

CHAPTER VI.

The tourist who is interested in the country through which he passes should make the journey from Aguas Calientes to the City of Mexico by daylight. The sight of the irrigating ditches, the waving wheat fields and the quaint towns along the route will do much to console him for the omnipresent dust. At Leon, whose green valley is a veritable oasis in the surrounding desert, he can buy one of the famous Mexican saddles or an artistic bridle.

We passed a terrible night at Siloa. Our next-door neighbors—Mexicans—talked and laughed at the top of their voices, all night long. When they thought we might possibly be asleep, they pounded upon the walls of the partition and even took the trouble to come out on the gallery upon which all the rooms opened, and knock on our door. The Spanish-American, at least in Mexico and Cuba, is a night-hawk who never sleeps himself, and who resents sleep in others.

At Siloa we left the main line and journeyed through a charming valley as beautiful as that of San Gabriel in California, to Guanajuato. The hillsides were still brown, but when the rains come, and the land bursts into great mounds of bloom and verdure the region must be a paradise. At Marfil, a quaint little village, we took the mule-car for Guanajuato. The line runs up a creek whose bed is full of gold and silver. According to popular report it is the custom in the valley to soak the pigs who wallow in the water, to save the silver deposited in their bristles; but I should not like to be made responsible for that story. We were also told that one-sixth of all the world's supply of silver comes from Guanajuato—another statement I am not prepared to defend with my dying breath. At all events, Guanajuato is a very rich town; not at all like its rival silver town—poor, starving Zacatecas. There is a beautiful opera house opposite the plaza, the finest I ever saw—not even excepting the Grand Opera House in Paris, which may be more costly, and certainly is larger, but not nearly so beautiful. And yet to reach this opera house and the prosperous town, we passed down the cañon of Marfil, three miles in length, and saw the hillsides piled with flat-roofed adobe hovels. Up the steep declivities staggered broken stairways upon which squatted dirty children and half-clothed men

and women; while dusty, twisting pathways, which seemed to go down nowhere in particular, sent down clouds of sand upon the passer-by. It was a picture of squalid misery that could hardly be equaled at Zacatecas.

One of our fellow passengers, the only English-speaking person, except ourselves, upon the car, volunteered to show us the way to the Pantheon. When we left the car together he led us, to our surprise, to a pretty vine-embowered Spanish house and introduced us to the Rev. Mr. C. We found we were in the Methodist Medical Mission, the only one of its kind, I believe, in Mexico. Our first acquaintance, Dr. S., had almost completed a hospital of forty beds, for the treatment of the sick of any faith, or no faith—truly a Christ-like enterprise. There is, in connection with the hospital, a church of more than three hundred members, many of them strong men in the community. The work of these missionaries has not been done without opposition. The men who, twenty years ago, organized the movement were twice mobbed, and once escaped with their lives only through the humanity of a "liberal" Mexican, who disguised them as peons and so conducted them through the mob. At present the spirit of hostility to the work of the church is considerably modified.

We made the trip to the Pantheon on burros. I

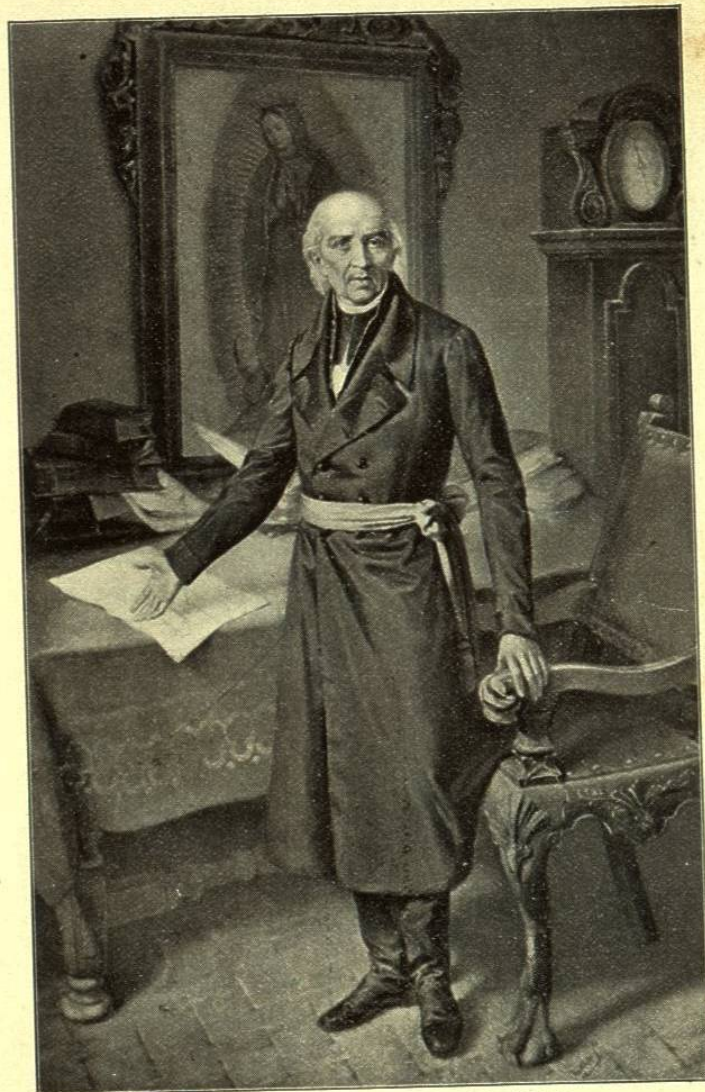
found burro-riding much more comfortable than the hard mule-riding of which I had had former experience in California. I had no saddle—merely a pack—but the motion was as delightful as that of a rocking-chair. When I came, afterward, to know and to love the Mexican burros, I came to believe in the transmigration of souls, for it seemed to me that the army of saints and martyrs must have gone into the bodies of those patient, kindly, little burden-bearers. Whenever I saw them climbing the cliffs so laden that only their deer-like legs were visible, when I heard the cheery ring of their pretty hoofs upon the stony street, I sent them a blessing from my heart. Surely there is nothing in animal nature, and there is little in human nature, that can excel in faithfulness this patient friend of man.

The Pantheon has a big square wall surrounding a large court. In these walls are the vaults for the reception of the dead, the whole somewhat resembling tiers of postoffice boxes. For the sum of \$25 a box may be occupied for five years. At the end of this time the lease may be renewed or a perpetual lease may be obtained. As, however, the perpetual lease costs \$125—a fortune even to the well-to-do Mexican—most of the bones are cast out in a few years to make room for others. By the peculiar action of the dry air, the bodies in the vaults become mummified, and if we descend to the

underground corridors we shall see long rows of these mummies standing upright, the men on one side of the passage, the women on the other. At the end of the corridor, looking like rubber dolls, are the blackened bodies of the children. We were told the story of a woman who went down into the crypt and was unexpectedly confronted by the body of her husband. Naturally the shock threw her into convulsions. The corridor is about five hundred feet long, and it is two-thirds full of bones which have been taken from the vaults above.

I understand that since we were in Guanajuato, these mummies have, by a decree of the church, been clothed in white linen Mother Hubbard wrappers. This must add to the horrors of the grisly sight, and it seems a wrong to the helpless dead to preserve their bodies in so ghastly a manner. Better is it, a thousand times, to return to the bosom of dear mother earth, and through her marvelous processes of resurrection spring up again in the blooming flowers and the waving boughs.

At the prison in Guánajuato, Hidalgo, the parish priest, struck the first effective blow for Mexican independence. Hidalgo was more than a parish priest—he was philosopher, scientist, and political economist. In his desire to increase the resources of his native land, he planted a vineyard, raised silk-worms, and established a porcelain factory. The



D. MIGUEL HIDALGO Y CORTILLA—page 71.

Spanish government, jealous of the development of Mexican products, destroyed his vineyard and burned his factory. Hidalgo revolted, and with an Indian army marched upon Guanajuato. The first attack was made from the mountain overlooking the prison, but the stones and paltry firearms of the Indians proving of little avail against the thick walls of the fortress, one of the insurgents volunteered to carry, after the manner of his people, a flag-stone upon his back, and under the protection of his burden, fire the fortress doors. The plan succeeded, the humble hero burned the doors, and Hidalgo's band entered and slew the Spaniards, whose blood still stains the wall and stairway. A year later Hidalgo and his three generals—Allende, Aldama, and Jiminez—were captured, and executed at Chihuahua, and their heads were brought to Guanajuato and hung upon the four corners of the prison. Ten years after Mexico succeeded in throwing off the Spanish yoke. Then the Mexicans carried the heads of their heroes to the Capital, and with loving rites laid them under the Altar of the Kings in the great Cathedral. Hidalgo, the Romish priest, the Mexican, has the New England type of face—the same type we see in the signers of our own constitution. It is the face of both a dreamer and a doer, an enthusiast as well as a man of judgment.

Unlike Zacatecas, Guanajuato has a plentiful

water supply, and the town is fresh and blooming. The water is taken from a reservoir—a marvelous piece of engineering—in the mountains above the city. Up the cañon, down which flows the stream from the reservoir, are the homes of the higher classes. Many of the houses are built over the water, and, with their bowring vines, they are enchanting. Through the open doorways we could catch glimpses of flower-decked courts and noble stairways with balustrades of marble or bronze. The churches of Guanajuato are, with the exception of the Cathedral, uninteresting, although in one of them we saw an exquisite copy of Correggio's Holy Night.

The crowd that passes the central plaza in Guanajuato is a motley one, but the American and English elements are almost entirely wanting. This is truly the land of "Grandfather's Hat," for one generation after another succeeds to the treasured headgear. In its holy crown the wearer carries all the germs collected through long ages, besides some other things—a bottle of pulque, some sandals or a cold lunch. If he is fortunate enough to possess two or more sombreros he piles one on top of the other, and travels around like an animated Chinese pagoda.

All day long in the hot sunshine the endless procession marches by, the men, in spite of the fervent



CORNER OF THE PLAZA, GUANAJUATO.

heat, hugging themselves in their gay serapes, and the women, who come to fill their water jars at the fountain, twisting their rebosas around their heads. At intervals a Mexican dandy goes by, wearing a gayly embroidered felt sombrero, his bulky shoulders and broad hips sharply defined by his short, tight-fitting jacket, and his revolver-decked sash, oddly topping legs of superhuman tenacity. Priests, with worn dark faces, marked with the blue line of

the shaven beard, mutter their prayers to the summer sky, the lottery venders cry their wares in high, shrill voices, beggars wrapped in rags demand alms of the passer-by; and every one—beggar, peon, priest, and dandy—lifts his peaked hat reverently as he passes the door of the holy Cathedral.

CHAPTER VII.

Querétaro, as all the world knows, is the opal town. When, upon our arrival, we descended from the train, we were immediately surrounded by the blanketed venders of the precious stones, none of whom seemed to see the humorous aspect of selling opals in pitch darkness—it was ten o'clock at night—but answered our scoffs with a courteous gravity that was a rebuke to us. Before we could find our baggage all the street cars and carriages had disappeared, and we were obliged to walk to the hotel, a distance of more than a mile. Not a single light was visible as we peered down the lonely road, but we hunted up an uncommunicative peon to carry our handbags, and with stout hearts started on our solitary way. It soon proved, however, to be by no means solitary, for a ragged escort sprung up, seemingly from the dust of the road, and attended us, begging, protesting, jabbering. When the attentions of our staff became too oppressive, policemen with lighted lanterns miraculously appeared upon the scene, and, one going before and one following, lighted us for a short distance on our way.

These sudden appearances and disappearances half frightened, half encouraged us. If they conveyed to us a hint of the danger of our night walk, they also assured us that we were carefully looked after.

It seemed to me that we waded through deep sand and stumbled over sharp rocks for half the night; but we came, at last, to a dim plaza, lighted by flaring lamps. Our guide suddenly turned down a dark, narrow street, and, although visions of midnight robbers and assassins danced before our suspicious eyes, we stumbled after him. We entered a low doorway, crossed an unlighted court, groped our way up a perfectly dark stairway, and at last came to a blank, black space, from whose depths a gruff voice cried in Spanish, "No rooms." I uttered an exclamation of horror, but Ahasuerus assured me that there was another hotel, and we plunged down again into the street. We crossed the dimly lighted plaza, entered another hole in the wall, and feeling our way with our feet we climbed upward into a great, cold, brick-floored hall, through whose many windows gleamed a faint but blessed starlight. Our guide knocked at a door, and after a great deal of discussion, not entirely amicable, among the inmates of the room, a half-dressed man appeared bearing in his arms a pile of bed linen and towels. He led us into a cheerless room containing three beds, and making

up all of them, so that we could have a bed and a half apiece, he placed a forlorn candle on the rusty iron stand, and left us to our slumbers. We piled the furniture against the door, which had no lock, hid our valuables, and in a few minutes forgot our fears in sleep.

We were wakened early in the morning by hideous cries, and looking out we saw that the plaza market, with its vociferous market women, its pottery venders, and opal merchants, was beneath our windows. One of the market women was serving a novel breakfast dish that seemed to fill a long-felt want. It was as thick as molasses, and as black as ink, but from its odor I think it was a beef stew. The eager peons gathered around the vender and, squatting upon the ground, bought and greedily partook of the brew, sopping in it the sour bread which they took from the high crowns of their dirty sombreros. The odor of garlic came in at the windows, and we, ourselves, did not care for any breakfast.

Querétaro will be remembered as the place where Maximilian made his last stand against the Mexican army. There is no tragedy in history more pitiful than that of Maximilian. Deserted by the wily Napoleon, frowned down by the United States, rejected by the Mexicans whose sovereign he wished to be, he suffered his last humiliation when Lopez,

a Spaniard and an officer in his own army, opened the city gates to the enemy, and delivered the emperor into the hands of the Mexicans. It was a sorry end for a prince of the house of Hapsburg, a Count of Savoy, a bright and shining light in the court circles of Europe, to die by the edict of a tat-



HILL OF THE BELLS.

terdemalion nation. In vain the United States protested, in vain the heroic Princess Salm-Salm, riding alone one hundred and fifty miles through desert sands, pleaded, upon her knees, for Maximilian's life; Juarez remained firm, and Maximilian was shot. By the side of the blonde Austrian prince, the

dark-browed Mexican, Miramon, and the swarthy Indian Mejia, died bravely for the Church and the government they believed to be of God. Had Maximilian lived, he would have been the present heir to the throne of Austria, and he might have spent a long and useful life, with Carlotta, the unfortunate wife whom his untimely death consigned to a mad-house. As I stood on the stony "Hill of the Bells," where Maximilian looked his last upon the world, I was not ashamed of the tears that filled my eyes for a life so wantonly thrown away.

Querétaro is full of Maximilian. The palace in which he and Carlotta lived during the siege of the town is now a museum. There we registered our names in a book upon the table where the emperor's death warrant was signed, with ink from the inkstand used in signing it. We saw the stools upon which Miramon and Mejia sat during the trial—Maximilian was ill and could not be present—the coffin in which the emperor's body was brought back to the palace, and many other relics. During the siege the plaza was Maximilian's favorite resort. From it he watched the contest, and the Mexicans, learning the fact, trained their guns upon the spot. A shattered fountain is shown as the memento of this hostile fire.

Besides its melancholy association with Maximilian's last hours, Querétaro is also famous for its opal

mines, its cotton factory, and its aqueduct. I do not know just where the opal mines are; indeed I could not hear of any one who had ever seen an opal mine, or who knew just how, or where, the stones were obtained. It is sufficient for the non-elect to know that there are opal mines somewhere near Querétaro, and that, for a consideration, more or less satisfactory to the purchaser, the gems can be bought by the traveler. Buying Mexican opals is, however, like adopting a baby; it may turn out well and it may not. The only safeguard for an intending purchaser of the precious stones is to engage as traveling companion an expert lapidary.

The Hercules cotton factory in the suburbs of Querétaro is the largest in Mexico. All around the factory, in a climate wonderfully adapted to the raising of cotton, lie waste lands; yet more than half of the cotton used in the manufacture of the fabrics comes from the United States. The aqueduct, whose graceful outlines can be seen long after passing the town, was presented to Querétaro by a public-spirited citizen. It brings water from the mountains several miles away and distributes it to all the public fountains and reservoirs. It is unfortunate that the generous gift is so little appreciated by the people and the city government; certainly Querétaro's inhabitants are dirty and its streets are by no means clean.

CHAPTER VIII.

One of the interesting sights between Querétaro and the Capital is the great drainage canal of Nochistongo. It is called the drainage canal that does not drain, but it has in its time drained the Mexicans of both life and money. It was begun two hundred years ago. The first few years of the enterprise the lives of 75,000 Indians were sacrificed; but in spite of this price paid in blood and brawn, within twenty years of the beginning of the canal, the City of Mexico was overflowed to the depth of three feet, and the streets were passable only in boats. This flood lasted five years, and the Spanish king ordered the city to be removed to the higher ground near Chapultepec, but the order was never carried out. At the present day the canal, one of the greatest engineering works in the world, an enterprise which was begun by the celebration of masses, and with the blessing of the Church, is one of the magnificent ruins of Mexico.

It was not yet daylight when we crossed the double rim of the valley of Mexico, and saw before