

## VI.

## TO AND IN SAN LUIS POTOSI.

Aztec Music.—Low-hung but high-hung Clouds.—Troops and Travelers.—A big, small Wagon.—Zeal of San Felipe.—Lutero below Voltaire.—Rough Places not Smooth.—Mesquite Woods.—Silver Hills.—Two Haciendas.—How they Irrigate.—Lassoing.—The Frescoes of Frisco.—Cleft Cliffs.—The Valley of San Luis Potosi.—Greetings and Letters.—The Church of Mary.—The coming Faith.—A costly and Christly Flag.—Joseph and Mary worshiped in vain for Rain.

How different the strains that fell upon the ear last night and those that are now addressing us; and both are musical! Then it was the dancing-girls' guitars and harps, making a twitter as of caroling swallows. Now it is a Government band that, on a broad and lighted plaza, discourses music that even Berliners would walk around to hear, especially if they could soon thereby reach a beer-stall. These Government bands are found in all the large towns, and are a great source of pleasure to the citizens. They play twice or thrice a week, and draw many loungers and listeners to their soirées. They are exceedingly refined in their touch. You never heard a clearer, softer note than that flute is now trilling; and the airs are gentle and recondite. How one forgets the long hard ride of more than eighty miles, the slow pulling along over heavy and rocky roads, as he listens to these rich strains!

"Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony."

The country and the people are made for music. Remember that all these players are Indians, "brown as the ribbed sea-sand," and a good deal browner than any I ever saw—brown as the old red sandstone. Are they made from that antique dust? All these are admirable performers. I have never seen a white face among

*A confesion de parte... aqui estan las pruebas -*

*May recon-  
abli*

them. In Mexico and all the cities of the land they are of one hue. The passion of the people is for music. The upspringing Protestant churches are bursting forth in song. As this hard, dry soil breaks forth in flowers the instant it scents the water, so the water of life touches their parched and barren souls, and they flower into song. I heard a poor untrained clothes-cobbling sister and her daughter sing the "Gloria in Excelsis" as I never heard Trinity or the Tremont Street choir approach; so simple, so full of soul, so grand, so upswelling. They bring forth new songs day by day. Once visiting their house (the husband is a preacher), they sang me Juan Bron. I was surprised to find my old friend John Brown in this new shape. How it rung, especially the chorus, closing with "Al Cristo alevad!" (praise to Christ). They had set it to the praise of the Creator, Christ; for it is as easy for them to make poetry as it is to make tunes. Their gifts of improvisation are Italian. Our frequently no browner brother of the South is their only equal in this respect, but he has not that operatic quality, that delicate tone, which belongs to this people.

Then the climate helps the gift. It is just the air for song. It is never too hot nor too cold in the evening, the time for music. Every night they can revel in this relief. Their burdened bodies and souls can rise on these wings of song to a realm of rest and joy. But this band must not beguile us from our purpose. The rather let them accompany us on our story of the journey, making its rough places smooth with their melody.

It is a good trait of this staging that it begins in the fresh of the morning. You get a good start of the sun, and the hot centre of the day is given to breakfast and to rest. So I am up at a little after three, take two cups of delicious coffee and milk, and a single roll, and go in the strength of that beverage and bread till mid-day. One cup is the usual allowance, but, being tired, I treat myself to a second cup of hot milk with a suspicion of coffee therein. It is also odd that one feels little desire for more food or ere the ordinary hour for dinner arrives—so easily we can get accustomed to our condition.

*Now here also the musicians are made for music -*



Rain had fallen in the night, and clouds, as the morning broke, appeared, hugging the bases of the hills. They almost swept down on us with their wet wings. Had they been in action they would have done so. Low to us, they were high in the heavens, being two miles above Vera Cruz or London, a high point for raining clouds to hang.

They do not hide the landscape, which lies wide, and level, and rich, and cultivated, a grand plain, like so many of Mexico. Soldiers pass us, dressed in the white costume of the country; artillery-men follow, five cannon, drawn each by ten mules, and their attendant caissons; cavalry and commandery—quite a detachment of an army. Their faces and shoulders are wrapped in their bright zerapes, not so soldier-like as comfortable. Following them are a score and more of heavily laden wagons, each drawn by a like number of mules, and each having a goodly company of men, women,



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and babies on the top of the baggage, one woman sitting on the beam (I know not its farmer name) that passes from the wagon to the oxen's yoke, as I have seen many a farmer at home ride, but never before, his spouse.

Following these are the other mule wagons of ordinary luggage, a baggage-wagon like that of the States, except that this is half as long and well-nigh twice as high. Perched up on tall wheels, and its maguery-cloth roof, covering wide flaunting bows, it seems a monstrous affair, till you get close to it, when you find all this enormous height and swell is only two wheels long—half the length you

anticipated, and that its pretensions required. It is a little giant, and is not unlike many another swell who begins his career much bigger than he ends.

This multitude of teams shows the readiness of this country for the railroad, as the level land shows its fitness. There is no doubt that a road, well and wisely made, will be a paying investment from the start.

The city of San Felipe is our first stopping-place. It is a largish town of five thousand inhabitants, dirty and adobe in most of its streets and houses, gayly got up, with colored washes and fancy figurings in its plaza and neighborhood. The time for changing horses allows me to visit the church. It is about eight in the morning, and fifty to seventy-five persons are at worship, while a priest is delivering the consecrated wafer to an altar full of coming and going recipients. At the corner near the entrance is a painting on the walls of the church, with the face of a woman, but habited as a pope, with the triple crown on her head, and two angel boys offering her an open book, on which is written in Latin, "The Word was made flesh." Her right hand is waving authority to lightnings that are diving at the heads of four apostates, who are disappearing under their forked fires, while over them is written, "*Qui ecclesiam non audierint, sit tibi Sicut Ethnicus et Publicanus*"—Matt. xviii., 17 (Whoever will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican). Now who do you suppose that verse and these lightnings were hurled at by that female pope of a church? Arreo, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Lutero. The last was the lowest, as if the quickest to sink into hell. That painting was fresh, and put up by some priest who scented what was in the air, and is getting the people ready to resist its coming. But Luther will be erased yet from those walls, and the triple crown from the head of the church; and those poor sisters, that are only allowed half the sacrament, shall enjoy the whole supper of the Lord in company with the disciples of this Lutero.

The road soon enters a divide, which is rough, though not high nor long. An attempt is made to have a smooth and handsome



road, and this succeeds for a few rods, and shows what might be everywhere, were a little constant care kept up. It soon gets tired of being good, like a spoiled and wayward child, and cuts up badly, as such a child is apt to do after its fit of momentary excellence. It goes round the spurs of hills staggering fearfully, and makes us, who are two only, stagger as bad as the road and worse. There are two ways to arrange for traveling safely over rough regions: one is to make the road good, the other to make the coach strong. They prefer the latter course here, or rather the diligence company do that for the preservation of their custom and coaches. So you have no fears, how much soever you are knocked about, that the coach will be knocked to pieces. It is made to stand, and it will stand. Never a lesion have I seen in these hundreds of leagues of travel, and over intolerable ways. They tumble into holes, whirl and toss and heave among loose boulders, or rocks *in situ*, down hill and up, trembling sometimes like a ship struck by mighty waves, but never springing a leak, or shivering a timber, or loosening a brace. They reel out of the rocky gulfs, and are off on a gallop in an instant, if road permits.

These low but tortuous and tossing hill-sides open shortly on another valley more attractive to the eye than the one just left, in that this is full of foliage. As far as the eye can see, it is one mass of feathery green. But all is not gold that glitters, or silver, even in Mexico, and this fascinating woodland turns out to be cheap mesquite and cheaper nopal, or cactus, that are growing wild. It is an uncleared forest. Still, an uncleared forest is a novelty here as well as in most of the United States, and will soon be in all parts of both countries; so I like it perhaps none the less.

The mesquite is not unlike the Peru, and both resemble in some sort our willow, except that these grow everywhere, the driest places suiting the Peru just as well as the moistest. It spreads like the apple and peach, though lighter of trunk than the former, and not so loose in the lay of its limbs as the latter. It bears a pod, which is sought as an esculent. These woods are encompassed with high bare hills, those on the left hand being not over a league from the

roadway. They are of the type that lay behind La Camada, a gray and silver frame to that fair picture. The hills may not all be full of silver, but they all suggest it. They are all of the same blood as the silver mountains proper, and put on airs as become the kin of so rich a house. They are basaltic almost in their castellated forms, and look rather like a column of giant "graybacks" opening their serried ranks to let this column of green, and perhaps this coach and company also, march through.

Our change of mules is made in the heart of this forest. The turtle-dove (*palumbra triste*, they call it here) fills the air with his melancholy wail, a single note of the whip-poor-will's strain. Women are frying and men eating tortillas under a cactus by the wayside; the vista opens deep into the green forest, and every thing is quiet, soft, salubrious. One could almost make himself into a Robin Hood, and live his life in this secluded richness. How wonderfully human nature adapts itself to its condition! We go from mountain to sea, from cell to city, with a zest for each that seems insatiate. But only one offers its attractions at a time. We can not at once sail the sea and climb the mountain, unless it be a mountain wave. We are like the lad who wished every season might last forever, and was met with a record of his contradictory wishes at the end of the year.

They are not contradictory; for we are so fortunately as well as wonderfully made, that we like truly and with all our heart the conditions in which we are placed. Thus the Creator fits the clothing of the world to the shape of the soul. Whatever be that wardrobe, it seems a part of the spiritual being whom it incloses, and every place affords a sympathy with every fibre of that being.

"Where it goeth all things are,  
And it goeth everywhere."

The two haciendas are called San Bartoleo and Goral. They are practically one. From six to eight thousand persons live on these vast estates; from four to five hundred men are employed in their cultivation. They and their families absorb the chief of the



population. The rest, as in all the *pueblos*, or towns, find their little livelihood as they can, carrying burdens, driving mules, here a very little, and there still less.

The grand house at the hacienda of Goral is elaborate enough for a castle or a convent, the two biggest things in this country. Its high front wall is set off with square pink blocks of water-color, and it looks big enough for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth and her retinue. The contrast between this palace and the clay-colored adobe huts about it is painful, though it is universal outside of the United States, but nowhere else more violent and extreme than here.

The fields lie wide and magnificent before it; but the fields are not for the tillers. For a real day or thereabouts they work and starve; for nothing a day this gentleman idles and abounds. I think some of the most scared anti-agrarians would be almost as fanatical and wise as Wendell Philips, the wisest man as well as the most eloquent of his generation, could they but look on these Mexican pictures. How much better are the huge manufacturing corporations, and railroad monopolies, and land-grabbers of the United States? Take heed in time, and let Christianity have its perfect work, or antichristianity will have its.

Curious grain vaults are on its plaza, pyramids or cones built of mortar, thirty feet high, for the storing of the harvests. The reason for this shape I did not learn. They give a quaint air to the plaza. A school and two churches and a half-dozen begging old women help break up the monotony of scenery and silence of this grand farm-house. The lordly owner ought at least to take care of his own paupers, and not allow them to prey on the traveler.

The wild wood, after leaving this posta, soon gets inclosed in a wall on the right hand, too high for us in the coach to see whether it be still a forest, or has become a fruitful field. It is a part of two haciendas in name, and one in fact, that stretch all this posta and beyond, from four to five leagues, from ten to twelve miles. The wall is admirably built of stone well capped, or of adobe brick, its only fault being that it is too high for our heads. Glimpses oc-

asionally show much culture, and a ride on the stage-top afterward exhibits a wide range of rich fields. All of it could be subdued easily. It only wants water. And that is obtained by the simple digging of wells. You can see them all over this land. They are usually of the old-fashioned Yankee sort, a pole balanced on a cross-bar, with a stone at one end and a bucket at the other. The drawers of water stand two and two, either side by side or front to front, so that they can stimulate each other in their work. Sometimes they arise to the aristocracy of a horse turning over a wheel around which buckets are fastened that catch the water below, and dip it up, and turn it into troughs and tanks. This for surface wells. Deep ones have still a different way of being operated. A large cowskin bucket hangs by a pulley over the well. The rope passes over this pulley and is passed round a big wheel, or barrel, six feet in diameter, a hundred feet away. The horse pulls the rope around this wheel and so hoists the water to the trough.

Still other modes are used, but the chief is the old beam and the double man-power. We can save all drought in the States by these and more simple and cheap appliances. The long dry seasons to which we are not unfrequently doomed can be remedied by these preparations. It is far better for the farmer to be thus busy than to sit and see his crops perish of thirst. They will not cost much to get ready, if they are not used, and will repay all their expense in a single year of drought.

The hacienda continues for two or three miles, blasted outside its walls, luxuriant within. It closes with a handsomely constructed corral, into which a company of horsemen are driving a herd of cattle. One of the younger fry, not having learned the futility of all attempts to escape, breaks away from the herd and scampers adown the field. Instantly three of the horsemen race after it. It is an unequal contest from the start. The little black "beastie" shows pluck. But they are too much for him, those three men and three horses. Forty feet off out flew the lasso, and caught him just where it aimed, around the horns. They can grip anywhere, it is said—hoof, ear, horn. An enthusiastic laudator of their