

bank bills; and, upon minuter inspection, perceived that notes of the principal banks of most of the States of the Union, were thus exhibited to public view in the window of a Mexican engraver—the Brandon notes not excepted. Bankers should look to it, lest their vaults may be filled with paper instead of specie from Mexico.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

Ramble in the Alameda. Circles, fountains, and statues. Names of Hidalgo and Iturbide. The carriages, walks, and crowds of ladies with their fans. The Paseo. Fountains of water. Statues of the Aztec gods. Carriages passing up and down. The Cavaliers. The management and trappings of the horses. A walk without the walls of the city. Beautiful country scenes. Christmas-day in Mexico. Grand mass celebrated at the cathedral. Crowds of people in the Plaza. Merchandise of the hucksters. Confused scene. Brokers. Night. Pine torches. Intoxication by drinking pulque. Narrow escape. The cathedral crowded. Grand mass. Raising of the Holy Ghost. Splendid view of the richness of the cathedral. Reflections. The services of the cathedral last all night. Mexican ladies. Premature debility. Paris fashions. The social habits of the ladies. Courtship by letters. Gentlemen in disguise. Ostentation at the theatre and paseo. An English lady. Rebozos. Los ire. Festivities of Christmas-day. The Dictator, pro. tem., and suite. Yankee driver. The big show. Plaza de los Torros. Human affairs. News of a British fleet. Mr. Doil, the British charge-de-affaires. Suspended relations of the two powers. False alarm. British jack on the Plaza.

My morning's excursion having been made to Santa Paula, I determined that my evening's enjoyment should be devoted to a ramble over the alameda, a promenade or park, and along the paseo, a ride, of the city of Mexico.

These places are the morning's and evening's resorts for the recreation of all the wealthy; and here are to be seen the pride and fashion of the city, whether native or foreign.

The alameda is within the precincts of the city, although on its margin. It is enclosed by a wall, and contains about twelve acres of land. Within, it is thickly grown with elm and other trees. Between the wood and the wall around it is a carriage-way, and rows of seats for pedestrians, from corner to corner. The whole is divided into well-flagged walks,

and, at suitable distances, are large circles, having fountains of water spouting high in the air. In the centre is the largest of those circles, having a statue of the Goddess of Liberty, in gold gilt, mounted on a pedestal, with two gilded lions crouching at her feet, while spouts of water are issuing from their mouths. On the sides of the pedestal hang two flags, on which appear, separately, the names of Hidalgo, who gave birth to the Mexican revolution, (Sept. 16, 1810.) and of Iturbide. Thus, in singular contrast, are exposed from the statue of the goddess, the name of the first revolutionary and republican patriot of Mexico, and that of its emperor.

Soon after my arrival at the alameda, the carriage-way was thronged with vehicles, mostly having ladies seated in them. Notwithstanding their loveliness was attractive, and the twirling of the fans was ominous of good tidings to a lover, or of compliment to an acquaintance: yet it could not but appear awkward, if not unnatural, to behold a young lady take from her bag a flint and steel, and, by the friction of a blow or two, ignite a piece of spunk, and, having lighted her *cigarrito*, (*segarr*), puff volumes of smoke from her nostrils and from between her beautiful lips. The carriages, after passing round the alameda a few times, would drive out of the southern gateway, and continue their journey to the paseo. Crowds of ladies and gentlemen filled the walks and the seats of the circles of the alameda; and I was informed that, on such occasions, letters of love affairs were freely exchanged between the sexes.

Being satisfied with my view of the rural and delightful alameda, I followed the direction of the carriages to the paseo. This is on the road to the pueblo of Tacaba. The entrance to it is by a gateway, having in its centre a tall fountain spouting high the water. It is surmounted with a statue, resembling more the description of the Aztec war-god than that of any other image. There are several other fountains to cool the evening breeze.

The paseo is about one mile in length, and the coaches, after passing up and down the ways a few times, would halt at one side, while others, which had just arrived, would drive backwards and forwards before them as if in review. By this arrangement any one individual would have an opportunity of beholding all other visitors, who had made it their business to see and be seen. It was amusing to behold the cavaliers, mounted, with all the paraphernalia of the costly trappings of their animals, with whip and Spanish spurs, galloping up and down the paseo, as if they were trying the speed of their horses, or escaping from the ladrones; while others, more

desirous of attracting attention, would, by a pressure on the rein of their bridles, cause their horses to raise their feet high and quick, as if dancing to the tune of Nancy Dawson; and then, when a fair eye is caught, make the animal plunge as if he had a ten foot wall to leap.

My walk to the *alemade* and *pasio* afforded me, not only much satisfaction at beholding the customs of the people of Mexico, but I also enjoyed a degree of pleasure from having been relieved from the heat and confinement of the city. To go thus outside the walls, and breathe the pure country air, with an animated and invigorated system, makes the imagination glow with delight. Such is the loveliness of the landscape scenery of lake, plain, and mountain; while the pueblo of Tacaba, at a distance, seems like a city on a hill; and the royal retreat of Chapultepec, on *Chapultepec monte*, Grasshopper's hill, is beheld through the lofty cypresses of centuries in growth, seated on the side of a mountain, looking like a palace of fairy enchantment. Such a prospect makes the soul swell with emotion, and wish a buoyancy of spirit; the scenes of nature are endeared, and existence rendered of more value to the possessor.

As the evening was drawing to a close I was admonished, on my way to the *pasio*, by a murdered corpse, which was exposed, for the recognition of friends, at the celebrated prison of the *Acordada*, to return to the city.

My Christmas day was spent in the city of Mexico, and during all the day of the twenty-fourth, my ears were constantly saluted by the *querieud a dar*, or the wishing to ring of the bells, to inform the good people, that the great mass was that night to be celebrated at the Cathedral. On the evening of that day I took a walk to the plaza, to witness the gathering of the people at that place. Great crowds had assembled, from distances in the country, of men, women, and children, who had spread upon the pavements their fruits, and goods of all kinds, intending to reside upon the spot during all the Christmas holidays. Under the corridors of the private buildings, around the plaza, were crowds of citizens, examining their trinkets and other commodities, brought by the hucksters to markets. I observed that many were the dollars expended in worthless things, to be used as Christmas compliments. These holiday merchants had not opened their goods for a temporary residence of a few hours, but had located themselves for day and night, as each individual had prepared him or herself with a *petate*, mat, upon which to slumber when wearied.

The scene was truly most confused and lively; more so than

any I had ever beheld; and I, for the time, began to think that there was some enterprise amongst the Mexicans; for it was the only sight I had discovered like business since I had been in the country.

By the way, it would not be improper here to remark, that all business, of merchandise or otherwise, is done in Mexico, through the *corredor*, a broker. If an individual wishes to purchase a lot of goods, he employs a broker to transact the affair for him; or if any other bargains are to be made, the same agency is used. The vender, and the actual vender, have no occasion to know one another, for the broker is supposed to keep in his bosom the name of the individual for whose benefit the purchase is made. In this manner much chicanery is used by these agents, who are constantly seen pimping and prying into every man's effects, without knowing who is in want of his goods or property. The brokers comprise a large class of the community, and are ever ready to buy or sell any commodity. They must, however, be watched, for they are great rogues.

At night, it being Christmas-eve, I again visited the plaza, in company with two of my American acquaintances. The scene was much heightened, in its interesting confusion, from that beheld during the day. The multitude of holiday merchants, who thronged the side-walks, were now scattered all over the plaza, seated on their mats in Indian fashion, and only discoverable through the dark volumes of smoke that circled upwards from the pine torches; and, as the crowd of citizen spectators passed to and fro, and the guards of soldiers, with their bright weapons gleaming through the smoke of the torch-light, marched along, the whole formed a scene more picturesque than any encampment of the kind I ever beheld.

But, as the hour grew late, the interest I had before taken was diminished, by discovering that many of both sexes were intoxicated by drinking *pulque*, the essence of *maquey*, a cheap liquid, used mostly by the *lazarones*.

It happened that, just as we were making up our minds to leave the plaza, it was my lot to have a serious warning to depart from thence. As I was passing along, a few steps in front of my friends, a supposed intoxicated Mexican rushed from a crowd near me, and, with a long knife in his hand, exclaimed "*Que mureram los extranjeros!*" Death to all strangers! I did not know what the wretch said; but, from my friends calling to me, and from a scuffle which ensued between the assassin and his countrymen, I quickly learned that the

Mexican designed to attack us. We then visited the cathedral, to witness the ceremonies of the night.

On my entering this splendid cathedral, although it was at a late hour, the vast building then contained one thousand and upwards, of worshippers. These were composed of all castes and characters of both sexes. The place, indeed, appeared to be a solemn one to me; and who could look with indifference or disrespect over so vast a multitude, all kneeling in adoration of that being whom I, from my first impressions, was taught to reverence. And, as the sacred chant and solemn peal of the organ ascended the high vaults of the cathedral, my thoughts, for the time, were turned within, and my secret aspirations were involuntarily raised to Him who had sustained my being at home, and in the midst of people of a strange land.

I have always had a respect for those who worshipped God in any form; and, it is true, that I have never beheld the great Maker of the universe worshipped in so magnificent a manner. Notwithstanding it was contrary, agreeably to my education, to the simplicity of that worship required of his beings, as exemplified by Christ and his apostles, yet the scene amidst the blaze of a thousand candles, shining with resplendent brilliancy in that vast edifice, could not fail to impress my mind with the solemnity of the occasion.

As I contemplated all around me, and the ceremony of raising the host was proceeding with great gravity, while the whole congregation bowed before the holy image of the cross, it seemed that there was more of form on the occasion than the understanding of the heart; and, as my eyes were again directed towards the altar, the banisters and pillars, the organ and the vaulted roofs, the polished surfaces of which were all of silver and gold, I could not help exclaiming within—"All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The ceremonies at the cathedral continued during the whole night. At the hour of two o'clock I returned to my lodgings at the Gran Sociedad. I should not close my remarks of this night's exhibition without saying a word or two respecting the ladies of Mexico; for, on this occasion, I saw a larger collection of them than I had an opportunity of doing during my stay in the country. The number who collected in the cathedral on this night was considerable. They were all intermixed with the common multitude; for here, as well as is the case in the other churches and chapels, there are no seats for the congregation; and the worshippers can stand, kneel, or sit upon the dirty floor, as their inclinations or necessities may

demand, except during certain parts of the services, when they are required to go through particular formalities.

In the manner above described, I had an opportunity of casting my eyes over a promiscuous crowd, and of contrasting the beauty of the Mexican with the European ladies; for here were people of every clime and complexion. From my observations of the Mexican women, as I saw them, both in public and private, I considered them generally handsome. For the most part, they are low in stature. They have invariably black hair and eyes. The skin of some have a tendency to fairness, in proportion to the care they have taken of themselves, and to their alliance with Europeans; yet, in the main, they appear to be sunburnt, having generally a florid complexion, which gives them a singularly beautiful aspect. The largest portion of them, however, have a dark brunette or Indian cast. The expression of their countenance, in general, is distinguished for its mildness and gentleness; this, added to their suavity and languishing air, makes their deportment peculiarly interesting; and, I could almost say that to see one of them is to love her.

The ladies of Mexico, who have advanced to middle age, as I observed, had mostly a tendency to be plethoric. The old matrons have the most enfeebled appearance of those of any country I had ever seen, their features being deeply marked with the furrows of age. The effects of accumulated years, in this high arid climate, not only lay violent hands on the natives themselves, but all who have resided long in that dry and hot atmosphere have an appearance of having been "parched, wearied, riven." The skin too has a dark, crusty aspect. I once heard a wag remark, that it was his opinion, a French doctor would do well by introducing into the country an apparatus for puffing plumpness to the skin.

Premature debility and declining aspect, is also attributable, no doubt, to the fact that young ladies, in that climate, commence the career of life earlier than is the custom in more northern latitudes. I have not unfrequently seen, especially among the lower classes, a mother of the age of thirteen years, while the husband and father was only a lad of eighteen. Hence the consequence must be, that the mother of some five or six in number, at the youthful age of twenty or twenty-five years, must feel and appear to have a broken and wasted constitution; while those of a colder clime, and double their years, will yet be athletic and healthy. By this healthy bloom of cheek, our widows are encouraged to hope for her second, or, perhaps, third husband; thereby encountering double and treble responsibilities.

The most fashionable and wealthy circles of Mexican ladies are not only very tasty, but extravagant in dress, following, in the main, all the varieties and change of pattern, as practised at the fountains of fashion in Paris; for the city of Mexico is well supplied with French milliners, both men and women. I have been informed, that a Mexican lady never wears the same dress to a ball a second time, although it may have cost her some five hundred or a thousand dollars; for silks, laces and satins are very dear in Mexico.

The social habits of the ladies of this country are very friendly and kind among their neighbours and acquaintances. The frequency of visiting is not practised among them. Their calls on one another are short and friendly, yet made with a degree of formality and courteousness of conversation which restrains the natural warmth of character.

It is with much prudence, and only upon Sundays, that they permit themselves to be visited by young gentlemen, and that only between the hours of ten in the morning and three in the evening. The entertainments of small tea and dancing-parties are but little encouraged and practised among them, while their amours are chiefly conducted in writing. By the way, it may not be improper to give an idea how some courtships are managed. A gentleman or lady who has had the shaft of Cupid to stick deep in the heart, expresses the passion by sending a letter to the object of their affections. If favourably received, this course is continued until their desires are consummated.

But, where the wishes of the parties are anticipated to be in opposition to those of the parents or guardians, the lover not only writes, every clandestine opportunity which presents itself, but in disguise, if fearful of observation, with slouched hat, and cloak or serapi drawn over his face, he will take his stand at the corner of a street, and in this manner, while basking in the sunshine, will indulge himself for a whole day, in beholding the charms of his adored one, who, perchance, now appears upon the corridor or portal, and then at the window, resembling a lone dove imprisoned in a cage, which, by wistful, languishing looks and perturbed motion, longs to be free, and cleave the heaven so much beloved.

It is not unusual for some swains, who have been debarred from the opportunities of sending a letter, to take the occasion, when the fair one is on the portal, to pass by, and, at the proper distance, suddenly throw open a sheet of paper which has a word or two written in large letters, so that the eyes of the lady may decipher it, eagle-eyed as they are to read. In these these cases a syllable is as much as a volume.

The reader, however, is not to imagine, from the above description of the manners and customs of the ladies of Mexico, that each has not her moments of ostentation, gaiety and coquetry. For if you could see her, when exposed to public gaze, visiting her favourite places of amusement, the theatre, the alemaide, or the pasio, you might then behold her, from her sumptuousness of dress, and by the light quivering of her fan between her delicate fingers, as she saluted those of her acquaintance who may come under the notice of her love sparkling eyes;—I say, you might there behold a being whose heart is susceptible of the warmest sympathies of our nature, and whose charms, on such occasions, hover like the evening rainbow to embrace the spell-bound spirits of her admirers.

But little can be seen of the Mexican lady, excepting on great ball and procession occasions; then, the elegance of her person, the modesty of her manners, and the cheerful loveliness of her smiles, never fail to feast the soul of the beholder.

The females of Mexico never wear bonnets, but cover their heads with an article of dress called a *reboso*, a kind of shawl some six feet long, and nearly half the same in breadth. This reboso not only covers the head, but is closely drawn over the face; and, by being crossed in front, obscures the bosom. I did not, but upon one instance, see a lady wearing a bonnet, and she was a European. I was informed that all ladies from abroad, on their arrival at the city of Mexico, conformed to the prevalent customs and fashions of the place, in walking and riding with uncovered heads. However, I was pleased to see the English lady, with great good sense, maintain the privilege of the bonnet, and not throw aside a comfort and an elegance to gratify the intolerant and bigoted spirit of the natives, who scorn any other ways than their own; and the lady, if she saw me, little knew how unconsciously she was delighting a stranger, who, by the sight of her bonnet, was reminded of those at home who lived supreme in his thoughts.

However, the ladies of Mexico, on appearing in public, covered with their reboso, are, on some occasions, a little kind, in having but a small portion of dress over their heads, the folds of which, by an inadvertent cast of one of her hands, will drop, and, for a *moment*, the beholder is blessed with a view of her bosom and waist. And, what is astonishing, she will not unfrequently be seen holding a corner of her shawl, or handkerchief, over her mouth, to prevent the deleterious effects of breathing the pure air; as the Mexicans universally believe that all of their maladies are derived from the atmosphere. Hence it is, that if you perceive a Mexican with his head bound up, or look dejected otherwise, his reply, made with a

shrug of the shoulders, and a leer of her head, will invariably be, "Los ira"—the air.

There is no purer atmosphere to be found on the face of the earth than is breathed on the plains of Mexico; yet the Mexicans seem to apprehend more detriment from it than from the vomito of the coasts. But as I advance on my journey up the country, I shall give my attention again to the "los ira."

The twenty-fifth of December, Christmas-day, was also marked by many other festivities. There was during the whole day, the firing of rockets from the churches, and of cannon from before the national palace, at the plaza. In the evening, General Canalizo, the dictator, *pro tem.*, in his coach of state, accompanied by his guards of lancers, commanded by a general officer, rode through the streets to the alemade and the pasio. To inform plain republicans in the United States, that it was an extraordinary sight for the first officer of the republic of Mexico to appear in his coach, would not awaken their imaginations to the gaudy and royal state in which such things are done there. But never was I more surprised, and indeed indignant, than when I beheld the chief magistrate of a republican government aping the gaudy show and circumstance of royal pride to please and gull a gaping people. I had thought that in the enlightened age of the nineteenth century, republicans of all the continent of America had thrown aside and disdained the finnel of monarchical pageantry and aristocracy, basing their noble bearing alone on the soundness of their constitutional principles, and devotion to their country's weal.

But so far from the Dictator of Mexico appearing in plain garb and equipage, and like Washington assuming in public to be nothing more than a servant of the people and private citizen,—General Canalizo had his coach literally fringed and covered with gold; and I hardly knew which the most to admire, the splendid uniforms of his coachmen, or that of his own. But for the fact, that the Dictator, instead of the driver, wore the *shopo*, and was seated within, I would have mistaken that Yankee, mounted on his seat like a golden throne, for the Dictator *pro tem.* of the Republic of Mexico.

There were also Generals dressed in full uniforms, attending as outriders to his Excellency, while not less than a hundred lancers were his body guard. Hang down your heads ye respectable republicans and generals of the United States! for you cannot aspire to being postillions and body-servants to the most high in authority.

Having seen the big show of the Dictator, I followed the crowd to the Plaza de los Torros, for I was not satisfied with

my speculations, upon the different castes of society, and the moral tone pervading each. Having convinced myself that decent and respectable portions of society, embracing both sexes, visited the shows of bull-fighting, I attended the exhibition, remaining there as long as I could do so with any degree of ease or comfort. I observed a mother with three children, call their attention so particularly to the scene of blood, that they might not escape seeing all the cruel performances of the occasion. I soon left the barbarous amphitheatre, never intending to enter it again.

It often happens in human affairs, that, when the fields look most gay, and pleasures are flooding in upon us, almost producing an elysium upon earth, sudden reverses will overtake the unsuspecting, and turn the glee of mirth and the pomp of pride into trembling, fear, and wailing.

So it happened, that just at the present crisis of Mexican affairs, on the glad day of Christmas, the news reached the capital, that a British fleet had arrived before Vera Cruz, to demand satisfaction for an insult offered to the British flag by the Dictator of Mexico.

Upon my arrival at the city, I found that not only the Mexicans, but foreigners of all nations, were much excited on the subject of the difficulty between the two nations, which grew out of an affair that happened at a national ball, given by Santa Anna at the Government Palace. The Dictator had directed that the ball-room should be decorated with the trophies of flags which had been taken by the Mexicans in battle. Among the number, conspicuously placed, was the English Jack.

On the arrival of Mr. Doyle, the British Charge de Affaires, who was an invited guest at the ball, he discovered that one of the ensigns of his country was spread out as a trophy, to decorate the brilliancy and glory of the occasion. Mr. D., in the prompt performance of his duty, peremptorily demanded of the Dictator of Mexico, that the Jack should be taken down, as a flag had *never* been won by the Mexicans of the English. The Dictator did not hesitate to veto its removal, and Mr. D. immediately, in the spirit of resentment, left the palace, and as a British sloop of war was lying at Vera Cruz, he despatched her home, with information to his monarch of the insult offered to her flag.

The anxiety produced by the suspended relations of the two powers, not only caused confusion with the English in Mexico, but with all other foreigners; as a state of war would throw many obstacles in the way of all, particularly those who had to travel, and who spoke the English tongue. For

the Mexicans are so prejudiced, that, when at war, they do not spare or protect private citizens, or any who belong to the enemy of their country.

It was amusing to witness the commotion of feeling produced, upon the news of every arrival of a ship at Vera Cruz. A thousand well-authenticated different rumours would be circulating at the same time among the people, and it did occasionally seem that the good people of Mexico almost heard the British bomb-shells, cracking over the castle of San Juan de Ulloa.

Nevertheless, it proved that, up to the 5th day of January, no English fleet had arrived off the coast. The government, in anticipation of the desperate result, had ordered troops to Vera Cruz, to fortify the fort and the city; but men and officers positively refused to obey orders, declaring that it would be certain death for them to undertake to defend the city.

The government had therefore to send a dispatch to the British Queen, announcing its willingness to surrender the Jack to any of the English authorities empowered to receive it, with the exception of Mr. Doyle. Thus making a personal affair of the whole difference between the Charge de Affaires and the Mexican Dictator. I should not be surprised, however, if her Majesty obliged the Mexicans to deliver the Union Jack, with a royal salute, to his Excellency, upon the Plaza.\*

\* Since the above was written, the British Sovereign has received the apology of Santa Anna, and Mr. Doyle was recalled.

## CHAPTER IX.

Indisposition of some of the Deputies. A failure of a quorum. The Deputies installed. Speech of Canalizo. Reply of Ximenes. Celebration of the installation. How things are done in Mexico. Worship of the Golden Sun. Firing of cannon. Splendid illumination of the Cathedral and Plaza. Installation of the President elect. Canalizo, the proxy of Santa Anna. Celebration of the installation of the President. The worship of the Christian, a happy exchange for the native. Grand parade of all the military. My stay in the city of Mexico. If the will of the people was known. Mr. Green gave me notice not to leave the city. Copy of the secret order. Determined to take the advice of General Thompson. General Thompson's negotiation. My opinion. Mexican persecution. Two Americans imprisoned at Guymas. Who are the Mexicans? Union of the European and Indian blood. Comparative difference of the Christian and Savage worship. Mild disposition of the Mexican. Love of the country. The Mexicans are a motley race. Solemnity and sadness of countenance. Mexican politeness. Confidence in no one who cannot blush.

In consequence of the indisposition of some of the deputies of the Mexican Congress, as communicated by letter to the Dictator *pro tem.*, a failure of a *quorum* occurred. Therefore, upon the day in course for the regular instalment of the members, the house could not be organised. This indisposition of the deputies was supposed by some to have been more the result of a mental than a bodily cause, in consequence of their disgust with the politics of the country, and their want of confidence in the Dictator; as they, during their last session, were driven from their seats by military force. And I was forcibly reminded, by their excuses, of the Seminole chief Sam Jones, who, when commanded by General Jessup to come in and surrender, returned word that he was lame, and could not walk.

The deputies were not installed until the first day of January. I took the opportunity of visiting the palace in company with an American gentleman,—who, from a long residence in the country, not only knew men and politics, but understood the Spanish language well,—and witnessed the opening of the session of the house for the first time under the new constitution.

After the speaker had called the house to order, General Canalizo rose from his seat, and, in a handsome manner, in-