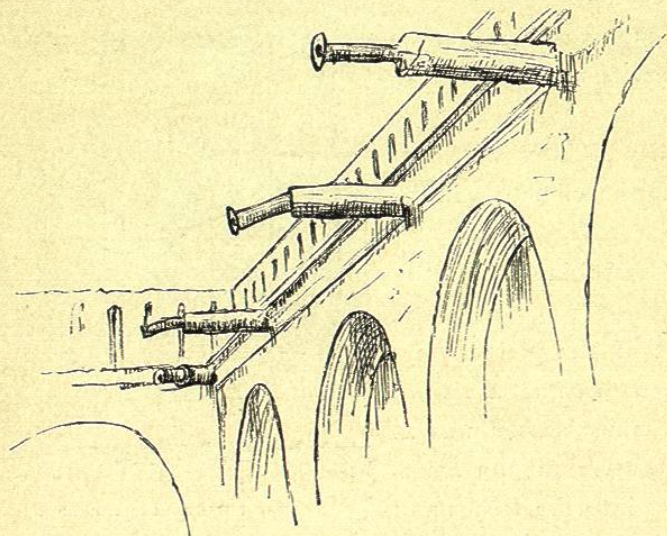


which by the aid of a bent pin and a string, manipulated by dexterous fingers, soon repaired all damages.

First, all the little sacks of water are conducted by means of the broom handle into the larger one, where the bent pin has been previously attached to the canvas and also to one end of the string. To the other end the strip of wood is fastened, and under this a bucket placed. Twenty minutes from the time of the first onslaught of the torrent through the roof all is serene and calm as a May morning.

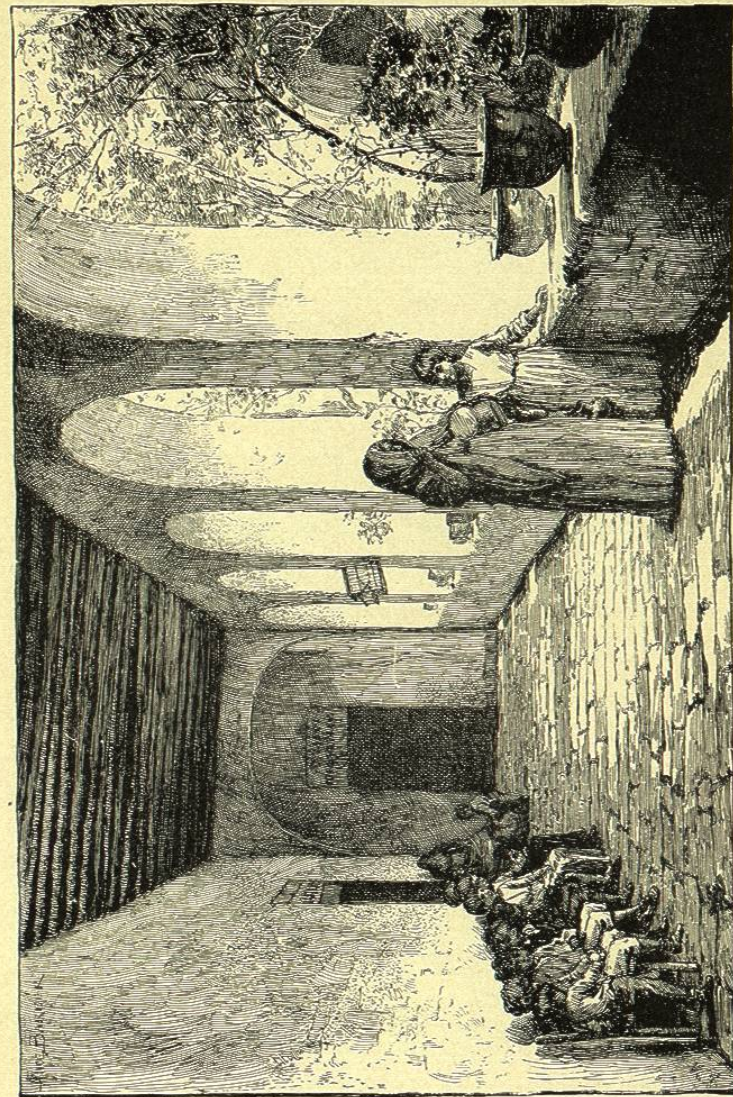
Orders were given at once to the *mozo* to sow the roof with grass-



WATER SPOUTS.

seed, so as to prevent another catastrophe. No greater protection is found for an ordinary earthen roof than that afforded by a solid greensward. The roots form a compact net-work, so that it must be an unusually heavy storm that can penetrate it.

The method of conducting the water from the roof is in keeping with everything else. Great heavy gargoyles or stone spouts, weather-beaten and moss-covered, tipped with tin, full ten feet in length, six in a line on either side of the court, answered the purpose in our mansion. During a heavy rain-storm it was interesting to watch the steady streams of water foaming and surging into the court. I saw a dog



VIEW IN A COURTYARD.

knocked senseless to the ground by one of these streams, and it was several minutes before he recovered his breathing and yelping faculties.

The ends of these spouts, in many instances artistically ornamented, protrude over the street. In more modern houses conduits, a few inches wide, are cut into the sides of the wall and cemented, taking the place of the stone spouts. They are quite as effective, but the quaintness and antique appearance of the houses is greatly diminished by them.

In the carriage-house there still remained a silent old relic of Mexican grandeur and aristocratic distinction, with wheels like an American road-wagon and hubs like a water-bucket. In the garden were fruit-trees and the family *pila* (bath). The latter was built of adobe, three feet high and twelve feet square, without cover, the water being supplied by means of earthen pipes from the mountain springs. A fountain and exquisite flowers adorned the *patio*, a climbing rose of unusual luxuriance at once attracting special notice. It was evergreen, and of extraordinary size, extending in graceful festoons fully one hundred feet on either side. We were told that at the time of the occupation of Saltillo by Taylor's army this same vine was an attractive feature of the court.

Imagine the dismay and apprehension of several American women at thus finding themselves surrounded by so many evidences of ancient refinement and culture, and yet by none of the modern necessities of housekeeping. In this old city of twenty thousand inhabitants there was not a store where such indispensables as bedsteads or furniture of any kind, pillows or mattresses, could be purchased; while coffee or spice mills, cook-stoves or wash-tubs, were absolutely out of the question. How we managed may prove interesting to those who contemplate taking up their residence in Mexico, and will be related in the succeeding chapters. It was not by any means a question of money or price that prevented one from being comfortable at the outset.

We ladies were constantly portraying to each other, in a humorous way, how frightened we should be if circumstances should ever require any one of us to remain alone in this old castle over night;

of how the ghosts and hobgoblins that were perhaps concealed in some unexplored crannies might come forth in all their blood-curdling hideousness. These idle fancies and banterings of the hour were vividly recalled one night, when I unfortunately found myself the only one to entertain the phantom visitors.

Every other member of the household had gone for a day's jaunt into the country, and was detained from home over night by a terrific rain and thunder storm. The servants, supposing they would return, went to their homes, as is customary, which I did not discover until after they had left.

In the dead hours of the night I was aroused from deepest sleep by a terrific noise. Quaking with fear in the dim light, and gripping the pistol which was on a chair at the head of my bed, I proceeded, like Rosalind, with a "swashing and martial outside," to reconnoiter. A brief investigation revealed the fact that the fancied ghost or hobgoblin was nothing more alarming than a "harmless necessary cat," which had crept in surreptitiously through the bars, on feline mischief bent. By a misstep of her catship there was a general crash of crockery, and the sudden clatter, breaking with startling effect on the stillness of the night, made me imagine that the hobgoblins had really trooped forth from their hiding-places.

I had flattered myself that the diligent study I had given the grammar, previous to my going to Mexico, would prove an "Open, Sesame!" to the language, but I soon found myself sadly mistaken when I heard it spoken idiomatically and with the rapid utterance of the natives. But by eagerly seizing every opportunity, however humble, of airing my incipient knowledge, and by aid of grammar and dictionary, my inseparable companions, I found myself in a few weeks equal to the exigencies of the case, and rattled off my newly acquired accomplishment with a reckless disregard of consequences.

Speculation and curiosity were ever on the alert to make discoveries in this old house, and at every turn a thousand echoes seemed answering my timorous step.

Generations had here lived their lives of sorrow and joy, and the

lightest vibration seemed the ghost of some long-past sigh or laugh, to which these walls had resounded; and to me these vast old rooms were peopled again by my own vivid imaginings. To walk twice or thrice around the court-yard and through this interminable array of rooms, seemed as fatiguing as half a day's tramp.

In one of these perambulations I opened the door of a room into which I had never ventured before. An ancient-looking cupboard stood in one corner, filled with odd remnants of dainty china, vases, bottles, plates, glass, a dilapidated but highly decorated old soup-tureen, and some pieces of broken crockery almost half an inch in thickness. Many faded letters were thrown loosely about on shelves and in crevices. A descendant of Mother Eve could do no less than look at the dates. Some were a hundred years old, written in Spain, and the chirography was exceedingly beautiful. One was written in the city of Mexico, by a husband to his wife. He wrote most tenderly to the pretty, young *esposa*, begging her to be patient until his return, which was to be in the near future.

Hanging upon the wall near the door was a well-executed oil portrait, representing a lovely Spanish face. The graceful pose of the figure attracted my attention, and the luminous, speaking eyes held me spellbound—the same eyes which have so long made Spanish and Mexican women famous in song and story. The patrician nose, the classic brow, the shapely, rosy-lipped mouth, and the perfect hand and arm, completed a picture of unusual beauty. A richly gemmed crown rested upon the dark hair, and in the lower corner of the picture, inside the massive, gilded frame, were the words: "*Ana su digna esposa*"—"Hannah, your worthy wife."

Carefully removing all dust and cobwebs, I carried my prize to the drawing-room, and hung it over the mantelpiece. I am sure I never passed it without glancing at that perfect face, so sweet and womanly in its expression, and experiencing feelings of mingled reverence and pleasure.

Much diligent inquiry on my part elicited the information that the portrait was of Doña Ana, wife of the Emperor Augustin de Iturbide,

the first and only crowned head to occupy a throne in North America since its settlement by Europeans.

The first Sunday morning after taking possession of our house, I was sitting in the sunshiny court alone, every one, even the *mozo*, being absent. The bells from perhaps half a dozen churches answered each other across the bright air, reminding me with some painfulness of the church bells in my American home, the thought of which had filled my mind with longings all the morning, as I saw the gayly dressed populace hurrying past on their way to mass. Suddenly there was a gentle tap on the ponderous outer door. Responding, I found myself confronted by a tall youth of perhaps sixteen, fair, rosy cheeked, black haired, dark eyed, and beautiful. He lifted his hat politely and said in good English, "Good-morning, Madame!"

The sound of my dear native tongue in a land of strangers and from the lips of one of them brought my heart into my mouth with delight and surprise. My visitor introduced himself as Jesus, taking care to spell his name plainly for me, and I fear my face betrayed my horror at the sight of an ordinary mortal endowed with that holy name. He informed me with considerable hesitation that he was a student in the college, and wished to call frequently to have an opportunity of conversing in English.

Having obtained permission to call whenever it pleased him, he asked if he might bring a friend. Accordingly, Antero P— was introduced—another promising youth, equally determined to improve his English. They soon brought others, and among my most pleasing recollections are the occasions when the college boys—sometimes a dozen—gathered about me on Sunday mornings, with bright, dark faces, flashing eyes, and determined expression, as they wrestled with the difficulties of our language. Their great deference and thoughtfulness for me added to the pleasure I derived from their visits,—for the advantage was mutual. I learned the Spanish while they conquered the English.

I could not but pity the other members of our party who so languished with home sickness that they quite failed to reap the pleasure I did from this study of the natives.

Every day I found some new object of interest, and after the house had been explored I spent hours gazing from the windows upon some of the strangest scenes I had ever beheld. Some were extremely pathetic and others mirth-provoking.

The young children of the lower classes, especially the girls from five to ten years, were objects of peculiar interest to me. Dozens of these were to be seen in the early morning hours going upon some family errand apparently, judging from the haste and the pottery vessels they carried. Their tangled hair, peeping out from under the *rebozo*, their unwashed faces and jetty eyes, their long dresses sweeping the ground—and looking like the ground itself—their little naked, pigeon-toed feet going at an even but rapid jog-trot, all formed a laughable and ridiculous picture.

Often their hands were thrust through the bars, begging money in the name of some saint for a sick person.

"*Tlaco, Señorita, pa comprar la medecina para un enfermo,*" ("A cent and a quarter, lady, to buy medicine for a sick person"). If I asked what was the matter, the reply, "*Tiene mal de estomago*" ("Sick at the stomach"), came with such unflinching regularity, I was forced to the conclusion that "*mal de estomago*" must be an epidemic among them.

The school children came in for a profitable share of my most agreeable observations, as they presented themselves before me in all their freshness and originality.

It is not the custom for the daughters of the higher classes to appear on the street unattended. I rightly concluded, therefore, that these happy little friends of mine, who created such a fund of amusement for me, were the public-school children who belonged to the lower classes.

They passed in the mornings about eight o'clock, and returned at five in the evening. The girls wore *rebozos* differing from their mothers' only in size; and a surprising unanimity of style seemed to prevail.

Their hair was drawn tightly back, plaited behind, the ends