

side the grand aisle, forming a guard of honor, themselves the motive and main feature of the occasion.

Boxes were filled with people prominent in fashionable and public life, a central one being reserved for Madame Diaz. An excellent orchestra and pupils from the Institute for the Blind furnished the music.

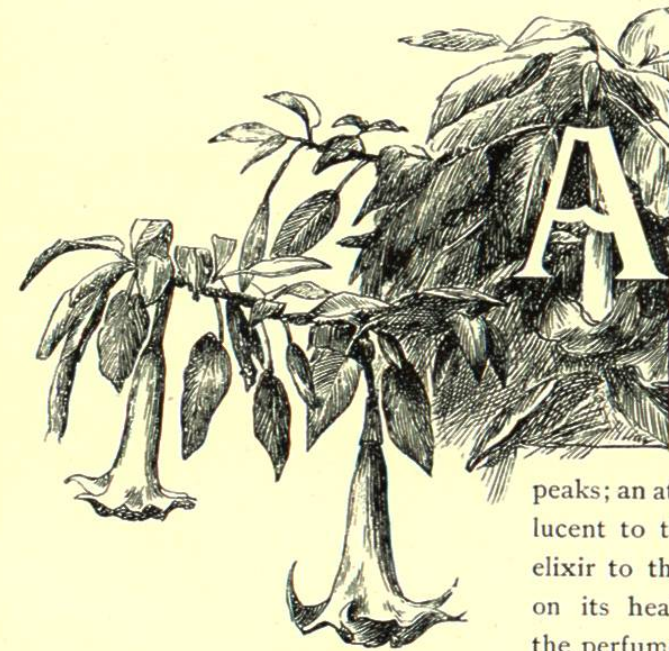
The prizes were handed to the cadets by the President.

In the literary exercises poems appropriate to the occasion were read by Juan A. Mateos and Anselmo Alfaro, but the most noted was the official address delivered by the "Poet Laureate" of the Republic, Guillermo Prieto.

It would be a graceful compliment for the students of Chapultepec Military Academy to be invited to participate in our competitive inter-State or national drills.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM MEXICO TO MORELIA ALONG THE MEXICAN NATIONAL.



SKY such as only a Mexican sky can be, when the sun's rays wove gorgeous oriflammes across the snowy mountain

peaks; an atmosphere, translucent to the eyes and an elixir to the lungs, bearing on its health-giving wings the perfume of a thousand

flowers; all these were the delightful accompaniments of a holiday jaunt on which we set out in gay spirits one brilliant afternoon in October.

Our party consisted of Madame de C — (whose guest I was) and her bright little daughter, Lotita, and servant. The objective points of our excursion were Toluca and Morelia, on the *Ferrocarril Nacional*, and as the railway had then been opened only a short time to the latter place, it was an event of no small magnitude, our visit to these famous old cities. In a charming letter to the *Two Republics* Madame

de C— thus expressed our sensations on taking our departure from Mexico: "After we leave Colonia station, as the cars carry us rapidly past the familiar landmarks, the restfulness of the landscape seems reflected in ourselves. But for the church towers and the roofs and the fortified walls of Chapultepec rising abruptly from the plain, the historic valley of Anahuac with its snowy sentinels, shining lakes, and circle of blue mountains, presents the same air of tranquillity that invited the Toltecs, weary from their long wanderings, to establish their lares and penates here."

The Mexican National Railway, or Palmer-Sullivan, has its westward extension now under construction from the capital toward the Pacific Coast at Manzanillo. The Texas frontier at Laredo is the starting point of the main line, but so far it has only reached Saltillo on its way to the capital.

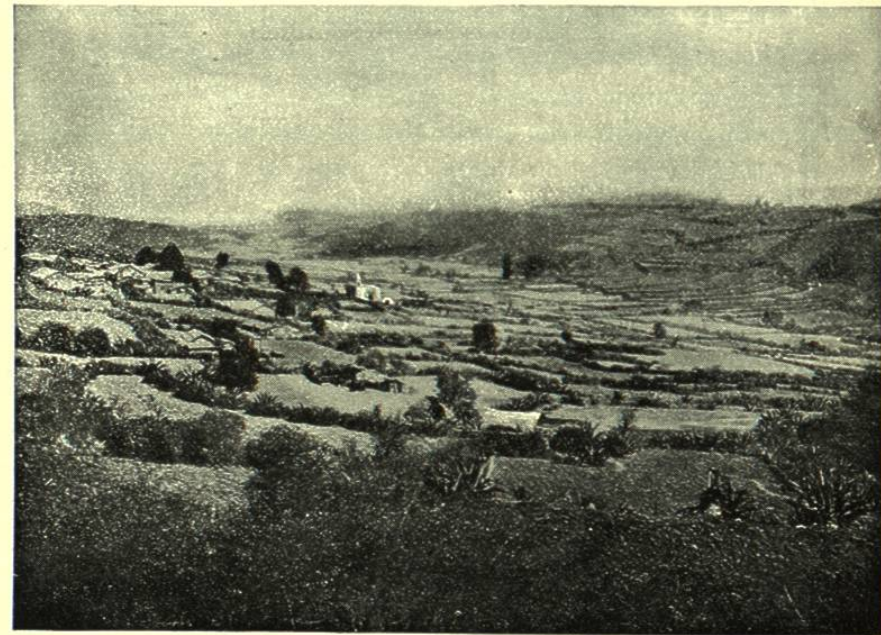
The western division of the National Railway has revealed the natural beauties of a region which hitherto have been as a sealed book to the ordinary tourist and traveler, the country being not only almost inaccessible, but also bandit-infested. The difficulties of engineering were also of a kind to appall even daring and progressive Americans. As an instance, seventeen bridges were constructed across the Rio Hondo in the space of a few miles, and a very insignificant stream it is in appearance, but its crooks and turns are quite amazing.

The intrepid little engine winds about the valley, now and again apparently thrusting itself against the foot-hills and mountains; then over dark abysmal ravines, spider-webbed bridges, and around horse-shoe curves where both ends of the train almost meet; then across gurgling waterfalls; through Indian villages, forests of pine, and along grassy slopes, continuing in its serpentine course to give one every phase of scenery to be desired. The most lovely view is that of the capital and the Lake of Tezcucó smiling and shimmering in the distance.

Our attention is divided between Nature's handiwork as shown in

the diversified and lovely scenery and the dwellings and mode of life of the inhabitants.

The humble huts of the Indians have an indescribable charm imparted to them by their quaintness of construction. They cannot exceed six feet in height, and with their roofs of straw, maguey leaves, or, as with many, planks laid on loosely, held in place by countless stones, each one weighing one or two pounds, reminded me of a peg-



THE INDIAN VILLAGE OF SAN FRANCISCITA.

soled shoe before it is worn. They begin in the valleys and run in irregular lines up the mountain sides, until one wonders how it is that some mighty landslide or upheaving earthquake does not sweep these frail structures from their lodging places.

These Indians own patches of land, and each one has his portion divided from his neighbors by rows of maguey. They cultivate wheat, corn, oats, and barley; and the different shades of green running in geometrical lines, transversely and obliquely, reminded me of

that feminine product, the crazy quilt. The observer wonders in which representative of the two civilizations is the geometrical instinct most highly developed—the crude Indian, unaided by a modern thought, or our “ladye faire,” with every stimulus from her neighbors’ ingenuity and an inexhaustible supply of gay materials from well-filled storehouses near by.

A simple placard on which we read “Crina,” informs us that we have reached the highest point on the road, and the highest station in Mexico—at 10,000 feet above sea level, and at a distance of forty miles from the capital. Here respiration becomes difficult, and overcoats and wraps are in demand.

After this, we enter the beautiful Valley of Toluca, which is well covered with haciendas, on which corn and beans are chiefly cultivated. For the first time we see the bright red-tiled roofs that here cover every house, large and small. The haciendas have numerous *ranchitas* (little houses), in size about five by seven feet, mounted on poles ten feet high. They are entered only by means of a slender ladder. In these strange appurtenances of farm life a watchman takes his station at night, armed with his rifle, and guards a certain number of acres from the molestation of robbers. The road passes near the famous battle-field of Monte de las Cruces, where was fought one of the most sanguinary battles of the War of Independence. A monument now marks the spot. The Valley of Toluca is larger than that of Mexico, and is more generally cultivated, being well supplied with water for irrigating purposes.

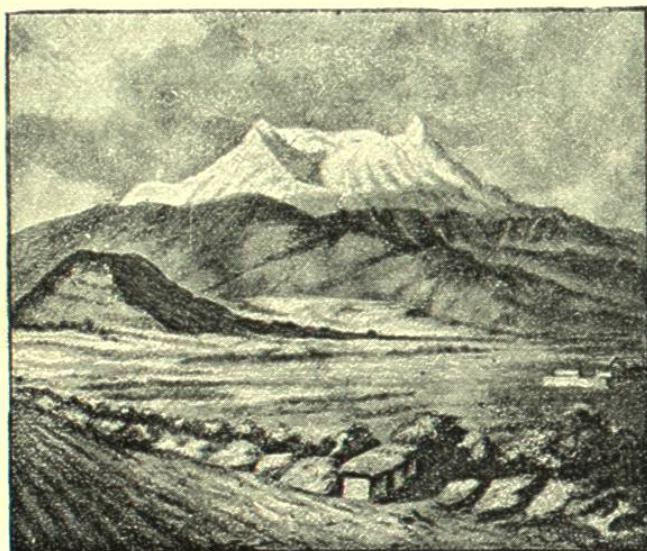
Toluca, the capital of the State of Mexico, is about 1,000 feet lower than the high point before described, and 1,000 feet higher than the City of Mexico. The climate is delightfully cool; in fact, for most constitutions, far too cool to be comfortable. The high altitude, together with the coolness, often affects with nervous prostration strangers, especially ladies, requiring days to overcome. The city has a population of about 25,000, is neatly paved, and rejoices in an abundance of clear, fresh water, flowing at all times through the streets. It has many fine old convents, now used as hospitals or

schools. Foremost among the latter is the “Instituto Literario,” one of the most widely known of all the institutions of learning in the republic, and it has the honor of having educated many of the most distinguished men of the country. Each municipality has the privilege of sending one student, who must stand a rigid competitive examination. The institution has five *patios* and covers an immense space of ground, and is provided with a fine library, museum of natural history, every appliance for the study of physiology, physics, history, and chemistry, besides music and drawing. The students have a gymnasium, warm and cold baths, comfortable dormitories, and for all these advantages the price of board and tuition in the school is only \$16 per month. The number of students at the time of our visit was 220. Many of them gathered around us, and conducted us through the gardens and buildings. They entertained us delightfully with recitations and choice music, and extended many other courtesies. A bright-eyed little Indian boy of only eleven years stepped out gracefully before us in the garden and delivered a charming address of welcome to the “two señoritas,” in which he stated that both the professors and students of the “Instituto Literario” were honored by our visit, and it was their wish that we should return at some future day. They all accompanied us to the portal of the college, where the usual custom of shaking hands, intermingled with all sorts of good wishes, was gone through, and the last that we heard was a long and continuous “*adios*,” amid the flutter of handkerchiefs and waving of hands from the gallant young students of “El Instituto Literario.”

In striking contrast to the Instituto Literario was a public day-school for the poorer children of the town. At seven o'clock in the morning, we saw dozens of small urchins filing into a building opposite our rooms. Not believing it possible that these were school hours, we went over to see for ourselves, and there sat the little folks, some on low chairs, some on benches, while others were down upon the floor, book in hand, and all studying together and aloud, reminding one of the chatter of magpies.

These tireless little seekers after knowledge were not released from their arduous duties until six in the evening; eleven long hours, excepting the noon-day recess, sitting there, *rebozo*-wrapped and book-absorbed.

It was an exaggeration of our "old field" system, and these little Mexicans enjoy a great advantage over their white neighbors; punishment of any kind being prohibited by law, and their "tender thoughts" and "young ideas" are spared the painful necessity of



NEVADO DE TOLUCA.

being taught to "shoot" by the aid and persuasive eloquence of a hickory switch.

By means of tram-cars, we made a charming trip to the *Hacienda de la Huerta* (plantation of the Garden), the most productive in the Valley of Toluca. We ascended a hundred feet to the mile for nine miles, and shivered with cold as we went. The hacienda is at the foot of the Nevado de Toluca, a perpetually snow-capped mountain, which aided us in the delusion that we had entered the arctic regions.

The hacienda has more the appearance of a town or municipality than anything else, having a store, a *fonda*, a very fine large flouring-mill, and produces great quantities of wheat. All the farm work is done by American machinery, and, in addition, one thousand men are employed the year round, who earn from 18 to 50 cents a day. In reply to our interrogation as to how they could exist on so small a sum as 18 cents, the *administrador* (manager) said that "until the *peon* was educated to where he felt the need of something more than *tortillas* and Chili peppers to eat, it was not likely his ambition would be much stimulated. It is only by the education of the young children that any such thing may be expected."

We were greatly interested in a young deaf-mute, who is employed as gardener on the hacienda. He had graduated at the School of Deaf-Mutes at the capital, and afterwards took a course in horticulture and agriculture at the Agricultural College there. He wrote on the slate in three languages, Spanish, French, and English, and seemed delighted to converse with us in the latter language. The borders and walks were marvels of beauty, but the former were rather startling, as they represented huge snakes, made of various kinds of bottles, and white quartz and lava, broken in tiny bits, with their great mouths wide open, as if to swallow anything that came in sight. Rustic fences of exquisite shape and style have been planned and arranged by this gardener, and at regular intervals on the rustic fence he had placed dainty baskets of ferns, brought from the mountains. He has ten men and two carpenters to carry out any of his designs. He was much pleased with our praises of his skill and taste.

We were the recipients of many social kindnesses from prominent citizens, to whom we bore letters of introduction. Among them Governor Llanan, the Governor of the State, received us with all the grace of a cavalier in the grand salon of the palace. Upon the walls of this elegantly furnished apartment there hung the portraits of all past Governors, while supported on handsome easels in the corners, were those of Hidalgo, Juarez, and George Washington.

The same rule, I found, existed in every State capitol that I visited, but not in every case was there a portrait of Washington.

A nephew of General Miramon, Señor Enrique Rodriguez y Miramon, the civil engineer of the State, together with his accomplished wife, bestowed upon the strangers most kindly attentions.

On one of our strolls we noticed a time-worn sign over a sadly defaced portal, which read: "*Boletas del sol*" ("Tickets to the sun"). We had been constantly mystified by the signs on both stores and streets, but this one eclipsed them all. A closer investigation proved it to be the ancient bull-ring of the town, and this sign indicated that those who had depleted pocket-books might sit on the sunny side for a less price than in the shade, *por el sombre* (a canvas awning) making the only difference.

Living in Toluca is cheap, and as a summer resort for those who are not affected by the altitude, no place in the Republic offers greater inducements. The hotel *El Leon de Oro* (The Golden Lion) is neat and well kept, as well as reasonable in charges. There is an excellent market, pretty little Zocalo, and an admirable band of music composed of boys, from eleven to fifteen, belonging to the public schools.

In this country, on every hand, striking contrasts and marked characteristics present themselves. Everything is possessed of an individual interest—each person or object in itself striking—collectively furnishing fine groupings for pen or pencil.

It was in Toluca that I heard strains of natural, human music that could not be surpassed by the *Miserere*, or the most plaintive measures of the *Requiem*, and saw a life-picture that Hogarth, with his fine appreciation of the natural, would have loved to depict, and which would rival the real and the ideal creations of Salvator Rosa.

I was slowly walking along a humble street, noting the striking objects that to me had all the fascination of pictures for the child. I heard loud wails as of a woman in anguish, and in the plaintive *patois* of the town, the words "*Pobrecita mia! Muerta! Muerta!*" ("My poor little baby is dead! dead!") Then followed low cries of calm-

ing grief, as though it were all driven back on the heart; then sobs, sighs, silence. Accompanying the mournful song of human agony, a mother's heart-breakings, with "*pobrecita mia!*" the perpetual refrain, I heard a solemn voice that was deep and mellow, with rich, persuasive inflections, half barbaric, but full of music, that seemed to charm away the wild grief that was welling up from her soul. The sobs ceased, the sighs were hushed, the consoling voice was silent. I looked in through the open portal and saw a touching life-scene—a tableau. An aged *cura*, clad in sweeping black gown, his long white locks streaming over his shoulders, stood with feeble, trembling, uplifted hand, his voice mute, his heart in prayer. Slowly his hand descended with the gentlest touch upon the bowed head of a poor, weeping Indian woman, kneeling at his feet, holding in her arms, hugged to her bosom, her dead baby.

* * * * *

Leaving Toluca to visit Morelia, the country presents the same aspect as seen elsewhere. Here and there rocky plains and sterile spots are guarded by glistening church towers, leaning against mountains covered with dark pines. Again, green fields and pastures, untold acres of alfalfa, wheat, and other cereals, inform us of a climatic change and a more favored condition of the soil.

To the end of our journey we have constantly in view the Nevado de Toluca, and are also haunted by a small river which follows us uninterruptedly, and is known as the Rio Lerma. Near Toluca there is a lake of the same name. The Lerma River, while at first appearing so insignificant, assumes in its course an important position, in the hydrography of a scantily watered country. It increases in size and volume as it flows through the States of Guanajuato, Mexico, and Michoacan de Ocampo—even passing through Lake Chalapa, and at last finds a suitable outlet in the waters of the great Pacific. On its long and tortuous course it changes its name several times—a custom not uncommon with Mexican streams.

At Flor de Maria there is a solitary station, with an excellent eating-house, connected with the railway. We pass near the rich

mining region of El Oro and others—also the *Cañon de las Zapolotes* (turkey-buzzard)—and at length we reach Pomoca, near Tepeji del



WATER-CARRIER OF GUANAJUATO.

Rio. Here we have a reminder of the heroic death of one of Mexico's bravest sons—Melchor Ocampo. A house in ruins and a garden in dilapidation are interesting mementoes of his tragic death.

The quaint old towns of Maravatio and Acambaro, founded in the sixteenth century, also come forward with their stirring revolutionary recitals. Everywhere we are reminded of the unparalleled struggles of the Mexican people for liberty.

The town of Acambaro is the dividing point of the

National Railway, one branch extending to Celaya, with a prospect at some future day of reaching Saltillo, the present terminus of the eastern division. By the western division we proceeded to Morelia, then the terminus. The traveler, so desiring, may make a pleasant tour through the middle States by the National, and return to the capital by the Central road.

In closing our journey of twelve hours from Toluca to Morelia, we passed beside the lovely lake of Cuitzco, just as the lingering rays of a semi-tropical sun, with all their bright-tinted hues, were thrown across this picturesque lake. Cuitzco is the result of a volcanic convulsion, and its waters are salt. The wild scenery surrounding it is in keeping with the peculiar little mountains in the background, its rich

vegetation interlaced with vines and flowers of tangled growth, in all making a scene in the short Mexican twilight well worth remembering.

Darkness closed us in from further observations, and at half-past nine we found ourselves comfortably settled in the Hotel de Michoacan. The *camarista* was both voluble and agreeable, with a hint of officiousness thrown in for good measure. At seven in the morning he entered our rooms without knocking, his hair standing erect upon his pumpkin-shaped head, and without preface or embarrassment stated it was not the custom in that part of the country to eat any *desayuno* (breakfast) except chocolate or coffee and bread. He evidently thought we looked doubtful as to the truth of his information, as well as of other marvelous things he told us concerning the hotel. To emphasize his statements, he stepped across the room and handed us each a copy of the regulations of the hotel. His face wore a masterly grin and his hair seemed to move back and forth "like quills upon the fretful porcupine," as he pointed exultingly to the literal English translation. He proudly directed our attention to Article XVIII., which read thus:

"In conformity with an order from the police, people coming to take lodgings into this hotel are obliged to let know their names, trades, and countries, as well as the place whence they do come, and those to which they are bound to, so that the whole be inscribed in a book which is kept for that purpose at the hotel office."

Article VII. informed us that:

"In the amount of room rent, the inward room service and the candle for enlightening it at night are only included; whatever other service the lodger may require is to be considered an extra charge, and, of course, paid for separately."

On reading this, I asked him if he did not also furnish matches. He turned his head, disdainfully surveying us from the height of his superior knowledge, as he replied with increasing emphasis and long-drawn intonation: "*No señora, en este hotel siempre faltan jabon y cerillos*" ("In this hotel we never furnish soap or matches").

Here were the identical words of Pomposo at the San Carlos! The

possibility of a pre-arrangement flashed across me, of course to be instantly rejected. The printed rules were before us, thirty of them, mostly restrictive. But in my travels I found every hotel well provided in this respect, the English translations being always waggish in their literalness.

The lover of ancient art, and of objects that have a history, may find in Mexico an inexhaustible fund of interest in visiting the numerous convents that exist everywhere. In many cases they have been purchased by private individuals and are used as residences. The government owns others, and has established in them colleges and municipal and industrial schools. In no place have I found these establishments more interesting than at Morelia. One of the most extensive is El Carmen, the venerable convent of the Carmelites. We visited it one evening, but time did not permit us to explore its spacious interior, and we decided to return and complete the inspection.

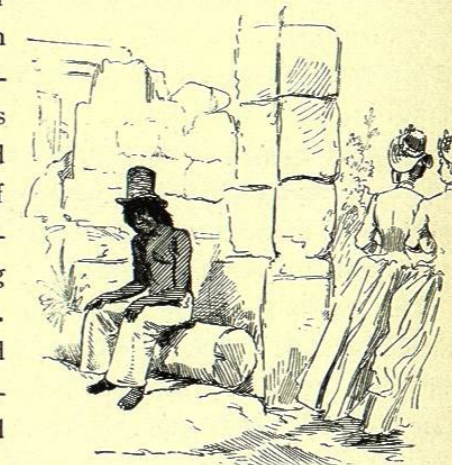
The Carmelites, on leaving the country, had presented this convent, with all its belongings, to a private citizen.

We visited many others, and always with an increasing desire to investigate further these remnants of the past. Among them were San Juan de Dios, La Merced, and San Diego. Special mention belongs to the last named. The convent of San Diego stands at the opening of the San Pedro Park. Attached to it is the sanctuary of Guadalupe, erected in 1708, a beautiful specimen of Doric architecture, adorned with columns, entablatures, and shields. This consecrated building served as a retreat for the bishop and clergy. The convent was founded by the will of a citizen of Valladolid, who in 1747 left \$21,000 for that purpose, with the condition that the sanctuary be annexed to it. Accordingly the building was erected and the old sanctuary enlarged. Many years later the magnificent altar was constructed which now adorns the church. The tall cypresses which screen the entrance were planted in 1807. They no longer shelter the devotees nor the monks pacing up and down in pious meditation; for the convent of San Diego, like so many others, has been secularized,

and families and individuals enjoy the rare privilege of dwelling in these noble tenements with their frescoed walls and deep recesses.

Our curiosity was not satisfied with regard to El Carmen, one of the oldest and most dismantled of all the convents in Morelia, having been established in 1593. Intent upon gratifying this curiosity, we bent our steps thither quite early one morning and were amply repaid. In many places the walls were moss-grown and dilapidated, while here and there the tangled vines and grasses and broken columns gave emphasis to the signs of decay that marked the ruin. Sitting complacently upon a broken, fallen column, we beheld an object that filled us with horror—an Indian *mendigo*, a representation in one, of the ancient Aztec, the *pobre Mexicano*, and the gentleman of the nineteenth century.

His head was covered by a mass of straggling black hair that fell like the mane of a buffalo over his penetrating black eyes, which were turned upon us with a furtive suspiciousness by no means comfortable. He was barefooted and shirtless. His trousers of white cotton were of rather insignificant dimensions, having only a full width to each leg. Surmounting the whole, tipped slightly to one side, was an ancient stove-pipe hat. Time did not admit of a further inspection, and taking refuge in some



AN OBJECT OF HORROR.

rapid evolutionary movements, we rushed through the big open doors, which creaked mournfully on their hinges, on into the vault-like hall, up the steep, shaky steps. It never occurred to us to look back, so sure were we that this remarkable specimen of humanity was in close pursuit. At the top of the stairway, ere we had recovered our breath.