

quiet denote north-wind and rain. There was no dew upon the grass this morning, and the migratory ants were trooping from the valley towards the mountains; this indicates a change in the atmosphere. The shepherd-bird (a bird of prey, the pajaro vaquero) also screamed as I rode to the village early, and the cattle bellowed incessantly. "Well, let it rain to-morrow, since we can enjoy our festivities to-day with a propitious sky."

Our advance-guard had halted in order to join the party. Many of the company now met for the first time that day, and the same greetings, recognition, kissing and embracing took place that we are accustomed to see in the old countries of Europe. Our party consisted of the priest, a jolly-looking gentleman and general favourite, the vicar, still young with a countenance entirely Aztec, the judge and the Alcalde, the doctor and the apothecary, together with the under-prefect and the tax-gatherer, and a few merchants and peasants. The married men had their wives and daughters along with them; a few young beaux who had taken a course of etiquette in the city, dressed and trimmed in the height of fashion, played the agreeable to the amiable offspring of the judge, and clearly had the preference — The men talked of business-affairs, and especially of the election which was to come off the following Sunday; the younger portion of matters of pleasure, and the ladies of dress, and the merits of their neighbours. I joined a Mestizo family of my acquaintance, who took little interest in the proceedings of the party. "Why so far behind", I inquired of the two well grown sisters? "You are melancholy it seems because somebody is wanting, or you are envious perhaps, because the young gentlemen yonder bestow no attention upon you?" — "I should'nt know what to do with the puppets, replied the younger with a roguish look, "unless to put them with our loros (green parrots), that they might entertain each other." — "Heaven forbid!" said the elder sister, in that case we should not be able to hear our own words. Let them be where they are, so that the Señoritas may have no time to look over other people's heads." — "Aha! here then is the thorn?" I enquired. "You have little to fear on this account; the cedar might as well fear that the bisnaca (a short thick tree, the melocactus) should look down upon it. But have you grounds for your remark?" — "Grounds? Oh, we know that we are no Gachupinas*, but neither are we Indian girls, as this judge's lady called us, with such a contemptuous side-glance when speaking to her neighbour yonder. She shall find that out yet, for we have honour, though our complexions are not white."

I am acquainted with the prejudices in this respect, and know how much bitterness it awakens to call one an Indian who considers himself something better. My policy must therefore be a conciliatory one; I suggested a possible misunderstanding; — that the feeling of true honour must not allow itself to be disturbed by petty grievances; and still more soothing remedies of this sort, which appeared to act as palliatives, but yet could not effect a radical cure in the passionate disposition of the Mestizo-

* The Spaniards are called Gachupins.

In the social relations of European society the matter is not a whit better; is just as ridiculous and perhaps even more so, inasmuch as a higher degree of cultivation is taken for granted. Does it not often happen that a young man, who has been conversing with certain beautiful and accomplished girls, enquiring of some lady of his acquaintance who they are, receives with a peculiar turn of the nose the reply: Tailors' daughters! — Beautiful and accomplished? — "Conceited they may be no doubt, but their beauty is not discovered by every one." Or: "How finely has this man spoken, how nobly has he acted, who is he?" — "A converted Jew!" Nearly allied social absurdities or rather injustice, exist equally in the east and in the west.

We arrived at the appointed place without farther touching upon the irritable side. Tall oaks and plantains shaded a little spot of level ground at the foot of a high cliff, which formed a semicircle. In the middle of this half-circle the rock was cleft asunder, and out of the crevice flowed a clear fountain, that, forming itself into a rivulet, murmured along through the cool grove. The servants were already awaiting us with all sorts of provisions, and a jovial camp was pitched directly. A watch-fire was already burning to roast the meat on the spit, and to warm the tortillas; full flasks were cooling in the spring, and instead of standards the ladies waved their silk pocket-handkerchiefs from the branches. The seats for the ladies were arranged in a circle upon mats, with the provisions in the centre; the men stationed themselves behind the fair sex, and thus in the most cosy manner we began the battle upon chickens, turkies, tortillas, enchiladas (maize-bread with Spanish-pepper, meat and cheese) tamales* cakes and such like things. We men must provide the wine, the glasses went gaily round the circle, and toasts, serious and ludicrous were by no means lacking. When it came to my turn, I drank to the welfare of the republic, and added: "May its citizens, in equal zeal for the welfare of the land, show that they comprehend the equality which the land vouchsafes to us." I handed the glass to the indignant maiden with whom I had been talking upon the way who seized it quickly and without thinking exclaimed. "Long live brown America** that withstood the arrogance of foreigners, and always will withstand!" As she returned the glass she cast a contemptuous look towards Doña Pomposa, which would have served as tinder if attention had not accidentally been directed to something else.

At a rapid trot a young horseman came riding up, quickly dismounted and approached our circle, saluted us and called aside an elderly man of lean figure and somewhat gloomy aspect, who was sitting near the two clerical gentleman. From the violent gesticulation we could see, that the intelligence was of no indifferent

* Tamale is an Indian dish, a sort of dumpling of pounded maize, highly seasoned and commonly filled with meat. They are cooked rolled up in maize or banana leaves.

** America prieta, as the Spaniards derisively called the Guerilla bands of Mestizoes in the war of independence.

character. Directly the old man begged the priest for a moment's audience, and after a conversation of a few minutes, the former mounted the horse, with the young man behind, and galloped away in the direction of the village.

"We were beginning to fear", said the judge to the priest who had again joined us "that we should be obliged to lose your agreeable society, for we could form no other conjecture than that you were called away to some confession or other." — "Oh no", returned the other with a smile, "the confessions are managed without us, and for that matter the weddings too. While the good man who has just left was witnessing the cock-fight with us and accompanying us hither, some one has eloped with his daughter." — "Which one?" asked three ladies at the same instant. "The eldest, Dolores", replied the priest; "I never should have believed it of her, for I thought her elevated above all worldly thoughts."

A somewhat malicious expression was noticeable with the young ladies. They looked at each other and exchanged glances. My neighbour gave me an explanation. "Oh, I am glad," said she, "that this saint is unmasked. Lola was the worst devotee we had; she had some fault to find with all of us, and everything she knew, she took with her to the confessional." — "Was she at church to day?" asked I. "Oh yes, to be sure", replied she, "one of the last to go out, for I saw her from our window with another of the same stamp, who will turn out in precisely the same way, the hypocrite!"

It was now clear that I had also seen her after service, and that the laconic conversation of the two rancheros had reference to her. Accident afterwards brought me in contact with the parties, whom I found living in entire satisfaction, and reconciled with the old people. Many marriages take place in this way, but they do not by any means always receive the blessing of the church, although blessings of another sort are by no means wanting.

Among Mestizoes of the labouring class these wild marriages are very common, and public opinion does not condemn them, because the exorbitant church dues (four guineas) are chiefly the cause that the poorer people gladly leave the clergy out of the account.

The sun was sinking behind the mountains, and pouring a purple light over the snow-capped summits. It was time for us to break up, for the twilight of the tropics is short, and hardly a quarter of an hour after sunset, the stars begin to shine. A profound quiet lay upon the landscape, which the chirping and buzzing of the millions of crickets and grasshoppers, who were singing their evening song, rendered more profound; and the cheerful songs too of the maidens added no discord to the festal voices of nature. It was night as we entered the village, but the streets were still alive with groups of young people who were recounting the pleasures of the day, or singing to the notes of the guitar. They were improvising such bantering verses as these, and the day's history evidently formed the subject of them. Just as we were passing, we heard strophe and antistrophe.

Maidens guard your breast from fire!
You will only seek in vain
To conceal the fatal flame.
Love that o'er your being ruleth,
Church nor altar ever cooleth.

Church nor altar ever cooleth;
Even if you seek to pray,
Something drives the thought away.
But the saint your hearts adore,
Him you venture to implore.

"Whomsoever the god hath wounded is not likely to suffer for want of ridicule", said I to my fair neighbours, as I took leave. "Every saint must have his festival (a cada Sando llega su dia)", replied they, quoting a Spanish proverb. Such was a Sunday among the Mestizoes of the village.

XV.

LIFE IN TOWN.

As the kind of foliage determines the physiognomy of the landscape, so do the cities bear the characteristic impress of a people's life and manners. The Mexican cities show at the first glance a common origin with the Romaic nations of southern Europe: straight streets, open squares, stone houses with flat roofs, numerous churches with glistening cupolas, far-extending citadel-like cloisters, mounts of Calvary, magnificent aqueducts like those of ancient Rome. — Splendour and luxury on the one hand, filth and nakedness on the other. The two Castiles have furnished the models; there as well as here we find the same lack of trees, the same absence of beautiful