and Orizaba stand guard over the enchanted valley, their snow-white tops vying in crystal whiteness with the fleecy clouds that encircle them, while the calm, fleckless vault around and above tempers the grandeur of the view, and soothes the spirit into sweet poetic serenity. We turn from it in silence, with feelings of reluctance and regret.

Returning at sunset, we had a new source of diversion in a lively conversation with two señoritas and their mother. They gave us their names and the number of their street, informing us that there we would "find our house."

Despite its many advantages, I was surprised to find so few English-speaking people at Puebla. But, strictly conservative as it is, we traveled about, sketching and making notes as freely as inclination led, meeting only kindness and courtesy from all classes.

In this connection a pleasing little incident occurred further indicative of the natural kind-heartedness of the people. We had gone there quite alone and unattended, not taking, as we generally did, letters of introduction, preferring to travel *incog*. Walking on the street, I became suddenly ill, and sought relief in a neighboring drug-store. The proprietor insisted on my remaining for some time, giving me several doses of medicine, which were efficacious. On leaving, he handed me a prescription and a bottle of the medicine, and positively refused all compensation. "No," he said, "you ladies are strangers here, and alone; you shall not pay me anything."

We left with regret, which was only counterbalanced by pleasurable anticipations in fulfilling a promise to visit Madame de Iturbide at her country-seat near San Miguel Sesma.

At Apizaco we were met by Don Augustin, her son, who had come from the capital to escort us to the hacienda, distant five miles from the station of Esperanza. The carriage was in waiting, and soon the spirited team was hurrying us along over the plains. Never before had I seen the Mexican aloe or maguey in such magnificence. Its "clustering pyramids of flowers, towering above their dark coronals of leaves," lined the drive on either side, to the very door. Here we met a royal welcome from our distinguished countrywoman. Surrounded by her numerous retainers, we could easily imagine ourselves in a feudal castle of the middle ages. The illusion was deepened on seeing her two little Indian attendants, whom she had taken from the common herd and dressed as *hacendados*, in buckskin suits and silver buttons. I was not surprised at their satisfaction in their finery when Madame Iturbide assured me that, save the possibility of a single garment, these were their first clothes. These little brown-skinned monkeys were constantly bobbing in and out—with "*si, niña*" between each breath—bowing, and waiting on us with as much zeal as if on them devolved the sole dispensing of the honors and hospitalities of the mansion.

In the late evening we promenaded on the *azotea* while our hostess regaled us with delightful reminiscences of her life in Mexico. We inspected with the prince the whole interior working of the hacienda—visited the cows, the horses, and the finest specimens of swine I ever saw, so immense that they almost rivaled the cows.

Madame Iturbide told us that, in accordance with a long-established custom, the peons would sing at half-past four o'clock in the morning. Promptly at the hour, the *recamarara* awoke us to hear the song.

The place of assembling was near the family residence. The first that came, turning his face to the east, began singing, and continued until all had arrived, when they chanted in chorus,

THE ALABADO; OR, SONG OF PRAISE TO THE MORNING.

"Praised and uplifted (or upheld)
And also glorified
Be the divine sacrament!
Give us to-day sustenance!
Give us Thy divine grace!
And succor us, O Lord!
In the work of the day.
And thou, Mother of the Word,
Immaculate and pure conception,
I beseech thee from my heart
Not to forsake me, Mother mine."

The music made a deep impression on my sensibilities. At times it seemed like the gentlest breathings from a reed instrument; then it would mellow down to mere sighing sounds, like whisperings from an Æolian harp. It was mournful, pathetic, imploring, and was the language of the soul in quaint, almost unearthly sounds. These weird strains were wafted to my ear on the calm morning air, and the invocation inspired me with the same sad and dependent thoughts and feelings so deeply rooted in the hearts of the dusky chanters of the dirge-like melody.

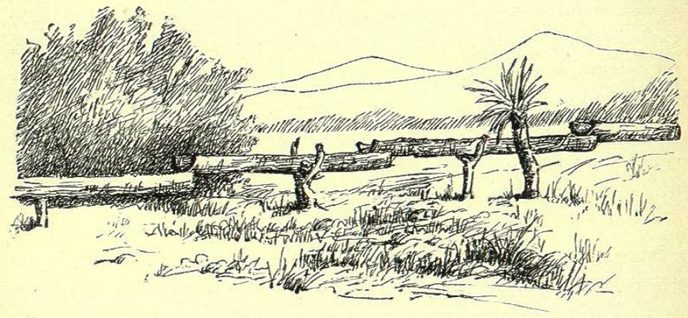
Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson, in *Ramona*, makes mention of the observance of this beautiful custom by the Mexicans in the early days of California.

We were shown that remarkable grass known as *raiz zacaton*, from which whisk-brooms and stout brushes for heavier uses are manufactured. The top is a luxuriant green, several inches in height, but no use is made of it, only the root being profitable. The peons employed to gather this fibrous substance call to their aid powerful mechanical appliances to remove it from the soil, so deep does it extend below the surface, and so tough are its myriad tendrils. It is exported all over the world and constitutes one of the most important products of the haciendas in this section of the country.

This hacienda, like all others, has its *administrador*, and an important office is his. While in many respects his duties are similar to those of an overseer, yet he differs very materially from that functionary. In the present instance the young gentleman who fills this position is a college graduate, speaking several languages, a bachelor of arts, and a justice of the peace. His accomplishments do not in the least militate against his efficiency as *administrador*, for he manages the estate most admirably, enjoying the utmost confidence of the family. He preferred his assured salary of twelve hundred dollars a year to the uncertain returns of the practice of his profession.

During this visit I obtained a better insight into the life of the peons than I had before known. From their evident contentment, I concluded that their condition was not, after all, so lamentable as I had imagined. If they have but little of worldly goods, they are rich in a politeness which redeems defects of face or person. In meeting a superior, their great clumsy straw sombreros are quickly removed by hard, horny hands, and the words gently uttered: "*Ave Maria Santissima!*" The superior never fails to perform his part of the salutation, and touching his hat brim answers, "*En gracia concebida*" ("conceived in grace"). If they pass twenty times a day, the same rule is observed. I was amused to see the little monkeys in the house practicing the formula.

A charming incident of the visit was a drive to the upper part of



AQUEDUCT.

the hacienda, which extends along one of the spurs of Black Mountain. Don Augustin rode close beside the carriage on his beautiful Andalusian mare, *Beso*—"Kiss." Our way for miles lay beside the primitive aqueduct of hewn logs which for two hundred years or more has supplied the hacienda with water from mountain springs. San Miguel Sesma is one of the oldest haciendas in that part of the republic, and extends over more than twenty square miles. The sides of the mountain are covered with pines, oaks, and a variety of other woods. At every turn we enjoyed views of sublime scenery, and at the top six geographical heights were plainly visible—Orizaba, Popocatapetl, Iztaccihuatl, Malinche, Black Mountain, and, in the dim distance, Perote.

We crossed a slight ravine, which, a rod or two below us, had, within a few years, deepened into a fissure of one hundred and ninety feet. To me it was almost as frightful as the Nochistongo. On descending the steep side of the mountain, the prince performed a daring feat, which exhibited his remarkable physical strength. The *cochero* seemed unable to restrain the mules and carriage from rushing headlong over the precipice. Instantly, and with the unerring precision of a professional ranchero, Don Augustin hurled his lasso, and deftly catching it around the step—Beso frothing and leaping—held back the wagonette all the way down.

Our delightful visit ended, we pursued our journey, the prince kindly escorting us to Orizaba. A few miles from Esperanza we leave the scorching winds, blinding dust, and perpetual upheaval of powerful column-like whirlwinds through which the cars run for some distance, and come to inviting shade and refreshing breezes, as we wind and twist about the mountains in leaving the table-lands. The descent is grandly wild and beyond the power of pen to picture, and travelers who have reveled in the beauties of Old World scenery give precedence to this. A writer on the subject said it is "as from earth to heaven—a little bit of Paradise." We remained on the platform to obtain an unobstructed view until our senses were dazed and giddy, as the brave little double-headed Fairlie engine pulled us safely, apparently on mere threads, along a lofty peak, darting through tunnels, crawling around curves, over slender bridges, at times hundreds of feet above some frightful abyss.

The pretty village of Maltrata looks white and peaceful in its snug retreat at the foot of the table-lands. We are told it is twenty miles away, but directly through it is only two and a half.

We purchased roses, tulipans, and other flowers of tropical growth for a mere song, from Indian venders, as well as orchids of dazzling loveliness, with their glowing yellow, pink, and red centers.

Notwithstanding the apparently dangerous route of this railway, I was reliably informed that no accident had ever occurred by which lives had been lost. It was under construction for thirty years, cost

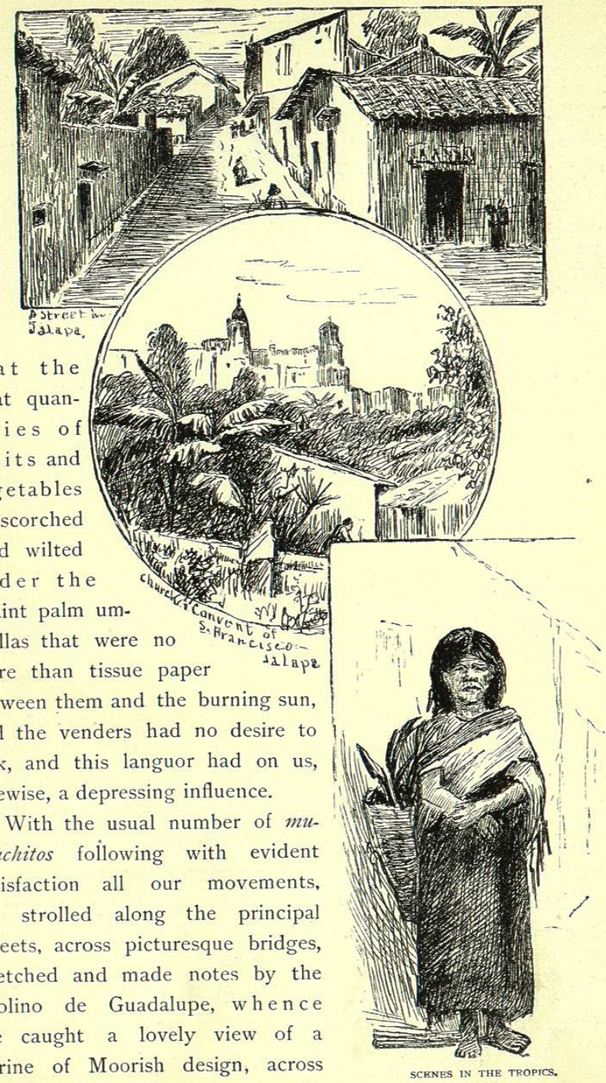
thirty millions to build, and has survived no fewer than forty different managements, besides time and again losing its charter by revolution; but its completion at last attained was a great boon to the republic. On its way to the capital it ascends seven thousand six hundred feet, and its length is only two hundred and sixty miles: and "this is the short and long of it."

As is the case with all railways in Mexico, whether of tram or steam, there are first, second, and third class rates. From Mexico to Vera Cruz, the first-class ticket costs $16.50—the second class, $12.50; but there are no Pullmans attached, and the difference consists in having neatly padded coaches for first class, while plain chairs in common coaches accommodate the less fortunate.

From Maltrata the foliage and vegetation assume a more tropical appearance, but there are wanting the tangled masses of vines and luxuriant growths one naturally expects to see. The heat, however, grows more intense, and when finally we halt before the pretty station house at Orizaba, everything and everybody seems wilted and panting under the heat. Don Augustin saw us safely to the "Hotel de las Diligencias"—a name which has a peculiar and particular attraction for hotel proprietors all over the country. Don Augustin gave us the desired information that the hotels had retained the names of former times, when they were head-quarters of the stages.

Orizaba has perhaps twenty thousand inhabitants, and considerable manufacturing interests. The Alameda is a quiet, shady park with an abundance of glorious flowers peculiar to the section. Among them I saw nothing grander than the sweet-scented *Datura arborea*—generally known as the Floripondio—hanging like snowy bells, ready for the fairies to ring; and the Tulipan vibrating in the soft breeze, like flaming banners. I had seen both of these at the capital and other points, but they are insignificant compared with those grown in the tropics.

The Zocalo, the cathedral and the market—the latter always a place of interest to me—were duly inspected. But the heat was so intense,



that the great quantities of fruits and vegetables lay scorched and wilted under the quaint palm umbrellas that were no more than tissue paper between them and the burning sun, and the venders had no desire to talk, and this languor had on us, likewise, a depressing influence.

With the usual number of *muchachitos* following with evident satisfaction all our movements, we strolled along the principal streets, across picturesque bridges, sketched and made notes by the Molino de Guadalupe, whence we caught a lovely view of a shrine of Moorish design, across

SCENES IN THE TROPICS.

a broken aqueduct, against a setting of blue in the distant mountains.

The coffee tree, with rich, dark green leaves and bright red berries—resembling cranberries—grows side by side with oranges, lemons, bananas, the cocoa-palm and gorgeous flowers, all in tropical luxuriance, overhanging low adobe fences.

The coffee berry is not allowed to ripen on the tree, but when in the red state, the branches, laden with fruit, are cut and left for several weeks to dry in the shade. After this, women and children bark it, when it is ready for shipment.

The city is walled in by mountains, and during the months of February, March, and April—as I was told by an old inhabitant—is visited almost nightly by wind storms. According to our own experience these rival the wildest hurricanes.

Our rooms were on the north or front of the hotel, consequently adapted to give the wind full sweep. Sure enough, at midnight, the tropical storm came up without a note of warning—moon and stars shining brightly in a cloudless sky—but if the Furies had been let loose our terrors could not have been intensified. Panes of glass were shivered to atoms over our heads, doors were lifted from their hinges and thrown with violence to the floor; everything movable was tossed in wild confusion, and "*las dos señoritas Americanas solitas*" expected to find themselves in the morning gray-headed from fright.

In the midst of the awful din and hubbub of the storm the mocking-birds on the corridor added their shrill quota to the general confusion of sounds, and I was humorously reminded of the experience of Mr. William Henry Bishop at Cordoba, when he spoke of their "dulcet ingenuity," and declared that a "planing-mill or a foundry full of trip-hammers would be a blessing in comparison."

Orizaba had now lost interest to us, and at the right hour we went to the station, expecting to continue the journey to Vera Cruz and Jalapa, but hearing a rumor of yellow fever, we decided to return to the capital.

Meeting Father Gribbin on his way from the coast, and fearing to

encounter another storm at the hotel, we accepted his kind invitation to the house of his friends, Mr. and Mrs. John Quinn, who reside at Mr. Braniff's factory, four miles from the city.

The hospitality of our whole-souled entertainers was greatly enjoyed after our stormy experience of the night before.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE.

"THIS tradition," says the historian Altamirano, "as written by Don Luis Becerra Zanco about 1666, because of the simplicity of its language, and also because of its reflecting more the characteristic sweetness and softness of the Nahautal language, in which the tradition was undoubtedly originally preserved, is the most authentic."

The subject of Guadalupe has been one of such intense interest, that about sixty-one Mexican and Spanish writers have written elaborately on it. So prominent is she, that thousands of children are annually christened by her name.

The tradition, as generally believed, is as follows: "At an early hour on the morning of December 9, 1531, Juan Diego, a humble Indian, who had been recently converted to the Catholic faith, was quietly pursuing his way from a town adjacent to the City of Mexico, to mass. Pausing for a moment at the foot of a mountain known as the *Cerro del Tepazac*, which is about three miles from the city, he was held spell bound by sweet and sonorous singing, which seemed to