

One of them fingered a knot of red and blue ribbons at my throat, saying: "From France? No such fine things here!"—Everything fine, in their estimation, comes from France. They seemed incredulous, when I patriotically informed them that the United States, and not France, had furnished me forth in all this astonishing glory. Before I knew it, one had picked the bow to pieces, and drawn the ribbons out, to see how long they were. Another called attention to the Newport ties on my feet, and compared them, with much curiosity, and some envy, with her own shoes, which, after the fashion of the country, were sharply pointed. All appreciated the greater comfort of the American-made shoe, but ended by shaking their heads—"Very nice—very pretty—but"—and what an execrable *but!* "*No es costumbre Mexicana!*"

They were equally curious about my family relations, asking me the number of my brothers and sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins, and aunts—never stopping until I had named them all, their location and business. When I mentioned a name, they immediately caught it up, and tried to translate it into Spanish, showing much satisfaction when successful. Their efforts in this direction were laughable.

They translated readily Willie, Guillermo; Fanny, Panchita; Richard, Ricardo; Andrew, Andres; but Walter was a stumbling-block, they neither translated nor pronounced it. They asked me if in our country we had houses of *adobe* and windows like theirs with wooden rods outside? Their eyes opened wide and wider, as I described our houses as from two stories in height, to five, eight, ten and thirteen. They evidently thought I was drawing on my imagination.

When asked if in our country we used carriages, goats, and burros—had haciendas, ranches, factories, and mills, I described as well as I could our resources. They were convulsed when I told them that until I came to Mexico, I had never seen in my whole life more than six burros. They appreciated and sympathized with my lack of education on the burro question; for to be beyond the sight of a line of them was equivalent to being out of the republic.

Every one of the various persons with whom I chatted asked me

if it were not very sad for me in their country. But I had not the courage to tell them it was sad for me; in truth I was so intensely interested in them, and their peculiarities, there was no room for dwelling on myself.

They evidently appreciated my friendly spirit and the willingness with which I allowed them to examine my toilet, not even resenting the liberty of one, somewhat more inquisitive than the rest, who lifted my dress a little to explore my hose, on which they murmured repeatedly: "She is very *simpática*," a word for which we have no exact equivalent in English, but which perhaps explains itself.

It was among these country people that I first observed any departure from the national type of feature and complexion. Some of them had glossy brown hair, gray eyes, and skin as fair as an Anglo-Saxon; while others had red hair, freckled faces, and pale blue eyes. The parents of one of these was pointed out to me. They were of swarthy brown complexion, with black hair, dark eyes, and in fact, all the characteristics which I had come to regard as typically Mexican. Among them all I observed the same gentleness of demeanor, and courteous bearing, which had already so forcibly impressed me in the city, among all classes.

Birth and education had nothing to do with it. It was an exquisite instinct, common to the people as a nation. Even here in Palomas, among a plain untutored population, of the laboring class, especially among the ignorant, wondering women who had dissected my toilet with such innocent complacency, it struck me, for in spite of their unconventional behavior, they were as gentle and courteous as royal duchesses.

About twelve o'clock, the family began making preparations for serving dinner, which I watched with keen interest. One of the daughters of the *hacendado* came into the parlor, and mounting a chair, on which she had placed a box, opened a small door high up in the wall, which I had not before observed. From this snug retreat—the *alhacena*—she carefully drew forth cups and saucers of exquisite china, as fragile as egg-shells, and beautifully ornamented. When she had

taken out four of each, she gently closed the door and left me wondering if it had an "open sesame" spring in the bolt; for I looked in vain for the little door, which when closed became invisible. I concluded it was a safe retreat for such articles of value in case of a revolution.

The table was spread in a bed room. We took our seats, the host at the head, but his wife did not put in an appearance, nor indeed did any other member of the family. First of all, soup was served from the kitchen in quaint, glazed pottery bowls, elaborately ornamented on the outside with vines and flowers, and on top of each bowl was a hot tortilla. Next the national *puchero* was brought in on plates, the tortilla in this instance, being slapped down by our plates from a fork. This removed, a kind of stew, perhaps *chile guisado*, which I had seen in the market—was served on plates with a narrow green rim around them, and on each was placed another hot tortilla. The next course was roast mutton, served on plates which this time had a red rim—and again a tortilla. Next came a roast of pork, filled with spices and pepper. While hot enough to make one scream, it was nevertheless, delicious. With all these courses, we were served with *salsa de chili bravo* (green pepper-sauce). Our host took great pains to initiate me into the merits of this sauce, but I could scarcely look at it without shedding tears copiously over its pungency. We had no vegetables, save the *puchero* which is described in another place; but when the last meat course was removed, we were served with a delicious quince jelly, which ended this excellent and hospitably served repast.

When dinner was over, and I was gratifying an idle curiosity by looking about the rooms, the eldest girl came in, and took her position on the floor, unrolling, as she did so, a handsome pair of slippers which she was embroidering. How strangely out of place they looked to me, in the hands of the girl seated on the earthen floor! I wondered who would be the one about those premises to wear them. But the design and the manner in which the work was executed would have been creditable in any country.

The extreme nicety and regularity with which the Mexican women,

even in the plainest walks of life, carry out any contemplated design, with needle and thread, on linen or cotton, is quite remarkable. Time seems to have no value. It is the custom in many places, for girls to learn all the dainty stitches, and while yet in their teens, begin to prepare spreads, table-covers, napkins, and mats, which when they are married will constitute a part of their household goods.

When the wife of our host came in, she found me intently engaged in scrutinizing the bedspread, and began at once explaining its history. She said it was the work of her grandmother, who began it when a girl. It had been a part of her bridal outfit, and afterwards descended to her mother, then to herself. The material was bleached domestic, but the design was at once unique and ingenious. In the center was a large pattern of flowers and fruit, with the daintiest vines, leaves, arteries, and tracteries to be imagined—all done by means of drawn threads and spool cotton. Around the entire spread was a valance wrought in the same exquisite manner. The space adjoining the border of plain domestic, above the valance, was a kind of insertion, filled in with figures of girls and boys swinging and dancing, women carrying water on their heads, shepherds with their crooks, and donkeys with their burdens—all truly represented by deft fingers, guided by shrewd feminine observation. A long flat cotton bolster had a case with several subdivisions at equal distances apart, filled in with fine crochet insertion. The bolster had first a covering of red, then the case stretched on, skin-tight, thus exhibiting the pattern of the lace. Laid pyramid-like upon each other were ten pillows, each one a little smaller than the other, and all decorated with the same lace. The spread and pillow-cases represented years of untiring, earnest labor, and also an inconceivable amount of precious eyesight, which these people evidently regarded as a mere nothing.

Altogether the day spent at Palomas was a most agreeable one, and even now to recall it affords a high degree of satisfaction. It opened to an appreciative eye the inner workings of the home life of the plain country people, in their original simplicity. Ah! peaceful Palomas!—"Pass of the Doves"—name unique and suggestive, for

their softly-melancholy coo! coo! coo! penetrated this humble home from the clumps of trees near by. May no ruthless innovator remodel your simple adobes! no insatiate gringo invade and despoil your sacred domain! But throughout all time, may you and your honest people continue to live out your lives, undismayed and undisturbed by any progressive, distracting or contaminating influence! In primitive blissful ignorance and innocence may your children live out their allotment of three-score-and-ten years, bare-footed, bare-headed, and unsullied by contact with modern galvanized institutions!

I watched Cosme with a humorous interest while he was preparing



SWEET CONTENTMENT AT THE PASS OF THE DOVES.

for our return home. He looked at his valiant steed now and again furtively, shaking his head and muttering something about not going so fast on our return. Poor Cosme! It was the old story of man proposing and a higher power disposing. The air was fine and bracing, and when we were all in our proper places for the homeward journey, I will confess to no small amount of uneasiness concerning Cosme.

The numerous and long-continued adios of our kind host and his family, and their friends, were wafted to our ears by the evening breeze, and in a twinkling we were out of sight of the house and dashing along the highway toward home. The horses attached to our vehicle, were apparently fresher than when we started in the morning,

and if we went out rapidly, the return was more rapid still. Cosme's horse dashed along before us with lightning speed, and soon made his hapless rider but a vanishing speck in the dim distance. The trip home was accomplished in almost half the time required in the morning.

On the outskirts of the city we halted for a few moments, in conversation with a friend, and Cosme, not knowing it, preceded us to the house. On arriving we found he had opened the great door, and there, on the bench in the hall, he was stretched full length, the most utterly exhausted, bruised and aching martyr that ever suffered for a cherished principle. In spite of the irresistibly comic nature of it all, I could not help feeling an acute sympathy for my poor servant, and Cosme, seeing it, was duly grateful. The horse he had ridden was walking about the court at will.

My dear little friend, Pomposita, had watched for our coming, and I had scarcely alighted from the carriage ere she came over and gathered me in her arms, saying that the day had seemed to her like a week, as she watched and waited for my return with feverish impatience. She clapped her hands, and laughed immoderately, when I related to her the amusing incidents of our trip to Palomas.

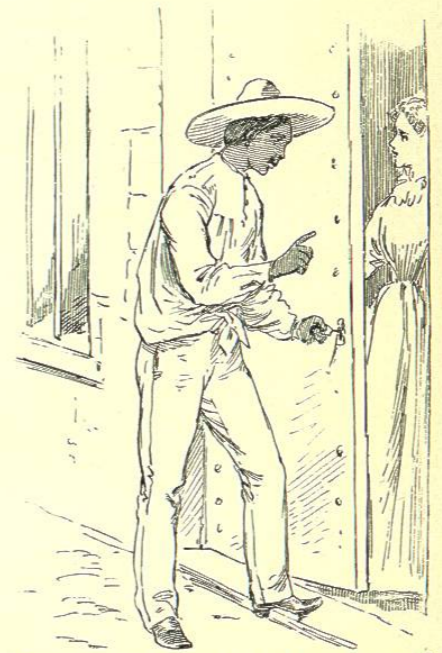
The next day Cosme appeared before me limping, while his countenance was indeed crestfallen and sorrowful as he said that he would have to leave our service, adding in a conciliatory way that it was not because he did not like us and our mode of life, nor that he would not willingly serve us until the end of his days, but he wished to learn the trade of a blacksmith.

The dreadful suspicion dawned upon me, that as I could not Americanize the *mozo* I would have to Mexicanize myself and household. Faithful Cosme! How sorry I was to lose him! At last I knew enough of the characteristics of the *mozo* to shrewdly suspect that his excuse was only a polite cover for his deep consciousness of the sufferings he had endured in our service the previous day. He did not intend to serve in a household where such an occurrence might be indefinitely repeated. He would be a *mozo* for the house; for the highway—never!

I made every effort to conciliate him—"never again would his services be demanded on such a ride." I walked about the court disconsolately, talking kindly to him. Nearer and nearer he approached the door. I followed, entreating him not to go; well knowing that if I lost Cosme—and all the other *mozos* had gone to San Luis Potosi, or some other far-away city, to see their families,—not a shadow of opportunity remained to procure another.

An admirable feature in Cosme's composition was his love of truth. He had never heard the story of the cherry tree and the little hatchet, but his innate veracity was not to be outdone by anybody. Somehow I always felt that when Cosme did go he would express the real cause of his leaving and not quote, like his predecessors, a mythical family's imaginary demands. Nor was I mistaken. When the poor boy reached the door he halted, turned and looked mournfully at me, as though imploring me not to ask him to stay longer, while in pathetic tones he murmured, "*Pos entonces yo me voy; adios, Señorita*" ("Well, now, I'm going; good-by, Señorita").

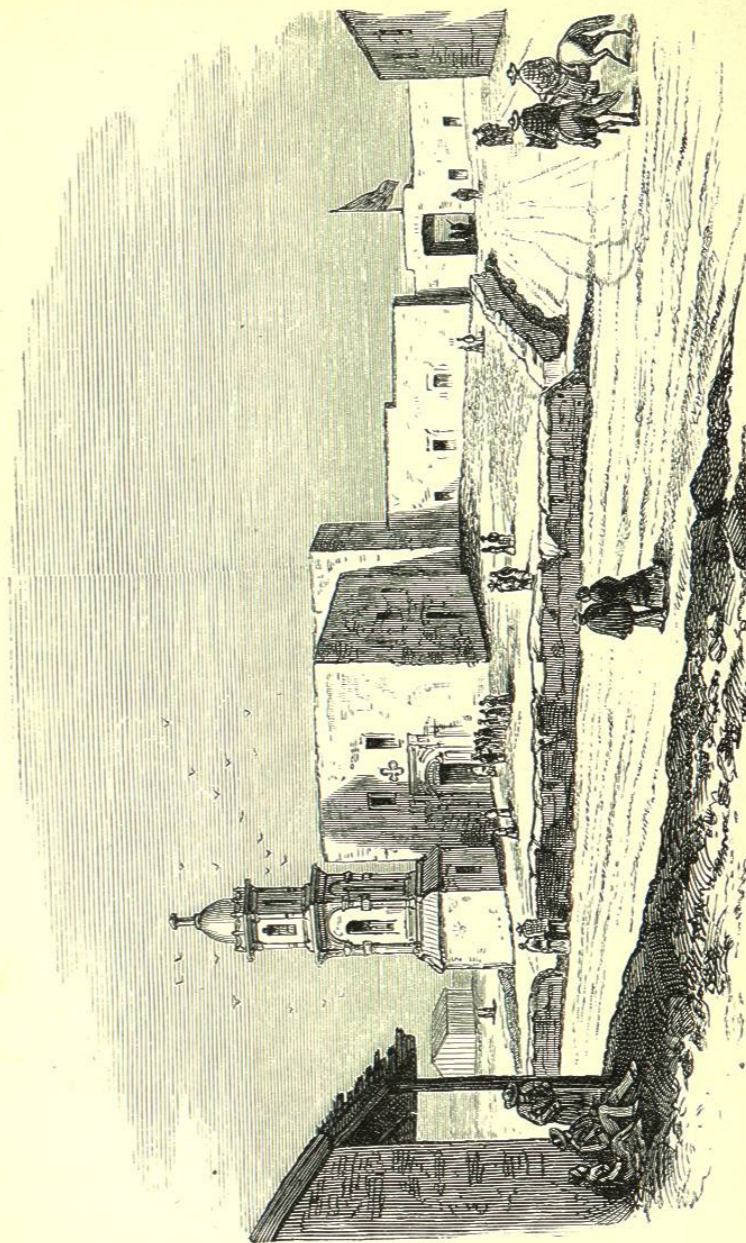
He stood on the threshold, perhaps for the last time, when I again ventured to remonstrate, "Well, now, Cosme, why won't you stay?" Almost closing the heavy doors as if to prevent another appeal, and tossing his hat far back on his head, his eyes rolling, his face ashen but determined, he made the final *pièce de résistance* with admirable *finesse*. Catching the huge key and closing the door, so that he barely had a view of my face, while one foot halted on the threshold, with bent figure and eyes beaming kindly regret upon



"YOUR AMERICAN CUSTOMS ARE TOO HARD ON ME."

me, there came the inevitable movement of the forefinger before the nose as he faintly replied, "*Porque tan fuertes son las costumbres Americanas me molestan y cargan mucho y tan pesadas que no puedo vivir bajo de ellos*" ("Your American customs are too troublesome and too heavy a load for me to carry; I can't live under them").

The last that I heard from Cosme was one of the invariable parting salutations, "*Hasta luego*" ("I'll see you again"), followed by the invocation, "*Queda con Dios! no puedo estar mas*" ("May God be with you! for I can't stay any longer").



OLD STONE CHURCH AT EL PASO, TEXAS.