

days; for this is the night before Christmas, and the Church authorities forbid all leaving of ships or doing of any other work on this holiday, except on payment into their palms, professedly into her treasury, of double fees of doubloons; so, to escape committing the sin or paying the price of bribery, the captain is determined to get outside the Castle before sunset vespers ring.

The hot streets are touched; the collector and commandant are paid their demanded and needless fee; the filth and fever of the narrow streets about the wharf are duly interviewed; a coachman lashes his sick horses from officer to officer; a cup of coffee is drank at those best saloons of Spanish-speaking countries; and some ten dollars are spent for the privilege of entering the port and exchanging steamers. Then the black sides of the goodly steamer are scaled, and Havana is left almost ere it is reached.

"Out to sea the streamers fly."

We leave the port left three centuries and a half ago by a daring soldier-farmer, with his small accompaniment of ships and soldiers, for the land, whisperings of whose wonders had allured the commandant of Cuba to embark his treasures in its discovery and subjugation; and who also, less wisely for himself, but not for the world, had been induced to give command of the fleet to a reconciled foeman, who had made peace with his adversary, that he might thus gain over him the greater victory.

Velasquez, however, began to fear him before he sailed, and had revoked his commission. But Cortez, before he had received official knowledge of the revocation, hoisted anchor and sail, and fled in the night. We follow after at not far from the same hour. The city lights glimmer along the shore ere we lose sight of it and them, and we skim all night along the way that adventurer sailed.

The first impression -

## II.

### A DAY IN YUCATAN.

The First-born. — An Opportunity accepted. — An Index Point. — Cocoa-nut Milk. — The Market-place. — Euchre as a Food. — A Grave Joke. — The Drink of the Country. — The Cocoa Palm. — The Native Dress. — A Hacienda. — A Pre-adamite Haciendado. — Jenequen. — Prospecting. — Almost a Panic. — Done into Rhyme.

EVERY thing is affected by first impressions. Sometimes they can never be overcome. That like or dislike often abides incurable. The first sight of a foreign shore is a love or a hate forever. How perfect Ireland is in my memory, because it looked so beautiful, rising, a green wave of stillness and strength, out of that sick and quaking sea, over which I had been rolling so long! Egypt is not a river of verdure so much as a strip of blazing sand, for Alexandria, and not Cairo, is its first-born in my experience.

Mexico has its first picture in my gallery. Whatever grandeurs of mountain or glories of forest it may unfold, its first impression will always be that first day in Yucatan. I never dreamed a month before of seeing Yucatan. Even if Mexico itself had crossed the mind as a possibility of experience, Yucatan had never been included in that concept. That prettily sounding name was as far off as Cathay or Bokhara.

Yucatan was, to me, Central America; a museum of ancient monuments; an out-of-the-world corner. In fact, it did not belong to Mexico till Maximilian's time. He annexed it, and they hold together still. We often strike an unknown rock in our sail through life, and Yucatan was the unexpected shoal on which we first stranded. It happened in this wise:

The *City of Merida* makes a landing as near as possible to the

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city after which it is named. This city is twenty miles from the shore, in the peninsula of Yucatan. It has sixty thousand inhabitants, and is the centre of a vast hemp-producing country. This hemp finds a ready market in New York. Hence the pause at this spot; hence the name of our vessel. It is to land stores for the big city, and to take hemp for the bigger country.

The steamer lies four miles from shore. Wearied with its close confinement, three passengers, two of whom are General Palmer, president of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, who, with General Rosecrans, is seeking the extension of that system in Mexico, and Mr. Parish, their European financial representative, propose to spend on shore the day in which we are to remain here. We are met with protestations from various quarters. We are told that we will be sun-struck; will get the *calentura*, or fever; that the fleas will take possession of us; that a Norther will arise, and we can not get back to the steamer; and thus hobgoblins dire are piled on our path. The American minister, returning home, grand and genial, adds his preventive persuasions. But none of these things move us. We go. The captain of the boat which is rowing us ashore enlivens our depressed spirits with encouraging stories about the abundance of monkeys and parrots, of lions and tigers, and deer and wild boars, and every such terror and delight—none of which we see.

We land at a wharf covered with bales of hemp, and brown-skinned natives in their white suits. On it stands a small, pale-faced gentleman, whom we find to be Mr. Tappan, of Boston, the consular agent, and grandson of the minister who wrote the plaintive and pretty verses beginning,

"There is an hour of peaceful rest."

It is almost always fortunate for an American abroad if the United States official be an American. He knows his language, the first important consideration, and he knows what the visitor wants to know, the second and not less important consideration. Our Boston friend is expert in these two excellences. He takes us across

the blazing sands of this holiday season to the cool arches of the collector's house. That gentlemanly official welcomes us to Progreso, the name of this new town. This name shows its newness, and also, possibly, that a Yankee had something to do with its christening; for the Mexican has hardly yet learned that there be such a thing as progress, much less that it can be concentrated into a town, though he indulge in titular progress, and put into names what his Northern brothers put into fact.

Our gentlemanly collector leads us through his official rooms into the domestic apartments, and introduces us to his family.† He is a Spaniard, his wife a Cuban, and his three adopted daughters are representatives of the three races, so called, that hold harmonious possession of this soil. They consist of a white young lady of Anglo-Saxon lightness of complexion, seemingly of a Northern European origin, her adopted parents being dark to her; another, slightly her junior, whose tint is of that Afric sort that Mrs. Kemble Butler deemed richer than any European, and whose opinion our former aristocracy confirmed by their conduct; and the third was a pure Indian belle, none the less beautiful in contour and complexion, a half-way house between these two extremes of human colors.† We did not see the Pocahontas of the family, but the Cleopatra and Boadicea were among our agreeable entertainers. They were dressed just alike, in neat, light, brown-checked muslins, with girlish modesty of array and manner that was cultivated and charming. Our ignorance of Spanish put a barrier between us, but their bearing was sisterly and filial; and we accepted this index of the New America as a token of the superiority of Yucatan over the United States, and a proof of the fitness of the name of the town. Had many an American father recognized, not his adopted, but his actual family, a like variety would have been visible about the paternal board. It will yet be, and without sin or shame, as in this cultivated circle.

The host offered us the milk of the cocoa-nut in large goblets, and grapes preserved in their natural shape. One cocoa-nut makes a tumbler of limpid water sweet and agreeable. His open apart-

*Variedad de la raza -*

*Familia bien surtido al hombre. Cual le gusta más al P. Obispo? Villegas.*

ments let the cooling breezes blow through, and we rejoiced an hour in the shelter from the July heat of December, and the stimulus of a Long Branch July breeze.

Then comes a walk through Progreso. This city, like our new Western enterprises, is better laid out than settled. It has its straight, broad streets running through chaparral, its grand plaza, with scarcely a corner of it yet occupied, its corner-lots at fabulous prices. That corner opposite the custom-house they hold at two thousand dollars. Others a little outside of the centre you can buy as low as fifty dollars. That is better than you can do on the North Pacific, where on a boundless prairie they will stake out a lot twenty-five feet by a hundred, and charge you hundreds of dollars for the bit.

The market-place is a projecting thatched roof over the side of a one-story edifice. On mats sit brown old ladies with almost equally old-looking vegetables. Here are oranges, bananas, black beans, squash seeds boiled in molasses, a sort of candy, and other esculents, to me unknown. Among them is one called *euchre*. *Yucca* Never having known what that too-familiar word means in the nomenclature of the States, I thought I would find out its meaning in Yucatan, so I invested a six-and-a-quarter-cent bit in this game of chance. I received a piece of the root—for so I judged it to be—looking like a cross between a turnip and a carrot. It was white, of various shapes, round, square, long. My piece was about as large round as a child's wrist, and as long as its hand. I tasted it, and was satisfied with *euchre* as an article of diet. If others, on one taste of their sort, would as quickly discard it, they might safely be left to make the experiment. But even my friend, the Rev. Mr. Murray, can not effect the prohibition of that appetite in that way. It is likely this would grow with tasting, as the other does, for it was sweet and not disagreeable, being like the turnip and carrot in nature as well as in looks. If it could replace the fatal fascination of its synonym, I should be glad to see it introduced into our country.

The houses of Progreso are of one story, of mortar or thatch,

covered with a high roof of thatch. This high roof is open inside, and makes them shady and cool. The sides are also often of thatch, and they look like a brown dwarf with a huge brown straw sombrero pulled over his eyes. Some of those built of mortar have ornamental squares in the sides, where shells are carefully set in various shapes in the mortar, and which make a pleasing effect, the diamonds and other shapes giving the walls a variety that is really artistic. Why could it not be imitated in larger buildings at home? One house had the word "Sepulcro" in large letters chalked along its front. "What does that mean?" asks one of the party. The occupant was sick a long time, and the boys thought it was about time he had died, so they chalked that word along the door to express their conviction of his duty. He ought to be dead—dead he shall be called. A grave joke, that.

Here I first tasted the sort of chocolate of which Montezuma was so fond, and which he took so thick as almost to make it an edible. A brown, brawny woman made us a cup of the same in a bamboo-sided, rush-roofed café. It was worthy Montezuma's praise: Parisian chocolate takes the second place hereafter, and a good way below the first. It is prepared in milk, and is a thick, soft liquid that melts on your tongue and "goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." That dame would make her fortune by such a café in New York. But, then, she probably wishes for no fortune, and her secret, the secret of all the dames of the country, may never be revealed outside the land itself. You must come to Mexico to know how "*chocolatte*" can taste.

The fields about Progreso have chiefly shrubs of the cactus order. Beautiful flowers of purple, yellow, and crimson abound. Here grows wild the heliotrope, the fragrant purple flower that is scattered so generally at funerals. The sweet-pea and other cultivated delights of the Northern hot-house and garden are blossoming abundantly.

The cocoa-palm throws out its long spines, deep green, thrust straight out from a gray trunk, that looks as if wrapped in old

clothes against the cold. This gray bark is a striking offset to the dark, rich leaves, which are the branches themselves. Where these leaves push forth from the trunk, from ten to fifty feet from the ground, a cluster of green balls, of various sizes and ages, are hanging. This green rind is an inch thick. Then the black shell known to us is reached, and inside of that, not the thick white substance we find on opening it, but a thin soft layer, or third rind, the most of the hollow being filled with milk. Later in the season the milk coagulates to meat, and the cocoa-nut of commerce is completed. It is cultivated extensively here, both for home use and the Northern market.

*See also p. 31  
title 3*

The people are chiefly Indians, not of the Aztec, but Toltec variety. This is a nation hundreds of years older than the Aztecs, and who are supposed to be the builders of the famous monuments of Central America, and to have been driven from Mexico southward about a thousand years ago. They are of the usual Indian tint, but, unlike our aborigines, live in comfortable houses, are engaged in industrious callings, and dress in a comely manner.

Both sexes wear white, the men and boys having often one leg of their trowsers rolled up, for what purpose we could not guess, unless it be for the more cleanly fording of the brooklets and mud-lets that occur. It was a token of neatness, if that was the reason, that was very commendable.

The women wear a skirt of white, and a loose white waist separate from the skirt, and hanging sometimes near to the bottom of the under-garment. This over-skirt, or robe, is ornamented with fringe and borders worked in blue. The head-dress is a shawl or mantle of light cotton gauze, of blue or purple, thrown gracefully over the head and shoulders. One lady, evidently thinking well of herself and her apparel, had a ring on every finger of each hand, and gold ornaments hanging profusely from her neck. I have seen many ladies who, if they distributed the rings singly on each finger, would not find both hands sufficient for their display. This light-brown laughing madam had her limits seemingly, beyond which she would not go—eight rings and no more.

As a proof of the industry and intelligence of these natives, let us go to a hacienda, or farm, a mile out of town. Though it is a short walk, yet having ordered a fly for a longer ride, we employ it on this excursion. We did not take the carriage of the country, which is a basket on two wheels, about the size of a cot-bed, which cot-bed itself lies on the bottom of the basket, and on which sit the passengers. A wicker covering bends over about two-thirds of this bed; the rest is open to sun and rain. Three mules abreast make this fly fly.

Our three little mules drag a sort of covered coach on high springs, narrow and jolty. They run under the whip and scream of the muleteer. The gate of the hacienda is soon reached. A lazy Indian boy opens it. We rush between a green wall of cocoa-trees a score of rods to a thatched-built house, large, well-floored, high-roofed, clean. The brown lady of the mansion welcomes us, and I try to buy a hammock. She asks three dollars. I have no gold, and she despises greenbacks, whether of Washington or Havana. So the bargain fails. The same thing I have since seen offered in Boston for less money. It is cheaper sometimes to buy your foreign curiosities after you get home.

Her boys take us to a cocoa-nut orchard, pluck off the nuts, split them with a sharp cleaver, and pour their milk into a glass. We drink in honor of the host. An old man runs up to us, with nothing on him but a pair of white pants, a cleaver stuck in his girdle behind, and a straw hat. He offs hat with both hands, and bows low to the ground. Had Darwin seen him he would have protested that he was the man primeval, built ages before the English Adam, who is (to Darwin) the height of attained, if not attainable, civilization. His face looked very like a monkey's, and his posture also. Yet this ape of modern false science was a gentleman of fortune, and industry, and sagacity, who had subdued five hundred acres of this wild land, and made himself a property worth six thousand dollars even here, many times that in the States. He raises hemp and cocoa-nuts, and is rich. His manners were gracious, and when he found he could not talk with us, he bid us

*Forque no  
es este amore-  
cano -*

good-bye politely, and hastened away as fast as if he had a note to pay, and only five minutes more left to pay it in, and no money to pay it with. His boys remained, and waited on us. One of our party offered him a couple of cigars, which he passed over to a little girl of his tenant's, being too much in a hurry, if not too much of a gentleman, to smoke. So our primitive gorilla disappears in a farmer of to-day. So will all scientific humbugs disappear.

The chief business of this place is the raising of jenequen, or hemp, pronounced heneken. It has the thick, green, sharp leaf of the cactus. A large traffic has sprung up in it at this port; not less than five thousand bales are exported annually to New York, or two million pounds. It is used in making ropes, and has a growing and extensive value. It is worth six cents a pound here, and pays about ninety-five per cent. on its cost of culture, so that it is a very valuable article of commerce. Its finer varieties are as soft as silk. It is destined to be more and more a source of union between Yucatan and the United States.

We roll in the warm surf of the sea—a Christmas luxury not enjoyed at Newport and Long Branch, but which was delightful at Progreso—and dine at our friend, the collector's.

There is no church in the place, and this chief man, though a Romanist, invites me to establish our church here. The chief corner of the grand plaza is still unoccupied, and the Methodist cathedral can be built there. It shows our opportunities, at least, and the liberality of this people, though perhaps it is too much like the sort we find in Western towns, where they will give any body a church lot in order to make the other lots the more valuable. Yet these simple-hearted natives ought to have a Sunday-school and Christian teachings, songs, and ordinances; and we hope some time to see the offer accepted, and such a church flourishing at Progreso. Some Christian body will undoubtedly take possession of the field, as a preliminary to the city near by, which is white unto this harvest. Whoever enters into this inheritance will find a pleasant possession.

Our day's delights have kept us beyond the hour appointed by

the captain, and we pull for the steamer with fears that she will pull away from us before we can reach her. The wind is contrary, the rowers weary, the night deepens, the waves roll, the lantern on the ship becomes a star. We fire pistol-shots and kindle paper, and they send up colored lights and fire the cannon. Our fires and shots they do not see or hear. Two hours of fear at being deserted, of questionings as to what to do in such extremity, of yet greater fears that the big black waves rolling high about and beneath us will roll bigger and blacker above us, of tests of inward quality of courage and faith, in which the most believing do not always prove the most courageous, and we come up at last, with great rejoicing, to the huge ship, with its many lights and warm cheer, looking like the palace of home and heaven, riding upon the waters of death. So may that palace yet welcome us all!

The stay-aboard company are thoroughly alarmed at our long absence. But when the fear and congratulations at our safety are over, they follow the example of the Irish mother and her lost child, so affectingly depicted by Hood, whose wailings over him lost are speedily replaced by scoldings at him found. To protect ourselves against their retorts, the rhymist of the party prepared, on the rolling deck, a defense, which, like all poetry, has permitted exaggerations mingled with its truth—a sort of wine-and-water fiction and fact that can be easily separated. As a memento of a lazy moment it may be worth inserting here. If one seeks to sing it, he can employ the tune of "My Maryland," which is the old college air of "Lauriger."

"The scoffer's boat is off thy shore,  
Yucatan, my Yucatan;  
Our feet are on the collector's floor,  
Yucatan, my Yucatan.  
His cocoa-milk and grapes are sweet,  
The cooling breezes gently greet,  
His household dames are mixed and neat,  
Yucatan, my Yucatan.

## OUR NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR.

"The dinners that we find in thee,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan,  
 Surpass all else in luxury,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.  
 There're monkey tongues and lizard steak,  
 And parrot's brains and chocolate;  
 What *carne* strange and delicate,  
 In Yucatan, my Yucatan.

"The jenequen is growing fine  
 In Yucatan, my Yucatan,  
 To make the hemp for rope and twine,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.  
 The hacienda, with its trees  
 Of cocoa fluttering in the breeze,  
 Whose fruit is tossed us by monkéys,  
 That's Yucatan, my Yucatan.

"There Darwin finds his primal man,  
 In Yucatan, my Yucatan,  
 Of monkey looks, but sharp as Yan',  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.  
 He makes his bow with double grace,  
 His pants alone are in their place,  
 His gait is a Chicago pace,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.

"Rings on each finger and each toe,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan;  
 The ladies ornament them so,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.  
 White robes and thin to ankles go;  
 Night wrapped in day, a pleasant show;  
 Such are the dames of Progreso,  
 In Yucatan, my Yucatan.

"Oh, 'tis a pleasant land to see,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan,  
 Lying along that summer sea,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.

## GOOD WISHES.

Long will its memories linger sweet  
 Of flowers and shells, and mules so fleet,  
 In our far-off and cold retreat,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.

"May churches, schools, and enterprise,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan,  
 Gladden thy golden sands and skies,  
 Yucatan, my Yucatan.  
 May railroads, built by Palmer Co.,  
 Carry great crowds to Progreso,  
 And Parish into parishes grow,  
 In Yucatan, my Yucatan!"