

of a crisp day in October, united to the brightness of a clear day in January, but without snow or ice, and, mingled with these, the life-giving air of a balmy day in May, and then imagine twelve months of such weather, some idea may be had of this enchanting clime.

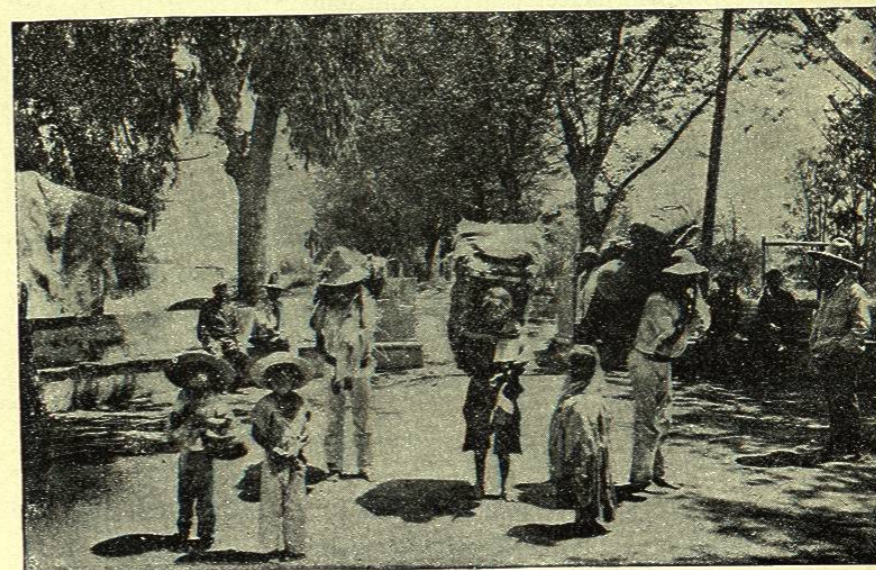
When Joaquin Miller was asked his opinion of Mexico, he replied enthusiastically: "Mexico! Why, it is Italy and France and the best part of Spain tied up together in one bunch of rapturous fragrance. . . . There are no such skies as has Mexico. People have got into the habit of talking about the sapphire blue that domes Italy. But it is because travelers, as a rule, go there by way of misty, foggy England, and the contrast is so great as to enchant them. But right here among the grand, restful mountains which rim this valley, I have seen the brightest skies in all my life; here, six days from Chicago and eight days from Boston, is more than Italy can give. I have seen the cattle and the stars sleep side by side on the mountains! Let me explain. There is generally a mist crowning every mountain peak which shuts out the stars. Here, how different! In my ramblings over the valley at night, the misty curtain is swept away and the stars can be seen all along the ridges. They stand out brilliant in this clear atmosphere. No such atmosphere can be met near Naples or Florence."

At the capital I observed the peculiar tints that settle over the mountain peaks in the late evenings. Looking upward from one street, the gazer sees a clear gray; from another, a liquid blue; from another, a bright rose or amber or gorgeous orange; all floating and blending together until the entire heavens are lit up by a bewitching roseate glow, which seems to vibrate gently to and fro in the thin air, while the whole superb canopy is gemmed with stars, which partake of the glowing tints surrounding them.

Later in the night, I have gazed in rapt admiration on the changing of this roseate hue into one so deeply, darkly blue, that to my vision the sky appeared a dome of jetty black, from which myriads of refulgent jewels shone out.

The contrast between the works of the Great Architect of the

Universe and those of man never seemed greater than on turning from this celestial view to the mundane scene below. From my point of observation in the Zócalo, where both our modern gas and electric lights flashed their brilliant rays across the wide streets, I could see the sleeping-place of a large proportion of the poorer denizens of the city—their roof, the broad expanse of heaven—their bed, the stone pavement, or at most a *petate*—the *rebozo* or *serape* forming their sole covering. Here, without inconvenience, these contented people



SCENE IN THE ALAMEDA.

slept, cuddled up, undisturbed by the gay throngs who walked back and forth around and among them.

Everywhere in the republic this out-door life exists. How different in the northern part of the United States! When the people there are shivering from intense cold, and all the avenues of travel are blocked with snow and ice, here are perpetual sunshine and flowers.

Every climate in the world may be experienced between the seashore at Vera Cruz and the capital. Eternal snows lie upon the one

hand; on the other, verdant plains and fertile valleys. Even the summer heat and drought on the table-lands are mitigated by the advent of the rainy season, which begins in May and ends with November. It is not continuous. The sun may be shining brightly, when suddenly the sky is overcast, and the rain descends in torrents, to be succeeded by sunshine. If two cloudy or rainy days come consecutively, the people find themselves quite aggrieved, and complain of the awful weather. But the rain usually comes late in the evening or at night; then the streets, ditches and canals overflow their banks and become merged in an open sea; but in the morning the water has disappeared; the sun comes out in all his splendor and cheering rays; the blue sky smiles, and all nature rejoices.

At the capital there are three distinct temperatures—that of the sunny side of the street, that of the shady side, and that in the house. In the morning, walk as early as ten o'clock, on the sunny side of the street, the heat will be almost overpowering. On making a change to the shady side, the difference will be so great as to produce a severe cold, while the light wrap, worn with comfort in the street, will be found insufficient in the house.

On reaching an altitude of four thousand feet and upward, strangers, and especially ladies, experience a peculiar dizziness, which continues for several days, after which they usually return to their normal condition. At the capital the elevation above sea-level is 7,349 feet, and during the first week after my arrival I was almost prostrated from this dizziness.

Another peculiarity of the climate consists in the fact that it is considered by many to be dangerous to pass suddenly from a closed room to the white light and open air outside. I saw several instances in which incurable blindness was said to be produced in this way. The natives understand the importance of moving about the house before going abruptly into the open air.

Still another climatic effect is, that the uncovering of the head is apt to produce a severe catarrhal cold. For this reason gentlemen never remove their hats for any length of time when out of doors.

According to the *Observador Medico*, the death rate of the city for 1885 was 13,008, of which 6,431 were females, and 5,577 males. The most frequent causes of death were pulmonary and tuberculous affections, which, with pneumonia and bronchitis, made up an alarming mortality of 4,292—about one-third of the whole. Contrary to what might be expected, only 179 deaths occurred from small-pox, while typhus and intermittent and malignant fevers claimed but a small number of victims. After lung diseases, diarrhea and dysentery were the most fatal, running up to 2,866. Allowing that the city of Mexico has a population of 350,000, the annual death rate is a trifle over 37 per 1,000. But if we consider that annually thousands of poor Indians from the hot regions come to Mexico and die from exposure and hardship, the real death rate will not exceed from two to three per cent. From its high rate of mortality arises the reputation of the capital for extreme unhealthiness; but with its primitive system of sewerage, imperfect drainage, and poor ventilation of the houses, no surprise should be felt. Any one who witnesses the repairing and cleansing of the immense sewer canals that are covered over in the middle of the streets, will certainly wonder that the death rate is not higher.

The number of funerals consequent upon such a large mortality is only equaled by the strange manner in which they are conducted. The highest dignitaries of the land and the humblest peon share equal honors in the mode of transit employed in conveying their lifeless remains to their



IDLERS IN THE ZOCALO.

last resting-places. It was an astute nineteenth century schemer who conceived the idea of employing the street railways as the best method of transporting the dead to the cemeteries. One man owned all the lines of street railway, and in order to carry out his purposes, he bought up all the hearses and their equipments, and thus compelled the public to accept his plan. It works admirably so far. The wealthy may indulge a hearse car, plumed, draped, liveried, and lackeyed, for \$120, with an additional one, or perhaps two, for friends. The plainer cars, drawn by one mule, may be procured for \$3, while others reach from \$12 to \$30, including one or two cars, neatly draped, for mourners. But to the stranger eye, accustomed to seeing the long cortége moving solemnly along the streets, with its hearse and weeping mourners, the Mexican plan seems repulsive and devoid of that respect which we pay to the lifeless clay of our loved ones. It reminds one irresistibly of Thomas Noel's famous couplet :

" Rattle his bones over the stones!
He's only a pauper, whom nobody owns!" *

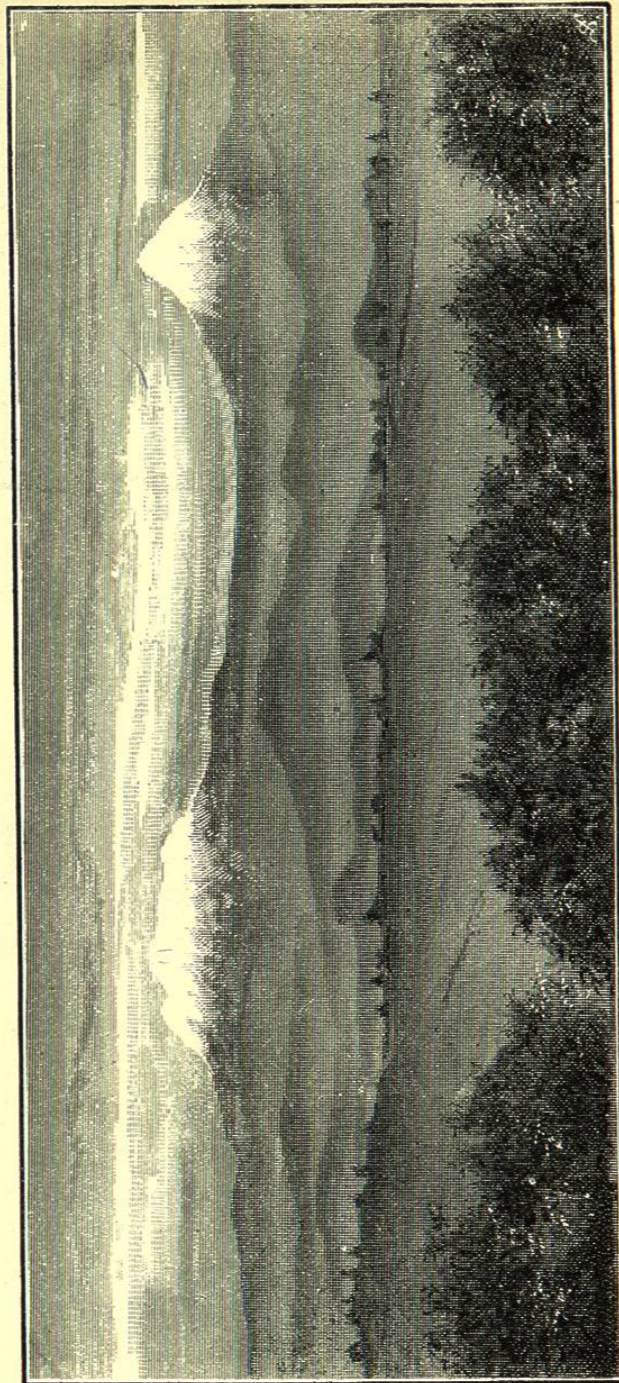
A short sojourn, however, serves to convince the most skeptical of the "fitness of things," the Mexican method being far more expeditious and, it is claimed, less expensive than the old plan.

Any day in the week one may take a car for Tacubaya, and there see the Indians transporting their dead to Dolores Cemetery. I have seen four men bearing on their heads the coffin containing its dead occupant. For miles they tramp steadily along, themselves the only hearse, horses, cortége, or mourners.

" In the darkness of the forest boughs,"

with the muffled tread of naked feet, they journey with their dead. At other times one may see a poor woman, bearing upon her head a plain little open coffin, containing her dead child, with eyes wide open and a profusion of gay flowers covering the tiny form. What volumes it tells of the sweetly poetic thoughts, implanted by a divine hand in the heart of a poverty-stricken, bereaved Indian mother!

* *The Pauper's Ride.*



POPOCATAPETL AND IZTACCIHUATL.

The Valley of Mexico is a basin, elliptical in form, about forty miles long by thirty wide. It is rimmed by mountains of porphyry, and its surface is diversified with lakes and hills. The scenery is unrivaled now as when it first met the enraptured gaze of the Spaniards, who in their enthusiasm exclaimed: "It is the promised land!"

The valley is watered by lakes, both of fresh and salt water. Lake Tezcuco, whose waters once surrounded the capital, has now retreated three miles.

A great portion of the valley was once a vast forest, which was denuded by the vandal conquerors. Hardly a vestige remains to tell of past glories save the grove of ancient cypresses at Chapultepec festooned with their melancholy moss.

In every direction one may gaze on scenes of beauty and grandeur, while in the distance, but ever in view, are the majestic Popocatepetl towering 17,720 feet over the surrounding mountains—and his less familiar but no less sublime consort, *Iztaccihuatl*, pronounced *ēs-tāk-sē-hwät'l*.

Popocatepetl ("Smoking Mountain"), with his tall peak, stands side by side with Iztaccihuatl, familiarly called *La Mujer Blanca*, or the Woman in White. The two mountains unite in forming a feature of intense interest to every stranger. The grand old mountain, lifting his imposing volcanic cone thousands of feet into the clear sky, seems to keep a majestic watch over the motionless slumbers of the Woman in White. The Smoking Mountain is silent now; but who can predict that the sleeping citizens of Mexico will never more be rudely awakened by his convulsive shakings and awful thunders?

The Indians, with their endless legends and traditions, wove a romantic story of these mountains. With their love for the marvelous, they attribute the Titanic mutterings of Popocatepetl to grief for his beautiful Iztaccihuatl, who sleeps on regardless of his thunderous tones.

The Woman in White lies stretched out as in a long and peaceful slumber—the rugged brow of the mountain forming the bier upon which she rests.

The Toltecs, the Chichimicas, and the Acolhuaus may have pitched

their tents, and wandered under the shadows, and looked in awe on the grand entombment under the open heavens, of the dead woman. They have come and gone, disappeared forever from the sight of man, but, clad in her garments of perpetual snow, lying on her grand bier, through summer suns and winter frosts, Iztaccihuatl sleeps on.

With her arms folded over her ice-clad breast—her knees drawn slightly upward, with the limbs gracefully sloping, the figure of the sleeping woman is completely outlined on the mountain top. Her icy tresses flow unconfined over the dark mountain sides. Thrown over all is a winding-sheet, which falls in graceful folds, covering the dead, frozen woman.

Often, when the sun is descending behind the last dome on the western range, she may be seen, with a golden, cloud-made scarf, shaded to pale pink, that finally melts into a gauzy *serape*, which heightens the mystical charm of this fascinating mountain. The handmaidens of the sky who imperceptibly decorate this sleeping lady live and float afar off in the realms of eternal blue; and by mysterious instinct seem to know when she will look more lovely with a change of her dainty draperies. Stretching down their shadowy fingers, these ministering spirits catch up the fleecy masses of clouds as they hurry swiftly along, envelop her in their vapory shroud, and imprint kisses on her placid brow, and, whispering mournful words of endearment, pass silently back to their heavenly home.

Once, on a visit to Tlalpam * I glanced into the clear waters of a shimmering lake. Reflected on its glassy bosom were these two mountains—peaceful, snow-clad, and as exquisitely limned under the matchless sky as though the water was a canvas, and a giant master-painter had planned and painted the whole grand scene.

The immutable laws of God create sublime works of sculpture and sublime paintings. Stand afar from Smoking Mountain and the Woman in White. Stand in their shadows, when the sun is sinking behind their lofty summits. The one rises, bold, rugged, misshapen,

* There is no natural lake at this point, but the heavy rains had filled the valley with water.

and chaotic. It may be, perchance, once on a time, that he was linked with the snow-white and pure Iztaccihuatl; and charmed the eye as he nobly towered over her—the two one. But his rude, tumultuous violence severed from his side, nevermore to again return, the Woman in White, who was once a part of his soulless self. His mutterings were heard for a time; but the fabled anguish that once found vent is no longer heard; his grief for his once loved Iztaccihuatl is hushed. Men suffer and are silent, mountains are silent but suffer not. Men and mountains may never grieve, because they may be alike soulless. Contrasting with the dark, gloomy cone that seems to scowl on the scene, ever ready to break out into angry thunders, and startle the sleeping world, is clearly outlined against the sky the Woman in White at rest upon her couch in the peaceful sleep of the just or the dead. Her face is upturned to heaven, white, cold, beautiful, looking into the great unknown depths of the sky, smiling in her hopes of the great hereafter, unmindful of the grim, misshapen cone that towers from afar.