en route* when I heard the tread of several horsemen in full gallop behind me. There were about fifty men and women in gala dress. They passed on quite close to us at full gallop, some sending forth rather shrill notes, others humming fandango airs. They resembled a horde of madmen let loose, or of

Indians enjoying a holiday. I inquired of my guide what this whirl of human beings that had just passed us meant. He told me it was the marriage party to which we had been invited, but I knew nothing whatever of wedding or invitation; still, in this very circumstance, I saw an excellent study of manners, and was delighted with the opportunity. My guide asked me to follow the party, for the way was long and monotonous. We set off at a gallop to overtake the party, which still continued at full speed, shouting, roaring, singing, in a thick cloud of dust raised by the horses' feet, and arrived at about ten o'clock A.M. at a rancho which consisted of about a score of wretched huts of stakes and reeds, where long tables laid out under a temporary awning of branches were prepared for us.

I was scarcely installed in my tent, the owner of which was a relation of my guide's, when medals, images, crosses, and beads were brought to me from all quarters to be blessed. For each blessing, the owner of the article chose a godfather and godmother, who, with himself and the priest, became *Compadre* and *Comadre de benediccion*, so that in about an hour I was related to the entire rancho. The frontier Mexicans love to multiply these spiritual ties, and thus in the course of his travels is he sure to meet, even in the smallest rancho, some relative or some friend of a relative. He then does not indeed receive hospitality; he takes it as a matter of course; and installs himself as if at home. After two years' ministry on the banks of the Rio Grande, my relations counted by thousands in town and rancho. Often I failed to recognise the man who would familiarly salute me in these words, "*Buenos dias, señor Compadre don Emanuelito.*" The Mexicans

are quite liberal in the use of the diminutive termination *ito*, as a mark of affection.

At mid-day the wedding feast was served up, and I had the place of honour. The meal consisted of rice soup without meat, but prepared with plenty of raisins and spices. Next came roast kid, cut up into pieces, and floating in a horrid sauce of beef-suet, pepper, and spices. After the first taste, I felt as if my throat was on fire. This beef-suet tasted like melted tallow, and turned my heart. After the kid came *tassajo*, likewise dressed in this abominable sauce. I had to summon up all my energy to swallow these frightful *ragoûts*. My study of manners and habits was costing me dear, and I got out of humour with my guide for having accepted the invitation without my previous concurrence; but, like the rest of the guests, his stomach was well used to these national sauces, and he ate like Sancho Panza at the marriage of Gamache. The only drink was a jug of whisky, which was sent round at the close of the repast. This time I stoutly refused, and asked for water, for I was so parched with thirst, that I thought I could quaff the Rio Grande at a draught. After dinner they withdrew to the huts or under the trees, for shelter for the siesta; and at four o'clock I departed with my guide; not, however, without saying adieu to all my new relations, an operation that engaged so long that a very late hour witnessed our arrival at Reynosa Vieja. All were in bed; but my guide awakened one of his female relatives, who gave me a water melon for supper, and a mattress on which I lay in the great square. I was buried in sleep when, at about one o'clock in the morning, my guide shook me with a determination which I could not resist. He gave a

thousand reasons why we should start at midnight, and urged me so effectually, that in the end I gave in with a sinking heart. To shorten the route, we struck into a wood of acacias, so dense, that I left there behind me no small portion of my apparel. Blind to all before me, I every instant knocked against the branches, the thorns of which smeared my hands and face with streams of blood. The path which we followed was sometimes so narrow and choked up, that to make my way I was obliged to stretch at full length on the horse. I then heartily regretted having yielded to the pressing suggestions of my guide; but it was too late to retrace our steps, and I vowed never again to travel by night; as if indeed the poor missionary could choose his time, and was not in duty bound, whenever duty called, to travel without murmur or hesitation. However, day-dawn in its first faint colouring put to flight all my *ennuis*, and I soon enough forgot my recent sufferings.

A penetrating odour filled the wood; the vanilla, the pachuli, the jessamine, the ebony tree, and thousands of wild vines saturated the morning breeze with delicious perfumes. The blustering voice of the cardinal, the languishing coo of the turtle, the sad sweet moan of the blue bird, the song of the bird of paradise, and the mocker, scattered around a charming medley of clear and plaintive notes. A light dew had strewn on the leaves of the trees and plants a thousand liquid pearls, which refracted the pure bright ray into its prismatic colours. These perfumes, this gentle air, these songs, and these brilliant hues did make me happy. This awaking of nature conveyed into my soul a feeling of undefined bliss; a vague happiness which I would

not have exchanged for all the joys of earth, while it raised my thoughts towards heaven. In these vast solitudes nature at every instant presents to the eye pictures in which the sublime is ever portrayed, now under the smiling and varied forms of virgin forests and unexplored mountains, now in the guise of a scorching or a monotonous desert. Everywhere she instils into the Christian's soul sentiments and treasures of poetry, of peace, and of gratitude towards the Creator of those wonders.

CHAP. V.

A STRONG MAN. — A STORM IN THE WOODS. — A SERIOUS FALL. — A DISAGREEABLE ERROR. — BEGINNING OF A LONG FAST. — A BAD NIGHT. — CRITICAL JOURNEY. — THE FUNERAL CROSSES. — RANCHO DE LA PALMA. — RETURN TO BROWNSVILLE. — A CONFRÈRE. — SUFFERINGS. — MOURNING. — MEDICINE AMONG THE RANCHEROS. — THE FEMALE WEEPERS. — INTERMENT OF A CONVERTED JEW. — A WELL-SPENT JOURNEY. — CRUEL SEPARATION. — DUTY OF FRIENDSHIP.

After much fatigue undergone in the woods, I arrived at Reynosa, and proceeded to the parish priest, whom I found in conference with one Antonio Rodriguez, celebrated, as well as his brother, for his Herculean strength. I was told that Antonio one day, to give a proof of his strength, seized a mule by the hind legs, and notwithstanding the cries and blows of the bystanders, the mule could not move an inch. The fame of both brothers was as good as a police station to the neighbourhood. If a horse had gone astray or been stolen, it was rumoured that the Rodriguez were commissioned to make search, and soon enough the animal came back to its stable.

I returned to Edinburgh with the intention of making my way to Brownsville along the Rio Grande, but I could get no horse on the eve of St. James; and the Mexicans, who have peculiar veneration for Santo Iago, were scattered about with their horses in the surrounding ranchos. After long searches, I could only meet with two sorry-looking ponies; and I made up my mind to call upon an old acquaintance, Ignacio Garcia, who doubtless would procure me horses for the long journey before me.

We had just turned into a very narrow pathway, intersecting a very dense wood, such as the virgin forests of Louisiana, when torrents of rain all of a sudden fell, drenching us to the very marrow, over-flooding the path, and forming pools, in which our horses were more than knee-deep. The wood became thicker and thicker; agavas, nopals, and pitas filled up every interstice between the trees, while the upper branches of the gigantic sycamores bent arch-like over our heads, shooting down from their sturdy folds enormous streamers of green. The storm raged with fury; and made this dome of branches, leaves, and verdure, rustle in a fearful manner. The guide avowed that he had missed his way.

"Let us continue on," I replied, "we may meet some one who will put us on the right path."

Nature is capricious at the tropics. The storm subsided as quickly as it came; and we reached the outskirts of a prairie, over which hung a rainbow of uncommon beauty. The reddish tint of the setting sun gilded the tree tops fantastically; large heavy clouds still rolled along the firmament in wild commotion; whilst the solemn roll of thunder was heard at intervals. A herd of cows and a number of goats were browsing quietly on grass now decked with brilliant diamond drops. They were tended by a horseman perfectly naked. His long shaggy hair, his brownish skin, his gun by his side, gave him a savage and terrible appearance. However, when I asked him if he knew where was the rancho of Don Ignacio Garcia, he made a sign in the affirmative with his head, and simply pointed his finger to the path leading thereto. This

path wound round and round again like a wounded snake in the convulsions of pain, and wriggled right and left among the trees so circuitously, that every instant I had to describe with my bridle semicircles in opposite directions. It was quite enough to give a Hollander the staggers.

After a couple of hours' wandering, I saw a huge rattle-snake curl itself up. My horse startled, plunged to the right, and brought my head against a large branch so violently, that I was unhorsed and rolled to the ground quite senseless. Had I not worn a thick, strong palm-leaf hat, it was not only stunned, but lifeless I should have lain. My horse made off. My guide, who had been some way behind me, carried away likewise by his frightened steed, rode over my body. It was all the work of an instant. I remained in this critical position more than a quarter of an hour. My insensibility over, I resumed my journey on foot, this time praying no blessings on the rattle-snake. About a mile on I met my guide, who, having mastered his horse and retaken mine, was returning to my rescue. I observed an unknown farm which, he said, was the one we were looking out for; but I too well knew there was some mistake, and addressed an old woman who was seated at a cabin door smoking her cigarette.

"Is this," I asked, "the rancho of Don Ignacio Garcia?"

"Yes, but he is gone to the feast."

"Are there many Ignacio Garcias in these parts?"

"Yes, a good many of them." The identity of name caused this mistake.

"Have you any horses?"

"There will be none till after the feast."

"Have you anything for one to eat? I have not tasted food since yesterday."

"No, Señor, I have just eaten the last *tortilla*."

"Could you at least make us a fire?"

"I am sorry I have no firewood — and the maize-straw, which you see in the backyard, is too moist for fuel."

I was so fagged, the night was so dark, and my guide so little to be relied on, that I could not retrace my path. I remained at the rancho and determined on returning to Brownsville through Mexico, being now satisfied that it would not be prudent to travel by impossible roads, at the risk of either being killed or dying of hunger. The soil all around was so saturated with rain, that it resembled a marsh, and the interior of the hut was not much better. Failing a dry spot whereon to lay myself down, I stretched myself on a wretched old cart, while my clothes stuck to my skin; my teeth chattered; and I shivered with cold. Hunger gnawed my entrails in a pitiful way; my joints and limbs were sore and broken with my journey and fall; and with all this, sleep I could not. In spite of all these tortures I was not one whit downcast; I knew God watched over me, and that his angel reckoned my every pain and ache to enter them in the book of life. It was but a very little thing to endure a few trials for Him who died for us on Calvary. Though not too robust in constitution, I have always supported purely physical sufferings with a fair share of fortitude. Unfortunately, moral trials tell much more on my poor organisation, and it is then I specially require aid from above, not to sink or lose heart or confidence.

We were up early, and in the end arrived at Edinburgh without mishap. I returned to Reynosa, where after many a useless search, the parish priest succeeded in procuring for me a wretched little horse, but no guide. I was then obliged to venture alone on my way, without other direction than the stars. The country was flat, but the trees and pasture lands were laid out by nature with a coquettish gracefulness. It was now a forest I had to cross,—now a little prairie, green, or in flowers, encircled by rows of palm trees, ebony, and mesquite trees—now a field of maize, its ears of golden hue, or of sugar-cane with its lanceolated leaves—now a resaca, in which wild ducks, cranes, herons, treated themselves to a bath. The road was wide and well made; but unfortunately, like that from Camargo to Reynosa, of which it was the continuation, it disappeared from time to time beneath the grass. Sometimes it was covered over with underwood—elsewhere cultivated, so that often losing sight of it, I was in danger of missing my way. I cannot say, whether their independence has made the Mexicans more free and happy; but of this there is no doubt, that since Mexico shook off the Spanish yoke, it has done nothing to preserve the roads, and if it does not bestir itself in that direction, international communications will become impossible.

Towards mid-day I saw, at the outskirt of a wood, a hut from which issued a white slender wreath of smoke. I concluded that the people of this house had not gone to the feast of Santo Iago; and as for forty-eight hours I had eaten only a few slices of water melon, an agreeable, but not very nutritious aliment, I approached the door, and knocked. A good old woman was setting about making

a fire for dressing *tortillas* and *tassajo*. I asked her if she could spare me something to eat. She told me she had just then only milk, but that if I waited I could share her dinner. Before accepting the invitation I inquired if the Rancho de la Palma was far distant.

"No, Señor," she said to me; "it is near this."

The Mexicans are not too bright on the subject of distances, and the word *near*, not qualified by a superlative and two or three diminutives, often means "*very far.*" But I had yet to acquire this knowledge of the relative value of words; and anxious as I was to arrive as soon as possible at the end of my day's march, I partook of a little milk and resumed my journey.

To the right and left of the road I had remarked for some distance a number of crosses fixed in the earth at certain intervals. My first impression was that they marked the scene of some horrid murder; and herein I only fell into the error so common among travellers who have noticed these crosses in the Mexican territory. I imagined myself in a cut-throat defile, and was prepared every moment to hear the usual formula, "Your purse or your life." Drawing nearer, I observed that several of these crosses bore the name of one and the same person, and the same date of his death. Then reasoning from the premiss that the same person could not be murdered at the same time in different places, I concluded that the crosses marked the spots where the remains had been laid during the funeral procession. I was afterwards confirmed in my judgment by Mexicans well versed in the usages of their country. However, a few of those mark the spot where murder had been perpetrated.

A little before sunset I arrived in my way to Brownsville at the Rancho de la Palma, where were assembled

together numbers of horsemen, some in gala dress, others in rags and squalor. This rancho you might almost call a little town; its population amounts to about a thousand souls. That day, not fewer than three thousand souls met there to celebrate the feast of Santo Iago. Palma has no grand square like the other towns and ranchos of these regions, but it is intersected by a wide and very long street in which the races and dances were held. I sat on the window-sill of the hut where I had put up, and, while waiting dinner, I contemplated the public rejoicings.

The majority of the rancheros were superbly mounted. Their saddles and bridles were mounted with silver, and two of the bridles were themselves of solid silver. After the races the horsemen walked about in large groups, arm in arm, singing to the accompaniment of the mandoline and the accordion, while some amused themselves by taking a woman *en croupe*, and setting off at full gallop to the end of the street, and returning only to change their burthen. Towards evening, however, the horses were tied to the trees of the rancho; lanterns were suspended from the branches; and seats were set out in rectangular forms. The rancheras, divested of their more precious articles of dress and of their mantillas, took their places, while the men formed in rows behind them. Two violins, two clarionets, and a big drum played the fandango, and the ball commenced.

At this moment my dinner was announced, and it consisted of a morsel of kid broiled on the coals; I ate it without sauce, seasoning, or bread; and let me add, without light. Fingers were made before knives and forks, and they had to serve me on this occasion. I endeavoured to shake off the crust of coal and ashes put

on in the process of cooking, but in vain. The whole time of my repast I imagined I was chewing gravel steeped in grease. Dinner over, I dispensed with witnessing the remainder of the festival; and having passed the two preceding nights almost entirely without sleep, I flung my blanket around me, and attempted to sleep in the back yard. But, during the whole night, the *bum-bum* of the big drum, the shrill discordant notes of the clarionet, the roars of merriment, and thundering acclamations of the dancers, kept me from closing an eye.

Next day, the principal inhabitants of the rancho came to beg that I would remain some time among them, to establish a mission; to bless a cemetery; to lay out a chapel; to organise, to baptize, and to marry. But Palma, being in Mexico, was no part of my jurisdiction. I should have the express permission of the ecclesiastical governor of Monterey for this purpose, and this I promised to ask.

This time, being in a condition to continue my journey through Texas, I took with me a guide who could conduct me as far as Galveston, a small rancho on the left bank of the Rio Grande. We had only two tilled fields to cross, so that the journey was without accident. After two hours we were at the banks of the river which our horses had to swim across. I breakfasted with a *Compadre de Bautismo*. Thirty miles from Brownsville, I met, in a small rancho, a Mexican, on his way to Reynosa, and engaged him to take back my horse, while I looked out for another. It was not so easy to find one; and when found he had neither saddle nor bridle. I harnessed him as best I could with cords, and set off at full gallop for Brownsville.

Four rancheros travelled along with me; and their

number increased by the way; and I re-entered Brownsville with an imposing *cortège*, in a very whirlwind of dust. I was browned by the sun; my beard and hair had reached a patriarchal length; and my clothes were all in rags. I was a skeleton from fatigue and hunger, so that no one recognised me. Nevertheless, I was well pleased with the journey, which had informed me of the character and manners of those people quite left to themselves, more numerous than I had imagined, and so sadly bereft of spiritual aids, that along both frontiers I met with not only families, but whole ranchos, which had not seen a priest for twenty or thirty years, to which my arrival was quite an event, and which were astonished to see a missionary act like the rest of men. I formed grand projects for the moral and material improvement of those destitute populations, so well deserving of interest. Alas! projects are more easily made than accomplished.

After my return to Brownsville I fell dangerously ill, and it was with no small joy that I welcomed the arrival of a colleague, sent me by the bishop of Galveston. He was an excellent Irish priest, of exemplary piety and indefatigable zeal. He eased me of part of my burthen; and in his society I found genuine consolation. Unfortunately, he had not youth enough on his side to support with impunity the excesses of the climate. I was often obliged to leave him alone, and go by myself to the more distant ranchos and villages; and as he knew no Spanish, his position in my absence was painful and critical enough. When I lived at Brownsville, my occupations were so multiplied, that sometimes we passed entire days without being able to interchange a word. His health was shattered by these different causes, his

strength declined, and he was obliged to return to Ireland.

Shortly after my return to Brownsville, my colleague was seized with a violent fever, which obliged him to keep his bed. The following Sunday I had to go to officiate and preach at the rancho of Santa Rita, ten miles off, but I returned to the town to sing the high mass and preach again as usual. I could hardly conclude the mass, and intimated to the congregation that a sudden indisposition put it out of my power to give the usual instruction; and I had hardly reached the sacristy, when I became quite unconscious. When consciousness returned, I found myself in my bed, surrounded by some benevolent individuals, who were lavishing attentions on me, while my sick colleague lay in the adjoining room. At this moment, Isidore brought me letters from France. Notwithstanding my weakness, I sprang from the bed to lose no time in seizing them. I took them out of his hands —but, alas! they announced to me the death of three members of my family. For some time the suddenness of the news and grief left me unable to weep. At length, however, nature had her course, and tears in abundance came to my relief. I was seized with a violent fever; and for twelve days I wavered between life and death. A poor young Irishman, named Philip, with affecting self-denial, left his business to help Isidore, and tend myself and my fellow-labourer, who were both confined to bed, and as much dead as alive. Without my knowledge, he called on the sheriff and the authorities of the town, and informed them that there was a fandango near my house, which every evening made a noise sufficient to make me worse, preventing me from sleep, and causing relapse. These gentlemen were

good enough to make the fandango change quarters. On the fifteenth day of my illness I got up to say mass, being now out of danger, but seeming ten years older by my illness. Philip, as if to be out of the way of our gratitude, went off to New Orleans, but I had at least the happiness to see him afterwards in this town. My medical attendant was also an Irishman, and would take no remuneration for his visits and attentions. I believe I was destined to be the spoiled child of all the Irish who came about me. No wonder, then, that this generous and cruelly persecuted nation should have my liveliest sympathies and most grateful affections.

To make things worse, several diseases raged among the female population of the frontiers. At this particular juncture, the duties of my ministry were particularly severe, while my strength was proportionately diminished. My parish, properly so called, radiated thirty or forty miles from Brownsville as a centre, having a population of nearly thirty thousand souls; but I was able to visit the ranchos, towns, and villages beyond the above distance only at stated periods, so that the poor people who died before or after, were necessarily deprived of sacraments. However, I multiplied my journeys as much as I could, and I was often on horseback the whole night, taking hardly time to eat my meals, while sometimes I lost my way.

One morning I was roused very early to administer the last sacraments to one of the best Catholic ladies of Brownsville, Madame Mariquita Garesché, wife of that good artillery officer who on my arrival had offered me his purse, his house, and his best services. I was attached by ties of devoted friendship to those two superior natures, who loved me as a brother. Mr. Jules, as I have said, was originally a Frenchman; and Madame

Mariquita, as I used to call her, had lived a long time in Paris, at the Convent of St. Clotilde. When at Brownsville, I usually sat at the table of my good friends, with whom I had many a conversation about our distant native land. On the occasion of my illness, Madame Garesché bestowed on me all the tender cares of a sister of charity; so that it was with the most profound emotions that I administered the last consolations of religion to this holy soul, full of resignation, who had so often aided me.

I was still by the the bedside of the sufferer, when Isidore came to inform me that I was called away six miles from Brownsville, to the rancho of St. Rosalia, to attend a woman who was dying of hemorrhage. Aware that this disease soon carries off its victims in these regions, I mounted at once the horse that awaited me, and galloped away. When I arrived, I found near the dying, another woman who was forcing milk from her own breasts into a spoon, and putting it to the lips of the patient. The remedy had an effect the reverse of what was expected, for the sufferer died immediately. As a medicinal remedy, the women of the ranchos have an implicit faith in the sanatory properties of "the milk of a Christian woman," as they call it. Unfortunately, experience speaks against them. Much better is the system of Raspail, which is in such vogue in these countries, and applied with such success. I have seen sold at a fabulous price, his "Annual of Health," translated from the Spanish. For sun strokes and apoplexy, sedative water was the only remedy known in these regions. In the ranchos, when one dies, the women weep, set up a bitter cry, tear their hair, strike their breasts with all the marks of grief, which,

whether in earnest or acted, is equally violent. At all times these noisy manifestations of grief take place among a primitive, uncultivated people. I witnessed this scene for the first time at Rosalia; and was alarmed and moved by it; but I escaped with all speed, having to assist at the interment of a converted Jew.

On my return to Brownsville, I performed the obsequies. Having reached the cemetery, we were assailed by one of those sudden storms which the tropics alone are able to engender. In an instant we were wet through. The soil was so softened by the unexpected deluge, that the brink of the grave fell in where I was reciting the prayers for the dead, and myself, and eight or ten others besides, fell over the coffin, and were half buried with the dead. But we escaped with sprains, a few bruises, and a coating of yellow mud upon our garments.

During this time, the streets were metamorphosed into as many little rivers, which I had to cross on foot. The storm ceased as quickly as it had begun; the sun shone forth in all his radiant splendour; and on arriving at the presbytery, I found two horses saddled ready, waiting for me, with a guide, who begged of me to go with him without a moment's delay to attend two women, who were dying in a rancho thirty-two miles from Brownsville. He added, that in order to travel more quickly, he had left, half way, two other horses as a relay.

There was no time for hesitation, and I did not even wait to breakfast, but changed my wet cassock for my coat, clapped my palm-branch hat well down on my head, to guard against the burning sun, and set off at a gallop. Having galloped for an hour and a half,

we exchanged our jaded horses for the relay awaiting us, and pursued our journey at a similar pace. I did not at the time perceive the error of my not having breakfasted; but now I felt very weak and unwell, and had distressing heaviness of stomach; my clothes were wet, not now with rain, but the perspiration that flowed abundantly from me in large tepid drops The heavens seemed on fire—the atmosphere in flames. It was the end of August, at the height of the raging heat, and the sun, with a serene, majestic self-complacency, sent down on our devoted heads his perpendicular rays. We crossed a great resaca, where the carburetted hydrogen that escaped from the earth disturbed the air like the fluttering flame of a candle, to a height of twenty or twenty-five feet. We felt as if we were passing through the midst of a raging furnace.

When I arrived at the hut where one of the patients lay ill, I was little better than herself, and I fainted before I could be kept from falling. To restore my consciousness I was abundantly sprinkled with cold water; but by the fall I got an enormous lump on my forehead. Having administered the last sacraments to the dying woman, I was about proceeding to discharge the same office for the other, when I became unconscious a second time. Fortunately my paleness and faltering gait plainly gave warning of my suffering condition, and I walked arm-in-arm with the rancheros who accompanied me. While the fainting fit continued I had to undergo a second sprinkling. Truly was I destined to spend my journey in a cold or tepid bath. My ministrations ended, I took a cup of coffee, but had not strength enough to eat anything, and I made the best of my way to Brownsville, where my presence was necessary.

But my journey was not to end here. Having come as far as the thicket that connects the rancho of Santa Rita with Brownsville, and, on account of the frequent murders committed there, called "*cut-throat*," I found a Mexican who had been for several hours waiting there for me to go to a rancho on the banks of the Rio Grande, where my ministry was needed. This fine fellow had been in Brownsville to look for me. Isidore informed him of my whereabouts, and he came to plant himself directly in my way. He tied his horse to a tree, and continued smoking cigarettes while waiting for me. I then turned off from my path and followed my new guide. We struck into the thick of a wood, itself exceedingly dense, and consisting exclusively of enormous ebony trees of richest odour, and of mesquite trees. On the evening previous, I had assisted in this very place, at the removal of the body of an American, who had been murdered in a mysterious manner. One of his friends proposed a post-mortem examination, with the view of finding some clue to the authors of the deed, and I was present at the operation, which took place just before the interment. The deceased received a ball from the very muzzle of a gun, right through the heart. In his breast was found the wadding, but beyond this, no more information could be gleaned of the murderer.

We even passed beneath the tree where he had fallen. The path was quite narrow, the trees were smothered with foliage, and the underwood thickly set. The shades of night were beginning to fall on this savage spot, so solitary and ill-famed. The plaintive coo of the turtle-dove was the only sound that, at certain intervals, broke the dismal stillness. Night — silence — solitude — the cry of the bird — all this inspired an undefined

dread which could not be explained. I felt sad and uneasy. From self-love, I suppose, I attributed this state of mind to hunger, weakness, and fatigue. At length, however, we arrived at our destination.

I found an old woman stretched on a buffalo skin. She had been scalded all over with boiling water, and was dying in the most excruciating tortures. To give her some ease, her neighbours had covered her all over with *nopal* dust or scrapings, — an effectual mollifiant, and much in use in these countries. Poor soul! the joy of seeing the minister of God made her forget for the moment her torture. Being unable to cure her, I whispered words of consolation into her suffering heart. I spoke to her of the dolorous passion of the Son of God — of Him who said, "Blessed are they who weep, for they shall be comforted."

I spoke with profound feeling, for I could never be unmoved witnessing the sufferings of others; yet I have seen so much suffering, that my heart might well have been hardened. But some natures it is hard to change. As I was quitting this poor woman, she squeezed my hand in grateful acknowledgment, and appeared more calm and resigned. For my part, I was more stricken down than herself; and I no longer thought of my fatigues.

The guide who was to escort me to Brownsville was not the same who had conducted me, so that this was the third guide I had in the course of my journey. I really quaked with fear, as I saw him sharpening an enormous dirk, which he fastened at his side. In my eyes he had all the air of an arrant, finished bandit. I might well fear; but it was neither fit nor prudent to manifest my apprehensions; and so I kept behind him as far as I could. We had travelled a certain distance

when I heard the branches sending forth a crackling sound before us. My guide seemed to take no notice of this noise; but, as in these regions distrust may become a virtue, I called upon my guide to halt and listen if he heard anything, for in the pitchy darkness to see any thing was simply impossible. In reality, we heard the approach of some one in the underwood.

"Who goes there?" cried my guide.

"A friend," was the answer.

"All right," he rejoined. And continued his course. But this answer by no means reassured me; for I would rather have met a panther than a man at such an hour, in such a place.

Hence, I cried out to my guide, "How now, you wretch! you say all right, while I think, on the contrary, it is *all wrong*. Do you know with whom you have to deal?"

"Oh! Señor curé," he replied, "fear not; I have recognised the voice of Don Antonio. He is a good Christian."

I knew nothing in the world about Don Antonio; but as he passed me by, I observed this good Christian, who seemed to me a bad character in rags. Appearances, however, often deceive, and I said, "Good night" to Don Antonio, who, on his part, wished me a thousand blessings. It was near midnight by the time I arrived at Brownsville. In mind, as in body, I was truly in a pitiable condition, but I retired to rest without taking any nourishment.

Seldom passed a week not characterised by a succession of similar occurrences, which kept me a whole day or a night, or both sometimes, on horseback, in fair weather and foul. I soon felt that such a life could not

last long, that my strength gave the lie to my wishes, and that my stay in this mission would be short indeed. Yet I found it impossible to act otherwise, for I could not in conscience make up my mind to neglect the instruction of those poor people that I loved so much, to allow so many poor souls to depart unaided in distant ranchos, souls that called on me to reconcile them to God, and open their path to heaven. Thus, notwithstanding my wretched health, never quite restored since my departure from Castroville, I determined on pursuing this exhausting course, while strength lasted to keep me on the saddle or at the sacred altar.

Sorrow and sadness just at this moment fell to my lot. My cherished Jules (Mr. Garesché) left for the United States. In the friendship of this pious Christian, so full of lively faith, I found much encouragement and consolation. His conversation was full of unction, and engaging beyond expression. Solitude has always been to me a sombre veil, spreading darkness and bitterness over my thoughts. Oftentimes the best constituted and most devoted natures require to attach themselves to something sensible, in order to shake off the lassitude of the soul. The mind cannot be always on the stretch, as it soon wears itself out. When you return from a long weary journey, the soul feels sad from the sufferings which it has aided to console, — the body is weighed down by privations that it cannot escape. At this moment the flower which you love, whose growth you watch, and which you water with due care morning and evening — the bird that warbles its joyous song on your gable — the faithful dog that watches your return with plantive whining, are not enough to drive away this natural melancholy brought on by

solitude. I was, therefore, deeply attached to this holy couple, tried so much by sickness. Twice was Madame Garesché brought to the brink of the grave; and twice did she escape, contrary to all the expectations of professional skill.

During our hours of freedom, Mr. Jules and his wife used to come and pass some time beneath the porch of my cottage. To the happiness of speaking my mother-tongue, while breathing the pure temperate air, embalmed with the fragrance of tropical nights, was added the advantage of drawing from the fountain head important information, regarding the countries which Mr. Jules had for a long time inhabited. At my age, these conversations had still for me the charm which the outpourings of friendship bestow upon those in whom years, evils, and experience have not weakened, and destroyed one by one their dearest illusions. My burthen was often enough rather heavy for shoulders so young; and sometimes God allowed me to fall into faint-heartedness, as if to show that He alone is the Consoler supreme, the Master of all hearts, and that in Him alone I ought to place all my confidence, from Him draw all my strength. Unfortunately, in the midst of trials, my eyes were not always turned towards heaven. Sometimes they sought the earth, to find there a support. I found in it the pious hand of this friend, and seized it with all the energy of which I was capable. These evening entertainments were a kind of antidote against this singular lowness of spirit, the offspring of solitude, which I could not shake off. In the heart of my dear Jules I found strength and courage, which Providence seemed to deny me, to make my labour more meritorious.

I have never imagined that the priesthood was a mechanism, which was to work coldly and regularly like a clock. Charity and love of human kind ought to be the moving springs of action with a priest. Such are often the tests of success in the apostolical ministry. St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, and so many other apostles of human nature, have converted whole nations, by pouring into their words and actions the treasures of charity, that glowed in the focus of their own ardent bosoms. A priest who would act differently from these illustrious models would preach to a desert, he would beat the air, and his ministry would be void. But if charity of the heart is the principle of zeal, it is also the source of a thousand miseries to him who attaches himself too much to the people whom he evangelises. To keep up this sacred fire of charity, and direct it to the greater glory of God and the profit of our fellow men, a strength is required which is found only at the foot of the crucifix. That encouragement is required, which is found chiefly in the perusal of the history of apostolical men, and in the devotedness of a pious affection.

Jules had been, then, to me one of those beings whose parting leaves in the soul a void hard to be filled up. The day of his departure arrived. I embraced him in a flood of tears, and parted, never to see him more. His pious consort, yet hardly over the effects of her late illness, accompanied him. She was anxious to go and pray over the tomb of her two children who died in the cradle, and were interred in the church, but was prevented by unforeseen circumstances. At the moment of parting, she made me promise to discharge this pious duty for her by proxy.

Sadly did I enter my house, to be cheered no longer by the visits of my friends. As night came I went to the chapel, feebly lighted by the pale ray of the moon. The breeze was hushed; the birds slept in their nests; all nature was plunged in profound silence; while I directed my steps towards the tomb of the two little angels, to fulfil my promise. Alas! It is only mothers who can weep over the bliss of their little ones, while their innocent souls enjoy an eternal happiness in heaven. Poor mother! she need not visit those two tombs over which I knelt in prayer, and which so often witnessed her prayers and moans. I could not pray for the angels whose bliss was secure; but I did pray for all mothers whose blind tenderness for their children is often cruel in its results — fatal tenderness, which fills the world with misery, and inundates it with vice. Thus did I discharge that debt of maternal piety. Tears bedewed my cheek; for I remembered that in France, I too had cherished tombs, on which, perhaps, I should never leave the impress of my knee. I remained a good while, my head resting on my hand, my eyes turned towards the altar, plunged in an abyss of reflections, each sadder than the other. I had a friend, and God was pleased to take him from me. Thereby, no doubt, He wished to disengage me from all those earthly comforts on which I loved too much to lean.

Since, henceforth, God was to be my only guide and support, I prayed Him with fervour not to abandon me. When I returned to my room, though still dejected, I was, however, calm and resigned, I bethought me of that incalculable amount of suffering that is spread over the earth, and which a prayer, a look towards heaven, renders so light.

CHAP. VI.

EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS. — ADVENTURES OF A EUROPEAN. — DERANGEMENT OF A CREOLE. — THE SECT OF THE VAUDOUX. — DANCE IN THE MIDST OF SERPENTS. — SORCERIES. — THE PIONEER. — PASSION FOR GAMBLING. — HISTORY OF MY GUIDE. — THE HONEY ANTS. — WONDERFUL GROTTA. — SECRET OF THE THREE LEAVES. — HUMAN SACRIFICES OF THE ANCIENT MEXICANS. — A VILLAGE SAVANT. — AN OPEN AIR MASS. — THE HEN AND THE CHICKENS. — AN UNPARALLELED DESOLATION. — THE RECEIVER-GENERAL OF BROWNSVILLE.

In my conversations with the rancheros, I perceived that the want of a religious education made their mind the slave of superstition, and that there was nothing which appeared somewhat singular, that was not to them something marvellous and supernatural. Whatever wore the semblance of mystery, whatever was the result of adroit or secret manipulations, filled them with astonishment and awe. They were content to believe that surprising things were inexplicable, without making the smallest effort to divine the cause, often so easy of access. I can, however, urge in apology, that in these vast countries, imperfectly explored and badly governed, you meet, at almost every step, strange and extraordinary occurrences. Some proceed from the clever mischief of man; some are the phenomena of nature; some the offshoot of the ancient idolatry.

A European living at Matamoros had seduced a Mexican young woman, under promise of marriage; but at the moment of the marriage ceremony he began to hesitate,

Sadly did I enter my house, to be cheered no longer by the visits of my friends. As night came I went to the chapel, feebly lighted by the pale ray of the moon. The breeze was hushed; the birds slept in their nests; all nature was plunged in profound silence; while I directed my steps towards the tomb of the two little angels, to fulfil my promise. Alas! It is only mothers who can weep over the bliss of their little ones, while their innocent souls enjoy an eternal happiness in heaven. Poor mother! she need not visit those two tombs over which I knelt in prayer, and which so often witnessed her prayers and moans. I could not pray for the angels whose bliss was secure; but I did pray for all mothers whose blind tenderness for their children is often cruel in its results — fatal tenderness, which fills the world with misery, and inundates it with vice. Thus did I discharge that debt of maternal piety. Tears bedewed my cheek; for I remembered that in France, I too had cherished tombs, on which, perhaps, I should never leave the impress of my knee. I remained a good while, my head resting on my hand, my eyes turned towards the altar, plunged in an abyss of reflections, each sadder than the other. I had a friend, and God was pleased to take him from me. Thereby, no doubt, He wished to disengage me from all those earthly comforts on which I loved too much to lean.

Since, henceforth, God was to be my only guide and support, I prayed Him with fervour not to abandon me. When I returned to my room, though still dejected, I was, however, calm and resigned, I bethought me of that incalculable amount of suffering that is spread over the earth, and which a prayer, a look towards heaven, renders so light.

CHAP. VI.

EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS. — ADVENTURES OF A EUROPEAN. — DERANGEMENT OF A CREOLE. — THE SECT OF THE VAUDOUX. — DANCE IN THE MIDST OF SERPENTS. — SORCERIES. — THE PIONEER. — PASSION FOR GAMBLING. — HISTORY OF MY GUIDE. — THE HONEY ANTS. — WONDERFUL GROTTA. — SECRET OF THE THREE LEAVES. — HUMAN SACRIFICES OF THE ANCIENT MEXICANS. — A VILLAGE SAVANT. — AN OPEN AIR MASS. — THE HEN AND THE CHICKENS. — AN UNPARALLELED DESOLATION. — THE RECEIVER-GENERAL OF BROWNSVILLE.

In my conversations with the rancheros, I perceived that the want of a religious education made their mind the slave of superstition, and that there was nothing which appeared somewhat singular, that was not to them something marvellous and supernatural. Whatever wore the semblance of mystery, whatever was the result of adroit or secret manipulations, filled them with astonishment and awe. They were content to believe that surprising things were inexplicable, without making the smallest effort to divine the cause, often so easy of access. I can, however, urge in apology, that in these vast countries, imperfectly explored and badly governed, you meet, at almost every step, strange and extraordinary occurrences. Some proceed from the clever mischief of man; some are the phenomena of nature; some the offshoot of the ancient idolatry.

A European living at Matamoros had seduced a Mexican young woman, under promise of marriage; but at the moment of the marriage ceremony he began to hesitate,

and ended by retracting his engagement. The girl's parents manifested no symptoms of resentment, but to all appearance, they continued their social relations with the seducer, who was soon persuaded that all was forgiven. One day, however, he was invited to dine; and after dinner, giddiness, accompanied by violent headache, seized him. He cried out that he was poisoned, escaped, and made the best of his way to fling himself into the Rio Grande, opposite Brownsville. At this point there are always passers by, promenaders, and barilleros. He was rescued from the water, — his life was saved, but his reason was gone. Picked up by a Frenchman, and conveyed home, he filled the house with cries of terror. Every one who met his eye was a poisoner. He refused to take any nourishment; he got away; flung himself once more into the river, and was once more rescued. It was then that a coloured woman, who had lived a long time in Louisiana, declared that this derangement presented all the features of that which proceeds from the absorption of liquids, drugs, or perfumes, known only to the sect of the Vaudoux. She told how her mother became suddenly deranged after visiting the house of a Vaudoux; and declared, with confidence, that if the unfortunate could be prevailed upon to contract the promised marriage, his derangement would cease. The result verified the prediction; for after a visit paid by the young man, in a lucid interval, at the house of the young woman's parents, his reason came back, and the marriage was celebrated.

This singular fact, which came under my own eyes, recalled to my mind that I had seen, in a steam-boat, a lithograph representing a Vaudoux dance. It represented negroes, coloured people, and whites of both

sexes, entirely naked, forming a circle by joining hands and gambolling joyfully in the midst of a number of serpents, that entwined themselves about their limbs without doing them any harm. Seizing the opportunity of learning something about this singular sect, the immorality of which surpasses even that of Mormonism, and whose mysterious power is displayed in deadly results, I made inquiries of this woman herself, a native of Louisiana, where the Vaudoux were very numerous.

"One day," she said to me, "my mother received a note requesting her presence at midnight in a certain house on business of serious importance. The signature seemed so authentic, that my mother made up her mind to go. She durst not inform either her two children or her negress of her intentions; but the negress observing the sadness and anxiety impressed on my mother's features during the perusal of the note, was curious to learn the reason of it. Not attempting any questions, she waited for her departure to take the note out of my mother's pocket, and asked me to read it aloud. The contents had nothing extraordinary in them; but as I read the address of the house, the negress exclaimed, 'Oh! missus, a great evil may perhaps happen, your mother is in the house of a Vaudoux.' I went out at once with the negress; and we found the house, which was only one story high, having merely a ground floor. As the door was unlocked, we entered. Alas! sir, my mother lay senseless on the boards in the middle of a triple circle of black ashes. An individual, veiled in black, left the room by a back door at the moment of our entrance. What had occurred, I have never learned. I took my mother in my arms, and, assisted by the negress, carried

her out into the street. The freshness of the night restored her to consciousness; but she had lost her reason, which she never after recovered."

The sect of the Vaudoux, originally from Africa, as it would seem, is widely spread among the negroes of the United States and the Antilles. What is its veritable end and object? It is hard to say: but this is certain, that its springs of action are self-interest, cupidity, and vengeance. They possess important secrets respecting the properties of certain plants, more or less unknown. They make perfumes or poisons, the effects of which are widely different; one kind killing by degrees, another like the thunderbolt; while some attack reason in different degrees, or destroy it altogether. They are also in possession of peculiar antidotes. A large number of Creoles, of whites, and of coloured people belong to this sect; and some of them even occupy a high position in the society.

The investigation of the mysteries of the Vaudoux would be a curious study, but it is as difficult as it is dangerous a task to interfere in their concerns. I was told the following, regarding some of their ceremonies, as they are often celebrated at New Orleans, at the Suburb Trémé, in an isolated house, surrounded by a fence of boards, and only one story high. One room composed nearly the whole house. At the further end of it, towards the east, was raised an altar covered over with red woollen cloth. This altar was hollow, and filled inside with rattle-snakes, congos, and other venomous reptiles, which would crawl out during the dance, glide about the room, and entwine themselves about the persons of the dancers. The Vaudoux undress, without doubt, in a closet on the ground floor, for they enter

quite naked by the door to the left of the altar. There they join hands and form a ring, while a negro takes his post in the centre, burns in a perfuming pan a substance that diffuses a thick white smoke through the room, stoops to the floor, perhaps to trace certain cabalistic figures, takes five serpents off the altar, and folds them round his neck and limbs. The ring then puts itself in motion; and the whole company, including the negro, twist and jump about for a considerable time. At length the lights are put out, and the noise ceases as darkness comes on.

This sect inspires such terror into the coloured population and the negroes who belong to it, that you cannot get them to procure personal and direct information regarding these mysterious practices. What they say about them is so extraordinary, that no reliance can be placed in it. I have frequently seen at New Orleans in the sequestered streets of the Suburb Trémé, boxes of tinned iron full of oil, and containing a square-cut stove, the size of which varies with the box. They were placed at nightfall on the window-sills, but it was long before I could get any person to explain to me the reason for the boxes being there. No one remarked them; and it was only during the latter days of my stay at Texas that I found them out to be specifics against the witchery of the Vaudoux. However, they are not numerous in Texas, and their sect is unnoticed there, except when any singular occurrence, such as the passing derangement of the European of Matamoros, suddenly recalls its existence. What struck me most was the indifference of the American police regarding the Vaudoux, an indifference common to all parts in which this sect is found. The police, however, know how to

deal with facts, which, secret though they be, are not entirely beyond their jurisdiction. Why do they tolerate these orgies, these arbitrary and cruel acts? Are they themselves afraid of the Vaudoux?

But if the Vaudoux are few in Texas, it is not so with another class of a similar stamp, I mean witches, who show their heads in the frontier ranchos of Texas and Mexico. Hardly a week passes without poor people having to complain of some wickedness practised on themselves, their lands, or their cattle. The witch the most feared and famous among the rancheros, lived at Ramireno, three miles from Brownsville. From her knowledge of the magnetic passes and the properties of herbs she used to astonish the poor Mexicans by her charms and cures, or else alarm them by her mischievous arts. She was held in mysterious respect, mingled with awe. I essayed to diminish her influence over the weak imaginations of the rancheros by explaining to them the means used for their deception; but I could never succeed. Facts were more powerful than words. The simplest remedy was to advise them to keep away from the company of the sorceress, to have nothing to do with her, to live as good Christians; calling to their memory, "If God is for us, who shall be against us?" At the same time I demanded of the witch to change her trade, threatening, in case she did any mischief, to have an inquiry. In the country parts of the Texan frontiers, there are traditions or stories rife about the secrets of natural history; and you learn astonishing things, which it would be as unreasonable to deny without proof, as to admit without examination. In the course of the November of 1851, I proceeded, under the guidance of a *péon* (a kind of white slave), to a rancho where a poor

woman was about to expire; but having a marriage and several baptisms to perform in another rancho not far distant, I took along with me the vestments and other necessaries for the holy mass.

These péons are nearly all reduced to slavery by misery, idleness, or gambling. Their servitude is not hereditary, and seldom even endures for life. The péon engages his services for a certain number of years, during which he is to labour on the land, to tend the cattle and deliver the messages of his master. On the other hand, the master is bound to supply his wants, and even sometimes gives him a small salary. In the countries that I have lived in, the condition of the white slave is by no means wretched; it is quite different from that of the niggers in the United States. In general, the péon eats with his master and is almost similarly clad; and it is hard at first sight to distinguish the one from the other. He enjoys much liberty and labours little. It is principally gambling that multiplies the péons.

My conductor was a humorous, poetic, story-telling kind of fellow. He sang a good many love ditties of his own composition, and when tired of singing he recited some mystic verses, a few of which attracted my attention. I asked him what he was reciting.

"It is my Christmas part."

"What part?"

"Ah! true, Señor, you do not yet know all our customs."

"Well, for Christmas Eve we represent at the rancho the birth of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, as is usual in a good many villages of Mexico. Three rancheros act the part of the 'wise men,' and I am one of them.

Others are shepherds, and sing hymns to the accompaniment of the mandoline. The youngest and handsomest rancheros are the angels and intone the anthems."

He went on for half an hour giving the detail of the ceremony. It was not without pleasure that 9000 miles from France, I found the representation of mysteries once so common in Europe.

While we thus chatted, we reached the banks of a large resaca of limpid transparence. It formed an oval regularly-shaped lake, skirted, as though by a framework, with palm trees, ebony trees, cedars, green oaks, and sycamores; while the wild vines connected one with the other by their graceful garlands, and a verdant slope adorned with fern and flowers, trended from the foot of the trees to the water's edge. A multitude of water fowls gambolled beneath. In the distance we saw stags and tawny animals slaking their thirst. In the midst of the lake was a woody island. A cloudless, azure sky completed this picture so full of charm and poetry. I was enchanted with the spectacle, and communicated my feelings to my péon.

"Oh!" said he, "if you went in the direction of the Red River, you would see sights more beautiful than this."

"There is, then, a Red River near this place?"

"Yes, it is very curious, especially at the Paso del Gigante. It is a ford, that gets its name on account of the bones of giants buried there. I have seen bones twelve or fourteen feet in length, but all that have appeared have been carried off, and the earth is so hard that the pickaxe cannot enter it. However, if the curiosities of the country have any interest for you, I can relate to you extraordinary stories, for Don Ignacio Garcia

has travelled a good deal in the solitary valleys, and learned a good deal which his fellow countrymen knew nothing about."

"And who is this Don Ignacio Garcia?"

"Ha! Señor Don Emmanuel, you don't see that it is I myself?"

"Well, Señor Don Ignacio Garcia, you have seen in my house serpents and living animals, and minerals enough to be assured that I have a fancy for curiosities. Do me then the pleasure of relating your travels and discoveries."

"With great pleasure, but on one condition: that you keep the secret while in the Mexican frontiers."

"I promise you."

"First of all, I swear that every word I tell you is as true, as it is that our Lady, Doña Guadalupe, is patroness of Mexico."

"I have no doubt: but commence."

"There is," begins gravely, Don Ignacio, "in the state of Tomaulipos a valley little known, where are found ants of an enormous size, which make honey; and their honey is still sweeter than the honey of the wild bee, which, however, is the sweetest of all. They seem half buried in the earth, while others of the same family feed them while they are making the honey. This honey is formed in a vesicle adhering to the ant, and when the vesicle is full the ant dies."

Here I interrupted Don Ignacio, for the purpose of telling him that I had seen at Matamoros, an American *gentleman*, named Langstroth, who preserved in a glass vessel a few of these vesicles. They are about the size and shape of a raisin-grain. The honey has

the colour and transparence of a beautiful topaz of Brazil. As to the ant, it resembles the ordinary ant, and there it remains in the vesicle as though buried in its own work. I asked for some details about its reproduction, but the existence of this insect is so little known that I could never succeed in obtaining any further information about it.

Don Ignacio, however, had promised me unexpected revelations. Seeing that I knew as much about the ant as himself, he began to think awhile, and started a new topic, in which I did not interrupt him.

"Ten years ago (it was then I herded the flocks of Doña Trinidad Flores), as I was pursuing a mustang, I penetrated into a very narrow gorge of the State of Nuevo Leon. To the right and to the left I saw only rocks and crags heaped up in confusion, as though the mountain had fallen in. I observed nothing in the shape of a tree beyond a plaquemine, a kind of medlar tree, which grew up in this chaos. I wished to draw near it, to rest beneath its shade and eat some of its black sweet fruit. In climbing up a slope, I caused some stones covered over by the moss to roll down, and, in their displacement, they laid bare the mouth of a deep grotta. I determined on entering; but, at a distance of twenty paces, I was brought to a halt by a wall, which, from feeling it, I found had not been built with lime and mortar, so that in less than five minutes I had it all down, and there opened before me a large lofty room lighted by a fissure in the rock. At the furthest extremity rose a square altar made of polished stones, the uppermost consisting of one solid block. On the altar lay a piece of pure, massive gold, oblong in form, a foot long by two inches wide, while over the

altar stood out in relief against the wall, a frightful grimacing figure made of red clay. The body was covered with a bundle of maize-straw, in which were set seven pins of gold, and several silver leaves tarnished by time. Near the figure was to be seen a garment decorated with red, yellow, and blue feathers, and in form resembling the chasuble of our priests. At such a sight I stood amazed, not knowing what to do. I soon recovered, however, and folded the piece of gold in my handkerchief, put the seven pins in my pocket, leaving the silver leaves untouched, as being too slender to have much value. I closed with care both entrances to the grotta, and returned to the rancho of Doña Trinidad, which was a good way from me. Before reaching it, I buried my treasure in a private spot. I sold part of it at Monterey, purchased my freedom, and went to San Luis de Potosi to dispose of the rest. Although the goldsmith robbed me, without a doubt, I still got out of him two talagres of gold.*

"I had now wherewith to purchase a pretty rancho, to cultivate it and grow rich, but I was fond of gambling and roving, and could not settle down. After sending my mother, who lived at Tula, three talagres of silver, I bought a splendid horse, with bridle and saddle all mounted with silver, and made an excursion to Puebla, Mexico, and Guadalajara. I played a good deal wherever I went, and got on so well, that in twelve months I was almost penniless. It then occurred to me to go and visit my mother. I retraced my steps, and before crossing the State of Zacataca, I halted at

* The talagre is a measure equal to a thousand large pieces; and of gold it is worth 16,000 piastres (960*l.*); of silver, 1000 piastres (200*l.*)

Saltillo, in the house of one of my co-godfathers, called Medina, whose mother was an Indian.

"Medina was old and sickly, and one day taking me aside he said to me, 'Don Ignacio, I mean to confide to you a secret, known only to two Indians and myself. As it ought to become the benefice of one alone, none of us made any use of it; but I fear the Indians may divulge it before they quit the world. I am sick and childish, and shall intrust it to you. Should you mean to make any use of it, you will see what precautions are required. Without them you run a great risk. Let us saddle our horses, and I shall tell you forthwith.'

"We left for the mountain district, and went at a cantering pace the whole way. Having rested in the evening, we resumed our journey at night, 'For,' said my comrade, 'we must not be seen by either of the Indians, who live near the spot for which we are making.' In the midst of the darkness we gained the entrance of a narrow valley. The horses were left here, and we began to ascend a craggy little hill, on which, despite of the darkness, I distinguished nepals and pitas. We had been clambering a quarter of an hour, when my co-father halted, plucked three leaves from three plants of the same kind, and said, 'Take those three leaves, Don Ignacio; keep them carefully. When they are dry, grind and put them into a crucible; their very presence instantly separates gold and silver from every alloy.' I put the leaves carefully in my breast pocket, fully impressed with the importance of the secret, and we returned to Saltillo. I impressed on my memory certain marks to distinguish this favoured valley, and at daylight I stealthily eyed the three leaves. I had never seen similar ones before.

They were long, like tobacco leaves, much of the same shape, and covered with a white down, that made them to the touch as soft as velvet.

"To turn this discovery to account, I betook myself to the silver mines of Guanajuato, in the mountains bordering on Mexico. I applied to one of the richest proprietors of the mines, a man of acknowledged probity, and I offered him my secret, and to conduct him to the lucky spot for four talagres of gold. He consented, but on condition of making a previous experiment with the three leaves that I had with me. The experiment succeeded beyond our hopes. The use of a process so simple would be attended with a vast saving in the working of mines; so that, without a day's delay, the proprietor and myself set off for Saltillo. We entered at night, not to awake the attention of my co-father. I found the valley; but imagine my disappointment at not discovering a single leaf of the kind we sought after. We traversed the valley in every direction—all in vain—yet there it was. In several points the earth seemed to have been lately dug up. What made the plants disappear I have never learned. So we had to retrace our steps, downcast and crestfallen. The proprietor was sorry enough not to have kept one of the leaves, to send it to a Mexican botanist, in order to learn its name and where it might be found.

"As to myself, with the little money that remained to me I bought some oxen and two carts, for conveying goods from Matamoros to Monterey. Unfortunately, by degrees I lost gains, carts, and oxen at play, and became a barillero at Brownsville, then péon. At present I am master of the unfortunate passion, but I conduct myself well, and work a good deal. My master is going

to grant me my liberty, and to give me in marriage one of his daughters, for whom I have a fancy. I shall live quietly at the rancho, and I promise you to build a chapel and open a cemetery."

"These are good resolutions," I observed, "let us only hope they may be lasting, and that industrious and prudent courses may bring you a fortune as large as you met with by chance and lost by dissipation. As to your grotta, I heard an ecclesiastic of Guadalajara, whom I met at Matamoros, recount an adventure that bore a striking resemblance to that of your story. These, with other data, make me believe that the ancient Mexicans did not confine themselves to the public celebration of human sacrifices on those immense truncated pyramids, those colossal temples, the majestic ruins of which are still to be met with. The Indians had, besides, particular sacrifices offered up in secluded and mysterious spots, such as you happened to meet with.

"Indeed, Spanish historians, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, inform us that in several regions of the West Indies the natives adored local deities in solitary spots and grottas, and that they sacrificed also on the mountains. The Indians of the island of Cuba used to perform pilgrimages to a cavern called Loaboma, in which they adored two divinities, of the name Maroba and Bintatel. They offered fruits, flowers, gold, pearls, and animals. In the same island in the desert was another idol, of the name Conocotto, famous for his extraordinary adventures, his invisible travels, and the dangers which he had escaped by miracle. The Cacique Guamarea held this idol in such veneration that he offered sacrifice to it daily.

"Every year the Tlaxcanallians used to offer a human sacrifice on the mountain in order to obtain a good crop. They would wait until the maize had got a foot above ground, which used to be in the month of March. They then took a boy and girl, three years old, the children of free parents, in the vicinity of the town, brought them in procession to a mountain, and immolated them to the god Tlaloc. The hearts were not torn out, as was the custom in other sacrifices, but the heads were cut off, and the bodies buried with new winding sheets. This month of March, which was the first month of the year among the Tlaxcanallians, was specially devoted to sacrifice, in order to draw down the protection of the gods. On the last day of the month, called Tlaxcaxi-penaliztli, the Tlaxcanallians offered sacrifice to their favourite god, Camaxtle, the victims being a hundred slaves. The victims were laid on their backs on a raised stone at the top of the temple, and the priests opened their breasts with a flint or obsidienne * knife, tore out the heart, placed it at the foot of the altar, and besmeared the idols with the reeking blood of the victims. A score of them were then flayed, and their blood-stained skins were bestowed on as many famous warriors, who put them on forthwith. The idols were usually made of marble, jasper, baked earth, gold, or silver; sometimes composed of divers substances, and ornamented with the precious metals. There were some, a mixture of maize and honey, or all kinds of Mexican seeds kneaded in the blood of boys and girls. When the temples and idols were being demolished by the Spaniards, after the conquest of Fernand Cortez,

* A greenish transparent stone of volcanic origin.

several divinities of smaller dimensions were concealed by the Indians in the caves and woods, or else buried in the earth.

"The amount of heads and statuettes of baked earthenware that you meet with everywhere, proves that the greater part of the great tribes that constituted the Mexican empire had their household gods. These little divinities were generally sent to the priests, who deposited them in the temples, that they might be sprinkled with human gore, and thus blessed after their manner. The priests had also other small figures, which they distributed among pilgrims. Numbers of those figures are found at the base of large temples, and especially at San Juan-de-Teotihuacan. The Spaniards, in course of time, forced the Mexicans to give up all these little idols, for the sake of the precious metals that either ornamented or constituted the greater part of them. Still a large quantity must remain in sequestered places.

"The tools used by the Mexicans, as well for sacrifice as for private purposes, were of wrought bronze, which was a good substitute for steel, or else of obsidienne. The silver mines most easily worked and favoured by climate are those of Guanajuato, which are very rich. Before the discovery of the *cold process* (*amalgamation à froid*), a process whereby the poorest mineral is made to yield its metal without the application of fire, and which is due to a Mexican of the name Medina, the silver mines of Mexico had not been much worked, for want of wood or other fuel in the neighbourhood of the mines.

"The sacerdotal garment found in the cave, proves the truth of the statements made by Spanish historians, that the ancient Mexican priests wore vestments bearing a resemblance, in shape, to the vestments of the Catholic priest. In a work of Gonzalez Ferdinandez de Oviedo, on the voyages and conquests of Fernand Cortez, which was translated into French, and published, I believe, at Amsterdam, in 1588, we read that among the presents received by Cortez from Montezuma there were—'surplices and vestments of idolatrous priests, copes, frontals, and hangings of temples and altars.'

"To be brief, those singular stories have the sad effect of keeping alive superstition and the love of the marvellous among this indolent people, plunged, as they are, in the deepest ignorance. I met in the ranchos only one would-be *savant*. He was small in stature, dressed in black, with a low, round hat on his head, giving him the air of a village schoolmaster. He had a high opinion of himself, and never doubted about the extent of his knowledge, as he knew some old French books, that he thought were Latin. He told me, with pride, that he had the Theology of St. Thomas, the apostle. Having no wish to lower him in the estimation of the people who were present, by telling him that the apostle and the theologian were quite distinct personages, I only asked him for the book. He brought me a French medical treatise entitled the *Summa Theologica*. Still the good soul seemed in earnest, and imagined he knew what he could not read."

At length we reached the rancho where I was expected. I administered extreme unction to the dying woman, who had not seen a priest for sixty years; and, after partaking of a tortilla steeped in coffee made out of burnt maize, I took my seat on a wooden

bench, under an old oak tree. The proprietor of the rancho sat by my side, with about thirty rancheros, of every age and sex, squatted around us. The cigarette was lit, and we began to talk about the improvements to be made in the village, and its future. Some related personal adventures, more or less interesting, and I talked to them of France, of her power, her agriculture, her army, her civil and religious institutions, and her old cathedrals. Railways, and especially electric telegraphs, were to them wonders incomprehensible. They were so on the tip-toe of attention that we prolonged the conversation till far in the night, without perceiving it. At last, however, we separated, with many hearty shake-hands and good-nights mutually bestowed, and slept soundly on the grass, here and there, with our bed-clothes round us.

Next morning, I repeated my breviary on the banks of the Rio Grande. This over, I took a little bell and went about the outskirts of the rancho ringing it, to call the people to mass, where I had prepared at the foot of a large sycamore tree an altar, consisting of two meal tubs, over which I placed a hut door. Two bottles, covered with moss, supplied me in the place of candlesticks, and I hung my crucifix against a tree, around which I had drawn hangings, tent-shape, of muslin mantillas and shawls. My rustic altar had an aspect at once graceful and picturesque. After my third summons, the rancheros arrived in crowds and in their gala dress. Some had come a long way, having previous knowledge of my arrival. At the moment of vesting I found that I had forgotten the alb at Brownsville. What was I to do? In the rancho there was no white stuff that might be rendered available. After long and useless

searches, I recollected having seen a hut whose ceiling consisted of a piece of unbleached calico. Cutting it into the form of an alb was the work of a moment, and I commenced the holy sacrifice in the midst of the most profound contemplation.

The rancheros were kneeling on the grass round the altar, and shaded by the sycamore leaves. After the gospel, I turned round towards my audience as usual, and began to preach on the parable of the husbandman, who sowed seed in his land. At this moment, I could not refrain from admiring the picture that opened before my eyes. This motley crowd, all silent, squatted in oriental fashion on the green grass; this young stranger who announced to them the word of God; this altar, so simple and so fresh beneath a dome of nature's verdure in the midst of a vast country; the sun gilding with glory this richly fertile plain; the birds singing their most joyous notes; all produced within me a feeling of poesy and happiness that I would not exchange for the most noisy joys of the heart.

After speaking for a quarter of an hour, I stopped for a few moments to wipe away the perspiration that flowed down my face — for, far advanced though the season was, it was still very hot. During this respite an old man, an octogenarian and more, bald and venerable in appearance, continued the discourse.

"Once upon a time," said he, "there was a hen which had twelve chickens that never left her side, and three more that rambled away from her. The hen did all she could to support her brood; but the land was sterile, and there was no grain. One day a hawk that was in search of prey espied the hen and her brood, and darted down upon them. The terrified hen called her young;

the twelve that were close to her took refuge under her wings and were saved; but the three that were roaming did not hear her cry and were eaten up. Your Reverence," added the old man, "you are the hen. The twelve chickens are the people of Brownsville. The three scattered chickens are the rancheros. The hawk is the devil, who has always some victims amongst us." Astonished at first, I heard out this allegory with a good deal of interest, but not one laughed. My surprise, however, ceased, when I recognised, in my interlocutor, a worthy old Mexican priest, who had for some years past fallen into second childhood. Not losing self-possession, I said on this subject to my good rancheros:

"The Holy Scripture tells us that the 'devil goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour'; but if we remain ever faithful to the law of God, if we observe his commandments — in a word, if we live as good Christians,—we have nothing to dread from the spirit of evil, and we shall die worthy children of God."

After mass, I took a slight collation, and, accompanied by my guide and several rancheros, I pursued my journey to a village where I had a marriage and several baptisms to perform. We had to pass along a pathway so narrow, tortuous and obstructed, that it was with much ado our horses could make their way through the briars and branches that crossed us in all directions. We then passed over glades and prairies where the earth was so light and soft that sometimes it gave way under our horses' feet. The rancheros call these *tierras falsas*, (treacherous grounds): after rain they are very dangerous; man and horse sometimes sink and disappear in them, as in shaking prairies. We then saw a large number of wild turkeys and roebucks that made off on our approach.

We arrived without injury at our destination in the afternoon of the same day. The village consisted of fifteen or twenty tents at most, raised on the edge of a forest and an immense plain of maize, watered by the Rio Grande. In order to impart more solemnity to the religious ceremonies, it was determined that their celebration should take place next morning after mass.

The village was crowded with rancheros who had come a long way, I should think, with a few exceptions, rather to dance the fandango than to assist at mass. Some lived so far as fifty miles off, a circumstance that may give an idea of their passion for dancing, and of how little they make of time and distance. When evening came, a stage for the musicians was erected beneath an oak; the benches for the rancheros were put in position; a meal hogshead, whose ends were replaced by parchment, answered for a big drum; while a clarionet and mandoline completed the orchestra. Lanterns were suspended from the branches of the trees, and the ball commenced.

The preaching, long fasts, and fatigues I had to undergo on like occasions, used to give me a violent headache, not much remedied by the sound of the big drum. I went to bed. The bed destined for me was in the hut of the future bride. Near the bed was the greater number of the family, who talked and bawled and laughed in such a manner as to keep me from rest, even if my fatigues had allowed it.

I lay down in my clothes; and to increase my enjoyment, a multitude of insects of every kind rose up in war against me. Unable to enjoy either quiet or sleep, I got up, and went out for a walk in the outskirts of the village; but falling down from lassitude and sleepiness,

I betook myself to an old cart, which I espied in the distance, and perched myself on its pole, which had been squared with the axe. The effort I had to make to retain my equilibrium, kept me from rest, and in utter despair I went and threw myself at the foot of a tree, and passed the remainder of the night meditating on these poor people, whom I could observe by the pale light of the lanterns, enjoying the sport of the dance. These dark shadows skipping in the distance beneath the branches of the mighty oak, to the horrid sound of the eternal *bum-bum*, presented a strange and fantastic picture. I thought of the witch dance. One of the dancers, under the influence of drink, or from sheer love of plunder, seized the opportunity to commit some thefts. He was caught in the very act, judged, and in punishment, tied to a tree for the rest of the night. He fell asleep; and during his slumbers, one of his judges stole his shoes off his feet. The robber awoke robbed.

At sunrise, the ball being over, I prepared the altar, as on the evening previous, under a tree. For want of a bell to apprise the rancheros of mass hour, I employed children, who ran from hut to hut to hurry on the loiterers. The entire congregation assembled around me were about five hundred souls. After mass and exhortation, I performed the marriage ceremony. The bride had to leave the same day with her husband for his place of residence, at a distance of fifty miles. During the ceremony her mother and relatives began crying; the bridesmaids joined in the chorus, and soon both bride and mother went off in a fainting fit. In my life I had never witnessed such desolation; but the Mexicans are never at a loss for tears. I then baptized five children, who capped the climax in this scene of tears,

I could never have conceived them capable. I hardly understood the prayers which I recited, for my wretched aching head sang its own unheard airs. I feared I should go mad. Tears they say are contagious; so the ceremony was hardly over when I took my horse and escaped at full speed to Brownsville. I met Don Eduardo on my way. He was an Irishman who filled the post of receiver-general of the country and collector of taxes. Before his time, the constables received more gunshots than piastres, so that there was no great competition for the occupation. Don Eduardo knew how sweetness and moderation would render him acceptable and successful with the Mexicans. When they could not pay the taxes in kind, they gave cattle and commodities as equivalents. The collector sold the cattle and commodities, and found a profit in the sale. The Mexican got over the tax and the public demands were met, both sides were satisfied. The Irish are very clever in acquitting themselves in countries where they are driven by circumstances.

Don Eduardo was at this very time returning from the discharge of duty in which he had succeeded in paying all arrears, so that he was in the best imaginable spirits. Being naturally quaint and witty, his company gave me a good deal of pleasure. He was full of anecdote and adventure. He stopped at every rancho, and had a shake-hands with every one. He was co-father to all the inhabitants of the frontiers. I thought we should never reach Brownsville, for it was midnight, and we were only at Santa Rita. He asked me to sup with one of his numerous *co-gossips*. Hungry and tired as I was, I accepted the invitation. After the meal he examined his revolver and changed the caps. I

asked him if he had reckoned on killing any one on the way.

"It is possible," he replied, "we may be attacked in the Cut-throat for the sake of our horses, and especially of my money. It is well known that I have always piastres with me from my excursions."

"What you say makes me regret having joined you as a companion, and having been overtaken by night at a distance from Brownsville, for I have no arms."

"Oh! don't fear," he says, "it is moonlight; you will be recognised; and you know the Mexicans never injure a priest."

We continued our dialogue, and arrived at Brownsville without killing any one.

CHAP. VII.

MANTA TRADE. — CARVAJAL. — A WAR OF DEALERS. — COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES. — PRUDENT SOLDIERS. — AM ASSAILED WITH A VOLLEY AT A DISTANCE OF TWENTY PACES. — END OF THE SIEGE OF MATAMOROS. — BATTLE OF CAMARGO. — TWO CONQUERORS WHO DO NOT DOUBT THEMSELVES. — PRISONERS OF WAR. — ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE. — HISTORY OF A PRUDENT GENERAL. — CONDEMNATION. — INFLICTION OF DEATH. — THE HOLY VIATICUM. — EXECUTION. — RETURN TO BROWNSVILLE.

THE trade in unbleached cotton stuff, or *manta*, is most important along the Mexican frontiers. The rancheros use an enormous quantity of it for inner and light garments and for manual purposes. The Mexican government, with a view of developing the manufacture of this article, gave a monopoly of it to fifty merchants, chiefly English and Spanish. The number of persons employed in it rose to 214,509; and from the establishment of the monopoly up to 1850, — seventeen years — the factories had issued upwards of fifteen million pieces of that material. Wishing to protect this branch of national industry, the Mexican government had laid such a tax on foreign fabrics, as amounted to a prohibition. This would have been a deadly blow to the frontier trade of Texas, had not smuggling assumed colossal proportions along the line of the Rio Grande, very inefficiently watched by about a dozen custom-house officers.

However, the merchants of Brownsville and those of Matamoros suffered alike from this state of things; for

the transit trade, being contraband, extended along the river banks instead of being concentrated in both towns. They conspired to excite a popular movement against the monopoly, and committed to General Carvajal the task of revolutionising the States of Cohahuila, Tamaulipas, and Nuevo Leon.

General Carvajal was a Mexican, brave and enterprising; more a distinguished soldier, I believe, than a good leader. He had been educated at a Jesuit college in the United States. He was of middle size, symmetrically formed, and had regular features: his lively eye spoke at once address and energy. During the war between Mexico and the United States, his part was somewhat equivocal. For some time he had cherished the project of rousing the Mexican frontier States, either to force the government to some administrative reforms, or to organise a little republic independent of Mexico, which should take the name of "The Republic of Sierra Madre."

General Avalos, commander of the Mexican forces of Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, and Cohahuila got a hint of what was going on. Carvajal being at Camargo, a troop of lancers was despatched to arrest him, but he had timely warning of his danger, and escaped to Rio Grande city, whence he opened negociations with the merchants of Brownsville, for money, munitions of war, and all requisites for organising the insurrection. He promised twenty-five piastres a month to every recruit. A crowd of American adventurers, who had fought in 1846–7, were attracted by the hope of plunder and the love of novelty. A couple of hundred discontented Mexicans joined this troop. Carvajal marched on Camargo, which, for want of soldiers, was taken without a blow; but he lost precious time in waiting, doubtless

the fulfilment of the promises of the merchants of Brownsville and Matamoros.

Meantime these had changed their plans. Possibly they dreaded the frightful consequences if Carvajal was conqueror. They invited Avalos to a grand entertainment, at which they discussed the measures to be taken against Carvajal. It was shown that the government troops, not being sufficiently numerous to defend Matamoros with any chance of success, the national guard should be called out at once, and a supply of money and firearms provided. The merchants, who had no fancy for personal contributions, counselled the admission of American cotton stuffs at a low duty, which might be partially applied in suppressing the insurrectionary movement. The other money would naturally go into Avalos's pocket. This suggestion opened a smiling view before the general, who decreed forthwith the proposed reform, despite the remonstrances of the superintendent of customs.

Carvajal was entertained with promises, and halted at Reynosa, as he had before at Camargo; so that for eight days or upwards, bales of cotton crossed the Rio Grande that might be estimated at the value of half a million of piastres. This transaction was little known, and therefore little talked of. The Mexican markets had a supply for a long time; but the smaller frontier markets found no more outlet for their goods. Their interests had been sacrificed; and they gave notice of events to Carvajal, who in his fury committed to the flames some of the convoys of goods that were making for the interior. Unfortunately the goods had been sold at cash payments to the merchants of the interior, and they were the sufferers.

Carvajal at length turned on Matamoros, whence the civic authorities, though they had made such preparation against him, sent him a deputation to know his intentions, and pray him to discharge his American soldiers, engaging at the same time to arrange all things for the best, provided that his proceedings did not savour of foreign intervention calculated to wound the self-love of the nation. But he refused, alleging that he could place no reliance on their promises while Avalos, his deadly enemy, remained at Matamoros, and saying he could not dismiss his Americans, who were his very best soldiers.

Next evening, with about fifty men he took up a position in Fort Paredes. This fort, which is quite near the town, consisted of some embankments raised in 1846, to protect Matamoros against the army of General Taylor. The only gun in the hands of the assailants opened fire at once; but at the third round it became useless; on the second day, at ten o'clock in the morning, Carvajal seized upon the hut of the customs-collectors, situated opposite Brownsville. This was rather a piece of military parade than a stroke of strategy. The inhabitants of Matamoros fired a few ill-aimed shots at him, which fell on the other bank at Brownsville, and had the effect of putting to flight those drawn together there from curiosity. Carvajal then decided on forcing his way into Matamoros; and his column scattered itself through the streets, and began an irregular skirmish, in which each man fired on either side without aim or order. The fusilade soon re-echoed through every street.

A little after the firing began, General Avalos was hit in the thigh by a spent ball, and was at once

carried to his house. A few of the combatants, and some curious on-lookers, were either killed or wounded. At this moment Carvajal had only to urge on his soldiers a little to become complete master of the town; but these, instead of advancing towards the Plaza-Major, the centre of defence, adopted the more prudent plan of hiding in the houses, and advancing slowly by apertures made in the walls and partitions. The besieged taking courage, pointed their cannon against the houses that screened the assailants, and forced the latter to scamper for their lives. During the night Carvajal ordered his troops to re-enter fort Paredes. This was a stupid mistake. The besieged hastened to form lofty barricades with bales of *manta*, and to cover roofs with sacks of earth, from behind which Avalos' men could fire upon the besiegers, if they should attempt to enter again, while they themselves were quite protected. Thus the defence was better organised; and from this moment it might have been foretold that the hesitation, if not the incapacity, of the Americans had snatched from them a victory which was within their grasp.

I passed part of the night in spiritual attendance on some of Carvajal's men who had been wounded, and were taken from the Brownsville side to a temporary hospital. As daylight appeared, thinking there might be at Matamoros a good many wounded of both forces, and that the Mexican *curé* could not be equal to the task of attending all, I crossed the Rio Grande, and took a wretched nag, abandoned near the deserted hut of the customs collectors, and made off on him at a gallop, hoping thus the more effectually to escape the balls of both sides, between which I had to pass.

I penetrated without accident as far as the large street that led to the square; but I found myself at once in front of a strong barricade, and heard around me gun-shots without seeing a mortal. However, thanks to the bad aim of the marksmen, I got within twenty feet of the barricades without being hit. There were then thirty muskets aimed at me. It being too late to fly, I suddenly drew the reins, and driving the spurs into my horse's ribs made him rear erect, while *a volley was fired*, and a number of balls sped hissing past my ears, — I escaped, but the poor animal that served me as a shield, had three balls through his body, and fell before the guns could be reloaded. I ran to the barricade. The captain in command then recognised me, and was much distressed by what had occurred.

"Why the d—l have you come here without white colours?" he said to me.

"I did not think they were required when one was alone and unarmed," was my reply.

The barricade might be assailed every moment, and my position was becoming more critical. There was no time for wasting words; and I informed the officer of my errand.

"I am come to confess the dying; where is the *curé?*"

"You cannot see him. They are fighting in the streets."

"Where is the hospital?"

"Just hard by."

I ran to it, but was rather surprised to find there only four wounded. The fighting had continued for twenty-four hours. Several hundred cannon shot, and upwards of twenty thousand cartridges had been used,

yet the loss on both sides was only a few in killed and wounded. Blessed be God! the horses had suffered more than the men.

On leaving the hospital, a negro who had come there, I don't know how, addressed me by my name. Seeing that I looked at him with an air of surprise, he said:

"How is it you don't know me? I have a brother who is in the service of your bishop. I have another who is the servant of the Archbishop of St. Louis. A third is with the Archbishop of Oregon, a fourth who —"

I interrupted him, saying, "Tell me about your brothers another time. The place is not well chosen for a conversation."

Judging my presence at Matamoros unnecessary, I returned to Brownsville, where they thought I was no more.

The same evening Carvajal sent for me, begging of me to go and attend the wounded at Matamoros concealed in a certain spot, and who could not have been transported to Brownsville, either because their wounds were too serious, or that they were deserters from the United States' army. I went forthwith to Fort Paredes, where I found the general dining on sprats (*sardines*) and a bit of bread. I put myself at his disposal. Next day he sent me a Mexican guide, and I went on foot so that I might run less risk.

Arrived at the Rue du Commerce, at the end of which was a barricade and a battery of large guns, I heard a heavy explosion succeeded by a shrill whistling sound. A brick-house had fallen behind us. My companion fell, a ball carried away his thigh and abdomen. I took the unfortunate man to a neigh-

bouring street and knocked at several doors to find some one who would look after him; but all that were not in the conflict had fled to Brownsville. My position was becoming critical, and I knew not what to do, ignorant as I was of the place where Carvajal's wounded lay. Fortunately, an American officer who was passing by pointed it out to me. I discovered a wretched hovel in which lay stretched six men mortally wounded, while an Irish surgeon, a most worthy and devoted man, was tending them. I begged of him to go and see after my poor guide, and exhorted my patients, as I administered to them the last consolations of religion. Five of them unfortunately died shortly after.

Returning to Fort Paredes, I met a hundred of Carvajal's horse, who were going to encounter a hundred of Avalos' lancers, in the review ground near the cemetery. Both sides met, eyed each other at a distance, and returned to their quarters, each glorying in the other's not having dared to attack. The siege continued twelve days. Besides the firing, the only event was the burning of some houses, which was attributed to the Americans. The accusation seemed not without foundation, for they several times threatened to set fire to the town, if they did not take it; and as the Mexicans endeavoured to stop the flames and save the property, they were treated to a warm fusilade, which wounded some of their number. The flames threw a lurid glare to a considerable distance. This night too, was to me a restless one, for I had the task of re-assuring several afflicted families, who had abandoned their homes at Matamoros to take refuge in Brownsville, and had come to me to unfold their fears and sorrows,

which, among other things, the explosion of some barrels of gunpowder might well justify.

Carvajal withdrew at the tidings that Canales was coming to the relief of Matamoros at the head of a force of a thousand men. Canales had been the chief of a band of ruffians in the war of 1846-47, and was accused of having sometimes fought against and sometimes imitated the *guerilleros* in his indiscriminate plunder of American and Mexican convoys, at the head of his band of robbers and assassins. He had, they say, a daughter, who managed the lance with expertness, and commanded some expeditions. At the time of the treaty with Guadalupe Hidalgo, a price had been put upon his head by the Mexican government; but he succeeded in vindicating himself—nay, in obtaining the rank of Mexican general in active service. For personal reasons he detested alike Carvajal and Avalos. He would have wished to have found the latter put to the rout, and he put the former; so that he came quite leisurely, in order to give full time to Avalos to be beaten, but finding him victor, he got into right bad humour.

The Mexican government honoured the town of Matamoros with the title of "heroic town," as a reward for its brave defence. The people of Brownsville arrived in crowds to view the ravages of the war and fire.

Carvajal had withdrawn to Rio Grande city, and wished to re-enter Mexico; but, to avenge his defeat, he organized a new expedition. Canales was sent to Camargo to encounter him, and they met on the Camargo road, where Canales' men riddled those of Carvajal from behind the brushwood. Then Colonel Nuñez, who commanded the Mexican portion of the latter, ex-

claimed, "We are betrayed—*sauve qui peut.*" It is thought that he himself was the traitor. Twenty-four of the Mexicans escaped to Rio Grande city. The Americans gave battle in the brushwood, and the firing continued during the night, without many casualties. On both sides the men posted themselves behind the trees for greater security. If the men escaped, the trees were the sufferers. Carvajal, seeing that his force was not strong enough to succeed, retraced his steps to Texas, which was only a gunshot from the battle-ground, and Canales, fearing a surprise, retired to the other side of the San Juan, which flows near Camargo to the north. A spy gave Carvajal intelligence of this retrograde movement, and he returned towards Camargo, with the view of entering the place before daylight; but at the same time the inhabitants informed Canales that Carvajal had retired into Texas; and the former, emboldened by this unlooked-for event, also turned his steps towards Camargo, where both armies found themselves face to face by their very efforts to escape each other. The conflict was comparatively bloody on this occasion. Carvajal, Johnson, and a third general, whose name I do not remember, were seen to charge in person, and to fire the one cannon which made up their entire artillery. His ammunition falling short, Carvajal was forced to retreat; and Canales proclaimed that his own retreat had been a strategetical movement. Thus did the war terminate.

The prisoners taken by the troops of Avalos were regarded rather as rebels and assassins than as prisoners of war; consequently, they were condemned to be shot a few months afterwards. Avalos, who had not yet recovered from his wounds, was furious against the Americans, and wished to give them a lesson for the

future. The execution was to take place three days after the sentence was passed, and I was charged by the Mexican general with their spiritual interests, and to prepare them for death. They were kept under guard in a room of the Lancers' barracks, which had been changed into a chapel. This barrack, which served also as a prison, was a large, square, brick building, in the midst of which was a court-yard, in which the prisoners walked while waiting execution. The entrance was by a large carriage-gate, opening into a corridor, at the end of which was the court-yard. The corridor was formed of two chambers, one serving for a gate, the other as a dormitory for the officers of the guard.

I entered, not without emotion, while the soldiers presented arms, and an officer led me to the chapel, of which the doors had been removed. At the sight of my French clerical costume the convicted flung themselves into my arms, with affecting demonstrations of sorrow and gratitude. A young Irishman, only twenty-two, hung on my neck, sobbing and crying, "Mother, sister dear, I shall never see you more." Both Catholics and Protestants shook hands with me, and thanked me fervently for having come to see them at that critical moment. Their despair wrung my heart, and instead of giving them consolation I began to join in their tears—and my tears were a consolation. Inwardly I prayed of God fervently to grant me the courage and strength necessary to discharge my duty.

It was only after violent efforts that I mastered my emotion, and begged of them to pacify their conscience before appearing in presence of the Eternal Judge. The American prisoners were not at all resigned; they

said that they had been kept in cruel suspense, and that the sentence was unjust. I recalled to their minds the conflagrations and murders of which they were the perpetrators, in an unoffending town, having only plunder in view; and that now it only remained for them to invoke the Divine mercy. I gave them some devotional books, and some tobacco, and promised to appeal for a commutation of punishment, telling them, at the same time, not to indulge in vain, sanguine hopes. They told me they had often written to their consul to interfere in their behalf, but that they had received no reply.

I waited on the English and French Consuls, who interfered in consequence with General Avalos, and I called upon him myself. He is a small, fat, rather olive-complexioned person. His black beard, and quick, sinister eyes, gave him a ferocious look. His father was a Mexican, his mother an Indian. The savage blood could be seen in the man. With polished, affable, and accomplished manners, he was stern, false, and vindictive. As he remained deaf to my prayers, I thought fit to remind him of a fact which I had on good authority, and which closely concerned him.

"I am going," said I, "to tell you a piece of history. A Mexican town had been attacked by a band of adventurers. At the outset of the combat the general of defence was wounded in the great square. He was taken to his own house; but, fearing that if the adventurers succeeded they might take and hang him, he got himself clandestinely conveyed, during the night, to a distant hut, leaving his troops to their own guidance. A curé of my acquaintance was aware of the fact. He might have revealed to the besiegers the hiding-place of the courageous general, and there was an end to the

war. But as there was at stake, not merely the life, but the honour too, of the general, the curé kept his secret. If you do not prove yourself to-day as generous as he did, to-morrow he shall publish this story in the journals, adding the names which I have not mentioned."

Avalos grew pale—his eyes flashed lurid lightning. Had it been in his power to plunge a dagger into my heart he would have done so without scruple; but as I trembled not, he thought me armed, and answered—

"Very good! the execution shall be deferred until I receive orders from Mexico."

This was all I wanted, for I knew there was a Spanish law, not repealed, in virtue of which, one condemned to death, who should leave the chapel for any reason whatsoever, could not be reinstated there, that is, his life was saved, for none were ever executed who had not passed three days previously in the chapel.

When I brought back this news to the prisoners they embraced me with transports, and the hope of life so lit up again within them that I felt alarmed. I did not feel sure of success; and I drew up in a hurry, with the aid of the curé of Matamoros, a petition, that went round among the ladies of the town, begging of General Arista, president of the republic, the life of the prisoners. It was not, in reality, good policy to put them to death, for their execution would be looked upon, on both sides, as an act of vengeance and a political assassination. It was even an imprudence, as by embittering the minds of Avalos' enemies, it might cost him his life.

To save the lives of these wretches, and calm public feeling, I wished to profit by the delay, to organise a

plan of escape. With some money this project could be accomplished, as I had only to make a hole in the prison wall, which was of brick, and hardly more than a foot in thickness. Besides, the building was solitary, and not strongly guarded, and the prisoners might, in a quarter of an hour, cross to the left bank of the river. But I was not seconded in due time. Among the countrymen of the Americans I only met with inertness, imbecility, and stupid threats against Avalos.

During these transactions, Colonel Nuñez, accused by the Americans of having caused the loss of the battle of Camargo, was obliged, in order to save his life, to beg of Avalos to put him in a place of safety, that is, in prison. He came then, under pretence of important business, to be a prisoner at Matamoros. Avalos, who did not relish him much, was not satisfied with his arrest only, but submitted him to a court-martial, and had him condemned to death. Nuñez found his protector had gone too far, and, fearing that the sentence might be put in execution, he fled, and took refuge in Brownsville, where his condemnation by the Mexicans restored him to confidence. This escape of Nuñez, who had been in the same prison with the others, stripped me of all hope of rescuing them, for it had the effect of rendering the surveillance more close, and the precautions more effectual.

At length an order came from Mexico to shoot the prisoners. This was on Saturday, and the execution was fixed for Monday. This order threw us into consternation; for we had been satisfied that Avalos, holding as he did his military commission from the President Arista, would not venture on any attempt at corruption or undue influence, either to please the president or satisfy his

own feelings of personal revenge. I had failed in saving the lives of these unfortunates. It only remained for me, with the aid of Don Raphael, a Mexican priest, to acquit myself of the awful mission of assisting them at the last hour. Their prison chamber was again changed into a chapel. An altar was made out of a long table. The report spread abroad, and the New Orleans papers repeated it, that I had bored a hole in the wall, by hiding myself in the altar, for the purpose of promoting the escape of the prisoners.*

* It is curious at times to see how facts are distorted by newspaper correspondents. The *Daily Delta*, of New Orleans, in its issue of 22nd June, 1852, thus describes the circumstances that accompanied this execution:—

. . . . . .

"I am now going to tell you of a murder, one of the most revolting that has been committed since the days of the Inquisition. You remember that in last October, about eight months ago, General Carvajal attacked Matamoros, and that the attack lasted eleven hours, &c. &c. In his retreat he was vigorously pursued by the enemy for two hours, and four of our men, who separated from the main body, were taken and cast into prison. They had been subjected to all kinds of hardships and barbarous treatment up to yesterday morning, when they were brutally put to death by order of General Avalos.

"I have to laud the conduct of some of the people of Brownsville on this occasion:—the Catholic priest, the Lieut.-Colonel [1], the Spanish Consul, Nosmand [2], and several other determined foes of Carvajal, seconded by the ladies of Matamoros, who pleaded the cause of the prisoners before the bloodhounds, so far as to obtain for them

---

[1] I do not remember that the Lieut.-Colonel had aught to do in this business.

[2] The Spanish Consul was dead, and his secretary had no influence. The English Consul, however, entered with entire devotion into their cause. He left at my disposal 2000 *doubloons* (6400*l.*) to aid me in the enterprise. These consuls were not at Brownsville, but at Matamoros.

I had intended it, but could not accomplish my design. The hangings of the altar were constantly raised up. I was between two sentinels; and two companies of lancers, blunderbuss in hand, stood guard, one opposite the door, the other behind the wall, against which rested the altar. I confined myself to my sad and solemn duties.

The following morning being Sunday, the holy *Viaticum* was taken to the Catholic prisoners. The streets were strewn with flowers and branches — flags floated from the windows, garlands of stuff and silk handkerchiefs hung from the houses along which the Holy Sacrament was to pass. The *cortége* left the church, preceded by a military band playing a dead march, and the people followed praying aloud. From the depths of the prison I heard the plaintive sounds of the music and the murmuring prayers of the multitude. My heart sank; I felt weak. The prisoners knelt by my

a promise of escape. General Avalos was to withdraw the guard, under one pretext or other, during the night, and to give the priest time to bore a hole in the prison wall, through which the prisoners might escape. The priest, God love him, performed his task with a *crowbar*. A little before daylight, the work being finished, after his labouring at it all night, he passed into the outer court, the prisoners behind him, full of the hope of again seeing their dear parents and friends. They found a guard of fifty soldiers, instead of ten (the usual number), outside, who forced them again into their prison. The priest then called on Avalos, but was refused admittance. The poor fellows were taken out at five o'clock in the morning, and shot down before 300 soldiers. The sentence specified *eight o'clock*. They have been thus deprived of the last three hours of their life, which doubtless they were anxious to consecrate to God. Such facts and murders have raised a universal shout of disgust in this town. . . . . . General Avalos was burned in effigy yesterday.

"P. S. The prisoners were denied the last rites of religion — extreme unction. The priest's name is Abbé Domenech."

side, wept and prayed along with me. Well might they indeed. They were so young! and grief for the loss of life, an absent cherished family, which they were never again to see. Nature has her exigencies, to which the strongest will must yield. Poor fellows! seeing my emotion and my sympathy, they felt less lonely, they drew from me some strength to support their misfortune and think of God.

Don Raphael entered carrying the Blessed Sacrament. They flung themselves before him, and laid hold of the pyxis, imploring the Divine grace in a heart-rending tone, and that they should enjoy the privilege of "asylum," recognised by the law of the land. They were calmed with difficulty. The prayers for those in the agony were recited, and the Catholics received the Holy Communion. In half an hour afterwards, took place the collation of the dead. It is the custom that the priest share in this last meal of the condemned prisoner. I could not sum up courage to eat; but from courtesy and pity, I took some chocolate. Scenes of this kind do their work in the heart of a priest; and if it be not made of brass, the three days that he thus spends with condemned criminals are days of moral torture that leave behind traces not to be effaced.

In the evening the American prisoners received the tardy visit of their consul, of their minister, and of a doctor. These gentlemen brought with them coarse linen garments, that their countrymen might be decently clad for the ceremony of execution; and they returned home, after smoking cigars for an hour with the unfortunate prisoners. I could not refrain from contrasting this kind of philanthropic consolation with Christian charity. What an abyss divides them! I spent the

night in the prison with the criminals. I spoke to them of heaven, of the clemency and mercy of God, for they were greatly downcast. Some of them rolling about their haggard eyes, murmured some unconnected sounds; others continued dumb, their eyes fixed on the earth. From time to time one of the youngest allowed a heavy heaving moan to escape him, sometimes a cry of agony, while he wrung his hands. About two o'clock A.M., overcome with mental fatigue, they manifested a wish to sleep a little. I arranged my own garments in the shape of a cushion, on which they laid their heads. While they slept, I went out to breathe a little fresh air in the prison court where a Mexican officer, seeing me in my shirt sleeves, lent me a covering, lest I might catch cold.

The execution was fixed for seven o'clock. At daylight, I went to the church to say mass for the doomed criminals; but it being closed, I had to go to the priest's house to get the keys. There I was informed that the fatal hour had been anticipated. I returned in hot haste to the prison; but was late. The condemned had left, accompanied by a dozen other prisoners, detained on the same charge, but not as yet sentenced. The place of execution was an untilled field, about five or six hundred yards from the prison. The wretches were fixed to a kind of bench; but the handkerchiefs to blind them had been forgotten. The unsentenced prisoners did them the charity of supplying the want. One of them, whose arm had been fractured by a ball, tore off the bandaging and gave it to the young Irishman, who had specially interested me. With a cruelty unheard of, the uncondemned had been placed behind the others, and thus believing that they were about to be shot without trial

or judgment, they gave themselves up to the most violent despair. Two of them fainted. Eight soldiers were drawn up in two files before each criminal, and a battalion of infantry assisted at the execution.

When I saw that the prisoners had been already taken away, I ran to the place of punishment to rejoin them, to give them another word of consolation. But as I drew near, I heard a horrid discharge; then a second. They were no more.

I learned that a Mexican and a Scotchman received the first discharge while they continued to pray, and without blenching. The second was to put an end to them. The bodies were placed on a dung-cart, and conveyed to the cemetery. Slow and on foot, under the pelting rain, I walked behind the cart, from which the blood trickled down, recommending the victims to the mercy of God. The cemetery was two miles distant, and the way was slippery and swampy. When I arrived, from emotion and fatigue I could not stand. There were neither coffins nor graves to receive the dead. The Americans having got me to promise that I should have their remains conveyed to Brownsville, I waited on General Avalos to make the request, but could not gain admittance. Either from fear or some other reason, his door was closed this entire day to all but his officers. I returned to Brownsville in a sad condition, physically and mentally. These three days had preyed more on me than a year of missionary labour.

On my return to Brownsville, a crowd of people came to inquire about the entire transaction. Their curiosity vexed me.

"What have you been doing these six months," said

I to the Americans, "to save the prisoners? Your conduct has been that of men without heart or energy. You have not even sought to procure them some alleviation during their long and painful imprisonment. Though many among them were Protestants and Americans, it was a Catholic priest who made an effort to save them, who went to see them, to console them and to sweeten their lot."

I was heard in silence, and it was admitted that in this melancholy drama, there was but one humane and honourable part which no one had ventured to undertake, and which I alone, on my part, had filled with constancy, self-denial, hardships, dangers, and privations. Thus, from this day forward, I acquired great popularity along the frontiers, and had no more disagreement with any one.

CHAP. VIII.

A MASQUERADE. — REVENGE OF AVALOS. — COMICAL HEROES. — CONSOLATIONS. — CHRISTMAS. — HOLY WEEK. — CAPTAIN MOSES. — TOILETTE OF THE RANCHERO. — MOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE. — NOCTURNAL REVERIE AT THE SEA-SIDE. — BAGDAD. — WALK TO BRAZOS SANTIAGO. — NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE. — PROJECT. — REMARKS ON MEXICO; AND THE INVASIONS OF THE YANKEES. — ADIEUS. — DEPARTURE. — SOUVENIRS.

SHORTLY after this execution, the Americans wished to be avenged on Avalos, and hanged him in effigy, as well as Manchaca, his counsellor of war. The scaffold had been raised on the bank opposite Matamoros; and two effigies had been paraded for three days on asses, followed by an *impromptu* masquerade, with a frightful uproar, and on the third they were hoisted on the gibbet, amidst boisterous acclamations. The people imagined they were offering a grand sacrifice to the shades of their countrymen.

General Avalos could see from his own house his effigy, swinging with the breeze. He did see it, and felt it, and soon made his anger felt also. A band of Indians, from the Mexican side, committed shocking ravages all at once along the Texian banks of the Rio Grande, from Santa Rita to Galveston. The steamship "Comanche" was repeatedly attacked by these savages during its passage up to Rio Grande city; and each succeeding day brought new tidings of murders committed

by them. As I was attending a sick person near Galveston, four Americans fell by the arrows of the Indians, near the hut where I was.

This last outrage roused the Americans to teach a lesson to the Indians who had taken up their quarters twenty-five miles from Matamoros, on the banks of the Rio Grande. Forty "good men and true" were brought together and marched against the enemy. They were commanded by a Yankee of Herculean strength, but of questionable valour. The little troop set out with as much hubbub as if they were going to the conquest of the world; and though the question was, who should accomplish the most daring feats, at the first encounter, the forty volunteers took to their heels. The expedition returned to Brownsville without sound of drum or trumpet, and it was well known by this time what hand guided the Indians. The American authorities addressed sharp remonstrances and ominous threats to Avalos, who had to despatch a force against the Indians, and they yielded without striking a blow, allowing themselves to be taken to Matamoros, where they got a field near the town, in which they quietly installed themselves.

They were the mildest creatures in the world, at least in their new abode. They were of great stature, and yellow copper-colour. Each family was differently tattooed, and the men's entire dress was a towel. The women were better provided for. I saw their children, eight or ten years of age, send an arrow through an apple at a distance of fifty paces, while some hit small coins at that distance. They sat the livelong day fishing on the banks of the river; and at a certain motion of the water, they became aware of the presence

of fish, invisible to civilised eyes. Off darted an arrow, and in a moment there mounted to the surface, a fish pierced right through. In the course of a few months, they were allowed to return to their solitudes; and thenceforth no more was heard of them.

After so many trials some holy consolations were reserved for me. Every day I saw scattered sheep coming to the tribunal of penance, such as had not approached the sacraments for several years. More than a hundred couples, who had lived in concubinage, begged the blessing of the Church on their marriage. On Sundays my church was filled with fervent rancheros, who had come, in spite of the inclemency of the season, even ten miles on foot to assist at the sacred offices. The soldiers of the garrison came sometimes, the band leading, to add éclat to our ceremonies. I bought at Mexico an organ, which I set up in the church to increase the solemnity of the ceremonies, and to direct the voices of our young choristers. At first I felt great disappointment on learning, that Brownsville had only one organist, who was engaged by the Episcopalians. Fortunately, I was on good terms with the Episcopalian minister, a young man of education and liberal views, and no bigot against Catholicism. He had even been on the point of becoming a Catholic, and was only prevented by his bishop, who himself some time after abjured Protestantism. He felt for my embarrassment, and as my services and his took place at the same time, he proposed that I should anticipate the time by an hour, and that he would postpone his by another. Thus the organist could perform successively in the church and the chapel. By this I had the benefit of seeing my auditory increasing by

the presence of Protestants and even of Jews. The Episcopalians came repeatedly to listen to my sermons; and I did my utmost to remove, by my preaching, the blind prejudices which the Americans entertain against Catholic missionaries. My words bore some fruit; and my conduct in the war of Carvajal facilitated not a little my efforts.

I observed that when I began to preach, several Frenchmen and young Creoles, having no great love for sermons, left the church, and went to walk in my garden, where they amused themselves with making bouquets of my choicest flowers. For some time I sought an expedient which, without wounding the lively sensibilities of these gentlemen, would oblige them to remain in the church and to respect my flowers. I found a very simple means of arriving at my end, without betraying my intentions. In the menagerie which I got up by degrees, was a fine-looking wild boar, which I had trained up as a watch-dog. On going to say High Mass, I let him loose in the garden. At the sight of this new warder, the marauders made off with all possible speed, and returned to the church patiently to hear the sermon.

Christmas-day arrived, with its rejoicings for the people and its sorrows for me; for we may recollect it was my birthday. The memories of the past—of family and country—came fresh upon my mind, wrapt in an undefined melancholy. During the midnight mass, I had a moment's happiness in seeing a crowd of every age, sex, and creed, take possession of the house of God, which was at this moment in all its splendour. The draperies, the flowers, the lights, supplied in profusion, were in sweet harmony with French taste, become

proverbial with strangers. The mass was sung by fourteen of my countrymen, who had very sweet voices. The chasuble which I wore, was the gift of a Mexican. It was gold brocade embroidered with gold and silk; and though more than a hundred years old, it reflected rays of light in all directions. Upwards of 300 who could find no room in the church had to hear mass in the open air. Fireworks, sent off by the officers of the garrison, terminated this feast, which had never before been celebrated with so much solemnity on the frontiers of Texas.

Holy week caused me unheard-of fatigues. Besides my ordinary duties, I had to hear numbers of confessions, to decorate the church, to explain the ceremonies in two languages, to sing by myself the entire offices, which are very long.

After the offices, I went on Holy Thursday to visit the church of Matamoros. I had to go this journey on foot, for during the last three days of Holy Week, vehicles do not run in the town. The choir of the church had been metamorphosed into a mountain of verdure, on the top of which reposed the most Blessed Sacrament. On this mountain grew natural trees; grottas were formed of moss and fern, in which were concealed shepherds, who, with their willow flutes, imitated the wailings of the women of Jerusalem, weeping for the death of the Redeemer of the World. The sweet plaintive notes of these instruments infused a melancholy feeling into the soul. You could not hear them without profound emotion.

Easter Sunday was one of the happiest days of my life. A crowd of Catholics approached the sacred table,—(how many among them had kept away from it for years!)

—and received the Holy Communion with meditation and fervour. God abundantly recompensed me for my labours; and with profound emotion, I gave vent to tears, while preaching on the benefits of the religion of the Son of God. My parishioners, affected, for the most part, by my emotion, also wept. We felt the full force of the words of Our Lord,— "My yoke is pleasant and my burthen is light."

A Jew, a retired captain of a steam-boat, who used to attend regularly at our offices, and was greatly attached to me, shed abundant tears. His name was Moses,—one of the ugliest men breathing, but not the less kind-hearted for that. His face was red, wrinkled, and frightfully pitted with small-pox. His enlarged features had neither regularity nor symmetry. My dear friend, the captain, was a phenomenon of ugliness in his normal state; but his grimace while weeping made him something frightful. I confess this grimace made a certain impression on me and rendered my discourse less impressive. Meanwhile a ranchero, who felt it no doubt rather warm, coolly took off his shirt in the church; but in an instant the sun darted his burning rays on his naked shoulders and the ranchero threw his shirt over them and tied the sleeves across his breast. Doubtless this toilette produced on my auditory an impression analogous to that which the grimace of Captain Moses had produced on myself. It was that of cold water thrown on fire; for at the end of my sermon the tears were all dried.

After the Easter holy days, I went to visit the portion of my mission which I had hitherto but imperfectly known. As it was but thinly inhabited, this visit was to be only a kind of vacation. Captain Moses offered

me hospitality in a house which he had at the mouth of the Rio Grande, and I accepted the offer. We set off together in the steamboat that plied between Brownsville and Brazos.

The distance, by water, from Brownsville to the mouth of the river is about eighty miles, but as the crow flies, only thirty. You would imagine that the Rio Grande, no less than the savage, regrets leaving this valley, at once so wild and beautiful. It hesitates, and makes a thousand windings before losing its identity in the depths of the sea. The banks are less picturesque than to the north of Brownsville, being flatter and more wooded, indicating the proximity of the sea. According as the gulf is neared, the land becomes arid, sandy, or marshy, trees more rare. The Spaniards of the sixteenth century well designated this coast by calling it *Costa Deserta*. It is a veritable desert. Some tufted sand-banks meet midway, and two or three ranchos are the only things that break the monotony of the road. A little before sunset, we arrived at a village at the mouth of the river. The dying fire of the day-star flung into space rays of reddish hue which were reflected by the sea, which seemed like a lake of blood.

The Captain's house was an old *entrepôt* of munitions of war, abandoned since the time of the American invasion. The building, which was large, and of wood, was then occupied by a quantity of rusty old iron, the remnants of wrecked vessels, either sold or abandoned. A bed, capable of accommodating four or five, was in the midst of broken anchors, severed chains, gaping lanterns, and other instruments of like nature. The Captain, with wonderful *sang froid*, honoured me with his apartment. The bed being between five doors and two windows, I

could not want air; but, for sleeping, I had calculated without the musquitoes, which are more numerous here than in Galveston.

Not being able to close an eye the whole night, I got up, and went to take a walk by the sea-side, to which the silver moonlight pointed out my path; I climbed the white sand-banks that skirt the coast, and took my seat on the débris of a wreck, washed ashore by the waves. I contemplated, with mixed pleasure and sadness, the extent of this calm, fair sea, wrapt in the silver rays of the moon. The waves died away on the shore with a regular, monotonous sound. Some light, grey clouds hovered in the firmament, and the cry of the night-birds mingled with the murmurs of the waves, while a light breeze refreshed the tepid atmosphere of this solitude.

At the sight of this spectacle, so grand, so poetic in its simple beauty, and of which I happened to be the only observer, I felt, in a manner, inspired. I turned my eyes towards France, from which a space of nine thousand miles separated me. I thought, that if death did not overtake me in the midst of my missionary duties, how I should soon be obliged to drag along, in my own country, a debilitated frame, a mutilated existence, henceforth without use or aim. For the second time my strength had brought me to the moment of gathering the fruit of my labours. For the second time my frail skiff was shattered on the rock of sufferings, at the moment of entering port. The "Sic vos non vobis" of Virgil then recurred to memory. Cruel thought, which darted across my mind like a temptation of the evil one. I called to mind the words of St. Paul, "What have you that you have not received? And if you have received, of what do you glory?" With reason

could I repeat, at this moment, the words of the gospel, "I am a useless servant." And I was so young; my short career had been so eventful, I had lived long in a short time. One consolation remained to me; it was, that I had never looked on the past with regret; and I hoped that God would take into account the days I had spent, my labours, my hardships, and sacrifices. With a mistaken zeal, perhaps, for the glory of God and the salvation of my neighbour, I had, without doubt, been imprudent, and thus hastened the ruin of my health. But, can man be always a sure judge in his own cause? I might have often deceived myself; but, having acted only from the best intentions, I had some ground to trust to the mercy and goodness of God.

Full of these sweet thoughts, that battled with the sadness of my soul, I at last fell asleep on the sea-weed upon the strand, beneath the starry heavens, and lulled asleep, as it were, by the monotone of the waves breaking on the lee-shore.

I devoted the next day to visiting the occupants of this wretched village, composed mostly of little, wooden houses, extremely low, and built up against the sand-banks. I found here two Irish families, with whom I passed two long hours, chatting about green Erin, their dear, native land, with its poetic memories, the privileged land of fairies, ghosts, ballads, and legends.

In the evening, the few families come down to enjoy a bath in the tepid waters of the gulf. I went with my esteemed Captain, who never left me. I then passed over to the other side of the river, and set foot on Mexican soil, to visit Bagdad, another village, situated near the mouth of the Rio Grande. This wretched

place bore no resemblance to the oriental town, once the abode of Harûn-al-Rashid. Some reed huts, plastered with mud and oyster shells, gave shelter to a dozen Mexican families, whose existence was a problem to me, for, to a distance of twenty miles all round, there seems no trace of cultivation. Sometimes there arrives at Bagdad a sloop from Tampico, loaded with bananas, ananas, cocoa nuts, and lemons. These fruits are immediately exported to Matamoros and Brownsville, where they find a good market. Near my Captain's house I observed large, wooden edifices, half in ruins, inhabited by Americans, who spent their existence in fishing and hunting. In the evenings, before sunset, they meet to smoke, to read the papers aloud, and to discuss politics. Eccentricity and feelings of independence must be pushed far enough to make people live thus in deserts, without name or shade, and spend in solitude and inaction a life without aim.

Brazos Santiago not being more than four miles from the mouth of the Rio Grande, I went there on foot with the Captain. We followed the beach. The strand was strewn over with a triple row of wrecks, for the most part half buried in the sand. As we walked along, we discovered an enormous quantity of table glass, five barrels of old brandy, which had been there for many years, and three hogsheads of rum, bearing date 1825. We then crossed a narrow channel, only two feet deep, which took us to the island in which Brazos is situated. On entering the island, I met an Irish family that lived on the produce of oyster fishing. The oyster banks, which are very numerous on the Texian coast, are almost at the water's edge, which ren-

ders the fishing easy. I observed, near the Irish cabin, hens picking the open oysters—they lived upon them. There was also a horse, but I dared not ask what provender they gave him: I feared they might answer "Oysters."

At Brazos I baptized a child; but having little to do, I returned the same evening to the mouth of the Rio Grande. To pass the time, the Captain and myself chanted the litany of the blessed Virgin. The Captain loved music much, and especially the litany; and when we were alone, he often said to me, "Let us sing the *Ora pro nobis;* it is so pretty." What a duet—an invalid priest and a Jew chanting the praises of Mary!

After a rest of eight days in these parts, I returned to Brownsville by land. The route over upwards of fifteen miles, passes through vast swampy plains, covered with jungle. Midway, I saw a neat rancho, situated on a small elevation, and shaded with beautiful green oaks. I stayed a short time, to drink some milk, and to know if the rancheros had need of my ministry. I then entered rich pastures, in which large flocks of sheep roamed and bleated at pleasure.

Returned to Brownsville, I was obliged to desist from my extensive missions, and to confine my visits to the sick. I seldom preached, not even on Sundays. I had seen the last of my strength. Every sermon cost me oceans of blood, issuing from my shattered lungs. My nervous, spasmodic fits had become so frequent, that I was also forced to abstain from celebrating the holy sacrifice during the week.

About the middle of the year, we celebrated at Santa Rita the feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of the Mexicans. The principal proprietor at

Santa Rita, intending to go to live at Bahia, wished, for the last time, to impart to this feast all possible solemnity. For this end he invited singers and several others from Brownsville. On the eve of the feast, about twenty-five of us went on horseback, conducted by this rich ranchero, who started off at a gallop, all following through clouds of dust, raised by the horses' hoofs.

On our arrival at Santa Rita, we found seven or eight hundred rancheros, assembled from the surrounding country. As this crowd could find no cabins to sleep in, it divided itself into groups, which encamped in the gardens, in the court-yards, and even in the streets and squares of the rancho. There was a large square in the centre of the rancho. The chapel, situated to the north of the place, and made with stakes, sunk in the earth, and potter's clay, had a thatched roof. The belfry, which was completely separated from the body of the church, was of the shape of a gibbet and mounted two old Mexican clocks.

Shortly after nightfall, we repaired to the chapel. The litany of the blessed Virgin was sung in chorus, as also vespers, and then we formed a procession by torch-light. Young girls in white bore on a pole, ornamented with streamers, flowers, and draperies, an image of the patroness of the Mexicans. They were followed by musicians playing the violin and mandoline, while I walked alone after them, and the people followed close behind. All bore lighted torches or lanterns in their hands, and recited the rosary aloud. As we passed in front of a cabin, the procession was saluted by the discharge of a gun, a rocket, or musket.

I rarely witnessed a more interesting spectacle. These white gowns, that portable altar, covered with lights and

flowers, these torches, this singing in the midst of silence and darkness, made a deep impression. After the ceremony came the amusements. For an hour the men assailed one another with harmless rockets, which were thrown and exploded amidst bursts of laughter; and as no feast, even religious, terminates without a fandango, the dancing saloon was fixed in a spot where the grass was shorter and more sparse. Coffee was kept boiling in a huge kettle, and distributed gratuitously; and the dance opened. The crowd assembled for the celebration of the feast being greater than had been expected, provisions soon became scarce, and coffee alone remained. Experience had taught me what noise is made on such occasions; I therefore went to spend the night beneath a fig tree, away from the ball. Next morning I offered the holy sacrifice in the chapel, and preached for the last time.

After mass, the greater part of the guests were half starved, and loth enough to return home fasting. I was of the number, and therefore proposed to go and have breakfast at the rancho of Doña Stefanita, situated three miles from Santa Rita. We set off on horseback, to the number of thirty. Doña Stefanita, a small, shrivelled old woman, placed at our disposal, with patriarchal generosity, her poultry-yard and her provisions. A goat, some hens, and melons supplied us with an abundant breakfast. Barring the Irish, I know of no people who exercise such cordial hospitality as the Mexicans.

In the month of March, 1852, Matamoros was honoured by a visit from a high government functionary of Mexico, General Don Emanuel Robbles, minister of war and of marine. By his valour and skill

he obtained a just celebrity during the siege of Mexico by the Americans. He then set about satisfying himself, personally, as to the military requirements of the frontiers. Having formed a design for the moral improvement of the people, and knowing the necessity of government support for its realisation, I got myself introduced to the general by the Mexican consul at Brownsville. I told him that I found a large population along the banks of the Rio Grande made little account of by staticians, and which, being abandoned to itself, was losing, gradually, its religion and its nationality. The children of the more comfortable classes were sent to the United States, to receive an education, sometimes prejudicial to their religious convictions, always to the detriment of their nationality. I offered to go to Rome to lay the question before the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda, and to ask him to divide those frontiers into regular, distinct missions, conducted by active, zealous priests, and numerous enough to found colleges and impart instruction.

"What will become of Mexico," I said, "before these Yankee invaders, who have already taken from it Texas, New Mexico, and California, if you do not make that sentiment which is the firmest bond of patriotism, the sentiment of religion, strike deep roots in the Mexican heart?"

In reality, the Mexican question is big with interest, for it presents the battle of an infant people that wishes to shake off its swathing bands, and to rise from the deep rut into which the jealousy of the mother country threw it, by reserving to herself extravagant monopolies. In spite of the concessions and liberal laws of Charles III., in 1778, Mexico has been crippled by the restrictive commercial system, and the systematic preference accorded to Spanish-born merchants. Thus, after its declaration of independence, in 1822, the new empire had to encounter unheard-of difficulties in its fresh political organisation. After the reign of Hurbide, which lasted only one year, came the Republic, which had to combat at once incapacity and ambition. All the chiefs of the work of independence would seize for themselves the fruits of victory; and, instead of uniting to commence the work of reform, political and commercial, they made war on one another, sometimes covert, sometimes overt, but which always ended in the overthrow of one of the idols of the hour. The incapacity and venality of the government, joined to the apathy of the governed, have made the history of this charming country a series of risings (*pronunciamientos*), which have often deluged Mexico and the provinces with blood. Part of the army obeyed the general who immediately commanded, and fought against the section commanded by another general. The administration was always seized upon by the partisans of the president, who frequently saw power snatched from his hands by an *émeute*. The ordinances of government, both fiscal and administrative, marked as they were with the seal of official incapacity in political economy, were but ill-suited to the particular requirements of the distant provinces. The president, who forced himself on the country, was generally the officer most adroit or daring. These men, while they upheld order by force and energy, enacted reforms to meet the momentary necessities of the government, but which had the effect of impoverishing the provinces, and curbing commercial enterprise, under the pretext of developing

the internal resources of the country. A lame and false pretext, for in paralysing the commerce of the provinces the rulers destroyed the means essential to the development of private industry.

In the old Spanish provinces a general wins his epaulettes without much ado; but in a rising republic the sword which rules and maims must give place to mind, which organises and directs the general interest. But, unfortunately, the Mexican generals were not all endowed with administrative faculties of this order.

If Mexico still feels her way to get out of this slough, and to go forward in the way of progress and civilisation—if she has within her so many disorganising elements, how can she resist this colossus, ever astir, this neighbour so ambitious and unscrupulous in his manner of invasion, which has his foot ever on her neck to carry off her fairest provinces? Empires, like men, require the experience of suffering. The experience of others rarely profits any one. Mexico, if she means to rise to the level of European civilisation, and oppose an impassable barrier to the Yankees of the United States, must fight and suffer more. But in the end she will succeed, for she has the principle of vitality within her, great intellects, great passions, and even patriotism. For the moment all this seems to slumber, but its waking hour is drawing near. Force is not enough to swallow up a country. Besides, the United States have a hideous sore that consumes them—slavery. In discussing those questions of the future, I observed to Don Emanuel Robbles—

"Mexico possesses the fairest and the richest provinces in the world, and the Catholic faith is a powerful weapon of defence against American aggression. She

will never be ruled by a Protestant country. The days of conflict and trial may return; then shall bold and intelligent minds rise up, made more numerous by religious training, which enlarges the intellectual powers of each man, gives all serious ideas of their duties as Christians and as citizens, makes them feel by a more accurate knowledge of the gospel and moral precepts all the dignity of their nature, teaches them to give God what is due to Him, and Cæsar what is due to him, that is, to their country."

Don Emanuel Robbles perfectly understood the bearing of my project, and the national benefit that would be its result. He gave it his approval, and gave me letters of recommendation to the Mexican minister, at the court of the Holy Father. I communicated my views to Don Raphael, who was to accompany me to Rome, and who had a letter from General Arista for the very same purpose.

By this time I had no more strength left me. My works could no longer keep pace with my will, no longer could I pursue my duties. Nervous spasms, fainting fits, spitting of blood, forbade the smallest fatigue. The priests promised to be sent to my aid had not arrived. I went to Galveston to see after them, and to inform my ecclesiastical superiors of the absolute necessity of my returning to France. I then returned to Brownsville, where, for a month longer, a martyr to sufferings, I was dragging along an exhausted frame, a spent existence, without ever stirring from that town that I loved so much, and which, for the space of eighteen months, was witness to my energy, ardour, and zeal, such as it was, in running about in all directions to succour the unfortunate.

Three priests of the Oblats of Mary were to replace me in the month of September. I was resolved to depart in the end of that month. My departure was sadder this time than when I left Castroville, for a return was out of the question. I was like one of those worn-out instruments, no longer of use, which are hung up in a corner to become gradually the prey of rust. Except a place of retreat and a last asylum, of which I had none, I resembled those military invalids, whom honoured scars have deprived of their means. I felt sad —much less indeed from the egotistical thought of a wintry future, of a clouded threatening horizon, towards which I was about to proceed, than from the deep affection I bore these strange people, to whom I had become thoroughly accustomed, an affection but too well returned. I had much difficulty in tearing myself away from the families which I was visiting for the last time. I felt as if I were one of them.

In fine, after my last adieu, I threw myself into a coach that was starting to Brazos. Among the passengers was a creole woman with an infant at her breast; she was going to New Orleans to rejoin her husband. The mother and the child, of whom I knew nothing, were *recommended* to me by an *American*, of whom I knew just as much. These recommendations, which would look so odd in Europe, are quite matters of course in the United States. They are quite honouring — but in general strangers have no desire to assume the responsibility of watching over unknown ladies during a considerable journey, and especially as they treat you with incredible unceremoniousness and freedom.

Arrived at Brazos I again saw my old friend Captain Moses, who had not grown more handsome. He made

me a present of several Indian silk handkerchiefs and filled my pockets with boiled prawns, as prog for the journey. We both wept sincerely in giving the parting embrace. This was the last mark of sympathy that I was to meet in this strange land. What a singular coincidence! The first was given by an Episcopalian; the last by a Jew.

A storm detained us eight days in the gulf. On the 21st of September, at midnight, we struck upon an oyster bank, and were for two hours hanging between life and death. A ship was wrecked a couple of hundred yards or so from us; and at the mouth of the Mississippi, we observed another on fire. I made no stay anywhere during my journey. I was unfortunate enough to have some fresh recommendations to Paris — recommendations which occasioned me a world of embarrassment and annoyance.

I remained a few days at Lyon in the bosom of my family, and then pursued my journey to Rome. My project for establishing Mexican missions was approved of by the judicious and zealous Secretary of the Propaganda; but before its accomplishment it should meet with the sanction of the Mexican prelacy. I reckoned on returning to Mexico to obtain this necessary sanction: but alas! man proposeth, God disposeth. Man's power is very limited here below. Bodily infirmities obliged me to remain some time in Italy. Medical skill declared my active career at an end — at an end, alas! when the greater part of my *confrères* were hardly commencing theirs.

And now, in the hours of solitude, the recollections of the past group themselves in sad array before my mind, like pictures always present, spreading over my

soul a sweet and dreamy melancholy, of which I cannot divest it. European life is to me cold, colourless, pitiful. My regards, for ever turned towards those old solitudes, those deserts peopled with dangers and red skins, tawny animals, and rattle snakes, could not rest on this narrow horizon, whither my sufferings had conducted me. The cloister smiled before me like a desert-island, in which I might seek shelter after shipwreck. Seated on the banks of life's rapid torrent, I see before my view these even now distant pages of my existence, like so many leaves transported on the wings of the wind towards the ocean of eternity. And with a tear trembling in the eye, and a sigh quivering on the lip, I murmur with my Master—"Lord, let thy will be done."

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE.