

form was precisely like that of a funnel, with its greater diameter resting on the surface, while at the same time there was a flue or vent through which the volcanic fire exhausted itself.

As the diligencia entered on the great causeway which separates lake Chalco from Xochicalo, a passenger, familiar with the country and its history, informed me that this bridge was not only made by the Aztecs, but was the same identical track which the Cortes and his followers passed on the 8th November, 1519, the day on which they first set foot in the city of Mexico.

As I advanced over the diversified and beautiful picturesque environs of the Capital, I could behold before me a large and compact city, which had for its first and most striking features, white walls and lofty steeples; and, I dare say, for the number, the magnitude and height, the religious buildings of the present day are not unlike what they were in the day when the conqueror first beheld them, the towering temples of the gods of Anahuac. Thus, on the evening of the 26th of November, unarmed by ladrones, or any other casualty, in a fatigued condition, and covered with dust, I arrived in the city of Mexico—too late, however, to behold any of the beauties of the place I had entered.

My first care, after the custom-house officers had examined my baggage—for in Mexico there are revenue officers in every town in the interior—was to take up my lodgings in the *Gran Sociedad*, a French Hotel in Holy Ghost street.

CHAPTER V.

The overthrow of Cortes. City of Mexico. Receding of the lake. View of Holy Ghost street. A large church. A Mexican lady. General Thompson's residence. An elegant part of the town. The streets of Mexico. Earthquakes. Style of Architecture. The city of Mexico. The proportion of a Spanish house. The population of the city of Mexico. Gen. Thompson's hospitality. Baron La Rook. The Plaza. The Palace. The Cathedral. Remarkable Carriages. Basalt Stone. Interior of the Cathedral. Mister Officer an American Artist. Virgin of Remedios. Tomb of Iturbide. Rarified air. The Convent of San Francisco. The Government Palace, Mint, &c. A general officer at the reception door. Capt. Cortes, of the Grenadiers. National Monument. Iturbide's Palace. Santa Anna Theatre. Numerous beggars. Journeymen Beggars. Feats of strength. Dress of the Lazarinos.

AFTER the overthrow of Cortes, upon that memorable occasion of the *noche triste*, the melancholy night when it is said that he lost more than four hundred of his followers, and all of his artillery, which was overturned from the causeways into the lakes and dykes—and having made his retreat from the city, but to rally and reinforce his army, which being done, he speedily returned, to complete a conquest which had hardly commenced, and having with a force much more numerous and better provided, retraced his steps to Tacaba, he made that place his head-quarters, The future and renowned Conqueror having ascended a high temple of Tacaba, was observed resting his cheek upon his elbow, in a most pensive and melancholy mood, and while thus absorbed in the deep meditations of the moment, during which a tear had trickled down his cheek, an officer who had observed him, ventured in his sympathy to touch the shoulder of his general, and in cheering tones bade his commander to hope for victory and for conquest.

The mind of Cortes at the time, like that of his Master when overlooking Jerusalem, whose standard of the Cross he chiefly delighted to plant in the pathway of his victories, was filled with love and admiration for the city of Mexico, which caused him to exclaim that "it was the most beautiful thing on earth," and in the deep sorrow of his heart he lamented that soon, by his hand, the place that teemed with countless multitudes of inhabitants, must perish by famine and the sword; and that the towers, the temples, and the palaces, that

glittered so resplendantly in the sun, must soon be demolished and buried beneath the floods of the canals and lakes—for they would not give up their idols, and peaceably surrender to the standard of Castile. And thus, like the Son of Jehovah, he would have exclaimed, "Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee as the hen doth her brood, under her wings, but ye would not." To the mind of Cortes, with, as it were, the most beautiful fancy sketch of nature's pencil thrown wide to his view, with a fair city in the midst, it might have at that day seemed to be the most lovely sight on earth; and I have no doubt that the city of Mexico, as it then appeared, was peculiarly adapted to exhibit to the view and fancies of human beings, more loveliness, and charms of art and nature blended, than the boasted appearance of the city as it now is—for the simple reason that in the Aztec city there was variety—while to the contrary, the Spanish cannot be possessed of any.

The four great causeways of the Aztecs, that stretched through the lakes, like so many bridges over the seas, and intersecting the centre of the city; the many high temples, and lofty white towers, the imperial and the nobles' palaces, covering acres of land; the floating gardens; the groves; the canals, filled with light canoes, rapidly passing and repassing; while the grand whole was crowded with minor and inferior buildings; nothing of all which are to be seen now—but upon the demolished ruins and fallen rubbish of departed magnificence, has been erected the modern, although the oldest city on the American continent, by Spanish architects and Spanish conquerors.

The city is of square form, and although not upon an elevation, is yet built upon a level dry plain, which has resulted, first, from the fact, that the old city was used mainly in filling up the canals; and, lastly, that the great lake of Tezcuco has receded between one and two miles from the walls of the city, which cause is attributed to the more rapid evaporation of the water from the lakes, since the plain of Mexico has been totally divested of its forests, so that it might the more resemble the plains of Castile, and remind the Spaniard of his European home. The streets of Mexico run north and south, east and west, intersecting one another, so that the squares are of an exactness, and equally of the same dimensions.

On the following morning, after my arrival in the city of Mexico, I rose from my bed refreshed, from having had a good night's sleep, notwithstanding the eternal ringing of bells; and no one can believe that the music of those ding-dong instruments was the lullaby that soothed me into the arms of Som-

nus; but my confinement and fatigue in the diligencia, the last four days and nights, had welcomed the blessings of sleep to my heavy eyelids. Having thus enjoyed one continued and uninterrupted night's repose, I left my couch, animated with the prospect of beholding the finest city in the world, as I always had heard the city of Mexico to be; and so glowingly had the descriptions of the metropolis been given by others, that I almost hesitate to give my own respecting it;—however, I shall attempt, in my own way, to give some detail of this proud and famed place.

So impatient had I become of seeing what was to be seen, and knowing whatever was to be learned, that I had not more than finished dressing, when I threw open my window, and thrust out my head, to catch an astonishing glimpse, or else I should not have had an appetite for breakfast; and in fact I could not, at the moment, but be reminded of the eagerness of animated boyhood, whose eagerness has been roused to such a tip-toe height, when about to visit a show, that he cannot prevent himself from taking a peep under the canvass before entering the door-way.

And what did I behold?—I first cast my eyes through a range of buildings, far to the south; and the street seemed there to have been met by a high and grand barrier of mountains, the view of which was heightened, inconceivably, by the distant view of the long avenue through which it was seen. As the golden beams of the morning sun were shed over it, it seemed to gleam with refulgence in its airy elevation; I then commenced slowly to retrace my view: and, as my eyes wandered from side to side, and from house to house, the street seemed to be filled with a motley crowd of gentlemen, and priests muffled in their cloaks and gowns; ladies, with their *rebooses*, a shawl drawn closely over their heads and faces, and crossed on their breasts, all slowly and solemnly walking along, as if they were going to or returning from a funeral; and I really should have been depressed by serious thoughts, if the scene had not been interrupted, here and there, by little mouse-coloured donkeys, loaded with charcoal, and driven by Indians, harshly screaming aloud, "*Caobona! Caobona!*"—and there was the water-carrier, loaded down with the weight of his earthen vessels, swung from his head, hanging before his breast and on his back; and, dearly, thought I, did he earn his living. While the greater number of the people, the paupers, standing in groups, or seated on the way-side, had drawn my gaze, my attention was suddenly startled by the clang of trumpets and the beating of drums, sounding

a retreat from some outpost, where they had been doing duty all the previous night, and were now returning to headquarters. The houses were all closely built together, without a single vacant lot, or intervening space between them;—all presented one massive front of ponderous construction, of about three stories in height—never higher—but a story in Mexico is twenty-five, or, at least twenty feet, but never less than fifteen.

There was, on a moderate calculation, a large, high church, whose cupolas were well and numerous supplied with different sized noisy bells, for about every other square. The roofs of the different houses were all terraced, which contributed to add considerably to the flat, weighty appearance of the whole buildings; and as my eyes, like the fools spoken of, somewhere, had been wandering to the end of the world, to the south, they had no sooner returned home than, truant like, they forthwith shot to the north; and, in like manner, as to the south, they were arrested by precisely the same panoramic view of mountain, churches, houses, donkeys, and people; and in so perfect an exactness, that the mountain seemed but to have been the mirror by which the whole was reflected—and my faculty of seeing soon wandered back to me.

But I should not neglect to remark that, just before my vision returned entirely home, obliquely to the opposite from my window, they caught the glimpse of something attractive, which, upon a steady and minute inspection, proved to be, certainly, a beautiful Mexican lady; her dark hair; her light brunette complexion; and, above all,—for the light of heaven seemed to gather lustre from them—her soft and inexpressibly melting black eyes were playing havoc with my susceptible heart; and I do not know that the window would have contained me, if my Catholic friend had not warned me to leave it, as the Holy Ghost was passing along the street. I was thus reluctantly compelled to close the glass door, and go to breakfast.

My breakfast being over, my first care was to find General Thompson's residence, and deliver to him my despatch from Judge Upsher, Secretary of State, U. S., and my commission for the usual *executor* from the Mexican government; that having been soon accomplished, (for the residence of the American minister was near at hand,) and, after having been most kindly and politely received by General Thompson, by whom I was invited to dine, I resolved to gratify the strong impulse of my feelings; that of beholding the city of Mexico. The hotel of the Gran Sociedad fronts on Holy Ghost street;

and that street having been the first which I had seen, and on which I had made my *debut*, and feeling desirous of viewing one of the more beautiful streets of Mexico, I of course did not return from the minister's residence to the high cognomened Holy Ghost street; not supposing that that street could have exhibited a specimen of the best improvement in the exalted city of Mexico, I therefore, naturally enough, hastened to search for a more elegant part of the town.

The broad and well paved streets of Mexico, being perfectly straight, stretch out on a level plane; the only relief to the eye of the looker on being that, it matters not in whatever street you may happen to be, turn whatsoever direction you may, you will, through the long perspective, behold the mountains, which never failed to attract my attention from the heavy masonry of the buildings. There are no scattered houses here, but the entire squares are built up in one solid block, being, as it were, but one vast edifice, and having no back grounds; for every foot of earth is covered with stone and mortar; and, as the walls are all united, it is said that little detriment has ever been sustained there by earthquakes, which are always more or less felt in the spring season, saving the occasional cracking of walls, and the falling of some few houses on the suburbs, built of sun-dried brick. The dimensions of the houses of the city of Mexico surpass those of Vera Cruz and Puebla; yet the architecture is the same. I hardly know what to denominate the style, unless it should be the Arabic or Moorish, mixed with Indian. It is true, that some of the churches seem to be of the Gothic. This one thing, however, is certain;—I cannot remember to have seen, in any other city, or to have examined in books, similar species of architecture. I have, therefore, been forced to conclude that it is a style *unique*.

The city of Mexico, in its appearance, is more compact, and, as a whole, in that respect, looks better than any other city that I have before seen; yet I must confess that I felt disappointed, from all that I had before heard, in not beholding a more magnificent outside show; for the coarsely stuccoed walls of the houses, with but few exceptions, having windows to their first story, looked to me as only being clumsy ramparts for the garrisons contained behind them; at the same time, the door-ways, in the centre, from twelve to fifteen feet in height, swung upon ponderous hinges, having many locks of curious construction, appeared to be the huge gates of a fortress. However, the Spaniard, from a spirit of distrust and jealousy, has never delighted in making a parade of all his valuables, to please idle spectators or a giddy multitude. You

must enter within the *sanctum sanctorum*, to feast your eyes on his silver, his gold, his jewels, and the languishing eyes of his fair ones; whilst, at the same time, his ostentation consists in being wrapped in the ample folds of his broad cloth cloak, which, in Mexico, is the receipt for a gentleman;—a ride in his coach to the Pacedo, or the splendid show of the costly trappings of the harness of his noble steed. It is within the gate of his palace, that you have an opportunity of beholding the extravagance of his expenditures. When you are fairly within the court of his castle, and you have cast your eyes upwards, you will then be struck with the view of the lofty columns and broad-spanned arches, that stretch around and support the corridors encompassing you on every hand. It is then within you perceive he considers to be the elegant portion of his house; and it is there that he lavishes all the ingenuity of his nature, in gilded gewgaws to please his fancy. I must say, that it did not please my taste, for the heavy architecture of the corridors, partaking of the outside appearance, oppressed the buoyancy of my spirits, if I could be said to have any, while the carving and the ornaments that I saw there, look too much, to me, like gaudy chains to please the maniac.

The population of the city of Mexico is estimated by some, to be two hundred thousand; but it is impossible to take a correct census (so it is said) of the city, or even of the country, on account of the considerable number of *lazarones* who inhabit the streets and nooks in the fields, having no homes. They do their cooking, their sleeping, and, indeed, all the functions of animal existence, in the streets. After I had become overpowered with fatigue, in my fruitless hunting for the most interesting parts of Mexico, I returned, at the hour of four o'clock, to the dwelling of General Thompson, chagrined at not having found a city which had surpassed all others before seen, or a street more attractive than that of the Holy Ghost.

At General Thompson's I much enjoyed myself with his elegant hospitality. There I had the pleasure of being introduced to some of the ministers at the court of Mexico. Baron Le Rouk, minister plenipotentiary from Holland, I found to be a most interesting and pleasant man. He made many interrogations of me, as to the system of the United States government, and more particularly of my own state of Virginia. The baron often expressed his satisfaction with many of the features of constitutional points which I cited to him; but would as often exclaim, "Have the people self-government sufficient to carry out the great doctrines?" for he per-

ceived that, with much difficulty, and by many revolutions, the Mexicans, professing to be republicans, were living under the will of a dictator. In reply, I endeavoured to explain the difference that existed between the two people, and finally hoped the agreeable baron would have a residence at the city of Washington, as minister from his country, where, from the proximity of the metropolis of the Union to the capital of my own state, he would then have an opportunity of verifying all that I had related.

It was not until after dark that I left General Thompson, and therefore could not, until the following morning, make further investigations. My inquisitive curiosity had by no means abated, for, added to my disappointment, my hope of yet being gratified in beholding something consistent with my expectations, urged me to an early rising; and, having first taken a look obliquely to the left, on the opposite side of the street, and then my breakfast, I sallied forth to behold, and not caring to be seen.

My direction was towards the Plaza, which, when I had arrived there, I discovered to be a vacant paved square of ground of about four acres. The government palace, the former residence of the viceroys, fronts this square on the east; on the south and west are buildings occupied as shops, having corridors extending over the side walks, resting on arches, supported by pillars. On the north is the cathedral, with its grounds covering the whole front of that side of the Plaza. There are one hundred and fifty places of religious worship in the city of Mexico, not exceeded, in capaciousness and richness, by any other city in the world.

The cathedral of Mexico is said to be the largest in America. This vast religious building has had a larger expenditure of money and labour than any other house in the city. Its site is upon a portion of the ground formerly occupied by the palace of Montezuma and the towering temple of the Aztecs, erected for the worship of the Mexican war-god, which rose to the height of one hundred feet, and called the temple of Coatepanatl. It may be that I am deficient in taste, as regards architectural proportions, but the front of the cathedral I could not altogether admire. It was without a basement sufficient to set off, in perfection, so stupendous and grand a building; for the want of this, some five or ten feet above the flat surface, much of the imposing sublimity of the cathedral is lost. The proportions of the cathedral are also much impaired by an extensive addition having been erected on the east side, to about one-half the height of the building; while on the west, there is no corresponding wing, which

makes the view of the front, when taken as a whole, appear as if the west end had been destroyed, or, otherwise, that the funds of the church were deficient for the purpose of completing the cathedral; and that, at some future day, it was designed to supply the vacuum.

The cathedral is, beyond doubt, the most attractive edifice in Mexico. The workmanship of the whole front is studied, and laborious, and I must confess that I have never witnessed so much expenditure in attempting a display of carvery by chisel, the most singular figures that I ever beheld, which covered the whole front of that magnificent edifice. The remarkable carvings are not, to my knowledge, historical of any thing, and I could but look upon them as barbaric hieroglyphics put on to please the Indians. The pillars that ascended up against the wall, for the support of the two high cupolas of the cathedral are, in shape and resemblance, that of the harp, with a lion's foot at one end, and a serpent's head at the other; the name of the order I have never heard, if it has a cognomen.

The statues that stand in the niches are Saint Paul, Saint Peter, Saint James, &c. &c., not one of which are of marble. When we take into consideration the material of which this costly structure was erected, being of basalt, which is much more impervious to the edge of the chisel than Quincy granite, I could not but think of the consumption of time and toil which the pride of the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus inflicted on mankind, to show them on earth the gate to heaven. On the west end of the cathedral, about ten feet from the ground, is let into the wall, the calendar-stone, or "Montezuma's watch," as denominated at the present day, and which has excited considerable speculation among the antiquarians.

The interior of the cathedral of the city of Mexico is extravagantly splendid in all its apartments; the dome being supported by two immense basaltic columns of the Ionic order. The railing and banisters around the altar and galleries are of silver. Many of the candlesticks, some of which are at least ten feet high, if not of rich gilt, are either of silver or gold. It is said that, besides many other images of precious metals, it contains a Virgin Mary of full sized statuary, of fine gold. It has also a railing around the high altar, the metal of which is composed of brass, silver and gold, mixed; for which, it is said, an English company offered a large sum of money, and to replace the railing in full weight in pure silver.

Mr. — Officer, a young American artist, informed me that, having obtained permission to ascend the high altar,

that he might examine a tablet of Murillas, of Lazarus at the rich man's gate; while there, a priest also ascended, having in his hand the Virgin of Remedius; and, on its being presented to him, he was of necessity obliged to kneel down and kiss it. While in this act, he not only discovered that the saint was without a nose, but the padre also: and, for that reason, it had been entrusted to his care. I am willing enough to believe that the padre will never have another nose to stick to his face; but as for the absurdities told by the priests, that they have used all the efficacious modes of applying glue and nails to fasten a new nose on their saint, but that all the ingenuity of the pious and the skill of the mechanic have been defied, for such is the obstinacy of the saint, that she would not have a new nose! As Mr. O. further stated, the dressing of the Virgin was covered with diamonds, it is said to be the most wealthy saint in Mexico, with the exception of one.

This cathedral is also the tomb of Iturbide, whose remains are deposited in a box, and positioned against the walls of the cathedral, having on it the inscription, "Sacred to the memory of Iturbide." The sweet tones of all the bells of the churches are said to be owing to the silver in their composition: and never in my life have I heard so musically sonorous a bell as that in the great tower of the Cathedral; yet I am disposed to think that this clearness of sound is attributable to the rarified air in which they are suspended, than to any silver they contain. One thing I know, however, that it was vexatious to be always obliged to be listening to the practising of them.

The convents of Saint Augustine and San Francisco, are the largest buildings that I have ever looked on, and they seemed to me, with their domes and many cupolas, to be cities in themselves. At the convent of San Francisco, I once attended divine worship, and heard a sermon preached in the English language, by an Irish priest. His services were for the benefit of foreigners who spoke English, and was listened to by about one hundred persons. I was informed, previous to my arrival in Mexico, that many of the houses had sunk some feet, resulting from the fact, that the city was built on marshy lake land; and I observed, that in consequence of the sinking of the convent of San Francisco, the side-walls on the western side had to be raised two feet to make it even with the pavement of the street.

The Government Palace is an extensive building, covering a whole square. Within its walls are appropriate apartments for a mint, a garrison for several regiments of soldiers, cham-

bers for the Deputies of Mexico, and offices for the cabinet, besides having a large portion of the building apportioned for the chief magistrate of the country. The front of the palace, I was informed, measured about three hundred feet. It has a heavy prison-like aspect, being (as is almost invariably the case) stuccoed and whitewashed on the outside. It has no windows to the outer walls of the lower story; but to the upper one there is a regular row of windows with sashes and panes of glass, as are customary in the United States; which by no means is a general thing in Mexico, for the climate does not require it; and likewise persons could not be found who would trust themselves to such flimsy protection; and the stranger will find that, unless the house is inhabited by Europeans or Americans, the windows will only have the strong shutters. A large folding door or gateway opens in the front of the palace, just in its centre. But there is an ornament, not on the outer wall of the building, but affixed to the gable end of the centre of the eastern side, which I should not neglect to mention; it is a golden or gilded sun, believed by some to be of pure gold.

A General stands at the door of the reception-hall, officiating as porter; at the White House at Washington City an untitled Irishman and a coloured man, perform those menial offices. When the reception-hall is entered, the visitor beholds at one end of the room, a throne canopied with crimson, where the Dictator sits in state over the destinies of the Mexican Republic. I had understood, previous to my visit to Mexico, that in the construction of the palace some marble of uncommon workmanship had been imported from Italy, for its adornment; but Captain Cortes of the Grenadiers, who very politely offered his services to conduct me through the palace, assured me that there was not a foot of marble in the whole edifice.

In the centre of the large Plaza, in the front of the palace, the government was erecting a monument in commemoration of the national independence of Mexico, which was to be surmounted by the Goddess of Liberty. The Plaza is much resorted to by the people of the city, and was found to be very convenient by the combatants during the last revolution. Besides the cathedral and the churches generally, excepted, I found but two houses in the city, that impressed my view, as being different in some of their features from the general sameness that universally attended all others. The first was the ill-fated Iturbide palace, which still bears his name, having more of the elegance of the Spanish style than any other I had seen, and not having been stuccoed, the out wall was built of

dressed stone, and but that the inelegant and unmeaning hieroglyphics were cut upon the stone, the palace would bear inspection in any city. The other alluded to, is that in which the office of the administration of coaches is kept. Its outer walls are of mosaic work, with glazed blocks of different colours, resembling porcelain. The new unfinished theatre, which is to bear the name of the hero of an hundred victorious battles, Santa Anna, is to have an entire classical and modern front.

While promenading the streets of Mexico to glean something of its fame, the ringing of the bells was a constant annoyance to me, and it did seem that I should never become accustomed to them. To one not having been used to the continued sound of the church-going bells, it could not otherwise than be distressing. My way, too, was impeded in the streets by crowds going to and from mass, and absolution; and added to the reverberation of church and convent bells, was the explosion of rockets from those places of holy worship, as if it seemed that some church or convent was in the act of celebrating some feast every day. They have an expression in Mexico which was difficult for me to understand, which was—*queriendo a dar*, wishing to ring. It appears that some short time previous the general ringing, some one or more smaller bells would commence a tolling, or irregular ringing, until the time should arrive for the grand uproar of all the big ones.

Besides the numerous beggars to be found in every crowd, and under every saint, and at every corner of the street, I found likewise beggars stationed at every door of the churches, who are employed by the priests to ask alms of the passers by, for the benefit of each peculiar institution. This is an every day business, and from such an example by the church, the indolent are encouraged to make their living by asking charity. I have had journeymen beggars solicit me to give them money for the family of Joseph, Jesus, and the Most Holy Virgin. Their importunities are couched in the most impressive language, and which is perpetually at their tongue's end, "By the blood of Christ, and the agony of the cross, give for the benefit of the holy lady Guadalupe."

A person walking the streets of Mexico finds that he must frequently step aside to permit the water-carriers, and other day labourers of the class of lazarones, to pass and repass, or else come in contact with them, as from the inclined position of their heads, they cannot see before them. And I hope I may not be disbelieved, by those who have never witnessed the feats of strength of a lazarone man, carrying as much weight on his back and head as almost any of the mules of the coun-