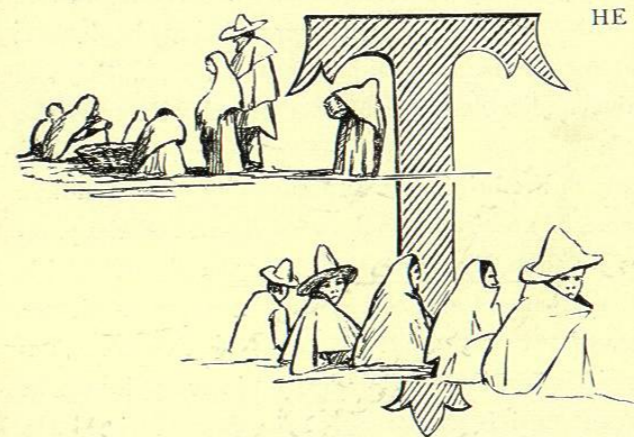


Adios ! thou cherished nymph !
 Adios ! oh ! lovely fairy
 Forgive me if I importune thee ;
 But to-day, when thou homeward goest,
 Receive the fond farewell of
 ' La Mariposa Indiana. ' "

CHAPTER XII.

MORE ABOUT THE COMMON PEOPLE.

THE SILENT AZTEC CHILD OF THE SUN.



HE silence of dead centu-
 ries
 That lie entombed
 on yonder hills
 Is his. These dream-
 ful poppy seas
 Wave on ; and all their
 languor fills
 The land ; he lists, as
 if he heard
 God speak through
 some still gorgeous
 bird.

His babes about ; the golden morn
 Strides godlike down the lofty hill :
 His wife and daughter grinding corn—
 " Two women grinding at a mill. "
 Oh, mystery ! This sun of old
 Was god ! was god ! and ample gold.

His golden hills had flocks of snow,
 His valley fields had fat increase.
 He saw his white sails fill and blow
 By restful isles of flower seas.
 The wood-dove sang his ceaseless loves—
 His harshest notes this soft wood dove's.

The Spaniard holds his lands ! Upon
 His fields, his flocks, his hold is tight !
 But, oh, this glorious golden dawn,
 The golden doors that close at night,
 His gold-hued babes, her russet breast
 Are his ! The world may have the rest.

Mexico City, April.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

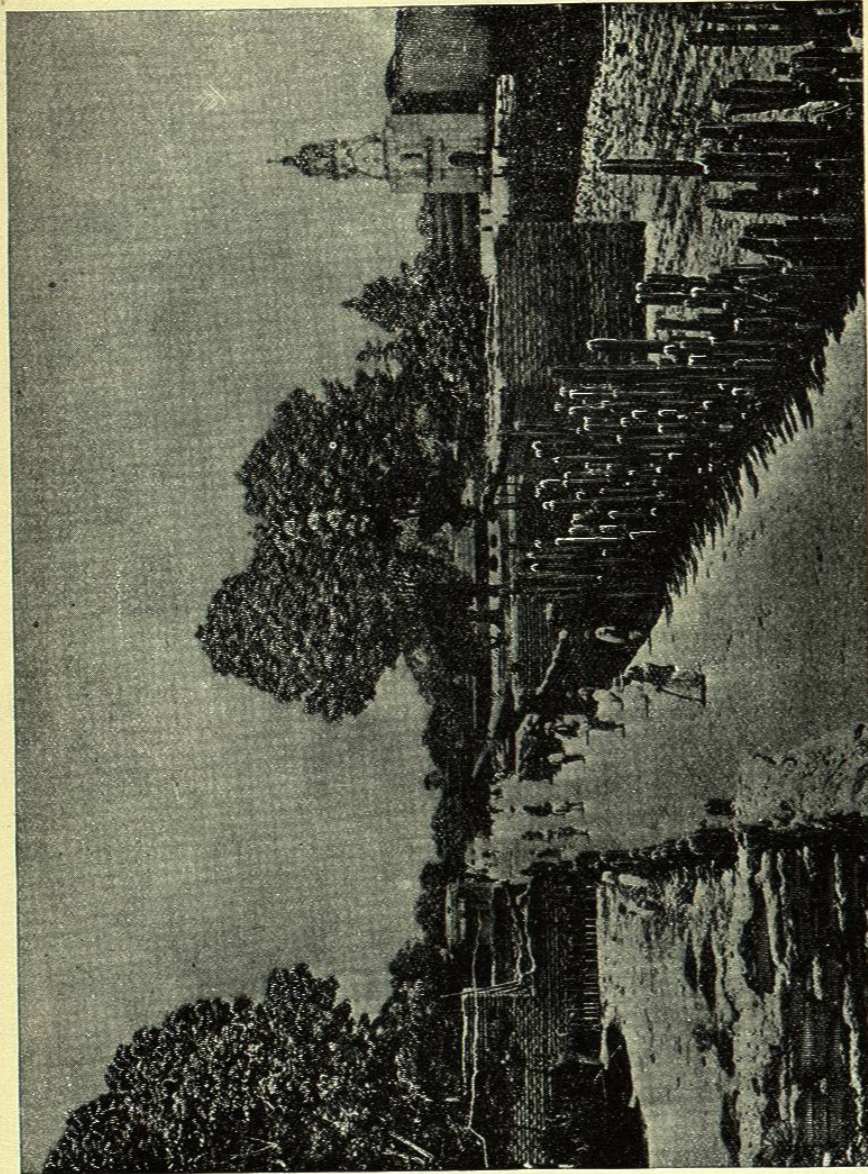
It was my good fortune to meet Mr. Miller at the Mexican capital and hear him recite the above poem before it had taken form on paper. Being in deep sympathy with the subject of this chapter, he kindly presented me with an autograph copy to insert in my book. Its tender pathos and quaint versification cannot fail to be admired, and are worthy the genius and wide fame of this gifted "Poet of the Sierras."

Whether seen beneath the brilliant white sunshine of a cloudless day on his native plains, or under the mellow effulgence of the peerless Queen of Night in the valley, consecrated by the shrines of his forefathers, the "Silent Aztec Child of the Sun" presents a picture unique in the history of the world. He is the primitive man, unmoved by the march of civilization around him, but in every lineament and movement, reflects the griefs and struggles of past centuries. He lives surrounded by the traces of those mysterious races which preceded him. All speak of the mutations of the world—the subjugation of mighty powers—and he has accepted the inevitable with a sad and unresisting stoicism.

He is ever picturesque. In his mountain home engaged in pastoral pursuits, in holiday attire on his patron saint's day, or in rags under the electric lights of a great city, the traditions of the past hang over him, investing him with the interest attaching to the pathetic last man.

To-day men and women may be found with accredited documents proving their descent from Montezuma and the princes of Tezcuco, but owing to inertia their claims are unasserted.

The conquest and Spanish domination wrought a metamorphosis



A TYPICAL INDIAN VILLAGE.

in the life and character of these Indians. Vast estates were once theirs. Their flocks and herds roamed at large upon the plains of their fathers. The blue sky, the shining lakes, the forests and mountains belonged to these children of the sun. To-day they are in dire poverty; the lands once tilled by their vassals they now till for others. They are the patient burden-bearers of this once grand Indian Empire. If their yoke is not easy, nor their burden light, we hear no complaint.

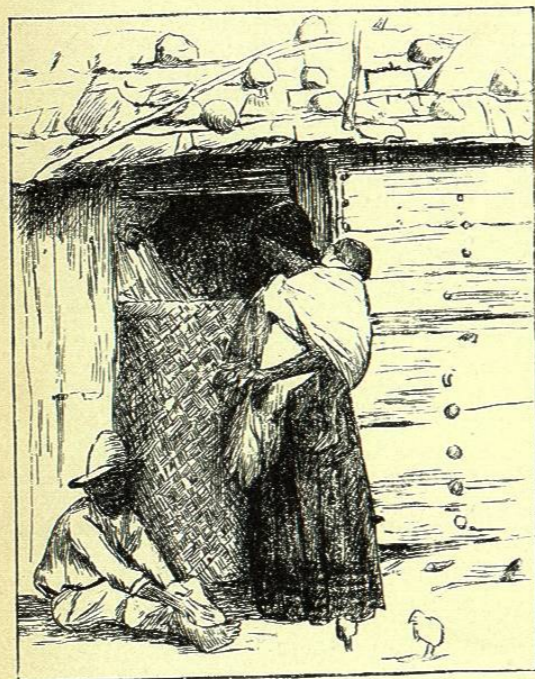
If we compare them with our North American Indians, we are struck with the contrast presented. At one fell blow the Aztecs were conquered, their spirit of independence crushed out. We have contended with our Indians for more than two hundred years. They have scalped and murdered the white man and burned his home, but as yet we have not been able to grapple the subject.

He retreats, we follow, and so long as he is not completely subdued, so long will he continue to pursue his own barbarous course. He feels the time coming when the white man will possess his all—when not a foot of land, and perhaps but a mere remnant of his traditions, will be left to him. While he can, he will carry his revenge in his own hand. He wants nothing—cares for nothing—if he has not his hunting-ground. He has no local habitation and no handicraft to amuse and divert him from the thought that each day provides for itself; and he must keep his arrows sharp, his flint and steel in readiness, to meet the pale faces that pursue him.

The Mexican Indian leads a peaceful life and remains on the same soil, even though it be his no longer. He is satisfied, feeling the worst is past and perhaps a better day in store for him. Shut up in his hut of *adobe* or palm, without either light or air, the chase and the camp have no charms for him. It troubles him little that he belongs to a conquered race. The independence of Mexico has not yet accomplished much for these people, yet they are content. Would that the great question of our own Indians might be settled, and that they could regulate their lives in as useful and peaceful a manner as their dusky-hued brethren in the land of the Montezumas!

The Mexican Indian is by inherent custom an agriculturist, and notwithstanding the fact that the conqueror imposed upon him burdensome and distasteful labors—among them that of mining—he at the first opportunity returned to his favorite vocation, to which he still adheres at the present day.

He is an uncompromising antagonist to any change of locality, and clings to the place of his nativity with unwavering fidelity. There is but little mirthfulness or merriment in his composition. An intense believer in the supernatural, it cannot be better illustrated than by the fact of Montezuma, in spite of all his splendid resources, yielding with so little resistance to Cortez' small band of four hundred and fifty men; for he must have felt convinced that the Spanish conqueror was the one designated by prophecy and tradition to possess the land.



BEFORE HER HUMBLE COTTAGE HOME.

"According to what you declare," said he, "of the place whence you came, which is toward the rising sun, and of the great Lord who is your King, we must believe that he is our natural Lord."

Without being inventive, they are great imitators and marvelously ingenious in the construction of the infinite variety of curiosities of the country:

Straw, wax, wood, marble, grass, hair and mother earth are all successfully treated by these dexterous brown fingers. True to the

life are these imitations, even the tiniest wax figures not more than an inch in length, representing venders of vegetables, fruits, or other commodity. But to me the most wonderful are the productions of the Guadalajara Indians in clay and glazed pottery. Of the latter, their pitchers, vases, water-jugs, animals and toys of all sorts are beautiful, while in the former an extraordinary artistic conception is evinced. In an incredibly short space of time they will model for you a life-like bust, either from the life or from a photograph. The strength of expression and fidelity to the subject are remarkable.

Their *plumaje* (feather-work) is delicate and artistic. Cortez and his men were much interested in the cloth woven of feathers, so intricate, multicolored and beautiful. They no longer manufacture feather cloth, but expend their skill in this line in the representation on cards of all kinds of animals, birds and landscapes.

On feast-days these ingenious people have their stalls on the Zocalo, with their street agents, and business is animated. Each one of these days finds still another variety of toys, and some of them are indeed laughable. For the 1st of November they have cross-bones and skulls, funeral processions (*calaveras* in wood), and death's-heads in imitation bronze, with glaring eyeballs and grinning teeth. All these are arranged on a miniature table, with a small bottle for *pulque*, and on one corner a cake or piece of bread of the kind the dead may be supposed to like.

Their rag figures and dolls are a comical invention. They make baskets with taste and ingenuity, from the size of a thimble to one or more yards in height. They excel in frescoing. They manipulate tissue-paper into decorative forms, and in numberless ways display aptness and imitative skill.

In brief, these productions of their natural ingenuity would require, in other countries, years of patient toil and study, if they could even then be reproduced. But I have been told that any attempt to educate them in their peculiar branches of art would be the means of losing their entire knowledge. This wonderful skill is purely the result of an artistic tendency—a faculty handed down from his ancestors.

But, as may be seen in other avenues of business in this land of rest and romance, they work on insignificant articles for days or weeks,

seemingly to the exclusion of all else, and then dispose of them for a mere trifle.



A CHICKEN VENDER.

The Indian voice is soft and low, almost flute-like in its sweetness, in this quality contrasting with the shrill tones frequently heard in the higher ranks of society. Their step is light, even cat-like, in its softness—a characteristic of all classes, regardless of station.

On *dias de santo* and other feast-days, outdoor gambling of every description is indulged in by this class, while bull-fights and *pulque*-drinking constitute their principal pleasures.

The love for spectacular display is also a predominating characteristic with them. It is shown in the pleasure taken in sky-rockets and all pyrotechnics, especially if accompanied by a band of music.

Their taste also finds expression in the universal love of flowers. Not only are the humblest homes embellished with such gay and gorgeous flowers as would constitute the choicest treasures of a northern hot-house, but in the streets and markets, edibles and other commodities are exposed for sale side by side with them, and for a *tlaco* or *medio* one may buy a lovely bouquet.

They are also great admirers of pictures, and groups may be seen any day in the principal cities, gazing intently on those exhibited

in the windows. But I have caught glances, pathetic to the last degree, as they peered through windows where shoes and stockings were exposed for sale.

The laboring class rise early and work late, rarely going home before the close of the day. Their wives bring them their dinner, and the whole family sit down to the bread of contentment upon a curb-stone.

The large number of unoccupied and non-producing among the common people may to some extent be accounted for by the bounty of nature and the cheapness and great variety of food-products. It is little wonder that they have no ambition to rise higher in the social scale, when the luxuries of life, without the least adulteration, may be obtained for a mere song. The idle, indigent and thriftless have equal advantages in the food they eat, with the toiling and industrious. The *atole* of all kinds, the barbecued meats, soups, beans and rice, together with the great variety and cheapness of fruits and vegetables, render their dietary one to be envied. From six to twelve cents will purchase a substantial and well-cooked meal, and it is an interesting event in one's experience to see the motley assemblage in the market place, and to hear their gay sallies at the mid-day meal; so that in many respects they have decided advantages, so far as relates to food, over even people of affluence in some parts of the United States.

The climate, also, brings its blessings to the poor. They may sleep in a house, if it can be afforded; if not, their lodging may be in the streets, the recesses of the churches, or any place that Morpheus may overtake them.

Clothing may be domestic or muslin, with a blanket or *rebozo*, and no special inconvenience is experienced. But, however poverty-stricken and wretched their condition, the women are always expert and canny with the needle. A woman with scarcely a change of raiment will embroider, crochet, and do plain and fancy sewing that would put to the blush our most dexterous needlewomen. She sits on the sidewalk from morn till eve, selling a basket of fruits, but not a moment does she lose from her stitching.

One fact worthy of being chronicled is, that the common people are making a considerable effort toward advancement in learning to read and write, even while employed as servants in families. I saw several at the capital who, unaided, were studying Spanish one day and English the next.

Mexico has a population of about 10,000,000, of which one and a half are pure white—Americans, Germans, French, English and Spaniards—and two and a half mestizos—leaving about 6,000,000 of Indians.

It has been estimated that there are five hundred different dialects in the country. The Indians have, in the main, retained their own race and tribal characteristics. Spanish is the language of many of them, but numerous tribes are to be found who speak purely in their own tongue, and cling to their own traditions, dress, and, to some extent, their own peculiar forms of religious worship, seldom intermarrying with others.

In the sixteenth century, according to *Mexico à travers de los Siglos* the types were classified as follows, and, barring the natural increase of population, they remain about the same to-day:

Children of <i>Spaniards</i> born in the country are called <i>Creoles</i> .			
"	<i>Spaniards</i> and <i>Indians</i>	"	<i>Mestizos</i> .
"	<i>Mestizos</i> " <i>Spaniards</i>	"	<i>Castigos</i> .
"	<i>Castigos</i> " <i>Spaniards</i>	"	<i>Españoles</i> .
"	<i>Spaniards</i> " <i>Negros</i>	"	<i>Mulattos</i> .
"	<i>Mulattos</i> " <i>Spaniards</i>	"	<i>Moriscos</i> .
"	<i>Negros</i> " <i>Indians</i>	"	<i>Zambos</i> .

Occasionally race characteristics, after lying dormant for perhaps generations, crop out unexpectedly in families, causing quite a shock when they appear. A dark, or as is sometimes the case, black child makes its appearance, and this is called *Salta atrás* (a leap over several generations).

The *mestizos* are the handsomest, and the *zambos* must rest con-

tent with occupying the position of the ugliest and most unattractive of the races.

As to the real merits of this classification, it is not possible for me to speak. I only know how the various shades and complexions impressed me as a subject for study. The dark, olive-tinted types seized upon my fancy from the date of my advent into the country. I felt a deep and sympathetic interest in them, as being the more directly connected with the aborigines. In their quiet and humble manner I read the history of a conquered people. In these dark shades there exist at least two different types. The pale though dark, swarthy, bloodless face, with melancholy, expressionless eyes and dejected bearing, indicates the one, while the other, the type above all others pleasing and interesting to me, possesses a rich brown skin, with carmine cheeks and lips; glistening, white teeth, united with great, wondering, half-startled, luminous eyes, soft and shy as those of the gazelle. Even their forms and gait are different, the one thin and shambling, the other, plump, full-blooded, graceful and active. Their politeness and humility, even among the most ragged and degraded, are touching. This is not confined to their bearing toward superiors, but is also shown to each other.

The salute of the poorest to his bronze-colored compatriot as they pass, makes the air musical with their liquid Indian idiom. Their code of etiquette is expansive enough to cover that practiced in the grandest homes in our American cities. In this respect the wealthiest *hacendado* has no advantage over the humblest *peon* who toils for him a natural lifetime. They are strictly careful never to omit the *Don* and *Doña* to each other, and "where you have your house," and "*muy á su disposicion*,"—terms synonymous with the higher classes—are in no way modified by the lower. Even their children are taught to say, on being asked their names, *su criado de V.* (your humble servant).

The talent for music is even more striking than that of the cultured higher classes. It is no unusual thing to hear every part of an air carried through in perfect harmony by full, rich, native voices,