

really the heirs of all the ages. There may be hidden codicils which, if ever discovered, will prove to us that we have not yet inherited all the wisdom of the centuries.

We ate our supper in the little dining-room looking out into the darkening court. The maidens of the household came, with their gracefully poised water jars, to the fountain, and a troop of horses plunged through the arched entrance and curveted across the court to get their evening drink. One by one the swinging lamps blazed out along the garlanded porch; the children's evening hymn floated up from the little shrine at the end of the corridor, and from the servants' quarters across the court arose the sweet strains of the Ave Maria. We sat among the blossoms until the moon rode high in the heavens and the stars stooped almost to the touch of our fingers. Then we went into the thick-walled, barred-windowed cells which served as sleeping rooms, and throwing ourselves upon the hard pallets, slept until morning. I was awakened by a gentle neigh, and opening my eyes I saw an inquiring pony and a velvet-nosed donkey gazing timidly and curiously through the grating upon my slumbers. I arose, caressed my gentle visitors, and went blithely out into an ungrateful world, which has blotted out the memory and trodden down the handiwork of the ancient builders.

CHAPTER XXI.

The impressions of a traveler are not always reliable, but for those journeying as we journeyed, often the only English-speaking people on the train, staying at Mexican hotels, riding on Mexican street cars, and in all ways affiliating with the native population, there are opportunities for hearing both sides of vexed questions that escape the hasty tourist or one who journeys in his private car. Then, too, as I was generally the only woman in sight, I personally received a great deal of courteous and kindly information from members of the superior sex, who, whatever their nationality, were always willing to enlighten my ignorance according to the most improved kindergarten methods. We also talked much with railroad men—conductors, ticket agents and engineers—who, in the dearth of responsible native workmen and officials, are sent from the United States to Mexico. These men are generally wan-eyed and baldheaded, having lost their hair in the fever, and most of them are homesick

and dissatisfied. Above all things they fear the fever, and they warned us against everything; against the water, against the night air, and particularly against the fruit. Fever, however, is not the worst thing to be feared in Mexico, for we encountered both malignant diphtheria and smallpox. Indeed, judging from the scarred and seamed faces seen on all sides, smallpox is the universal heritage, and vaccination unknown in the republic.

Begging is another form of virulent disease that afflicts Mexico, but we were told that Americans are largely responsible for this malady. When an excursion party is expected, the thrifty Mexican mothers clothe their children in rags and send them to the train. The tender-hearted Americans, moved by the pitiful sight, shower pennies upon the poor innocents, and the Mexican families live for weeks in comfort upon the money thus gained. This spread of pauperism by indiscriminate alms-giving is a theme for meditation, for if it be really true that we Americans are offenders in this respect, we may be sure that, sooner or later, we shall be compelled to pay the penalty of our thoughtlessness.

During our return trip from Oaxaca I had a chance to study the methods of a "general promoter of industries" and other schemes, who spoke as one having authority, and who was particularly eulogistic of the Mexicans. As he had the appearance

of not having bathed for several years I thought that some parts of La Republica were specially adapted to his needs. He did not, however, agree with us in our high estimate of the southern Indian. "I tell you," he said, "one of them northern Indians at Chihuahua is wuth a dozen of them southern fellows. Jest give 'em plenty of pulque, and corn-meal, and a cigar or so, and they'll work like a mule; they'll work till they drop." From the point of view of the "general promoter," the northern Indian is certainly the better man.

The consensus of opinion seems to be that the Mexicans, whether of the north or of the south, have little mechanical ingenuity, and that they cannot be trusted to care for machinery. The Spanish lack of caution which ruined the engines of Cervera's fleet is also characteristic of the half-breed Mexican. A strike on one of the railways last winter, which compelled the road to employ Mexican engineers, resulted in the burning out of most of the engines, and the general demoralization of the rolling stock. This lack of trustworthiness is apparent in all grades of railway service. One of the first things we noticed upon our arrival in Mexico was the fact that the switchman always stood with one foot on the switch until the train had passed. We learned afterward that, as the Mexican cannot be trusted to set a switch and lock it, he is com-

pelled by law to stand with his foot upon the bar; for only the certainty that in case of an accident he will be the first one killed, has the power to make a native switchman responsible.

Nor is this lack of reliability confined to the lower classes, for, I am sorry to say, the American, English and German mine-owners and capitalists whom we met, made the same complaint of Mexican business men. So far as their integrity is concerned we personally, with the exception of our experience with the Vera Cruzans, who, like the people of most seaport towns, are a shifting and a shifty population—found no one disposed to deal dishonestly with us; indeed we suffered less imposition than we should be liable to meet on a similar trip in our own country. It is evident, however, that the average Mexican cannot keep an appointment—a weakness imputed to the Spanish race everywhere. Some American capitalists whom we met in Aguas Calientes told us that they had been waiting in town since Monday (it was then Thursday) for a Mexican mine-owner with whom they had a business appointment.

The return journey from Puebla to the City of Mexico carries us past Cholulu, thence onward near the foot of the volcanoes, and by a tramway from the station of Santa Ana, to the ancient republic of Tlaxcala, whose inhabitants Cortés secured as allies

in his conflict with the Aztecs. Of these Tlaxcalans, then numbering over 300,000 souls, whose valor in battle so impressed Cortés that he hastened to make friends with them, only about 4,000 remain. The old town, which was built in an amphitheater, in the foothills, is one of the notable places in Mexico. In the ancient church of San Francisco, built in 1521, is still preserved the oldest pulpit in America, and in the Casa Municipale is the original grant of arms given to the Tlaxcalans by Charles V., the standard given to the Tlaxcalan chiefs by Cortés, and the robes in which the chiefs were baptized.

At San Martin we begin to climb the mountains, and at Naucamilca we reach the highest point, 9,000 feet above the sea. These high regions are one vast field of waving grain, and white-walled haciendas dot the landscape. At the lower elevation of 6,000 feet we find ourselves once more among the green spikes of the maguey, and see and smell on all sides the yeasty liquor. Nearing the Capital we pass the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, and whirl along the low banks of Lake Texcoco. At Chapingo is one of the finest haciendas in Mexico, the property of the heirs of President Gonzales, the one-armed patriot and boodler who preceded Diaz. Beyond Chapingo we enter a long avenue of mighty trees, through whose drooping

branches the city lights begin to glimmer. The glimmer livens to a glow, and at last in a dazzle of electric lamps we enter the St. Lazare station. Once more we feel ourselves a part of the civilization of the nineteenth century, and as we sink back on the comfortable cushions of the carriage we are



THE BURDEN BEARERS.

glad to forget for a time Cortés, the Aztecs, Quetzalcoatl, and all the other dead and gone gods and heroes. We eat our well-cooked dinner in a modern French restaurant, and we wipe our mouths, and we

say "ah-ha," for we feel in every fiber of our beings that we are the children of steam and electricity, daily newspapers, and modern cooking and service.

CHAPTER XXII.

We left the Capital one bright morning in March by the daybreak train on the Mexican National R. R. and journeyed eastward one hundred and twenty-five miles, as far as the station of San Marcos. Here we left the train and sat for five wretched hours in a miserable little station house, while the deaf, the halt, the blind, the horribly disfigured, strolling peddlers and curiosity seekers came to gaze upon the *Americanos*. At the sight of the misery around me it really seemed that I owed heaven and humanity some apology for physical and mental vigor, and for all my worldly comforts. Nevertheless these pious reflections did not prevent a feeling of sickness when in the midst of the unappetizing surroundings I tried to swallow my lunch. Ahasuerus went out and bought a bottle of Spanish wine to complete the meal. The memory of that acid drink still sets my teeth on edge and chills the blood in my veins, but the starving

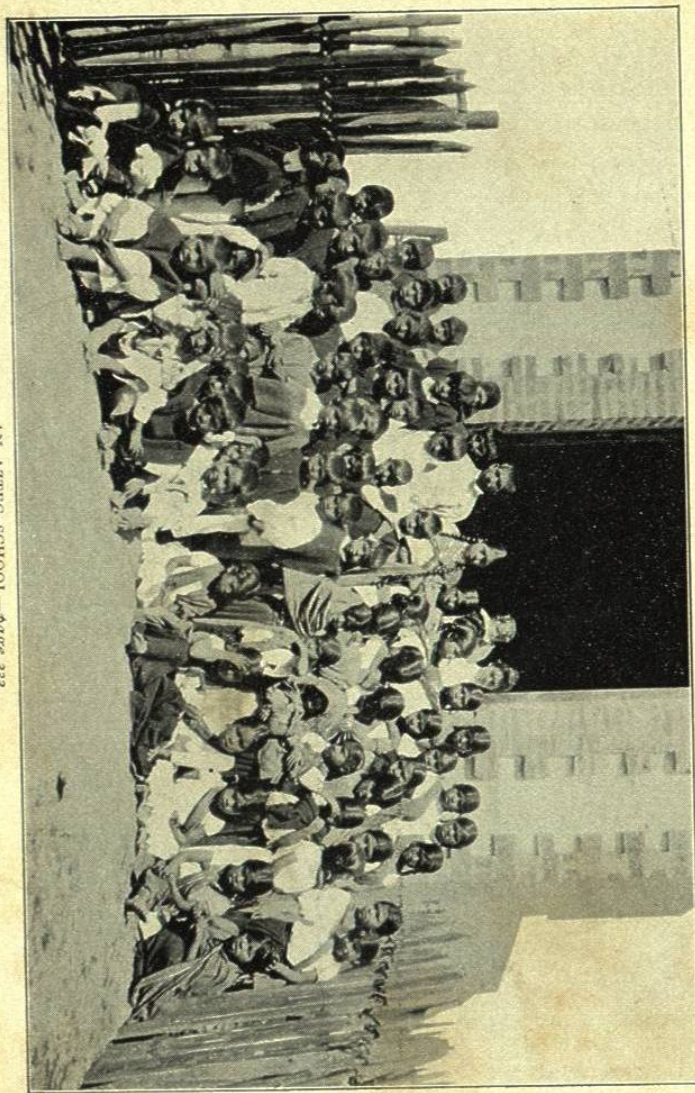
creatures to whom we gave it, with the remains of the lunch, swallowed it with a heart-breaking avidity. It is difficult for an American accustomed to the abundance of his own land to realize that in our neighboring republic many people annually die of starvation.

The train on the branch road which leads to the foot of the mountains started about the middle of the day. We found the first-class cars had cushioned seats along each side and in dimensions and comfort much resembled a small American omnibus. We were fortunate enough to have two very interesting traveling companions, one a sprightly young Mexican in the early twenties, the other a magnificently handsome Spaniard of about forty-five. The Mexican wore the skin-tight jacket and trousers of the gay young native who fondly imagines he is wearing "American clothes." The Spaniard was attired in a suit of Mexican cut, made of silver-gray broadcloth and ornamented with an infinity of silver buttons, chains and loops. Upon his head was a high sombrero of gray fur-felt, bearing upon the front a monogram in silver, and upon his feet were gaiters of gray ooze leather. The costume was admirably calculated to set off his dark beauty, and I have never seen, outside of a frame, a more glorious picture than this Spaniard. Like many very handsome men, he seemed entirely un-

conscious of his charms, but gave his mind to the admiring and reflective contemplation of some specimens of ore which he drew from a silver-decked pouch at his side.

We soon discovered that both men were mine owners, who naturally believed that they had a fortune in their mines. They were disposed to be very friendly, and we were soon included in their stately and courteous conversation. As our knowledge of the Spanish tongue did not extend beyond the words and phrases necessary for our daily travel and needs, we were somewhat bewildered at the jargon of "ores," "assays," and other mining terms. We endeavored, however, to look as intelligent as possible, smiled, beamed with our best American beam, and murmured intermittently "Si, Señor," and I'm sure I hope we said it in the right place.

We reached our destination—a little Indian village—after dark. Tired and hungry, we welcomed the feebly burning lights of the tiny hamlet, and, forgetting for the moment that we were in Mexico, Ahasuerus demanded of the conductor the way to the nearest hotel. It was an unfortunate slip of the tongue, and when the conductor, who for a wonder understood him, pointed to a miserable fonda not far from the station, the naked truth was too bitter for us. I fancied that I saw a bit of mockery in the smile with which the Spaniard said, "The Señora



AN AZTEC SCHOOL—page 232.

likes not the hotel?—so?”—a fancy which nerved me to walk up to the wretched place with an air of placidity, although at each step my heart sank lower and lower. The inn, which was of two stories, was a crazy building leaning to the wind in a perilous manner. The lower floor was of dirt and the upper one of loose boards. Along the upper balcony were strung lines of bloody sheepskins, sickening alike to the eyes and to the nostrils. An Indian woman, the mistress of the house, and too evidently the mistress of its Spanish master, conducted us up the shaking stairway to a room containing two beds; one for Ahasuerus and myself, the other for our traveling companion, the young Mexican. “Well,” said that worm Ahasuerus, turning upon me as soon as we were left alone, “you are fond of romantic adventures and picturesque scrapes. How do you like this?”

He soon strolled off, grumbling, and left me with my handkerchief to my nose and despair in my heart, ensconced in one corner of the porch behind the gory sheepskins. From my nook I overheard a discussion between the Indian landlady and our fellow-travelers. “But,” argued the young Mexican, “the señora does not like it; it is not the custom of her country.” The woman, who spoke an Indian dialect unintelligible to me, was evidently impervious to the señora’s likes and dislikes, for

neither man seemed to affect her decision. I soon withdrew, and I knew the result of the discussion only from what followed. When we went to bed we left the candle burning and the door open for our roommate, but when we woke in the morning we found that he had not been in. On my way to breakfast, as I passed a large room, I recognized among the rugs and blankets strewn over the floor the Mexican's portmanteau, and I realized the fact that rather than annoy us he had slept with the rougher guests of the fonda upon the dirty floor.

When the pangs of hunger overcame us we went, one at a time, lest we should carry down the crazy stairway, to look for dinner. We entered a large room with a dirt floor, which was filled with the smoke of braziers. At one end of the room was a long table, covered with a coffee-stained cloth, at which sat seven or eight evil-faced, bandit-looking men, who, in spite of their unprepossessing appearance, rose courteously upon our entrance to salute us. Across the other end of the room was a stone table in which were inserted the barred braziers upon which the dinner was cooking. The coals and cinders continually dropped between the bars of the braziers upon the dirt floor, to the peril of a troop of ragged, unkempt children, the offspring of the Indian woman and her Spanish master, who stood lowering in the doorway, as ugly a specimen

of brutal humanity as I ever looked upon. A stone bench upon which the woman—a tiny creature—climbed to reach the steaming kettles, was in front of the range. The heavy vessels were unbearable weights in the woman's feeble hands, and she stumbled awkwardly up and down the bench, to the disgust of her lord, who continually cursed her. Around the table were stone benches upon which we, with the other guests, seated ourselves. Some hungry kittens, two half-starved dogs and a brood of piping chickens disputed with us the possession of this seat.

I have eaten worse meals, even in the United States, than this dinner in the Mexican fonda. There was no drinking water, but, as usual in such inns, a large bottle of pulque was placed before each cover. The soup course was really delicious, the omelet good and the frijoles appetizing, so that we were enabled to make a bountiful meal. It is true that the time between courses was rather long, but the guests showed the most exemplary patience, and evinced their friendly interest by offering advice or suggestions to the tiny cook, and they seemed to like the food no less that they had a hand in its preparation.

Our traveling companions, who had in the meantime joined us, in deference to our American prejudices removed their hats; but the other men sat,

silent and haughty, under the shadow of their great sombreros. The light from a smoky lantern upon the wall fell upon the heads and the gloomy shadowed faces of the diners, and I was reminded of a gypsy scene in an opera. The only thing lacking to the theatrical effect of the whole was the orchestral accompaniment. In spite of the picturesqueness of the scene, however, I must confess that I could not repress a thrill of fear at noticing that Ahasuerus was the only unarmed man in the company. The other guests carried heavy pistols swinging from their cartridge belts, and the ring of their revolvers upon the stone benches formed a martial accompaniment to the jingle of spurs that gave me an uncomfortable impression of being among the bandits; an impression which the fierce faces of the Mexican caballeros in no way belied. I lay down that night, for the only time in Mexico, with a feeling of uneasiness; but the sole disturbers of our peace were the chickens, pigs, donkeys and horses beneath us, whose high-keyed chorus ascended through the wide cracks of the rough floor.

Our awakening was cheered by the appearance of our friend and expectant host, who reported the coming of a horse for Ahasuerus, and a band of Indian chairmen to carry me over the mountains. They had, he assured us, started early in the night

and would soon arrive; so we hastily dispatched our rolls and coffee, and sat us patiently down to await the burden-bearers. One by one the swarthy guests of the fonda departed; our traveling com-



ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS.

panions, with many "addios" and graceful salutations, jingled off to their mines, and still the Indians did not come. It was nearly noon when they finally appeared with the chariot which was to transport me to higher regions. This chariot was a high-backed wooden chair with a broad foot rest,

and a white cotton canopy overhead which could be drawn over the face or thrown back.

I seated myself in the chair, the Indian porter knelt, placed one of the two bands around his forehead, and the other around his shoulders, rose slowly like a camel and trotted off with me. The motion was delightful—much like the easy canter of a pony—and many a sly nap I took under my white canopy as the day wore on. There were four chairmen who relieved one another at stated intervals. They were all strong, robust Indians accustomed to burdens of at least two hundred and fifty pounds, so that my conscience did not too much reprove me, although I must confess that I had all the time the feeling that I was making of a human soul a beast of burden. The beasts of burden, however, bore their load cheerfully; for the first one carried me, in spite of my protests, straight up the mountain five miles without stopping. Besides our Indian retainers we were accompanied by our host's mozo, or private servant, and three gaunt Indian dogs who serenely trod the path of glory, giving triumphant battle to all the other dogs in the various Indian villages through which we passed.

We traveled during the day over three mountain ranges. Up and down the steep declivities, skirting the narrow benches, threading the rocky ravines, and descending green valleys in whose

verdant depths were hidden Indian villages, went the sure-footed mountain horses, and my bearers traveled close upon their heels. We often exchanged greetings with the dignified Aztecs, ploughing in the green fields and upon the rocky slopes, fishing in the tumbling streams, or gathered around the adobe schoolhouses and the tiny cross-crowned churches, and we always received from these humble, native señors a courteous, if a curious, salutation.

The sun was setting as we wound slowly down the mountain trail into the little Indian village nestling at the foot of the third range. The men working in the fields and the women washing at the fountain turned to look at us, while a graceful girl, who was driving a flock of black goats, in her astonishment allowed a little jet-faced kid to escape and to run, crying like a baby, after us. One of the Indian guides seized the little creature and turned its head in the opposite direction, whereupon it fled, wailing, back to its mother. The whole scene was one of pastoral innocence, and with sighs of happy content we pressed onward, down the verdant valley to the spot where the home of our host—the only white man in the village—nestled among the trees beside the tiny mission church and schoolhouse.

We had scarcely removed from our clothing the dust of travel, when we were told that visitors were

waiting to see us. We descended and were greeted by the head man of the village—a courteous and intelligent Indian—and the master of the municipal school. They had come to bid us wel-



DESCENT INTO THE VALLEY.

come to their town, and to offer their services for our entertainment. Although the Aztec was their native tongue they spoke Spanish musically and fluently. The schoolmaster had not at all the physique of the Indian. His face was round, his eyes were sparkling, and he had altogether the air

of a fat, jolly negro. Both men wore the American dress; that is to say they both wore coats and trousers, although hardly of the American cut. Their heads were covered with the straw sombrero so universally worn by the Indians.

The village, which numbers about 1,500 souls, is hidden away in this lost corner of the earth, where the ancestors of the people took refuge from the fury of Cortés. Three centuries later, upon the coming of Maximilian, the tribe burned their villages and hid in the mountain fastnesses, so that they have a perfect right to proclaim themselves an unconquered people whose adherence to the Mexican republic is entirely voluntary. They certainly have all the physical traits of an unconquered race and are the tallest and finest Indians we saw in Mexico. Unlike other tribes, they all own their little farms, which they cultivate, by means of crooked sticks and placid, thick-necked oxen, to the very summit of the mountains. Although courteous and affable to strangers, they are at enmity with all the Indian villages further down the mountain, whose inhabitants profess the Catholic faith—the hated faith of the Spaniard. A handful of the tribe has been gathered into the Protestant mission, but the majority are without religion.

They keep many of their old customs in this far-away corner of the world. The women still spin

with distaffs and weave with curious handlooms. Doubtless their untroubled lives, as well as the mountain air, contribute to their longevity; certainly we saw many very old people. The dress of the men consists of the usual straw sombrero,



AZTEC LOOM—FOUR GENERATIONS.

wide linen trousers, and a linen shirt, reaching half-way to the knees girded around the waist by a bright scarf. The women wear skirts and chemises whose low cut reveals beautiful shoulders generally ornamented with curious bead necklaces, and they have no head covering except the rebosa and their dark tresses. Neither sex wears shoes,

and both men and women possess slender, high-arched feet which are, in spite of the usual coating of dust, of wonderful beauty. A curious custom prevails among the men and boys of wearing one trouser leg rolled almost to the thigh, revealing a slender, shining limb. When questioned as to the reason for this, they could only answer: "It is the fashion"—an answer that proves the mountain Indian to be on the highway to civilization. The houses of the village, which are of mud or adobe, stuccoed, and painted some bright tint, stand in the midst of neat gardens, the streets are well kept, the children clean and pretty, and the people themselves are industrious and contented.