

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXIII.

NOVEMBER, 1881.

No. 1.

A DILIGENCE JOURNEY IN MEXICO.

THE journey was made in the winter of 1880-81, when the rapid progress of work on the two great railroads had already put a limit, not far in the future, to the period of diligence journeys as a necessity in the interior of Mexico. My husband's business related to certain silver mines, for which Morelia, the capital of the State of Michoacan, was the nearest point of departure. The softly voweled name of the old Catholic city was alluring. Beyond the mountain wall which encompasses the valley of Mexico there lay an interior full of indefinite promise; strange figures walked the streets of the capital, or camped in its market-places, who had come over the mountains on their sandal-shod feet from a country of which travelers said, "There is nothing stranger out of Egypt." The *diligencia general* is the ordinary Concord coach, drawn by eight mules, harnessed in a complicated tangle, which is technically described as "two wheelers, four on a swing, and two leaders," *i. e.*, two at the wheels, four abreast in the middle, and two ahead. The driver wore a pair of goat-skin breeches, with the long yellow hair outside, comically suggesting the legs of a satyr. He had an assistant beside him, who wielded the whip, or, if whipping failed, pelted the mules with small stones from a leather bag filled for the purpose. There was extraordinary neatness and precision in his aim. The offender was admonished by sharp, unerring little taps upon the ear, or the root of the tail, or a projecting hip-joint. On these occasions, unlike the teamsters of the North-west, the Mexicans do not rely on profanity.

The season was late January, but triumphant spring in the old city of Cortez—clear, intense sunlight, young leaves spreading, a commotion of birds in the city gardens, and a damp, earthy smell mingled with the per-

fume of violets. There was that thrill in the air which "stirs the blood with the instinct of travel," and gives one a longing to "tarnish the blue of distant mountains with one's feet." The old pavements of Mexico are laid in a pattern, outlined with large stones which have become painfully prominent with the tread of centuries. We started with a heavy jolt and a succession of shocks, as the wheels bounded from the intersecting lines of this ancient pattern, but the torture ceased at the square, where stands the equestrian statue of Charles IV., which the common people call the Trojan horse (*el caballo de Troya*), the focus of several historic streets. We diverge upon the *Paseo de Bucareli*, named for one of the viceroys, where the Mexican ladies were wont to take the air in their carriages, before Carlotta founded the new *Paseo de la Reforma*, and gave it the tragic association with her memory. The city is steeped in tragedy, but one does not remember this on a spring morning, when even the gray arches of the aqueduct are putting forth new life in the tufts of young grass trembling against the sky.

The houses in this part of the street have an individuality and a strong facial expression which impresses an American vividly in contrast to the monotonous, wide-eyed stare of a respectable New York street; each house is worthy a description which would apply to no other. It would not be easy to guess the life of the people inhabiting them. The houses repose behind their crumbling garden-walls, looking out upon the shifting world of the street with a dull, slumberous dignity which ignores the pathetic look of social decadence and general discomfort creeping over them. Their windows are deep-set and heavily shuttered; the balconies have formidable railings; the gardens look weedy and wild; the strong

sunlight spares no detail of decrepit wood-work, or faded paint, broken tile, or stain of leaking spout meandering down the stuccoed wall with a grotesque suggestion of unwiped tears on unwashed cheeks. One, a low house in pale yellow stucco, peeling in flakes and exposing the gray adobe, had a grass-grown bridge crossing the moat, where floating weeds and water-plants scarcely stirred upon the sluggish current; a few thin poplars rose against the low horizon, through which a rising moon might peer with weird effect. The aqueduct followed us beyond the city gate, its massive arches, each one the tribute of a conquered Indian village, marching with pomp across the plain, and framing it in solid gray shadow—a succession of pictures, all in the same low morning light, with the same background of blue mountain-wall, overtopped by volcanic peaks with world-resounding names. It would have been an immense encouragement to my youthful geography if I could have believed in the actual existence of Popocatepetl, and that I should ever see him cutting the tropical heavens with his dazzling, snowy helmet. I do not remember even trying to learn the name of his bride, Istacihuatl, or the “white woman.” The aqueduct is such a bulky embodiment of the past that one may easily overlook the historic marshes which were once covered by the now shrunken lake, and reflected on such a morning as this the far-famed floating gardens of Montezuma, and the Aztec pirogues flitting into the markets of Tenochtitlan, with their loads of fruit and flowers for the tables of the nobles and the sacrifice of the dread priests. Now, as we swing along past the aqueduct, Chapultepec is in sight, the light arches of its loggia rising above the tops of the cypresses, which have outlived four empires and countless vice-royalties, succeeding each other like dreams of a troubled night. There is a tradition that the ghost of Cortez’s Indian mistress, the gentle Doña Marina, walks where the shadows are deepest in the cypress avenues; but one cannot understand why Doña Marina should be there, alone, of all the sad Indian queens and fair Spanish vice-queens who have walked there in life. What a company they would be—many times greater than the daily assemblage of the living on the Alameda—if all the restless and disappointed men and women who have inhabited Chapultepec in the past should gather like the twilight shadows in its melancholy walks, and look at each other as they passed, with dumb, wistful, reproachful, or threatening, or despairing eyes!

The stage-road is the ancient *camino real*, built very soon after the conquest, and apparently never mended since. It was paved with

the miscellaneous stones of the country through which it passes, unhammered, and laid in a pattern, like the city pavements; but this source of exasperation time has nearly removed. Traces of it are left here and there, and when not visible we knew it by a painful perpendicular movement of the hind wheels of the diligence. Across the valley to Tacubaya the road is broad and level; cool morning shadows cross it; the country is like a garden; flights of birds hover over the freshly turned earth, where men are plowing with oxen yoked by the horns, and plows of a pattern probably older than Christianity. With this rude implement they have been scratching the surface of the soil for centuries, while depths of unexhausted fertility lie below. The men at work on the windy plain wear wide white cotton trousers flapping about their bare brown ankles. Their great hats swing around with the sun—at midday resting on top of the head, at sunset framing it in a halo of shadow. The *sarape* illustrates the old fable of the sun and the wind—closely enfolding arms and shoulders during the chill hours, and tied in a roll about the waist at noon. The leather sandal allows the foot to take hold of the ground so firmly that, remembering the modern shoe, you feel that you have never seen a man walk before.

Four miles from the capital we jolted through the main street of Tacubaya, a city of country-seats, gardens, churches, and beautiful trees,—among them the black ash (the Mexican *fresno*), and the delicate foliage of the pepper-tree (*arbol de Peru*). Looking through the gate-ways of its courts, we saw the most tantalizing interiors framed in the blank wall. Blossoming plants were ranged along the railing of the gallery (*corredor*) which surrounds the stone-paved court, or *patio*; sometimes there was a staircase, always interesting with its suggestion of human feet going up and down; or a glimpse of an inner court, with a stone fountain, and women at work, or gossiping, babe on arm, or with a water-jar poised on the shoulder and a backward turn of the head.

The intimate life of a Mexican house centers in the *patio*. Through the deep arch of the portal you look in upon its domestic economies, its dignities, its social life, its charities; you behold the common fireside, where it seeks the sun’s warmth on chilly mornings; you see the family carriage and the horses, the fetching and carrying of the servants, the dogs and parrots and children, and the perpetual “beggar at the gate.” By good luck, you may catch a glimpse of the young girls in the *corredor* behind the screen of plants, the sound of a piano in some lofty *sala*, or a sono-

rous young voice conjugating French verbs in a monotonous recitative.

Beyond Tacubaya are long hills, which we climb slowly, leaving behind us the view of the wonderful valley. Prescott's description of it as the Spaniards first saw it is to-day the best that could be given, allowing for the changes which he speaks of:

"In the center of the great basin were beheld the lakes, occupying then a much larger portion of its surface than at present; their borders thickly studded with towns and hamlets, and, in the midst, like some Indian empress with her coronal of pearls, the fair city of Mexico, with her white towers and pyramidal temples, reposing, as it were, on the bosom of the waters—the far-famed 'Venice of the Aztecs.' High over all rose the royal hill of Chapultepec, the residence of the Mexican monarchs, crowned with the same gigantic grove of cypresses which at this day fling their broad shadows over the land. In the distance, beyond the blue waters of the lake, and nearly screened by intervening foliage, was seen the rival capital of Tezcuco, and, still further on, a dark belt of porphyry, girdling the valley around, like a rich setting which Nature had devised for the fairest of her jewels."

The day grew hotter, the sunlight blinding on the dry and verdureless hills. The destruction of so much of the magnificent forest timber of the valley has greatly increased the dryness and barrenness of its winter climate. The Spaniard has been a terrible foe to the virgin forests, laying waste with short-sighted greed, which his descendants pay for, and perpetuate. I recall very little of this part of the journey except the faces of our fellow-travelers, the philosophic Mexicans, who dozed, and woke to smoke cigarettes and doze again. Two young gentlemen, brothers, on the middle seat, conversed together silently in the language of the deaf and dumb; one only was a deaf mute, but they were equally fluent with their fingers.

At twelve o'clock we breakfasted at an Indian village, the name of which is not to be found on the map—a few low adobe houses and a hilly street. Two women were washing dishes in the inclosed end of the porch of the *café*, screened from the sun by an awning of matting; and household utensils of native pottery were set out on the broad, low adobe wall on which rest the wooden pillars which support the roof of the porch. There were a great many dogs, pigs, and children, not to mention the ubiquitous flea of the country, in active circulation, but the room where we ate was clean and cool. The breakfast was far beyond what we had expected so poor a place to furnish; even those chiefest luxuries, fresh eggs and milk, were not wanting.

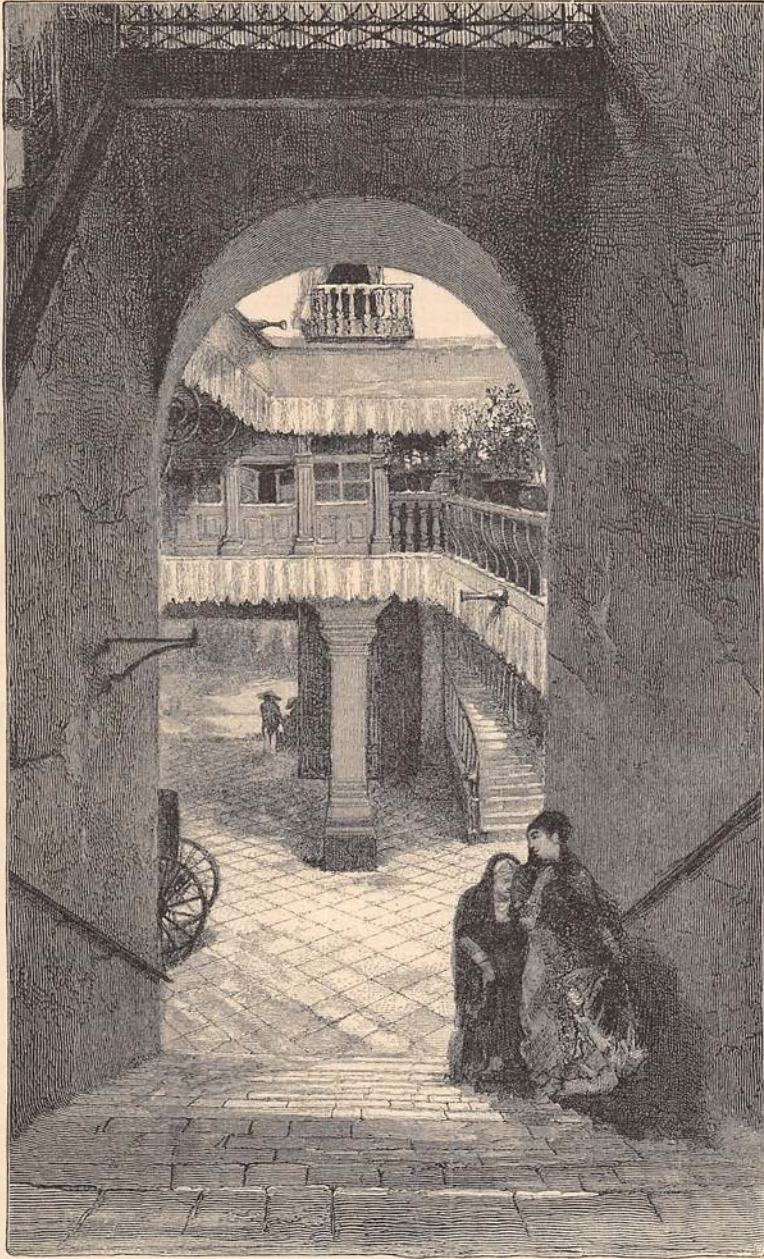
Thus far we had met no vehicles except the two-wheeled carts drawn by oxen,—wheels without tires, hewn out and showing the separate strokes of the ax,—but many

humble travelers on foot, trotting into Mexico with back-loads of market stuff. Fruits and vegetables were carried in a four-sided hamper or cage called a *huacal*, made of osiers; often it was filled with live fowls, the tail feathers of the cocks gayly fluttering through the bars of the cage, or was divided into compartments, with eggs below and fowls above.

We met huge masses of pottery ingeniously woven together with cords of the *agave*, and towering perilously above the bearer's head; rolls of matting, wooden trays, bundles of sugar-cane, *camote* (a kind of sweet-potato), tomatoes wrapped in green leaves. A pair of live hens never came amiss, swinging by the legs from a disengaged hand, or tied to an available corner of the load. Whole families were *en route*, even to the baby, rolled in one end of the long cotton scarf which the Indian mother wears over her head, or suspended in its folds at her back. I do not think a stranger procession could be met with on the high-roads of this century.

Steadily climbing, the country growing poorer and wilder, we pass many little heaps of stones, supporting the fatal cross,—the place of a murder,—making a mute appeal to the traveler to pray for one cut off in his sins. We enter the mountain passes, dark with pines and firs, and ascend to the battleground of Las Cruces, on the divide which separates the valley of Mexico from that of Toluca. We pass the monument to Hidalgo, and I ask with shame who was Hidalgo, and am answered: "He was our Washington—this is our Bunker Hill!" It was here, on the 30th of October, 1810, that Hidalgo with his Indian insurgents, armed chiefly with slings, bows, clubs, lances, and *machetes*, met the troops of the Spanish Government, under Colonel Truxillo, and drove them back upon the capital. The loss of the Indians must have been frightful; in their ignorance of the nature of artillery, they charged Truxillo's guns and "tried to stop the mouths of them with their straw hats, until hundreds had perished by the discharge." After the battle, a sad train of Indian women went up on the mountain to bury their dead, and the many crosses that were raised by their hands gave the spot its name.

Many of the Indian huts by the way-side have a frugal lunch set forth, on a clean white cloth, held down by stones—dulces, fruit, and bread, and always a bottle of *pulque*. We wondered much for what expected guest this humble invitation was extended, until we saw the wayfaring Indians set down their packs on a rude platform before the house, evidently built for that purpose, and refresh themselves at the road-side counter. Women came for-



COURT AND STAIR-WAY OF A MEXICAN HOUSE.

ward from the interior, to receive payment, and gossip with the guest in their soft, half-pleading voices, the very sound of which is an invitation. We descend about a thousand feet from the divide to the plain of Toluca, and are still nine thousand feet above the sea level. Here are rich *haciendas*, the first we had seen since leaving the valley of Mexico. I recall one with a high gate-way—a kind of canopy,

supported on stone pillars, and roofed with red tiles; a long avenue of cotton-wood trees leading to the white-walled *hacienda*, like a low fortress, looking out over its brown pastures. Toluca lies at the foot of the extinct volcano of San Miguel de Tutucuitlapico, which is said to contain, in the very midst of its once fiery core, two lakes of the purest and coldest water. We entered Toluca about



ON THE ROAD TO MEXICO.

four o'clock; the shadow of the mountain was already creeping down into its streets. It was like a town in a romance of the Middle Ages—mellow in color, with dark cypresses, white bell-towers, and tiled domes against the background of dream-like mountains. No street-cars or hacks profaned its streets; the horses were unshod; there seemed to be no sound in all the place except the roll of the diligence-wheels as we thundered through the narrow, roughly paved streets, and into the court of the Hotel de la Diligencia.

Our room opened on the *corredor* of the hotel; it was meagerly furnished, but clean and restful, with a kind of rude stateliness from its lofty ceiling and tiled floor. I lay down on one of the narrow brass bedsteads, furnished with linen as white and cold as new frost, and looked at the great spaces of dull color with thankfulness for the absence of perplexing patterns of modern wall-paper and cretonnes

with conventionalized flowers. One long window, with heavy inside shutters, opened upon a balcony, from which we could look down on the flat, chimneyless roofs, the stone water-spouts, and the languid life of the street below.

The broad, luminous shadow of afternoon had crossed the street, and was creeping up the opposite houses. Along the perspective of stuccoed façades,—washed in dull yellows and blues,—we saw, leaning over other balcony railings, other feminine heads, covered with the long-fringed scarf, the *rebozo*, or uncovered, black-braided, with pale, low-browed tropical profiles. We had supper by the light of two candles, in a bare and lofty dining-room. The returning stage for Mexico was not yet in, and there were rumors that we might not get through to Maravatio on the following day. We went to bed early, in preparation for a short night. At three o'clock, we were wandering along the dim corridor, protecting our



MAGUEY FIELDS IN THE VALLEY OF MEXICO.

one candle from the draughts, in search of the dining-room and hot coffee. In the court there was a trampling of hoofs and a heavy jarring of wheels as the coach was dragged out from under the arches; brigand-like figures, muffled in *sarapes*, were moving about by the light of a torch, stuck in a crevice of the pavement. There was plenty of time before the start to eat and drink, and wrap ourselves well from the chill, thin air, and to look at the stars in the quiet space of sky above the court. The man who sits beside the driver carried a torch, made of *agave* rope, covered with pitch; by its yellow glare, the unfamiliar landscape was revealed in sudden flashes framed in darkness. We had left the tumult of the pavements, and gained the silent country road. There were glimpses of *hacienda* walls and pasture bars—not of chestnut, gray-lichened and weather-bleached, but of massive stone, pierced with round

holes for the long, smooth bars to slide through, and instead of the shuddering twigs of withered golden-rod planted in the way-side snow-drift, a rich mass of nopal cactus stood out, pale green, like jade-stone, in the torch-light, throwing a blotch of black shadow against the wall. We slept, and woke, and tumbled about in the coach. There was a pretty young *señorita* beside me, with whom we had begun an acquaintance in experimental Spanish and English. Sometimes her head was on my shoulder, sometimes mine on hers, as the diligence hurled us from side to side, and the miles of dim country were left behind. Now and then the crack of a wax match, and a spurt of white flame, showed two or three faces and two or three cigarettes meeting in their midst, with a murmured "*gracias!*" then darkness again.

Morning broke solemnly, with a single streak of light where the gray cloud-curtain

lifted above the horizon. We were on the great plain of Toluca,—the bed of an old sea,—its long undulations stretching, without a break, between us and the brightening East. Three figures were riding against it, who proved to be the escort accompanying the diligence. Between Mexico and Toluca it is guarded by pickets, stationed along the road at intervals. They were picturesque fellows, in *sombreros* and *sarapes*, swinging along in their saddles with an ostentatious clank of carbine and sword and spurs. One, who rode a gray horse beside the coach-window, wore a wonderful great hat, quite heavy with silver

before. Their dull, melancholy faces had a vagueness, a lack—to call it a hunger would be sentimental, yet they seemed to be waiting for their souls. We met immense droves of black swine, driven by two or three Indians, with food rolled in a piece of matting, a few billets of wood, and a brown earthen jar for cooking, hung at their backs. During the heat of the day, the hogs and their drivers slept by the road-side, traveling in the cool hours of the morning and evening and far into the night. The strangest figures were those who wore the cloak made of the shredded leaves of the *maguey*, woven into a kind of



A PULQUE SHOP BY THE WAY-SIDE.

braid, and a silver cord wound four times around the brim, and fastened with silver buttons. His *sarape* had been brilliant in its day, but was in better tone for having been dulled by age; it enveloped and concealed him all but the lean, brown bridle-hand, and one dark eye, which ranged backward and forward like the eye of a spirited horse. He looked half-soldier, half-bandit, and, I doubt not, was prepared to enact either rôle with gusto.

We met fewer traveling Indians on this day's journey; but their solitary figures in the desolate, unpeopled landscape were even more impressive than the moving market of the day

thatch, which rustles in the wind. I have seen suggestions of this weird garment in Japanese drawings. It might have been the earliest sartorial expression of the human mind.

At noon we reached a *hacienda*—the owner non-resident. There were two courts, communicating by a gate-way in the dividing wall; the inner one was entirely surrounded by buildings of adobe, one story in height, roofed with dull red tiles, their deep corrugations sloping downward in "descriptive lines," showing the heaving and sagging of the roof. Here also was the fountain, like a flying-buttress to the main wall, severe, almost Greek, in its design. A



THE FOUNTAIN AT LA JORDANA.

curious little chapel opened on the outer court opposite the stone bath for the horses—everywhere were broad spaces of sunlit wall, with luminous shadows slanting across them and resting on the worn, channeled pavement. The *hacienda* appeared to be very old, and perhaps not prosperous. Here we saw in perfection that costume of the Indian women which had delighted us at a distance. The petticoat of wool, woven with fine horizontal red stripes on a dark blue ground, is of their own manufacture, coarse, but of excellent texture and colors; it is merely a straight breadth of the cloth, girded about the waist with a scarf of rich colors; the fullness all in front (recalling the beautiful straight folds in Greek drapery, that descend from the girdle below the bosom), and the scantiness at the back, which gives expression to the movement in walking. The short, square mantle which covers the shoulders and bosom is of darker,

finer material than the petticoat. Without the head-cloth, which protects the head from the wearing of the leather strap which supports their burdens, they are much wilder in appearance, their black masses of hair almost covering the low, retreating forehead, and hanging in a rough braid at the back. While we breakfasted, a crowd of beggars were hovering around the door—children and women of the most abject class,—“*esclavos*,” we were told, on the estate,—clothed in remnants of the costume I have described, some of them scarcely clothed at all. The old women, with their shrunken, unvenerated bodies exposed, were unspeakably dreadful. The Mexicans were very gentle always with the *léperos*; if they gave nothing in response to the plaintive “*por amor de Dios*,” they never harshly repelled them, perhaps for fear of the “evil eye.” Our breakfast, with this group at the door, was not, it may be imagined, a very pleasant meal.

Tortillas were brought in by an Indian woman on the palm of her hand, and laid in a pile on the table-cloth. Don A. (the *licenciado*, the father of our pretty *señorita*) gathered up those which were left and tossed them to the supplicants at the door, who seized and scuffled over them like ravenous dogs.

Toward sunset we crossed the "line" into the State of Michoacan, descending from the high, unshadowed plain through passes of the hills into a rugged country, with spurs of the nearer mountains, darkly wooded to their tops, narrowing the outlook toward the rich valley and distant blue ranges beyond. We passed the great live-oak under whose shelter Maximilian breakfasted magnificently with his suite,

coach, sang the first songs of the country we had heard. Their monotonous tremolo came to us fitfully, as the creaking of the heavy wheels through the mud permitted us to hear, and the night stillness of the unknown country gave a peculiar impressiveness to the fragmentary notes, as spontaneous as those of a belated night-bird. The circumstances under which one hears this music may account, partly, for its singular charm. It is very simple, with much repetition, and a "dying fall," which haunts the memory; it is sung in the high Spanish tenor which suits so well the light tinkle of the guitar-strings, or the *bandola*, a kind of lute still used in Mexico. We heard these songs everywhere—at night, on



RANCHEROS IN THE PLAZA AT MARAVATIO.

on his last "progress" on horseback from the capital to Morelia.

The historic pavement crops out here on the slope of a long hill, down which the diligence plunged and staggered, the eight mules pelting the stones with their little hoofs, apparently with no more control over its insane lurches than we inside had over ours. It was a relief to feel the wheels sink into the mud of a despondent stretch of road below.

Twilight found us still plodding along, tired and supperless. The outlines of the rolling wooded plain grew dim in a mist that gathered in the hollows. The new moon began to shine faintly; the guard, lounging along behind the

the steamer's deck, sung by the Cuban girls in the intervals of cigarettes, sitting along the rail with their faces in shadow and their hands blanched in the moonlight; by the boatmen in the harbor of Havana, crossing between ship and shore, with a single lantern in the stern of their gondola-like boats—the music as faint and thin over the water as the pale phosphorescent gleam in the wake of the boat; by all sorts of people in the streets of the cities at night; again on the steamer, one stifling night, off Yucatan, sung by the half-naked convicts in the steerage, climbing the hatchway-ladder for a breath of pure air. (We saw them go ashore next day with a guard of

Mexican soldiers, to be left on the government works in a climate which is slow death.)

About eight o'clock, we stopped before the white colonnade of a large, unlighted building of the *hacienda* of Tepitongo. We walked many times the length of its tiled pavement, back and forth, before doors were opened or any sign of occupation came from within. We were destined to a better knowledge of Tepitongo on our return, but that night, as we saw it by candle-light and faint moonlight, it was no more real than the house of the Three Bears in the wood, or the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. Two or three low-voiced Indian women brought us supper, and made up beds on the stone floors of two great bare rooms opening on the cloistered court, where plants were growing in spaces provided in the pavement. It had a sad, formal, convent-like aspect in the uncertain light of the setting moon. We breakfasted next morning from our lunch-basket, and departed on the edge of day-break. The lands of Tepitongo on each side the road, for some distance, are carefully cultivated by antique methods.

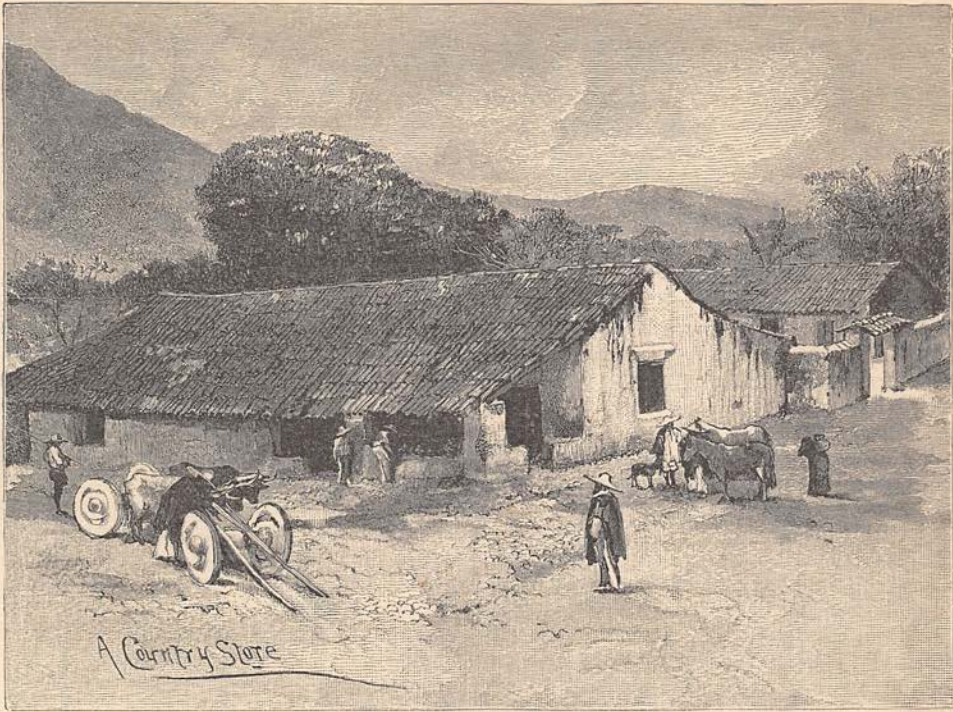
The massive stone dams which hoard the waters in the rainy season, and let them out by means of ditches across the levels, would put to shame many of our city reservoirs. The heavy buttresses add greatly to their picturesqueness, if not to their strength, and they have that rich ingrained color and texture which only time can give. There is an immense amount of old stone-work in Mexico of great artistic and archæological interest; men and materials were not spared under the Spanish *régime*. Every little provincial town, unnamed, perhaps, on a foreign map of the country, has its plaza, with a fountain and stone benches facing the walks; its arcaded sidewalk on the principal street, and a noble church, with bell-towers, dome, and broadly sculptured façade. When the Tlascalans, Cortez's Indian allies, were helping him in his work of destruction at the siege of the capital, razing the temples and palaces, and heaping the canals with their ruins—"Go on!" the Aztecs called to them, bitterly,—“the more you destroy, the more you will have to build up again. If we conquer, you shall build for us; if your white friends conquer, they will make you do as much for them!” The bridges on the *camino real* are grand and simple structures, built with the indifference to human labor which characterizes all the work of this period. There will often be an obscure date, or an inscription which has sunk back into the stone. The Virgin's image is gone from the niche where the traveler of old paused to cross himself, and the stone seats are worn and hollowed by all the tired figures that

have rested there since they were first hewn out of the broad parapet.

Taking advantage of the first change of mules after sunrise, A—— tossed a piece of silver to the driver, and we walked on ahead of the diligence for a mile. The sun had not burned away the dewy freshness of the morning. Here in the lower country, spring was farther advanced; flowers were not plentiful as yet, but a rich growth of trees, in half-leaf, was added to the gaunt, sculptured cactus which alone grew on the plains. This is Mexico *Templado*; there is little of the tropical except the nopal, planted in hedges by the road-side, and singularly effective, with broad patches of light and shade on its prickly palms. There was lavish promise of blossoms which we did not see, owing to a phenomenal snow, which brought a second winter upon this part of Mexico. We passed fields of the *maguey* (American aloe), but they did not form a feature of the landscape, as in the valley of Mexico. Each *hacienda* or *rancho* raises enough to supply its household with *pulque*, the national drink, which is to a Mexican what beer is to a German, or *vin ordinaire* to a Frenchman.

We met this morning the only private carriage which we saw on the *camino real*. It was very old and cumbersome; it was drawn by two mules, and occupied by a stout, majestic-looking, middle-aged lady, with a black shawl over her head; two men servants, conspicuously armed, and dressed in leather jackets and leggins, *sarapes* and broad straw-hats, rode behind the carriage. Soon after, we passed the *hacienda* from which the carriage had probably come. The Indian laborers whom we met all said, “*Buenos días*,” and lifted their great hats and their great eyes to us, with the stare of one of Circe's beasts. Somewhere, you feel, in that dull body a man is imprisoned. A strange sight on the road was a number of Indian women, stooping and moving rapidly across a great field in the distance. Their employment seemed very mysterious, but proved to be the gathering of the dried droppings of the cattle, which they put rapidly in a sack, and emptied in a heap.

Often I thought of that strange book, “The Cossacks,” by Tolstoy. Such a strong pencil in this country could do a wonderful work. The shadows are black and broad. There could be found nothing more intensely local. Only the French influence, which appears not to have extended much beyond the capital and the shops of the cities, has interrupted the national expression, strangely mixed, as it is, with one civilization imposed upon another, yet homogeneous, like the architecture. There is a class which will always have the foreign



furniture and costumes and manners; but here is a tremendous interior, more remote and peculiar than anything an untraveled American can imagine.

A provincial Mexican town has no suburbs, no straggling outlying streets, no approaches of any kind. It rises like a mirage from the uninhabited plain. There is no converging network of telegraph-wires, no increase of travel on the one road which leads into and leads out of it; not even a smoke-cloud darkens the blue above its sun-warmed *azoteas*. You see it a long way off across the hot plain, like an impossible vision. You do not believe in it until, from the rough, stony highway, you enter between the pillars of a half-ruined gate into the heart of a city which looks as if it had never been young.

We drove into Maravatio at high noon of a *fiesta*,—the circumcision of our Lord,—a day which might have been made on purpose for a holiday, if all days of this season in Mexico were not perfect. It was a warmer, more southern-looking town than Toluca, on the high table-lands, with more tropical fruits in its markets and less clothing on its dark children. The *rancheros* and country people, in their best *sarapes* and *rebozos*, had come in town to attend the bull-fight, and were sitting about on the stone benches of the sunny little plaza, in motionless content. A continuous proces-

sion of sandal-shod feet shuffled along the sidewalk, under the arches of the *portales*; gayly dressed horsemen, in braided leather jackets and tight trowser-legs blazing with buttons, paced their barefooted ponies through the streets, often with a friend accommodated behind. We sat in the deep stone window-seat of the hotel, looking out on the bright, yet strangely listless throng, and partook of ices handed in at the window by a street vender, who, having served us, passed on down the street, trailing behind him the diminuendo repetitions of his long, musical cry, "*Ni-é-ve!*"

The returning stage from Morelia had not arrived; there were bad, very bad roads ahead, and no further effort was made to proceed that day. "If not to-day, to-morrow," is a Mexican proverb. Possibly, the driver did not care to turn his back on a bull-fight. A procession of *toreros*, in their brilliant costumes, uplifting a huge garland of *banderillas* and accompanied by a band, paraded the streets. We could not see the figures distinctly; but we heard the music—the thrilling dance-music of the country. As an invitation to the *toros*, nothing could have been better. It did not perceptibly stir the loungers on the stone benches; they were already convinced; but I, who abhorred the thing, and would not go in the capital, fell suddenly under the spell of the senseless, intoxicating music, and begged A—— to take me to

the bull-fight with the rest of the town! It seemed all the town did not go, for we were obliged, in reaching the entrance, to press through a crowd (that "smelled to heaven") of humble Maravatians, who remained outside because of their extreme poverty, not from any lack of taste for the popular amusement. We mounted a perilous wooden ladder to the scaffolding surrounding the arena. The entire structure had been reared without aid of nails or saw; the timbers showed the shaping blows of the ax, and were lashed together with ropes of *maguey*. It may not have been particularly safe, but was quite in keeping with the performance we had come to see, which resembled the scenes in a Roman arena as this rude amphitheater did the Colosseum. The city authorities sat in the place of the Cæsars; from the stall below, the band played the national airs, to accompany a dance of clowns, which was interrupted by cries of "*Toro! toro!*" from the spectators. In the great blue arc of sky above the densely packed seats, the buzzards mounted, wheeled, and sank. One mountain-peak looked down at us dispassionately, from a long way off. It was a very vulgar horror. Of all the figures in the arena, the bull seemed by far the noblest. In the pauses of his charges, he faced his throng of persecutors with a large-eyed bewilderment, pawing the dust and taking quick breaths of excitement. The space was too small for anything but butchery; there was little skill shown in defense by the men—not even very fine horsemanship. The spiritless, blindfolded horses were wantonly sacrificed—absolutely thrust upon the bull's horns. In less than ten minutes one was wounded to death. A—— put his hand before my eyes; and, indeed, I could not have looked, for I was seized with an uncontrollable fit of nervous crying. No nerves, not trained to it for generations, could have stood it,—the cries, the music, the peril,—for, wretched burlesque as it was, the simple fact of death was before our eyes. We went out ignominiously, with all the dark-eyed women around looking at us with fixed curiosity.

On our way back to the hotel we passed a conspicuous handbill of the Teatro Nacional, advertising the performance of "*La Cabaña de Tío Tom*." An illustration, in the most obvious style of art, representing a scaffold, a headsman lifting the bleeding head of a prostrate knight in armor, while a long-haired maiden knelt distractedly on the steps, apparently referred to the general character of the exhibitions at the National Theater, rather than to that particular performance—unless the Spanish dramatization of "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" be a very free rendering of the original.

In the garden of the plaza, the violets were

filling the warm air with their fragrance, the streets were quite deserted, and the bursts of music from the *plaza de toros* broke a stillness as deep as that of a June meadow at noon. On one of the stone benches near the fountain, an old man was patiently shaping a broom of palm-splints, with the help of a small, half-naked boy with a rosary crossing his brown, polished bosom.

We left Maravatio at three o'clock next morning, by the light of an *hachon*—an iron basket holding flaming brands of pitch-pine, elevated on a long handle stuck in the crevices of the pavement of the *patio*. Again we rumbled away, carrying a flash of yellow torch-light through the dark landscape, which seemed to wake and look at us for an instant as we passed. Again, at the first posting-station, we walked ahead of the diligence, with the long morning shadows stretching before us, the mountains of Michoacan rising very dark and near. Indistinct trails led here and there across the plain, among the wild acacias—crabbed little trees, covered with mistletoe, and, in some cases, quite bled to death by it. We met an Indian with a cloth tied over his head, like a Bedouin Arab—his wife, the primal woman, trotting behind, with a young child asleep in the folds of her *rebozo*. She had broken a branch from a way-side shrub, and held it up to protect her from the sun.

At noon, we entered another of those unreal cities springing suddenly from the plain. It was market-day, and the country people were encamped in the plaza, under their huge umbrellas of matting, and (trade being dull at the hour of the siesta) were doing a little unobtrusive cooking, in queer-shaped earthen vessels, over charcoal braziers; it looked more like a kind of alchemy than cooking. Heaps of tropical fruits, pottery, dulces, curious articles of Indian industry, were heaped in rich masses of color around the gray stone circle of the fountain, with its cool spots of mold and oozing dampness. The design of the basin was bold and florid, of a much earlier period than the shaft rising in the center, crowned by the Mexican eagle clutching the national cactus, which, as a triumphant bit of realism, had been painted a bright green. A little Indian boy, nearly naked, lay asleep in the sun, opposite the coach-window. We woke him by tossing cakes upon his bare, softly heaving breast. It was amusing to see his grave bewilderment over the happiness that had come to him so mysteriously. He was enlightened, however, by the by-standers, who pulled and pushed him to the coach-window, where he murmured some shy, unintelligible words of thanks, and then rushed away, with his cakes in the folds of his one garment.



NOON IN THE "CORREDOR" OF A MEXICAN HOTEL.

We left the town with reluctant backward looks. Brief glimpses along the vistas of its streets were like turning the pages of a fascinating story—begun, but never to be finished. The book closed, we were again on the lonely highway, and the landscape gave as little sign of the city we had left on the other side of

the last hill, as the ocean of a sail that has just dipped below the horizon. Was it at Sinapecuaro, or another dream-like old town we passed through that afternoon, that we saw a church, lovely in color and massively simple in form, with rich sculptures in low relief, opposed by broad spaces of stone,

carved only by the hot fingers of the days and the cool touches of the nights, that had seen it standing, clear against the sky, at top of a triple flight of stone steps, leading down to the level of the streets? The people sitting on these steps, or shuffling up and down with sandal-shod feet, were not dressed, but rather clothed in garments which belonged to them as the leaves to the bough.

We were going down, all that afternoon, into a beautiful country. The road for miles lay between hedges of nopal and organum cactus, softened by a fringe of willows. There was a glimpse of a distant lake, Cuitzio, and among the low meadows still ponds or reservoirs of water reflected the sky and the flight of wild fowl passing over them. The guards on this part of our journey were slim, boyish-looking young fellows, in a gray cavalry uniform, enlivened by the colors of their *sarapes*, twisted around the pommel of the saddle. One of them shot a wood-dove on the wing, and dressed it with his fingers as he rode. The afternoon grew cool and shady; twilight came, and the moon rose over a stretch of muddy road, as we plowed through on our way to Tepitongo. The *camino real*, as it crosses this rolling plain, could not be distinguished from a number of experimental tracks, which showed how despairing drivers had wandered to the right or left in search of better ground.

We walked ahead for a long distance, forgetting the day's fatigue in the bliss of movement and the calm of the softly lighted sky over that wide, dim landscape. Our tired eyes rested far off on the measureless horizon. The stillness was like sleep, after the rumble of the diligence. We were like caged birds set free. I had not been in the saddle for six months, since leaving Colorado, and the hollow, measured tread of the light-footed cavalry horses stepping beside us, and their familiar smell in the night air, stirred my old passion for riding, which had slumbered during the Northern winter. I found myself indulging a wild, childish hope that the diligence might break down, and we be obliged to wander on through the soft, cool hours of the night. One of the guards would, of course, offer me a horse, and I might ride into Morelia behind my husband, like a lady in a ballad!

The young fellow who shot the bird rode up alongside and offered to relieve A—— of his overcoat, which he carried over his shoulder. Its weight appeared to astonish him greatly; he even handed it to his comrades to lift, as a curiosity in clothing. It had been an unusually cold winter in Mexico, and among the common people a saying went around that

the Americans had brought it with them from the North. The soldier riding beside us attempted a conversation, but we could understand very little except his opening question to me—I was "*Una Mexicana?*" "*No, Señor—una Americana del Norte,*" which, of course, accounted for the astounding peculiarity of a lady walking over a bad road and appearing to enjoy it. The diligence did not break down; we were obliged to climb in again after a while, and fell asleep in our places, all the old aches re-asserting themselves in our confused dreams. We traveled late into the night, dozing and waking at the changing stations, listening to little scraps of talk in the darkness—"Cuantas leguas ahora á Morelia?" "*Dos—dos y media; no mas!*" ("How many leagues now to Morelia?" "Two—two and a half; no more!") "*Ah! muchas, muchas!*" with a groan.

Once, in a strange little Indian village on a hill, we caught a beautiful view of the dim country—the moon had set—from the fountain where the mules were watered. At last, from the talks in the darkness, we knew that we were "*cerquita*"—"nearly in." A—— translated freely. We rattled violently down a long hill; looking out, we saw by the light of a lonely street-lamp the stone pillars of a gate-way. We passed the arches of an aqueduct, the street-lamps became continuous, as we ascended a roughly paved street, and rolled into the echoing court of the Hotel Michoacan.

A sleepy-looking servant, with a perfect mat of black hair, which seemed to have absorbed into its coarse fibers all his intelligence, was able to distinguish us as Americans, and presented the card of the Señor Don ——, who had most kindly waited for us until midnight, and then ordered a room and hot supper as his welcome. We climbed the stone staircase to the *corredor*,—plants, arches, and starlight,—a place so restful and cool that we could contentedly have stretched our cramped bodies out on the tiled floor; but the sleepy servant opened a door with a key which looked as if it might be the key of the city gate, and showed us something better. The heavy shutters of the one great window were closely barred. The Mexicans have convictions on the subject of night air as absolute as their religion.

We dragged the shutters open and stepped out on the balcony. Opposite us, across the dark, leafy plaza, rose the towers of the cathedral, standing alone, its huge bulk clearly outlined against the sky. It was two o'clock; we counted the four quarters as they were struck; then a deep-voiced bell intoned the hour.

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXIII.

JANUARY, 1882.

No. 3.

A PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF MEXICO.

THE first morning after our arrival at the picturesque old stone barrack called the Hotel Michoacan, we woke with the impression that it was a *fiesta* in the city. A confused jangle of innumerable church-bells, deep and near, far and faint, mingled with the alert sounds of drum-taps and bugle-calls, and the shuffle of leisurely footsteps along the sidewalks; the sunlight, streaming in between the heavy inside shutters, lay warm on the red-tiled floor. From the balcony, the city looked as mellow and rich in color as one's dreams of Italy; figures draped in *sarapes* leaned in the portals of courts, or against the stained stuccoed walls, and the smoke of the national cigarette went up like a matutinal invocation from every masculine lip. It was not a *fiesta*; in this way Morelia wakes every morning, the church-bells calling her to prayer, and the cavalry bugles appealing briskly to her military sentiment. It is chiefly the women who respond to the former. There are many of them abroad at this hour, gliding with soft steps, black-shawled, or folded in dark *rebozos*, through the streets, and climbing the steps of the clamorous churches. The men were not visibly responding to anything.

The domes and towers of the city are white—old white, with a great deal of color in it. The dense olive-green cypresses, which the wind scarcely stirs, have an ecclesiastical heaviness and dignity well suited to the character of the place. The *paséo* and the Park of San Pedro, at the end of the *Calle Real*,—the principal street of the city,—show from a distance as a soft cloud of gray twigs tinged with the faint green of budding foliage. The mountains encircle the plain with a noble, quiet sweep of outline—the church spire rising just above it against the sky, whose impalpable

depth and breadth of color make the most perfect relief for their solid whiteness.

We looked out over the city that morning with an aroused, expectant sense of delight, as in the early stages of an acquaintance which promises rich and peculiar satisfaction. We felt that here we could turn back to the unread pages of those other alluring old cities we had left behind us on our diligence journey. Here were the narrow side-streets climbing and ending in the sky, shadow and sunlight sharply dividing them; here the soft-footed figures in unfamiliar draperies, gliding past high white walls—moving pictures out of another century; the silence of the streets, the air of suspended activity, the poverty and the state.

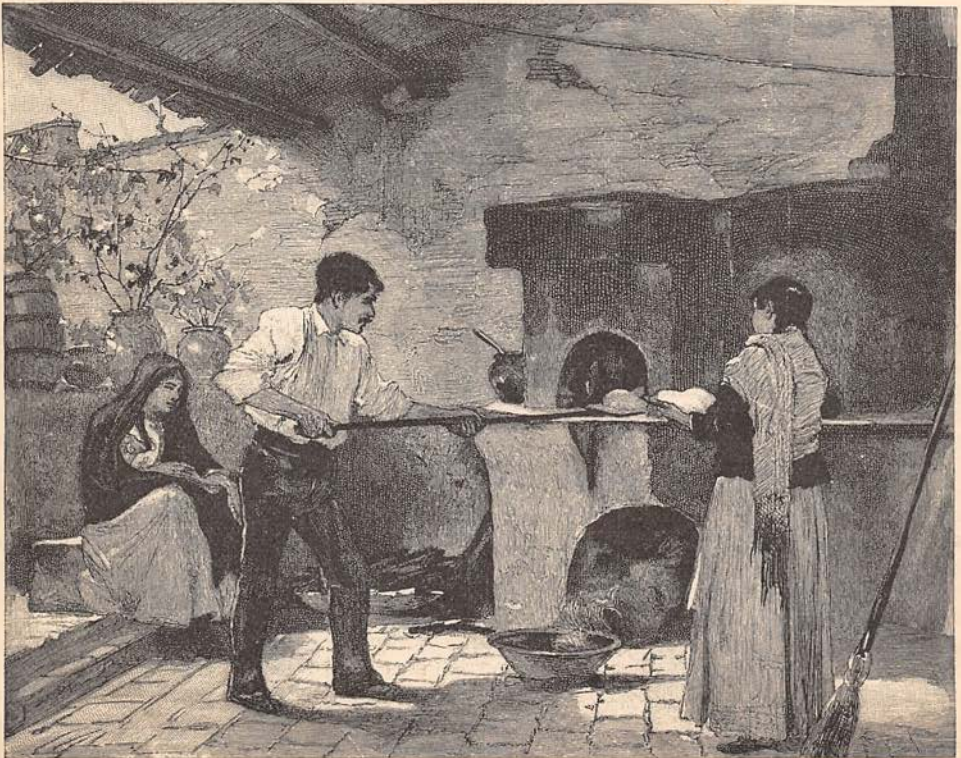
A few days after our arrival in Morelia, A—— set out with a party of gentlemen to the mines he had come to visit, leaving me to the very kind and stately hospitality of the Casa G——.

The expedition took its departure from the court of a neighboring house of one of the principal families. It has a staircase of beautiful form turning at the juncture of an arch with the main wall, and following its curve upward to the corridor. The court looked, on the morning of the start, very like a cavalry head-quarters. Booted and spurred footsteps clanked up and down the stone staircase, past the dim picture of the Virgin on the landing; about twenty-five pack-mules and light saddle-horses were being made ready for the journey by the Mexican servants, with all the picturesque paraphernalia of the road. The baggage included a brass camp-bedstead, mattress, and pillows with embroidered covers, boxes of provisions, cases of old Spanish wines, and a variety of luxuries which a mining engineer is not in the habit of associating with

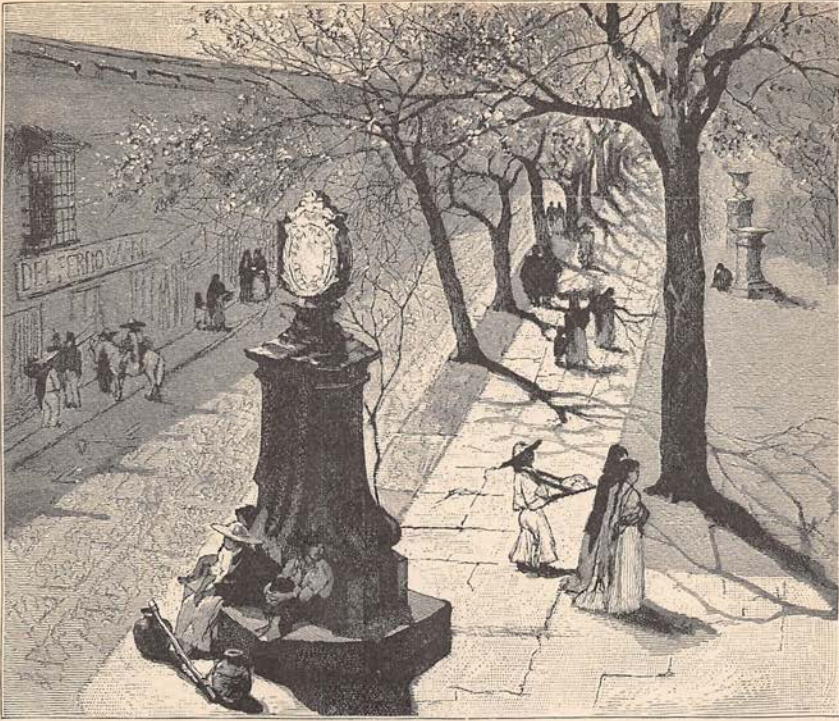
camp-life. A young son of the house escorted us through the confusion of the court to the corridor where the ladies were leaning over the railing, watching the preparations below. Don P—— wore the characteristic dress of a Mexican gentleman for a journey of this kind—a pair of dark goat-skin overalls, called *chapareras* (from *chaparral*, the low, thorny oak-scrub as a protection against which they are worn); a leather jacket, richly embroidered; huge Mexican spurs, not as cruel as they look, the blunt rowels inflicting a bruise instead of a stab (they are often decorated with little bells, whose jingle keeps the horse on the alert, and saves him from a more severe reminder); a wide-brimmed light felt hat, heavy with silver cord and braid and buttons; a sword and sash and a beautiful *sarape*, from the looms of Northern Mexico, worn as only a Mexican can wear this most graceful and dignified garment.

There were good-byes in English and Spanish in the corridor, a bustle of clattering hoofs in the court, as horses were wheeled round and *cinchas* tightened; cigarettes were lighted, Winchesters steadied at the saddletrees, and the queer little cavalcade, prepared alike for peace or war,—so romantic in appearance, so commonplace in reality,—rode

out through the shadow of the deep portal, which always gives an air of importance to the entrances and exits to a Mexican private house. From the balcony of the *sala* we watched them, a few minutes later, riding down the street, where they appeared to excite no particular interest—certainly no surprise. In a provincial New England town they would have rivaled a traveling circus, but the Morelianos abroad that morning saw nothing more exciting than one of their first citizens riding out to his *hacienda*, possibly, with his friends and servants, armed and equipped as befitted a journey of some thirty miles into the country. Letters from the City of Mexico, preceding us, had opened to us the hospitable doors of the Casa G——, one of the most distinguished houses in Morelia. Its cosmopolitan character made the life of a stranger within its gates much easier than it would have been in a local Mexican family. Our host, a Prussian gentleman's son, of liberal expectations, had married in Mexico a beautiful Spanish creole, of a family from the northern provinces of Spain, where the fair type is preserved. The life of the house kept the best traditions of both races; Spanish was its language, but French, German, and English were also spoken. It is with my host's



THE OVEN IN THE CASA G——.



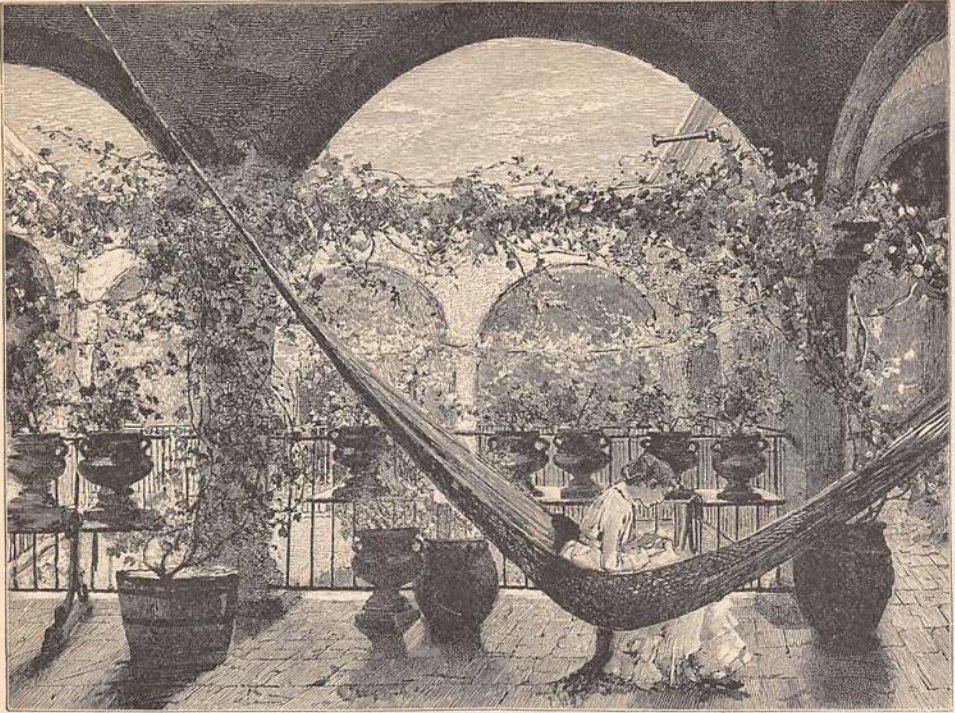
MONUMENT TO MORELOS (MORELIA).

permission that I describe some of the domestic details.

The house had been originally built for an ecclesiastical college, and, as may be imagined, was a very easy fit for a family of three. There was an agreeable sense of unexplored space in the vistas of high, airy rooms opening one into another, and all opening on the corridors which surround the front and rear courts. The house might have served for a municipal palace without overtaxing its capabilities. The great and lesser drawing-rooms had rows of French windows, with stone balconies commanding a view of the principal *plaza*, the Cathedral, and the life of the *Calle Real*—not a very exciting panorama, but intensely characteristic and peculiar. I never tired of it: by morning sunlight, the budding ash-trees sifting their light shadows across the pavement; at noon, hot and silent, blotches of motionless shadow, sheltering figures as motionless; the monument to Morelos, on the corner of the *plaza*, embracing in the angles of its pedestal the perpetual group of loungers who contribute themselves to the artist's design as a gratuitous illustration of another phase of the national character—the men crowded together in the shadow, and generally a meek old woman, or a young one with a baby, sitting on the sunny side without question of prerogative. But by moonlight

the *Calle Real* is most beautiful. The lamps are not frequent enough to discolor the white light which lies on one side of the street, or penetrate the darkness which covers the other. The proportions of the city are fine, and at night its stateliness is more apparent than those subtle gradations of ruin which are stealing away its angles and dimming its colors. In a dream of its past, as one of the great cathedral cities of New Spain, with an almost more than royal dynasty of priests and prelates heaping up treasure on earth for the church, and, it is to be hoped, treasure in heaven for the people,—a dream of revolution, and pillage, and crime, and of bitter, sullen reactions after spasms of patriotic ecstasy,—the old city of Valladolid, which has taken the name of Morelos, one of the bravest of her children, for her own, awaits her latest epoch.

One afternoon, when we walked at sunset through a weedy, ruinous gate of the city to the hills beyond,—hills covered with short, dry, winter pasture, and traversed by many diverging trails,—we met a barefooted Indian lad carrying the red signal-flag of the railroad engineers, and over the crest of the hill we saw a little troop of horsemen riding in—a detachment of the advance of the nineteenth century. It will be curious to see how the importunate guest will be received by the



CORRIDOR OF THE CASA G—.

priests, by the passive poor, by the stately *familias principales* of the city, who have all that "sluggish, suicidal pride" of the creole and a shrewd eye for the practical advantages of modern civilization besides. One shudders to think of street-cars in the *Calle Real*, of sharp American voices among the sunset shadows of the *paséo*, of American boot-heels on the sandal-worn pavement, of American Spanish!

Morelia, from the point of view of the Casa G—, is a very different experience from the same place viewed from the Hotel Michoacan. Instead of the bedside tray of coffee and rusks served by the waiter with the impenetrable head of hair, who never knocked at the door, one awakened to the luxury of a bath, a daintily served cup of chocolate or a bumper of hot milk, fresh eggs, fresh fruit, in the flower-scented dining-room, at whatever hour one chose to ask for it. The air of early morning was indescribably pure and cool,—cool enough to suggest an open fire to an English or American constitution,—but the sunny side of the corridor was a very good substitute. The flowers were freshly watered and fragrant. All the galleries in Mexico surrounding the inner courts are lined with flowers. It is one of the prettiest features of their domestic architecture. The vines fes-

toon along the arches stirred a little in the breeze which lifted and let fall the heavy leaves of the banana-tree near the dining-room door. Clear shadows slanted across the pale-tinted stone façade of the cloistered gallery. There was a hammock of Panama grass, swinging empty, or cradling the little daughter of the house, always attended by a fluffy white poodle, whom she addressed as "*Enrique! mi Alma!*" (My Soul!)

A man-servant, of the shade of complexion called *moreño*,—chocolate with a little milk in it,—and eyes of chocolate, unmixed; in a white linen blouse, with a red sash girding the waist, shuffled listlessly about the gallery at this hour, watering the plants or sweeping the red-tiled pavement with a broom made of palm splints. There was a parrot, like a great jewel, on his perch in the sun. The gray turtle-doves are regarded by the Mexican servants as harbingers of evil to the house where their soft guttural note is heard, but the Casa G— rejected this superstition of the country, and gave shelter to the doves. The noises of the house were very pleasant; loud, harsh voices or footsteps were unheard; no bell ever rang. If the young mistress had need of a servant, she stepped into the corridor and clapped her hands. The signal was answered by Leonarda, or Rita, or Michaela, or

the disconsolate Ascension, who did everything with a fine gloomy air, even to the carrying about on his shoulders of the little José, the child of Leonarda, the Camarista. Their mediæval associations reconciled one to the only loud noises of the house—the deep, echoing bay of the two gaunt young bloodhounds chained to the wall of the court below, and the stamping of the horses' feet on the pavement of their stalls under the arches. The rear court was called the corral. It was here the steeds—two saddle-horses, and a pair of very large and solemn white mules, who drew the family carriage to the *paséo* every afternoon—were watered, at the stone tank built against the high wall and overshadowed

most beautiful and valiant of the game-cocks were translated to the corridor above the corral—a kind of Walhalla, where, from the solitude of a hero's seat, they looked down on the domestic cares and small, bustling lives of their kindred below. The days began with much life and cheerfulness—the dogs baying in the court, excited by the coming and going of their master's footsteps; loud discussions among the hens in the corral; the cocks calling to each other in the corridor; the porters washing down the pavement of the courts. There was practicing in the *sala*, or recitations, audible through the open doors of the school-room, presided over by the German governess; my hostess in the “dispensary,”



TANK IN THE REAR COURT OF CASA G—

by a bamboo thicket—all smooth brown stems, leaning in graceful curves, supporting or letting fall a shimmer of pale green leaves over the brown water. Ysabel, the coachman, with his *sarape* over his shoulder, sitting on the edge of the tank while the white mules drank, suited well this corner of the court, rich in color and shadow. A little community of fowls inhabit a part of the corral, and the care of them was one of my host's pastimes. There was not a plebeian among them; almost all were creoles of purest foreign blood; a few of foreign birth also, as the gallant English game-cock, the prince consort to a small clipper built Spanish hen of flawless extraction. The

giving out the household stores for the day to the women-servants, or inspecting the attractive basket Ysabel brings from the market—as picturesque as a fruit-and-game “piece” with its miscellaneous heaped contents, including fruits from the Tierra Caliente, brought on donkeys up the slopes of the Sierra Madre, strange herbs and vegetables, and always a mass of flowers for the table. The first ceremonious meal at which the family assembled was the midday breakfast, *almuerzo*. There was a succession of courses, chiefly meats, in surprising quantity and variety in a climate where a very little animal food is sufficient, ending with *dulces* and coffee. After the soup,

rice, cooked in the Mexican fashion, was invariably served and eaten with bananas. The game and poultry had the advantage of the most perfect cooking over a charcoal fire. A spit is used in roasting, and every Mexican kitchen is well provided with a multitude of pottery vessels, even to pottery griddles, light and clean, which seemed to me far preferable to our heavy, unappetizing metal ones.

From time to time a national dish appeared, rather to humor the guests' fancy for their novelty than for a preference for them on the part of the family. One called *turco*, I was told, is of Moorish origin. It is composed of chicken, cooked slowly in a paste made of the flour of a very small and delicate dried pea, and served with a sauce of complex flavor. Raisins and olives are an incidental feature of it, and the whole dish tastes of the Arabian Nights. The famous sweetmeat of Michoacan, *guaravate*, made from the fruit of the *guayaba*, but less cloying than guava jelly, was generally a part of the dessert. There were *meringues* called *suspiros de la monja* (nuns' sighs), and a very rich custard, "golden cup," made by vigorous beating of eggs, sugar, and flour of almonds, which was said to be a fleshly temptation to the *padres*, and sometimes, alas! offered as such, by naughty little lambs of their flock who wished to be let off easy at confession. We made the acquaintance of several strange tropical fruits: the *chirimoya*, a delicate custard, with black seeds inclosed in a rough green rind; the *granadita*, which is eaten like an egg out of its beautifully colored shell. The contents is slippery, seedy, sweet, with a faint aromatic sub-flavor. The *almuerzo* corresponds to our dinner in social significance. One is not asked to dine in Mexico, but literally to "take soup at this, your house" (*su casa de Vd*), and you are told, with other complimentary phrases, that your host is your servant. The *siesta* follows the *almuerzo*. It was not the custom with the active ladies of the house, but my shaded bed-chamber opening on the corridor was very inviting, and the softness of the air, May following February, undermined the best resolutions in regard to letter-writing, sketching, and the study of Spanish. The light brass bedstead was exquisitely furnished with the finest of linen and the painful hand-embroidery of the country, taught originally by the nuns, and considered a necessary part of a Mexican lady's education. The long, narrow pillows were covered with "ticking" of crimson Chinese *crêpe*, which glowed through the sheer linen-lawn cases and the interstices of the embroidery and "drawn work" with which they were lavishly trimmed. The bed had a canopy of brass

bars, but it was uncurtained; in Mexico as few draperies as possible are used, because of the constant warfare housekeepers wage against fleas, moths, and insects of all kinds.

Opposite the bed, with its dainty feminine fittings, hung a complete fencing outfit, arranged on a green-baize-covered shield against the wall. It included both the light French foil and the heavy German-student sword. The door-way was flanked on one side by a tall case of weapons, containing some beautiful Toledo swords, an old blunderbuss with its bell-shaped barrel, all the modern rifles, elegant, wicked-looking dueling pistols; and among the mementoes of warlike passages in my host's varied life was a box containing seven bullets that had at different times been taken from his body. The book-case on the other side of the door was filled with well-selected books in German, French, and Spanish—the remains of his fine library, the most of which, while being moved in boxes during one of the political crises of the country, went to make part of a barricade. The ladies in Mexico who "dress" always dress for the *paséo*—the public promenade where the youth and romance of the old city enact the subtle dramas of a society where mediæval barriers still exist. It is by no means permitted that young men and women should meet freely before marriage: they may look at each other on the *paséo*, or from convenient balconies.

You observe a youth sitting for hours motionless on a stone bench in the *plaza*, or leaning in a door-way, his eyes fixed on an upper window or balcony of the opposite houses. The object of his gaze is probably not visible, unless the affair has prospered, and happiness already "blooms like a lusty flower in June's caress"; but, however coy the hidden eyes may be, they are doubtless cognizant of the patient figure of their adorer in the street below. This is Mexican courtship. The eyes of mamma and papa are also carefully cognizant, and this is Mexican marriage.

At five o'clock the carriage rolls out of the court, with Ysabel on the box in his best *sarape*, a gray, braided jacket, and a wide-brimmed gray felt hat, ornamented with silver cord and braid. Rubio, the ancient *portero*, shuts the carriage door, and Roberto at the gate rises and takes off his great hat.

Señor G—, who, after twenty years of the Mexican climate, keeps his Northern habits of exercise, generally walks to the *alameda*, and meets the carriage at the entrance, where the vista of black-ash trees, the rows of stone benches, and the broad paved walk begin. As the white mules pace sedately down the roughly paved streets, the ladies keep a hand ready to make the customary signal of greet-



FANNING THE FIRE.

ing from the carriage windows to their friends at the windows and balconies of the street. It is an indescribably fascinating gesture—so swift and subtle, almost like a fleeting expression across the face. It is made by a quick flutter of the second finger, the hand being raised, palm inward, to a level with the eyes. How much its charm is enhanced by the beauty of those dark Southern eyes it half conceals, it would take a very stolid observer to decide. It seemed to me excessively intimate; in Morelia I believe it is kept for one's friends only, but in the capital it is the usual greeting at a distance between acquaintances. I have seen nothing prettier in their social customs, except the way the ladies meet and lean their cheeks together, and pat each other softly on the back of the shoulder. The *paséo* bounds the *alameda* on either side, and joining beyond it, goes rambling through the wooded park of San Pedro, which gives it its

name. If you are driving, it is very pretty to look in across the high-backed stone benches at the little parade of wives and daughters under the ash-trees. All classes are there: the bare-footed Indian girls in *rebozos*, their long black hair smoothly braided or flowing loose over their shoulders, sit beside the ladies of the chief families in crisp silks and muslins. The classes are so distinct that there is no need to insist on the distinctions in public. The young girls walk two or three abreast, the light falling on their uncovered heads and shining, undulating braids. The women are sometimes dull-looking, and by no means always beautiful, but they have a quality which is exciting to the imagination. It may be presumed that it is not for the enjoyment of sylvan beauty alone that the young Morelianos who display their horsemanship on the *paséo* get themselves up magnificently in braided jackets and trowsers, tight as long hose, and buttoned

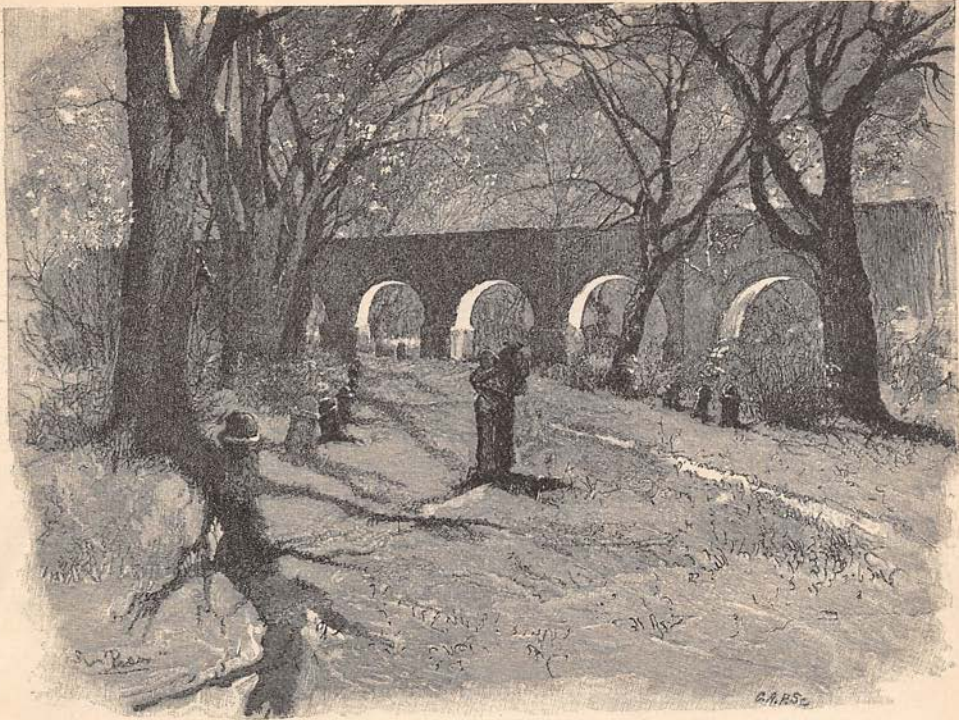
from hip to ankle with silver, and set off their dark glances with a halo of silver-braided hat-brim. One regrets to see that many of the most fashionable young gentlemen have abandoned the national dress, wear "chimney-pot" hats, and ride tall English horses, while French bonnets and elaborately trimmed walking-dresses are replacing the trailing skirt and the graceful feminine shawl. Powder is used without reserve or the slightest consideration for that subtle harmony which nature preserves between hair, eyes, and complexion. The effect is that of being surrounded by feminine masks, with beautiful human eyes looking out from them with an intensity of expression very startling in its contrast to the blank, soulless surface of faintly rouged white which the face presents.

At the end of the *alameda*, where the *paséo* turns into the lovely wild park of San Pedro, illumined with the low sunset light, and gorgeously dim as a painted window, stands one of the most perfect bits of church architecture we saw in Mexico—the Convent of San Diego. A screen of tall cypresses weave their long shadows across the green close before its low, arched entrance. A few lean wearily upon their comrades, but their general air is of guarded and somber dignity—a grave com-

pany of dark-robed priests silently pointing upward to the tall white bell-tower, and the Holy Family in pale blue stucco, raised in rich relief below the light arches of the bell-tower. It is so high up, this mass of figures in pale blue, that one cannot be quite sure of its significance beyond its nobly decorative character. Deep, narrow, barred windows make spots of shadow on the clear pale spaces of the front elevation, which is long and low rather than lofty. San Diego has been secularized, and is now rented in apartments to families; but one can only imagine sober, ecclesiastic figures in black and white walking under the cypresses or entering the low, deep portal. The colors of sunset begin to glow through the trees as we enter the woods by the *paséo*. We pass a circular fountain with a paved walk surrounding it, and stone benches facing the walk, inclosing the fountain in a greater circle. This ancient rendezvous is called the *Glorieta*: it keeps a pathetic suggestion of a social life in the city's past much more crowded and gay than anything San Pedro now exhibits. The roomy, colloquial benches are empty, and grass is growing in the chinks of the pavement. One may often see a group of Indian women filling their water-jars at the fountain, or following the winding footpaths through the wood, with a



THE LAUNDRY OF THE CASA G.



THE AQUEDUCT IN SAN PEDRO (MORELIA).

cántara supported on one shoulder by a bare uplifted arm.

Wild roses are in blossom among the untrimmed and neglected hedges; the trees are leafing out; the wood-dove's *coo, coo, coo!* comes from one cannot see where—it pervades the wood, like the low sunset light. The *paseo* is enlivened only by a few private carriages rolling along at lonely intervals—there is a separate road for riders. We saw very few ladies riding—in fact, I remember but two, and both of them sat their horses very ineffectually, in a helpless sidelong fashion. Often we left the carriage, and walked with a wistful pleasure through those old trodden foot-paths that lead away into the dim days before the Conquest, when San Pedro was the site of a populous Indian village, with a history of its own reaching back and losing itself in other dim days of traditional conquest before the advent of the Spaniards. The aqueduct crosses the *paseo* diagonally from the city; at the edge of the wood it bends and swings off across the green valley toward the hills that feed the city fountains. When the bells of the city strike the hour of *oracion*, we reënter the carriage and drive slowly homeward. By this time the *alameda* is nearly deserted, the brief Southern twilight has suddenly faded, and the lamps are beginning to

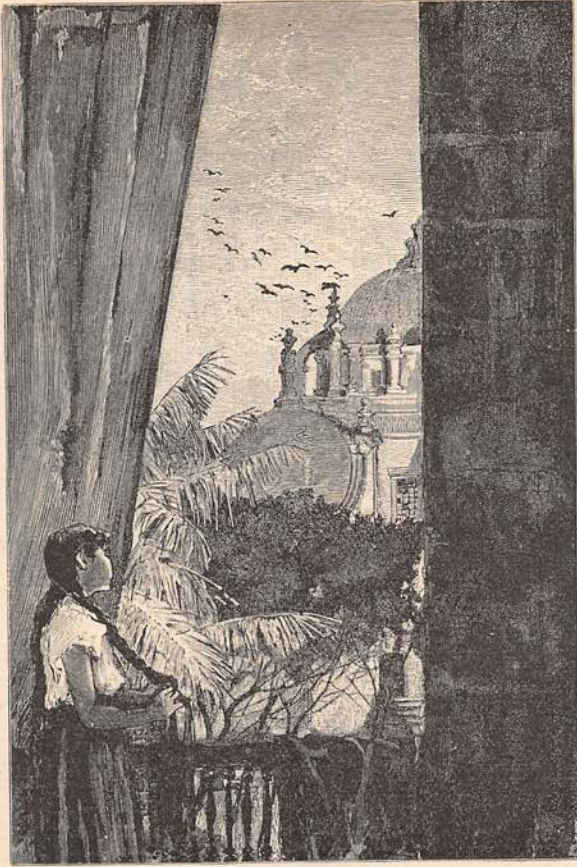
shine in the streets. The Indian women who sit in a row along the sidewalk opposite the entrance to the *alameda*, with bunches of lettuce, dressed with poppies, for sale, have rolled up their strips of matting and camped farther up the street, near the *plaza*. Their little fires, shining at intervals along the street, supplement the scattering lamps. They are cooking supper over a few coals of charcoal in a copper brazier; or they have kindled a lightwood torch to ward off the chill of night and advertise their heaps of *dulces*; or are boiling a kind of sweetmeat, made of molasses, in a shallow pottery dish; or, over the brazier of charcoal, are making and frying *tortillas*—the kind that are spread with meat and *chile* and rolled together like an omelet. All the bells of all the churches, from the great cathedral with its dome and triple towers to the little church with a single tower and a single cypress-tree beside it, rising together as if equally a part of the architect's design, are sounding at this hour. The bells of the cathedral strike the hours and quarter-hours of the day and night, and all the churches unite at the services of morning and evening. The cavalry regiment stationed in the town contributes its mysterious bugle-calls and drum-taps.

There are lonely cries of street-venders, the dull bumping of wooden cart-wheels,

drawn by oxen, and, at the hour of the *paséo*, a roll of carriage-wheels and a stirring clatter of hoofs along the streets; but all these sounds throb upon a stillness as deep and restful as the shadow of the cypress on the yellow gable of the little church. By the time we arrive at home the court is dimly lighted by the moon, and Rubio has placed a lamp in the sconce at the head of the staircase. He opens the carriage door, and shuffles slowly up the stairs behind us with the wraps. He always reminded me of that "ancient beadsman" in the "Eve of St. Agnes." We were very fortunate in regard to the moon. We had the last of the old moon on the steamer, the new moon tempered the darkness of our evening rides in the diligence, and its full splendor lent the last touch of enchantment to the corridor at night. The plants inclosing the black well of the court below were bathed in moonlight, the deep red blossoms of the *flor de noche buena* (flower of Christmas Eve) still held a suggestion of their vivid color, and the broad, drooping banana-leaves took a silvery gleam. The doves were asleep, the blood-hounds, roused by noises from the street, from time to time woke the echoes of the *patio* with their deep note. Two lamps high up on the wall of the corridor, augmented by spaces of lamp-light streaming across the tiles from open doors, still left long, dim promenades where restless feet might wander; but even the corridor, shadowy and spacious under its dome of sky, seemed a prison with the limitless beauty of the tropical night outside. I wearied myself with speculations about the faces we had seen on the *paséo*—women's faces with eyes that permitted you one moment to look into a heart as deeply dyed as the *flor de noche buena*, and then shut you out with a sweep of the long lashes, and left you gazing at a dull, pretty, expressionless, powdered face. Now, when the play is over and the masks are laid aside, and the little feet in their tight French shoes are prowling about the bare stone-floored rooms and moonlit galleries, what measure of content dwells with those cloistered lives, submitting to and helping suicidally to preserve the conventions of a society which holds toward all women a consistent attitude of suspicion. The habit of generations, and the inborn conservatism of a woman's nature, aided by the influence of religion, may make submission easy; but I used to wish with all my heart that it might be my privilege to transplant one or two of those unconsciously pathetic girls into a freer, happier society and a broader training. Such gayety as an American girl of the most reserved type enjoys, a Mexican girl could not

conceive of. Nor could an American girl understand how it is possible to be as bright and sweet-tempered and patient as many—almost all—young Mexican girls are upon such frugal spiritual and mental cheer.

Supper is served at eight o'clock—a heavy meal with courses of meat, but not so elaborate as the breakfast. There is very little evening afterward. We sat in the large, dimly lighted *sala*, or leaned over the balcony railings, and listened to the music which burst forth in an irrelevant way from the band of the regiment, like their unaccountable bugle-calls and drum-taps. One evening they gave an entertainment, to which all the first families of the city were invited—the only occasion of any public festivity which occurred while I was in Morelia, with the exception of the perennial bull-fights. The occasion of the entertainment was the distribution of prizes for scholarship among the privates of the regiment, many of whom, I was told, had been enlisted two years ago from the Indian villages by the persuasive means of a lasso (the Republic must have soldiers), and, to the credit of their officers, now exhibit a neat, cheerful, soldierly bearing, and the rudiments of a practical, if not a liberal, education. They were small, thick-set, dark, with the stolid movements and heavy features of the Indian,—the type of the mass of the insurgents who fought under Hidalgo and Morelos—the men who tried to stop the cannons' mouths with their straw hats. The pretty little unused theater of the city was ingeniously lighted with candelabras made of clusters of bayonets, supporting candles placed in their sockets. The chandelier suspended from the ceiling bristled with bayonet-points. I observed the people who sat beneath watched its descent rather uneasily while it was being lowered for the purpose of renewing the candles. The military music, orations, poems delivered by the soldier-students, and addresses by the officers, were received with enthusiasm by the audience. I found my entertainment chiefly in watching the latter—the dark, plebeian heads in the parquette, and the ladies of the first families in the boxes in full evening dress, looking impassively lovely behind their softly waving fans. Our experiment in Maravatio had satisfied me that the national amusement was "too strong" for me, as the Señorita Del M—, our fellow-traveler, had said. I did not attempt it in Morelia, though the Plaza de Toros was a much more imposing affair than that of Maravatio. Its two entrances bore the inscriptions, "*Entrada del Sol*," "*Entrada de la Sombra*." The seats in the shade were attainable at a price which only the comparatively rich could pay. The poor people sat unsheltered in the sun. Dur-

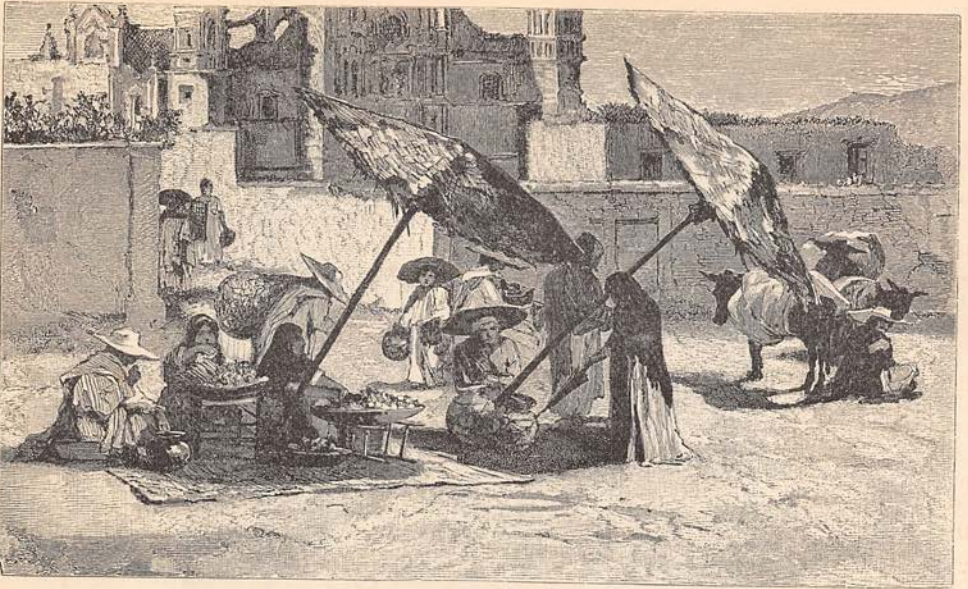


A MEXICAN BALCONY.

ing the Carnival, a burlesque of the bull-fight paraded the streets, and performed at intervals to promiscuous crowds gathered hastily in response to the music. It is a kind of Punch-and-Judy show on a large scale. The upper part of a bull is rather cleverly imitated in wood and rawhide, and plunges about supported on the head of a man, who is concealed by an exaggerated flounce of drapery depending from the body of the bull, rudely suggesting the housings of chivalry. This anomalous beast rushes around the ring formed by the spectators, in pursuit of the *toreadores* in costumes and masks. The music is a monotonous *tum-tum* of guitars, interrupted by much shouting and rude joking and hustling of the crowd, the bull charging upon them from time to time, his horns lowered, his petticoat wildly flapping. It is indeed very laughable if one is in the mood for the crudest and most extravagant burlesque.

My sketching expeditions involved so much

assistance from the family and servants,—the customs of society forbidding any independence on my part,—that I made few attempts to extend them beyond the limits of the house. One morning I made a sketch in San Pedro, looking through the arches of the aqueduct from the Glorieta. As the result of the combined efforts of Ysabel, the coach and the white mules, a maid-servant, and the two ladies of the family and the artist, it could not be regarded with triumphant satisfaction. On our way home past the *alameda*, deserted at this hour, but lovely with its checkered pavement of light and shadow, and glimpses of the shadowless sky of noon between the dark columnar tree-boles, we came unexpectedly upon a characteristic bit of sentiment—a young girl leaning from a balcony, talking with a young man, whose place was properly on one of the distant stone benches, out of reach of all communication except by the eyes. He was her *novio* (betrothed), the *señorita* told me; but what a scandal! They were actually



A BIT OF THE MORELIAN MARKET.

talking together—he close beneath the balcony, with his dark pale profile uplifted; she with her pretty arms crossed upon the iron railing, her face not six feet from his! From the expression of the young girl's lips and eyes, and the lowering black brows of the youth, it struck me that they had reached, without the medium of many words, an unpleasant juncture in their passionate pilgrimage.

One other morning, in the hope of finding a quiet bench in the *plaza* from which I might make a sketch of the market, we set out, the two ladies and myself, in the care of Ysabel; but arrived at the *plaza*, it was evidently a hopeless quest—blazing sunlight everywhere, and everywhere curious, stolid black eyes observing the *Americana*, the only one of her species in the city. The gentle *señorita*, seeing my despair, bethought her of the Casa Montana, on the corner of the market-place. The Casa Montana was the residence of the Señor Doctor of that name. We were cordially admitted by his wife, and conducted through a pretty little court one story in height, surrounded by a corridor painted in the Pompeian manner. A number of singing-birds in cages among the plants were in full chorus, and a hideous monkey from the Tierra Caliente, winding and unwinding his long arms about his body, gave the note of discord, without which this little place of bloom and sunshine would have been almost monotonously fair. From the brightness of the court we entered the cool, dim study, the win-

dows of which commanded an excellent view of the market-place and its curious encampment of Indians, who move in on market-days from the country with their families and merchandise, which are equally on exhibition, if not for sale, under their awnings and umbrellas of palm matting. The doctor's study was a very professional-looking room, with a skeleton in a tall case and other grimly impressive details. The light was much concentrated, falling from a high, deep window, into which I climbed by means of a series of steps sunk in the thick adobe wall, which served also as seats. Once seated aloft above the heads of the ladies, as in a private box, between the shaded room and the view of the lively drama in the sunlit *plaza*, I occupied a semi-detached position in the conversation highly favorable to work. We walked home through the market, and bought flowers and pottery—the rich reddish-brown pottery of Michoacan—not so beautiful as that of Guadalajara, but fine in color as a ripe horse-chestnut, and with traditional simplicity and beauty of form. Occasionally we took a walk under the *portales*,—the arcaded sidewalks surrounding the principal *plaza* of the city,—where many articles, chiefly of native manufacture, are offered for sale. It was here we bought the curious little offerings in hammered silver laid by the peasants on the altars of patron saints, to ward off the evils to which their lives are peculiarly exposed. A *ranchero* offers a silver horse. A man with a broken arm or leg offers the same, crudely imitated in silver.

One with *dolor de la cabeza* offers a silver head. Here are the rosaries, the little guitars of cedar-wood, made by the Indians, and in skillful fingers giving forth a very sweet, thin tinkle; the toy *toros* of wood covered with calf's hide, with horns and tails of the most expressive fierceness—the arrogant arch of the shoulder decorated with *banderillas* of crimped tissue-paper. The multitude of rude but very effective toys, made by the Indians with the most pathetically poor materials, show the importance which the pleasures of the children have in their eyes; every pottery vessel or household utensil is imitated in miniature for the baby housekeepers. Here we found the palm-splint brushes, the fans for blowing up the charcoal fires in the chimneyless pottery stoves which are used in all Mexican kitchens. But all purchases from the main shops were made through the medium of the patient Rubio, who trotted back and forth between the street and the corridor with boxes and packages for inspection. If it was a question of a scarf or a mantle, the shops emptied their stocks of these articles into Rubio's hands; they were tried on at leisure, discussed before the mirrors, and if not approved, sent back without scruple. If the little daughter re-

quired a skein of wool for her knitting, Ascension must call Rubio, and Rubio must go into the street with a bit of red wool twisted about his dark finger to be matched. "*Encarnada, Rubio. No color de rosa!*" were her instructions to the old man. "*Si, si! Nina Encarnada,*" he repeated to himself on his way to the staircase. Life in the house was not gay, but serene as the sunny hours that wheeled their shadows around the corridors.

I had fallen easily into that helpless attitude toward the outer world which is like a spell over the lives of the women of the country. The return of the engineers, and the discussion of plans for our homeward journey on horseback, broke up the dream—one last drive in the *paséo* in the splendor of the low sunset light, then a bustle of packing, and talk of saddles and horses, servants for the road, and of steamer days and telegrams, last calls, and a sense of multiplied obligations which fate might never permit us fitly to recognize. When the railroad is completed, and the tides of travel ebb to and fro, if our friends of the Casa G—are among those northward bound, may they find as gracious and courteous a welcome as they gave the strangers within their gates.

THE REVIVAL OF BURANO LACE.

THE brevity of the guide-books admits of only a passing allusion to the outlying islands of Venice. Hence, many an enlightened and curious traveler sees nothing beyond the churches and palaces, the pictures and the mysterious water-streets of the most wonderful city of the world. True, this traveler has been made very happy, and, ignorant of what is left unseen, goes upon his way in a contented spirit, not knowing that he has lost some of

the best of Venice. For the initiated, however, these bits of dark green verdure scattered over the pale green lagoons have an indescribable charm. They seem to cluster around the old city like children about a mother. Some are so mature as to be graced by domes and spires. One, indeed, though long deserted, is truly older than the parent town, for who does not know that Torcello was the refuge of the people of the main-land from the



VIEW OF BURANO.