

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was very hot the day we left San Luis Potosi and the unreasonable heat showed no sign of abatement, even after we had passed the stone that marks the location of the Tropic of Cancer and knew positively that we were in the Temperate Zone. Catorce, which lies buried in a deep chasm a short distance from the railroad, is one of the most picturesque towns in Mexico, and certainly merits a visit. But when we saw the beds of dust through which we must travel on foot or on horseback to reach that city of mines and abysses, no thrill of enthusiasm stirred our investigating souls, and we retired beneath the curtains of the sleeper, with premonitions of a martyr's fate. It was then with delight that, when we were dragged from our beds in the dead of night, we found the last trace of the torrid zone had disappeared; a north wind was blowing, and a cold rain, which fell like a benediction on our inflamed and sun-dried faces, was dropping steadily.

To reach the battlefield of Buena Vista one must

leave the train at Saltillo, a town about fifty miles from Monterey. The battlefield is six miles from the town, and as Saltillo is as yet without street cars it is necessary to hire a carriage to make the trip. The battle of Buena Vista—or Angostura, as the Mexicans call it—was fought in a deep valley rimmed with mountains. In the midst of the valley rises a high plateau which falls away on both sides into sharp ravines. Upon this plateau General Taylor with an army of 5,000 men took his stand against 12,000 Mexicans, commanded by General Santa Anna. In the hard-fought battle which followed the Americans were victorious, although at a terrible cost of life. Among the killed were Colonel John Hardin and a son of Henry Clay. The Mississippi Rifles, commanded by Colonel Jefferson Davis, did valiant service in this battle. One of Whittier's early poems, "The Angels of Buena Vista," pays a most touching tribute to the Mexican women who ministered to our wounded after the battle.

The great State of Coahuila, of which Saltillo is the capital, once included all of Texas. Although the United States has taken most of her territory, our country has as yet little influenced the capital city, which is thoroughly Mexican in its sentiments and customs. The chief business of the town is the manufacture of the Saltillo serapes, which are

said to be the best made in the republic. The leisure hours of the citizens seem to be spent shrugging themselves in the folds of these serapes in the vain effort to warm their frozen bodies by the glow



BISHOP'S PALACE, MONTEREY.

of the blankets' bright colors. In spite of our impressions, however, the climate is said to be delightful in pleasant weather.

When we reached Monterey at four o'clock in the morning, it was cold and rainy, and we unpacked

the heavy wraps we had carried so long through the tropics. There was no conveyance at the station but an open street car with water-logged benches. So we were compelled to put ourselves to soak behind its dripping curtains during the long journey to the hotel, where we completed the hydropathic treatment by sleeping some hours between wet sheets. We arose betimes, and, voiceless and disgusted, after a mere pretense of breakfast, we went out to see the town.

Monterey can hardly be called a Mexican city. It has a large and constantly increasing American population, and American ways of doing business. Here, for the first time in Mexico, we saw drawn-work and opals take on American prices, and we found also American prices at the hotel—accompanied by the very poorest kind of Mexican food and service. It will not be long, however, before Monterey, like Chihuahua, will lose the last vestige of its Mexican picturesqueness, and become an ordinary American city. Nevertheless, as its beauty depends in no small measure upon its natural situation, Monterey can never become wholly uninteresting. The great Saddle Mountain which overtops the busy streets is the only saddle mountain I ever saw which did not have to be explained to me; the saddle is actually visible to the naked

and uninstructed eye—a fact which of itself should make Monterey notable.

To find any particular place in Monterey just take the Belt Line of mule-cars. Every other line in the city branches off from this, and if you miss connections the first time, you can swing around the circle again. We took three swings before we finally found the trail to the Bishop's Palace, although most of the time the palace was in full view. This palace, which was built by one of Monterey's bishop's for a country home, was besieged and taken by our army during the Mexican war, and its capture gave the city into the hands of the Americans. After the fall of the citadel, General Worth, commanding the United States forces, entered the town, but finding its streets swept by the fire of the Mexican artillery, his troops broke through the walls of the houses, in this manner making their way from block to block, while the sharpshooters from the roofs poured a ceaseless shower of bullets upon the heads of the city's brave defenders. Although I am aware that the officers and soldiers of the United States' army could, under the circumstances, not do otherwise, still, I am never less proud of them than when I read the annals of the Mexican War.

At present a garrison of Mexicans is encamped in the desolated halls of the palace, and the once beau-

tiful gardens are turned to waste land; but at the foot of the hill, where lies Monterey, rimmed round with majestic hills and mountains, are pleasant homes in sunny orchards and the air that rises to us is filled with the odor of orange blossoms. Surely war never turned into desolation a more beautiful spot.

A little river which has for its source the Oja Agua, runs through Monterey. It is crossed by a famous old bridge, La Purisima, the scene of one of the desperate stands made by the Mexicans against our troops. The Topo Chico Hot Springs, which can be reached by horse cars, are about four miles from the city. The drive to the springs through fields of waving grain—which in April are ripe for the harvest—is charming. The springs are said to be sovereign for rheumatism and kindred diseases. Whether or not they are curative, they certainly are cleansing and delightful. The water, which has a temperature of one hundred and six degrees, is soft as velvet and of a most beautiful blue color; the tubs are clean and although the great bath halls are cold and cheerless in winter, they must be refreshingly cool in summer. Near the bathhouse are two fairly comfortable hotels. One of them—built of black marble—makes some effort, I believe, to furnish modern accommodations.

The windows of our room at the hotel looked out upon the little Hidalgo Park, in the center of which is a monument bearing a figure of the great patriot in whose honor it was named. The little plaza is



HIDALGO PARK, MONTEREY.

clean, and bright with flowers, a living contrast to the dead pile of awkward modern buildings, not far distant, which Monterey calls her Cathedral. Hidalgo among the flowers seems a type of life ever upspringing in comparison to the dead pile of stones, and his uplifted hand seems to challenge the

verdict of that outlived church which excommunicated him and agreed to his death. As we all know, however, the conscience of the Mexican church has been its own challenger, and the remains of this, one of the greatest, if one of the most rebellious, of her sons, rests in her holiest place. The great plaza or Alameda at the other end of Monterey is a curious combination of American thrift and the Mexican love for the picturesque. The plazas, as well as many of the streets and public buildings, were, at the time of our visit to Monterey, gay with bunting and floral decorations, as it was the anniversary of the retaking of Puebla from the French by President Diaz.

CHAPTER XXIX.

We left Monterey one evening when the city was celebrating with the blare of trumpets and the flare of fireworks, her martial anniversary, and turned our faces homeward. All the next day we rolled through gorgeous gardens of orange, gold and scarlet cactus, and through fields of wavy mesquite, but we would have given all that tropic wealth of color and bloom for the blossom of our own dandelion. We had had smiles and tears together, but for the moment we were only too glad to say good-bye to old Mexico, and greet again our own land; that land we had left in peace, and which was now filled with the sound of marching troops and the trappings of war. Like loyal Americans everywhere, we were anxious to be at home and bear our part in the great drama.

It is much easier—and cheaper—to get in to Mexico than it is to get out of it. The little money that I had left in my purse was suddenly divided by two, and as an addition to my pecuniary distress the

Custom House officers, who on this side have a vigilant eye for smugglers, inquired the first thing if I had any drawn-work. Now why did they ask me that? Other women on the train brought through all sorts of contraband goods without any troublesome questions. Was it because I alone looked guilty? I am sure I did not feel so, for I had known of hundreds of dollars' worth of drawn-work passing the border without challenge, and consequently I never thought of paying duty for my modest store. But the ways of the Custom House are past finding out. I have known women to smuggle with the greatest audacity, and without one word of suspicion, while the most pious and conscientious woman I ever knew was once accused of fraud, and with difficulty rescued her sealskin coat—which she had carried abroad with her the year before—from the clutches of the customs officers. I suppose, however, that the officials must collect tariff from somebody, and perhaps they were as lenient with me as the law allows; at all events they did not make me pay any duty on my dear old Aztec gods, so I will forgive them.

In spite of the Custom House we were radiantly happy when we had crossed the border and were really once more in the United States. We made our obeisances to the first derby hat we met, and the sight of the good American clothes, that looked

as if they would stay on, thrilled us with joy. To be sure our ardor was a little dampened by the appearance of a particularly grumpy Pullman-car conductor, and when we reflected that we had never seen a discourteous act or heard a discourteous word from any railway or street-car employe in Mexico, our patriotic pride was a little staggered; but fortunately we remembered, just in time to save our feelings, that the American, in spite of his un-Chesterfieldian ways, doubtless possessed manly qualities unknown to the polite Mexican. He certainly had the ruder, and, let us hope, the stronger, virtues.

And the wooden shanties along the road—how delightfully clean and fresh their unpainted walls looked to us! Who is it that says our wooden cabins are undignified, inartistic? To be sure they are cold in winter and warm in summer, but the fresh air blows through them and the hot sun sizzles out their germs and there is no incrusting filth of generations on their walls. Then how easily they burn up when their day of usefulness is over; and even if they do burn up their inmates, that at least is a clean death and far better than poison by typhus. Yes, I love even the wooden shanties of my own country, and, in spite of mental reservations on the subject of the Mexican war, I am so proud to have been born in the United States, that, if I could fight

for the dear old land with baking powder instead of gunpowder, I would be one of her most valiant defenders.

THE END.

