ful cheeks and forms. It did not seem possible that rocks could be so lady-like; soft, yet firm;

"So moving delicate, so full of life."

I gazed, and envied the coming circuit-riding brethren over this hacienda. We pass one of its ranchos, clean and comfortable compared with many below, the men gentlemanly and the women lady-like. They came and shook hands with the driver; a chatty mother offering him cold water, and all showing the American training of the young haciendado, and preparing the way for the chapel and the stationed preacher.

This posta of twelve long leagues is pulled across through heavy, dusty, level roads, but also through this munificent landscape of green and silver, and we come where we began, and where, at near the midnight hour, this writing is being finished, in the peaceful rancho of Bonaventura.

One more day and we see the city that concludes this ocean section, and we get to the end, practically, of Mexico. May the robbers keep still aloof, though my German lad sleeping over there says they are plenty and bad above, and tells a story of what they lately did, to put me in bodily fear, shooting a woman, and tying two men to a tree. He is armed, and thinks that is his protection. Shall I get out my tin-foil sausage, or beg a revolver? Nay. I sing my talisman:

"Jesus protects, my fears begone!
What can the Rock of Ages move?
Safe in His arms I lay me down,
His everlasting arms of love!"

X.

INTO PORT.

Sunrise.—Villa de Gomez Firias.—A lost American found.—Flowering Palms.—An unpleasant Reminder.—A charming Park.—Agua Nueva.—La Encantada.—La Angostura.—Battlemented Mountains.—Buena Vista.—The Battlefield.—The Result.—Why.—Saltillo.—Alameda.—Friends.

The four days' trip across the wilderness ocean is completed. The pleasant harbor is made; the perils by land are at an end. True, four days' staging yet remain, or ere the country is left, and the robbers, if such there be. And as a vessel has been wrecked in sight of its port, and coaches have been robbed within two miles of Mexico, there are plenty of chances yet to experience all that is threatened and feared. But the chief perils are past, and the chief weariness; and it is to be hoped none that follow will exceed those that have gone before. Our night in a rancho was without excitement. "I laid me down in peace and slept. I awaked, for Thou sustained me."

It was not much after midnight when the men sleeping on the ground at the door of our biggin began to bestir themselves; at a little after one we were all up, and at two off, one party of two for the South, one of one for the North. The coach had several rent windows, and let in the cold air full freely. But as the air was not very cold, the shawl sufficed for a protector, and I tossed and slept till morning broke. The same level was before me, shut in by the same hills. The light grew rosy in midheavens, then on the western ridge, and then the blaze boiled and steamed up the east, and all was done.

It was a long pull through the unchanging fields of stunted mesquite and palm, varied by equally stunted castor-oil bean, whose

very leaves and tiny yellow flower had a slimy and sickly look. At last a miserable cluster of huts appeared, thirty-five miles from our starting-place, and we stopped at the rancho with the ornate title of Villa de Gomez Firias. This was once a favorite resort of the Indians for its water, which is bad enough, and shows how the region round about must suffer. It was a favorite fighting-place also, and there were skulls and bones enough to furnish a half-dozen secret college societies, not only with their hideous symbols, but with a secret greater than any of the boyish ones they profess to possess, even that which these embody and express—the mystery of death.

An attempt was made to get up a breakfast here, but it resulted in a fried egg and frejollis, all the intermediate meats being absent. Nice fresh milk made the place of the absent and the present more than good.

A colored boy, lounging at the half-cent grocery, had wandered hither from Texas. He had got on the Mexican white trowsers, sandals, hat, and language, but his pink shirt and black face he had not changed. He is working here for "two bits" a day, living in a rancho with his master. He said he preferred the dollar a day in Texas, but why he does not go and get it he says not. His name is William Henry Griffin. It was a pleasant sight and sound, this American skin and tongue, even as a variety to the universal brown. He was brought up a Methodist, and I hope may yet help these poor people into that liberty, though I fear he is not a shining example to-day of its achievements, whether of faith or works.

Our wide prairie, extending from Mattejuala, here comes to an end. Hills gather around us, and grant no opening; they must be crossed. The level has been not less than fifty leagues, or one hundred and thirty miles. The hills before us are not high, but they are sufficient to conclude that feature of the itinerary. We ascend a hard, handsome road, and wind into a round valley a thousand or two feet across, and shut in by hills. It is well filled with palm-trees that in this high mountain wall are getting ahead

of their prairie kindred outside. They are crowned with white blossoms. It is one of the strange contraries of this country in nature, as in men, that such hideous-looking creatures as cactuses and palms produce such marvelous flowers and delightful fruit. This palm bears this tree of white blossoms on the very top of its head; out of the middle of these green spires, like bayonets, rise the tall white plumes, some of them two feet high, and half as tall as the trunk that supports them. Here, too, these trees are uniformly straight, as if, like country people, they are simple and sturdy when at home, but, brought into city society, grow odd and shoddy. Another slope lets us into another park, longer and wider, but not long nor wide. The driver kindly points to a hole in the side of the hill, goes through the motion of cutting his throat, and says that here the coach was once stopped, three men taken out and robbed, and their throats cut, and they thrown into that hole.

This is a comforting word. I ask him if there are any robbers here now. "Oh no; farther on," is his still comforting reply. "Farther on" I saw three men descending a long slope. The hill looked near, and yet I could not tell whether the men were on foot or on horseback. They drew near, and I saw their horses. "These are the men," I said. Stage stops. They part, and pass on each side of the coach. I am up with the driver. I wait to hear the cry to Zaccheus, "Come down!" They chat with the driver, laugh, and drive on. So goes that fear, like all its fellows. Compadres of the driver, they could not pass without saluting him.

Another harder pull yet, and a more beautiful wild orchard of blossoming palms, and we enter a valley of great beauty, with mighty mountains guarding its eastern side and entrance. These are the loftiest peaks that have appeared on the road since leaving the green hills of Mexico. They rise close to the pass, and leave only a narrow path into the valley. They appear as if placed here on purpose to protect the land from invaders, and to that purpose they were put. For we are now close upon the historic ground of Buena Vista. These southern gates are the rear-guard of the land. The real battle was fought some miles to the front, across this val-

ley, and amidst the ravine which opens out of it at almost right angles. But, undoubtedly, this wall was chosen because of its partial protection and defense, and, had the front been maintained, this would have afforded a strong barrier.

The hacienda of Agua Nueva is located at the upper end of this long valley of La Encantada. It is on a dry and rolling rise of ground, well under the tall hills. Here we change our mules, and start on the last posta across this wide sea, whereon we have been cruising these last four days. This is the most exciting of all; for it passes over from end to end the track of that famous battle which more than all others conquered Mexico, as the people of the United States believed, and showed their faith by their works in making its victor President.

The mule-changing Agua Nueva is as hot a spot as one cares to pause on. Yet some decaying buildings, one of which is especially roomy, give us momentary shelter from the storm of heat, as well as the sight of dirty damsels frying their perpetual tortillas. A bit of a chapel, dirty as any of its worshipers, stood among the huts and the larger semi-ruins of a once valuable hacienda. It was, therefore, especially agreeable to see the mozo harnessing up his eight mules for the pull across a famous field, and to a civilized town. It was like that last day out at sea, when the hills of Neversink are almost in view, and you know that to-morrow morning will see you safe in the dear old port.

The mules whiz out of the dusty and decaying plaza, and rush for the gorge that opens straight on to the Gulf. The sweet valley of Encantada, running in the opposite direction, looks fruitful and green as we glance down it, just before the high rocky walls close us in and close it out, perhaps forever, to these eyes.

These walls are like those at the entrance behind, except that the latter run east and west, and these run north and south. The last is the more usual lay of the hill lands. So that the valley of Buena Vista is simply in the same direction as almost every valley we have passed through since leaving the capital. But the previous valleys have been from five to twenty miles wide; this is hardly two. It is well named La Angostura (The Narrows). Its rock forms are very remarkable, especially those on the left, or toward the west. They rise in huge castellated shapes, not unlike the basaltic columns near Velasquo. The range is five hundred to a thousand feet high, and full of surprises in its angles no less than its striated surface. The opposite side is higher, and more after the usual form of mountains.

Between these ranges is a deep dry river-bed that has cut its crooked way through the valley, and scooped out a path twenty feet below the original level, and present roadway of the valley. This *barranca chico*, as they would call it, or little ravine, is not an unusual sight in the country. The hill-sides west of the capital exhibit some of great depth. But this one differs from any I had previously seen in that it is exclusively and evidently a river-bed, and probably is a river itself in the rainy season.

On the eastern side of the narrow valley there are several moraines, as seemingly artificial as is the river barranca. If the one is scooped out by violent action of the elements, the other is heaped up by like violent action. They are as high as the bed of the river is deep. They extend from near the river's edge to the side of the tall rock-hills. How they were cast up is not evident. There are no glaciers to make them, as in the Alpine moraine. They can not have been tossed up from the bed of the river, for they have no connection with the stream. Riding past them, I could not solve their cause. Perhaps some scholarly soldier, who fought on them and under them, may be acquainted with their origin.

They had a use that day. On their summits were placed the American cannon, which did no little to carry the field. Perhaps it was on one of them that the famous order was given, "A little more grape, Captain Bragg," an order which strengthened the American heart, and so helped gain the day.

The battle was fought on this strange field. Along that dry gulf General Taylor's troops made their perilous pause; on these seemingly manufactured hill-tops they planted their guns. There