

traveller as he emerges from between the hills where the buildings are nestled. You stand nearly a thousand feet above the valley, and, in the pure and rarefied air of the mountains, the vision is almost unlimited over a world-like panorama of crag, lake, city, vale, and volcano. I have already described the view from the opposite point of the mountains, as you approach Mexico from the east, and I shall therefore not detain you with what could at best but amount to an amplified catalogue of picturesque features in the most charming landscape of the world.

JOURNAL OF A JOURNEY

IN THE

TIERRA CALIENTE:

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF A VISIT TO

CUERNAVACA, THE RUINS OF XOCHICALCO, THE

CAVERN OF CACAHUAWAMILPA, CUAUTLA

DA AMILPAS,

AND SEVERAL

MEXICAN HACIENDAS OR PLANTATIONS.

17th September, 1842. This is still the rainy season in the Valley of Mexico, and the clouds which have hung around the valley for some weeks past, pouring out their daily showers, seem to forbid our departure upon an expedition which I have contemplated making before I leave Mexico; but as the period of my departure is rapidly approaching, I find it necessary to embrace the opportunity presented by the protection of a party of gentlemen who design visiting, during the next two weeks, some of the most interesting portions of *Tierra Caliente*, south of the Valley of Mexico. It strikes me, too, that as the mountains which surround this valley are the highest in Mexico, it is more probable that the stormy clouds, driven up by the north winds from the sea, gather and are attracted by these heights, and consequently expend themselves over the nearest plains;—the adjoining valleys which are lower than this, are likely, therefore, to be free from the continual deluge of water with which we have been visited for the last two months.

Our preparations have accordingly all been made to set out to-day, about four o'clock.

ST. AUGUSTIN DE LAS CUEVAS.

At three o'clock the court-yard of our houses presented the appearance of a cavalry barrack;—saddles, sabres, pistol-holsters, huge spurs, whips, baggage, horses, and servants. By four o'clock we had all *rendezvoused* at the dwelling of Mr. G—, in the Calle del Seminario. Our party is composed of seven, among whom are Mr. Black the American Consul, and Mr. Goury du Roslan, the Secretary of the French Legation; the rest are chiefly Scotch gentlemen, engaged in commerce in Mexico. Two mules have been hired and laden with a good store of *provant*—such as hams, corned-beef, portable soups, sausages, sardines, and wine, and these are put under the charge of an *arriero*, who, with my servant, and two other servants of our companions, make up a company of eleven, all mustered.

Few things can be more complete for all weathers and all seasons, than the outfit of a Mexican horseman. He has everything that can contribute to the comfort or necessity of the passing hour, strapped to some part of his horse or his usual equipments.



MEXICAN SERAPE.

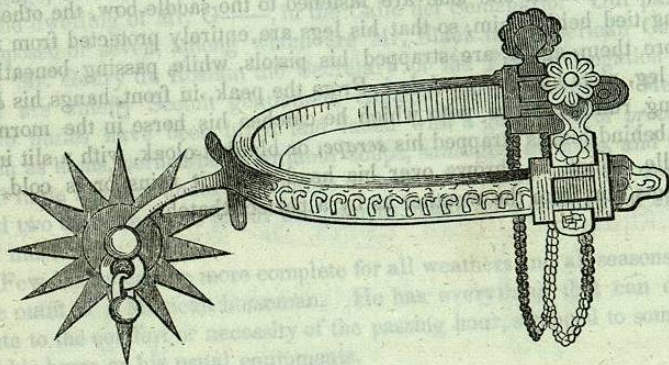
First of all, he has his broad-brimmed, steeple-crowned *Sombrero*, covered with oilskin; next, his short leathern jacket, fancifully embossed with plated nails, like the old buff-coats of the feudal freebooters; then, his leather trowsers with rows of buttons at the seam, preventing the chafing of the saddle, and his leggings to protect his feet and ankles; in front of him are his *armas de agua*, a large skin cut in two parts, the ends of which on one side are fastened to the saddle-bow, the other two being tied behind him, so that his legs are entirely protected from rain; before them, again, are strapped his pistols, while, passing beneath his left leg, rests his trusty *toledo*. From the peak, in front, hangs his *lasso*, a long running-noose with which he catches his horse in the morning; and behind him is strapped his *serape*, or blanket-cloak, with a slit in the middle, which he throws over his head when it rains or is cold, and protects him from the weather as by a perfect thatch.



MEXICAN HORSEMAN.

Thus mounted on his high-peaked Spanish saddle, with stiff wooden stirrups, over which are long ears of leather,—and his feet armed with the

huge Spanish spur, to which is attached a small ball of finely-tempered steel, that strikes against the long rowels at every tread of the man or beast, and rings like a fairy bell,



MEXICAN SPUR.

you have a complete picture of a Mexican horseman, equipped at every point and ready for the road. If he has to fight, he has his weapons; if to feed, he has his laden mule; if it rain, he dons his serape and armas de agua, and rides secure from storm and wind; and if he arrives at an Indian hut, after a long and toilsome journey, and no bed is ready to receive him, he spreads the skins on the earthen floor—his saddle is his pillow, and his blanket a counterpane. He is the compendium of a perfect travelling household.

In this guise were most of us equipped when we mustered in the great square—except, that for leathern jackets, we had substituted blue cloth, and had strapped our serapes on the pillions behind us.

All were punctual to the minute, and the arriero, together with Gomez, and Antonio, the two other servants, were sent on to the *Garrita*, to pass our carga mules. Gomez was a stanch, wooden-faced old trooper, who had done good service in the troublous times in Mexico; Ramon, a Spaniard,—a thin, hatchet-visaged, boasting, slashing rogue,—who had fought through many a guerilla party of the Peninsular war; and Antonio, a sort of weazened supernumerary, with a game leg, a broken nose, a toothless upper gum, a devilish leering eye, and a pepper-and-salt cur as worthless as his master, who amused himself during the whole of our journey by running bulls, tearing sheep, worrying fowls, and taking twice as much exercise as was necessary.

A party in better spirits never set out. We had the prospect of relaxation, the sight of something novel, and the hope of propitious skies.

As the Cathedral clock struck four we put our animals in motion—*sed vana spes!* A cloud, which had been for some time threatening, opened its bosom. In a moment our serapes were on, the armas de agua tied round our waists, and the storm of wind and rain was upon us. We consoled ourselves by thinking it was only the baptism of the expedition.

At the city gate the guard of Custom-house officers wished to charge an export duty on our wine, but our passes from M. de Bocanegra and the Governor saved us, and we launched forth on the road to St. Augustin, with the shower increasing every minute. It is useless to say more of this dreary evening. For three hours the rain was incessant; and that the rain of a tropical storm, with huge drops, and wind and lightning. The water flowed from our blankets like spouts. The road over the plain was no longer a highway but a water-course, rushing and gurgling over every descent. The poor Indians returning from market paddled along, shrouded up in their *petates*. There was no conversation in the company. Every one was sulky, and felt a very strong disposition to return home and start fair with dry skies to-morrow; but it was decided to push on. Finally, one of our carga mules, with all the provant, tumbled over in the mud, and tried to kick himself clear from his load; the arriero, however, was directly over him with his long whip, showering blows on head and haunches, until he again set him in motion for the village.

It was quite dark when our cold, weary, and uncomfortable party entered St. Augustin, and knocked at the gate of Mr. M——'s country-house, where we were to stay for the night. We hoped to find everything duly prepared for our reception; and among our hopes, not the least was for a blazing fire to dry our bespattered garments. We came up to the door, one by one, silently and surlily. We were not only angry with the weather, but seemed to be mutually dissatisfied. After a deal of thumping, the door was slowly opened, and instead of the salutation of a brilliant blaze in the midst of the court-yard—one miserable, sickly tallow candle made its appearance! A colder, damper, or more uncomfortable crew never reunited after a storm; and we found, notwithstanding the usual protection of Mexican blankets, Mexican saddles, and armas de agua, that the rain had penetrated most of our equipments, and that we were decidedly damp, if not thoroughly drenched.

We entered the house after disposing of our accoutrements in a large hall, and found quite comfortable quarters, and beds enough for all parties. A change of dress, a glass of capital *Farintosh*, (which was produced from the capacious leathern bottle of Douglas,) and a cut at the ham, with a postscript of cigars, set us all to rights again; and at eleven o'clock, as I write this memorandum, the party are singing the chorus of a song to Du Roslan's leading.

Sunday, 18th. I was asleep last night in five minutes, nor did I awake until aroused at 5 o'clock by the loud pattering of the rain against the shutters. Cold, gray, cheerlessly, the day broke; and as cold and cheerlessly did we assemble in the kitchen to take our chocolate. A council was held as to proceeding or waiting for better weather. I adhered to my theory, that the rain was confined to the Valley of Mexico; and that when we had passed the mountains in this day's journey, we would find it dry and pleasant travelling in the warmer and lower country. At any rate there was something consolatory in the *hope*. The horses were accordingly ordered, the damp dresses packed, our serapes wrung out, and the mules freighted for the day.

As the bells were ringing for mass, and the villagers hurrying through the streets to church, we sallied forth, every man trying to discover the symptom, even, of a break among the dreary brownish clouds that hung low from the mountain-tops to the valley.

As soon as the road leaves the town of St. Augustin, it strikes directly up the mountain, and runs over crags and ravines which in our country would startle the delicate nerves of a lady. Railroads and McAdam have spoiled us; but here, where the toilsome mule and the universal horse have converted men almost into centaurs and are the traditional means of communication, no one thinks of improving the highways. But, of late years, diligences are getting into vogue between the chief cities of the Republic; and one, built in Troy, has been started on this very road. How it gets along over such ruts and drains, rocks and mountain-passes, it is difficult to imagine!

On we went, however, over hill and dale, the misty rain still drifting around us, and becoming finer and mistier as we rose on the mountain. The prospect was dreary enough; but in fine weather, these passes are said to present a series of beautiful landscapes. In front is then beheld the wild mountain scenery, while, to the north, the valley sinks gradually into the plain, mellowed by distance, and traversed by the lakes of Chalco and Tezcoco. Of the former of these we had a distinct view as the wind drifted the mist aside for a moment, when we had nearly attained the summit of the mountain. Here we passed a gang of laborers impressed for the army, and going, *tied in pairs*, under an escort of soldiers, to serve in the Capital. This was *recruiting*! Further on, we passed the body of a man lying on the side-path. He had evidently just died, and, perhaps, had been one of the party we had encountered. No one noticed him; his hat was spread over his face, and the rain was pelting on him.

We saw no habitations—no symptoms of cultivation; in fact, nothing except rocks and stunted herbage, and now and then, a muleteer, a miserable Indian plodding with a pannier of fruit to Mexico, or an Indian shepherd-boy, in his long *thatch-cloak* of water-flags, perched on a crag and watching his miserable cattle. We were now travelling among the clouds, near 9000 feet above the level of the sea.



INDIAN WITH PANNIER.

INDIAN SHEPHERD.

After about four hours' journey in this desolation, the clouds suddenly broke to the southward, revealing the blue sky between masses of sullen vapor, and thus we reached our breakfasting house on the top of the mountain.

Imagine a mud-hole, (not a regular lake of mud, but a mass of that clayey, oozy, grayish substance, which sucks your feet at every step,) surrounded by eight huts, built of logs and reeds, stuck into the watery earth, and thatched with palm leaves. This was the stage breakfasting station, on the road from Mexico to Cuernavaca! We asked for "the house;" and a hut, a little more open than the rest, was pointed out. It was in two divisions, one being closed with reeds, and the other entirely exposed, along one side of which was spread a rough board supported on four sticks covered with a dirty cloth. It was *the principal hotel*!

There was no denying that prospects were most unpromising, but we were too hungry to wait longer for food. We asked for breakfast, but

the answer was the slow movement of the long forefinger from right to left, and a "No hai!"

"Any eggs?"

"No hai!"

"Any tortillas?"

"No hai."

"Any pulqué?"

"No hai."

"Any chilé?"

"No hai."

"Any water?"

"No hai!"

"What *have* you got then?" exclaimed we, in a chorus of desperation.

"*Nada!*"—nothing!

We tried to coax them, but without effect; and, at length, we ordered a mule to be unladen, and our own provisions to be unpacked. This produced a stir in the household, as soon as it became evident that there was to be *no high bid* for food.

In a moment a clapping of hands was heard in the adjoining room, and I found a couple of women at work, one grinding corn for tortillas, and the other patting them into shape for the griddle. There were two or three other girls in the apartment, and, taking a seat on a log, and offering a cigarrito to each of them, I began a chat with the prettiest, while the tortillas were cooking. A cigarrito, a-piece, exhausted, and with them, half-a-dozen jokes, I offered another to each of the damsels, and found them getting into better humor. At length, one arose, and after rummaging among the pots in a corner, produced a couple of eggs, which she said should be cooked for *me*. I thanked her, and by a little persuasion, induced her to add half a dozen more for the rest of the party. By the time that the eggs were boiled and the tortillas baked, I suggested that a dish of *mollé de guagelote* would be delicious with them, and felt sure that a set of such pretty lasses must know how to make it. "Quien sabe?" said one of them. "Was there not some left from this morning?" said another; and they both arose at once and looked again into the pots. The result was the discovery of a pan heaped with the desired turkey and chilé, and another quite as full of delicious frijoles. These were placed for five minutes over the coals, and the consequence was, that out of "*Nada*," I contrived to cater a breakfast that fed our company, servants, and arriero, and which would have doubtless fed the mules also, if mules ever indulged in *chilé*. I never made a heartier meal, relishing it greatly in spite of the dirty table-cloth, the dirty women, the dirty village, and the fact that my respected tortillia-maker, while engaged in her laudable undertakings, had occasionally varied the occupation, by bestowing a *pat* on the cake, and another, with the same hand, on the most delicate portion of the leather-breeches of a brat who annoyed her by his cries and his antics. I shall long remember those girls, and

the witchcraft that lies in a little good-humor, and a paper of *cigarritos*. Let no one travel through a Spanish country without them.

About one o'clock, we had again mounted; and riding along a level road which winds through the table-land of the mountain-top, we passed the CRUZ DEL MARQUEZ, a large stone cross set up not long after the conquest, to mark the boundary of the estate presented by Montezuma to Cortéz. At this spot the road is 9,500 feet above the level of the sea, and thence commences the descent of the southern mountain-slope toward the Vale of Cuernavaca. The pine forest in many places is open and arching, like a park, and covers a wide sweep of meadow and valley. The air soon became milder, the sun warmer, the vegetation more varied, the fields less arid—and yet all was forest scenery, apparently untouched by the hand of man. In this respect it presents a marked difference from the mountains around the Valley of Mexico, where the denser population has destroyed the timber and cultivated the land.

This road is remarkable for being infested with robbers, but we fortunately met none. We were probably too strong for the ordinary gangs—some fifty shots from a company of foreigners, with double-barrel guns and revolving pistols, being dangerous welcome. At the village where we breakfasted, there was an ugly-looking band of scoundrels, who hung around our party the whole time we remained there, watching our motions and examining our arms. I cannot conceive a set of figures better suited to the landscape that village presented, than these same *human fungi*, who had sprung up amid the surrounding physical desolation, and flourished in moral rotteness. Every man looked the rascal, with a beard of a month's growth; slouched hats, from under which they scowled their stealthy side-glances; sneaking, cat-like tread; and muffled cloaks or blankets, that but badly concealed the hilts of knives and *machetes*. None of these gentlemen, however, pursued or encountered us.

After a slow ride during the afternoon, we suddenly changed our climate. We had left the *tierras frias*, and *tierras templadas*, (the cold and temperate lands,) and had plunged at once, by a rapid descent of the mountain, into the *tierra caliente*, where the sun was raging with tropical fervor. The vegetation became entirely different and more luxuriant, and a break among the hills suddenly disclosed to us the Valley of Cuernavaca, bending to the east with its easy bow. The features of this valley are entirely different from those of the Valley of Mexico, for, although both possess many of the same elements of grandeur and sublimity, in the lofty and wide-sweeping mountains; yet there is a southern gentleness, and purple haziness about this, that softens the picture, and are wanting in the Vale of Mexico, in the high and rarefied atmosphere of which every object, even at the greatest distance, stands out with almost microscopic

distinctness. Besides this, the foliage is fuller, the forests thicker, the sky milder, and everything betokens the sway of a bland and tropical climate.

A bend of the road around a precipice, revealed to us the town of Cuernavaca, lying beyond the forest in the lap of the valley, while far in the east the mountains were lost in the plain, like a distant line of sea. Our company gathered together, on the announcement of the first sight of our port of destination for the night. It was decided, by the novices in Mexican travelling, that it could not be more distant than a couple of leagues at farthest; but long was the weary ride, descending and descending, with scarcely a perceptible decrease of space, before we reached the city.

In the course of this afternoon we passed through several Indian villages, and saw numbers of people at work in the fields by the road side. Two things struck me: first, the miserable hovels in which the Indians are lodged, in comparison with which a decent dog-kennel at home is a comfortable household; and second, the fact that this, although the Sabbath, was no day of repose to these ever-working, but poor and thriftless people. Many of the wretched creatures were stowed away *under a roof of thatch, stuck on the bare ground, with a hole left at one end to crawl in!*

What can be the benefit of a Republican form of government to masses of such a population? They have no ambition to improve their condition, or in so plenteous a country it would be improved; they are content to live and lie like the beasts of the field; they have no qualifications for self-government, and they can have no *hope*, when a life of such toil avails not to avoid such misery. Is it possible for such men to become Republicans? It appears to me that the life of a negro, under a good master, in our country, is far better than the beastly degradation of the Indian here. With us, he is at least a man; but in Mexico, even the instincts of his human nature are scarcely preserved.

It is true that these men are *free*, and have the unquestionable liberty, after raising their crop of fruits or vegetables, to trot with it fifty or sixty miles, *on foot*, to market; where the produce of their toil is, in a few hours, spent, either at the gambling table or the pulqué shop. After this they have the liberty, as soon as they get sober, to trot back again to their kennels in the mountains, if they are not previously *lassoed* by some recruiting sergeant, and forced to "volunteer" in the army. Yet what is the worth of such purposeless liberty or the worth of such purposeless life? There is not a single ingredient of a noble-spirited and highminded *mountain peasantry* in them. Mixed in their races, they have been enslaved and degraded by the conquest; ground into abject servility during the Colonial government; corrupted in spirit by the superstitious rites of an ignorant priesthood; and now, without hope, without education, without other interest in their welfare, than that of some good-hearted

village curate, they drag out a miserable existence of beastiality and crime. Shall such men be expected to govern themselves?

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It was long after sunset when we descended the last steep, and passed a neat little village, where the people were sitting in front of their low-roofed houses, from every one of which issued the tinkle of guitars. The bright sky reflected a long twilight, and it was just becoming dark when we trotted into Cuernavaca, after a ride of fourteen leagues.

Our companions had already reached the inn, and as we dashed into the court-yard, we found them *à tort et à travers* with the landlord about rooms. We had seen a flaming advertisement of this tavern and its comforts in the papers of the Capital, and counted largely on splendid apartments and savory supper after our tiresome ride and pic-nic breakfast. But, as at the "diligence hotel" in the morning—everything went to the tune of "*No hai!*" No *hai* beds, rooms, meats, soups, supper—nada! They had nothing! We ended by securing two rooms, and I set out to examine them, as well as my legs (stiff from being all day in the hard Mexican stirrups) would let me. The first room I entered was covered with water from the heavy rains. The second adjoined the first; and, although the walls were damp, the floor was dry; but there was no window or opening except the door!

We had secured the room, and of course wanted *beds*; because, room and bed, and bureau, and wash-stand, and towels, and soap, are not all synonymous here as in other civilized countries. Four of our travellers had fortunately brought cots with them; but I had trusted to my two blankets and my old habits of foraging. At length the master managed to find a bed for two more of us, and a cot for me, and thus the night was provided for. We had resolved not to go without supper, and my talents in that branch of our adventures having been proved in the morning, I was dispatched to the kitchen. I will not disclose the history of my negotiations on this occasion, but suffice it to say that in an hour's time we had a soup; a fragment of stewed mutton; a dish of Lima beans; a famous dish of turkey and peppers; and the table was set off by an enormous head of lettuce in the centre, garnished with outposts of oranges on either side, while two enormous pine-apples reared their prickly leaves in front and rear.

An hour afterward we had all retired to our windowless room, and after piling our baggage against the door to keep out the robbers, I wrapped myself in my blanket, on the bare, pillowless, sacking-bottom, and was soon asleep.

Monday, 19th September. The morning was exceedingly fine, the sun was out brightly, and there were no symptoms of the rain that