eight he comes, but nobody sees him, and Vera Cruz has spent a day in waiting, and spent it in vain. The sound of the vesper bells floats sadly into my ears, as I write close under the towers of the Cortez Cathedral. How long before more Christian bells shall sweetly summon more Christian disciples to a more Christian worship? How long?

The opening for Christian work is not surpassed by that of any city. It should be taken possession of by the true Church of the True Cross. The foreign element alone would make a large congregation. They can all understand English. The natives are horribly neglected, and would respond to earnest missionary effort. It is the sea-port of the country, and many sailors visit it. The danger from yellow fever is not great. Gentlemen who had resided there fifteen years laughed at the fear of strangers. It is certainly no greater for ministers than for merchants. It is a good centre of influence and departure. It should be speedily occupied. Let Cortez's dream be fully answered, and Vera Cruz preach and practice the perfect gospel of Christ crucified.

IV.

THE HOT LANDS.

From Idleness to Peril.—Solitud.—Chiquihuiti.—Tropical Forests.—The Falls of Atoyac.—Wild Beasts *non sunt*.—Cordova and its Oranges.—Mount Orizaba.—Fortin.

Vera Cruz soon wearies. Even the generous hospitality of our consul, whose table and couch have been mine for days, could not make it lovely long. The mountains draw like the Loadstone Mountain of the "Arabian Nights." The consul-general comes from the capital, and by due persuasion is enticed not to wait for the president's return, but to climb back after the old fashion, the stage-coach and the robber; for though the railroad is finished, that does not insure one a ride over it. Until the president returns over it, no one can, except he gets passage in a dirt-car, and takes the mountain morning coldness, without shelter, and almost without a seat. How long we may have to wait for his return, *quien sabe?*—(who knows?)—the universal answer here to all inquiries, as *mañana* is to all orders. So we get as far as is allowed us on the railway, and then take to the stage.

There are several reasons prompting us to this course. The stage is a vanishing institution. A week or two hence there will be no staging between the sea-port and the capital. We must indulge it now or never. Then we are told it is exceedingly dangerous. Robbers abound, and they will not fail to lose their last opportunity to black-mail the coach. So it will give the romance of peril essential to a first-class excitement. It is also a horrible road, and men affirm that they would endure any torment they or their friends could be subject to, especially the latter, rather than make the trip again—and then go and make it. Why not we?

It has, too, the *cumbres*, or mountain precipices, so steep that we are led to imagine the stage will tumble off by sheer pull of gravitation and centre of motion; the passengers rolling down, back first, faster by much than they rolled up. The peril of those "who gather samphire, dreadful trade," must be encountered, or Mexico is not truly done.

And, lastly, the ride all night in a crowded coach full of garlic and tobacco and pulqui, and all abominable stenches, is set forth to frighten the novice from the attempt. But it only whets his appetite. The water feeds the flame, which has got so hot,

"The more thou dam'st it up the more it burns."

The ride in a coach full of dirty and offensive natives, over horrible roads, up precipices that incline the other way, they are so steep, among robbers, all night long—it shall be taken, and it is. Any thing to get out of Vera Cruz. That orange is sucked thrice dry.

My companion attends the governor's soirée in honor of the president until two of the morning, and I turn him out of bed at three to take the unwelcome trip. We start at about four, sleepily and snugly tucked away in the luxurious cushions of an English rail-carriage. For night-riding, or any other, this sort is superior to the low-backed seats of the American car, though inferior to our sleeping-coaches. A nice nap, and the day wakes up, and so do we. The landscape stands forth in its summer warmth of color. We are out on the Tierras Calientes, or Hot Lands. They are moderately level, seemingly thin of soil, but probably more dry than thin. The dog-tree abounds, and is in full blossom. Its white flowers look lovely, and make one fancy that something like peach-trees are growing wild over all the country. Solitud, some twenty-five miles out, is a station where coffee, cakes, bananas, and oranges are disposed of to the half-sleepy passengers. It was at this place that the French, English, and Spanish ambassadors held the convention which resulted in the invasion of Mexico by Maximilian. They made but little, in pocket or fame, by that attempt to

resist the Americanizing of America. It will be the last effort put forth by Europe for the colonizing of this continent. From Isabella to Victoria, for nearly four hundred years, the attempt has been kept up. The seed is well sown. Its future growth must be from our own soil. The crowned heads must lay their crowns at the feet of this crownless one, on whose head are many crowns. The land lies idle and desolate for fifty miles. It is undoubtedly susceptible of culture, for rich tropical trees, with their heavy foliage, are not infrequent, and the open pastures are fit for grazing, and occasionally feed a few cattle. But the insecurity of property blights all the land. You can hardly cultivate bananas close to your door without fear of losing your crop through the wild marauders of the region. Life is of no consequence to them, compared with a few oranges or cocoa-nuts, and so the region is almost without inhabitant.

At the distance of about fifty miles the mountains draw near, the first terrace above the plains of the sea.

Chiquihuiti (pronounced Chee-kee-whee-tee) rises along the landscape, cutting the edge of the lowlands as sharply as a house-front cuts the land out of which it arises. This is the beginning of the table-lands of Mexico, and of the snow-capped volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Orizaba. We wind up into it, and are astonished by the profusion of its tropical verdure. The scanty gleanings of the lowlands had not prepared me for this superabundance. The gorges are deep, the heights lofty, and from lowest depth to topmost height there is a flood of green. Such trees and leaves I had not imagined possible in midsummer, and this was midwinter. The trees were compact together, some of familiar forms, such as oak and birch, but of unfamiliar richness. Others among them were new members of the family. The acacia-tree was the largest and the most prolific in species, and it spread itself in huge branches, and towered above its fellows as by natural mastery. Yet it is light of substance, and some of these iron-like woods undoubtedly and justly despise their vain brother. Many sorts of these hard woods are here, awaiting the horrid steam saw-mill that

shall eat them all up, and ship them to New York, and make this green, grand wilderness a desolation.

How sorry I am to be compelled to think that some Yankee speculator in lumber from Bangor to Brainerd will read these lines, and be up and off in the next steamer for Vera Cruz and the splendid woods of Chiquihuiti! Cortez did not sigh more for Mexican silver than these lumbermen will for these mahoganies, and rosewoods, and other equally polishable delights. Black-walnut will be of no account when the Mexican lumber reaches the Northern market. Give us a good fill, dear ancient forests, of your green delights, for the Yankee wood-sawyer is coming, and you will soon be no more.

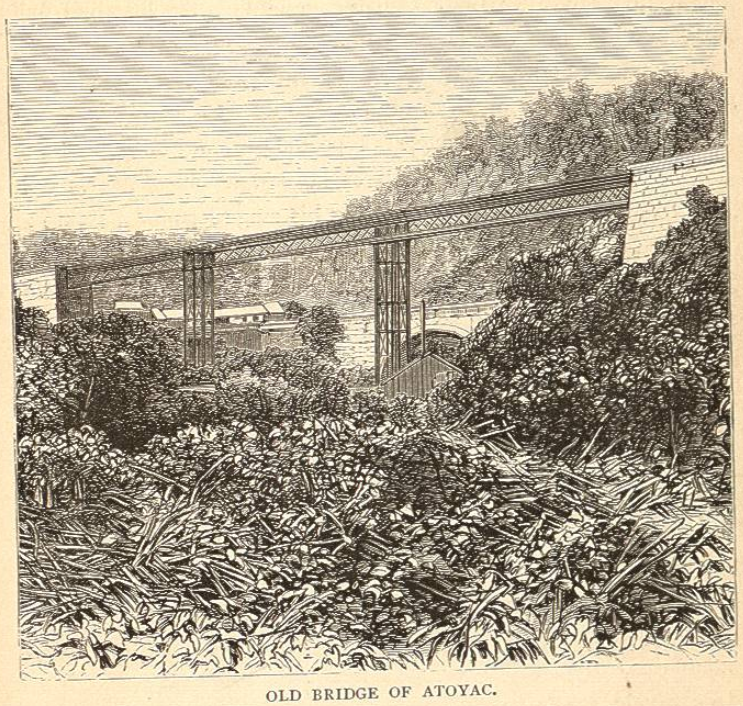
The roadside is lined with immense palms, whose leaves are each themselves almost a covering for the body, while the castor-oil-tree spreads its broad wing along the way, hated of all youth, loved of not all doctors.

Convolvuli of every hue throw their vines and flowers over these palms and taller trees. Our old morning-glories were growing wild, and make our path a perpetual "pleached bower" of beauty. The orchids hang on the taller trees, or sit in nests in the crotch, parasitic plants of every color making the tree into nosegays. They are a fungus, and seem to prefer decayed trees; perhaps themselves decay them. Some that are stripped of leaf and bark glow like a June rose-bed in the radiance of these curious plants. There are hundreds of varieties, and have attracted of late much attention from botanists, and have even got into literature.

About ten miles up, the road winds round a gorge that sinks hundreds of feet below, and whose upper side comes together in the Falls of Atoyac.

This is one of the most beautiful water-falls I have ever seen; I might say the most beautiful. It is not stripped of its trees, as is Minnehaha, who sits shivering in her nakedness, as unhappy as the Greek Slave. Nor does it come, like that, from a level landscape. The hills rise all around it a thousand feet and more.

The sides of these hills from base to peak are densely covered with trees, whose leaves are almost a solid mass of green. The white water leaps from this green centre a hundred or two feet, into a curling, foaming river, and into a darkling mirror of a pool. The whole scene is embraced in one small circumference, and you seem to pause trembling on the bridge that spans a side of the ravine, before you plunge into a tunnel, hanging hundreds of feet



OLD BRIDGE OF ATOYAC.

above the lovely spectacle, with an admiration that is without parallel in any small fragment of American scenery. May the Mexican Government preserve the Falls of Atoyac and their enchanting surroundings from the knife and the factory of the spoiler.

Are there monkeys or wilder beasts in these woods, or parrots, or birds of paradise? Of course they will all tell you that they abound. But when you ask one if he ever saw any, he shrugs his shoulders.

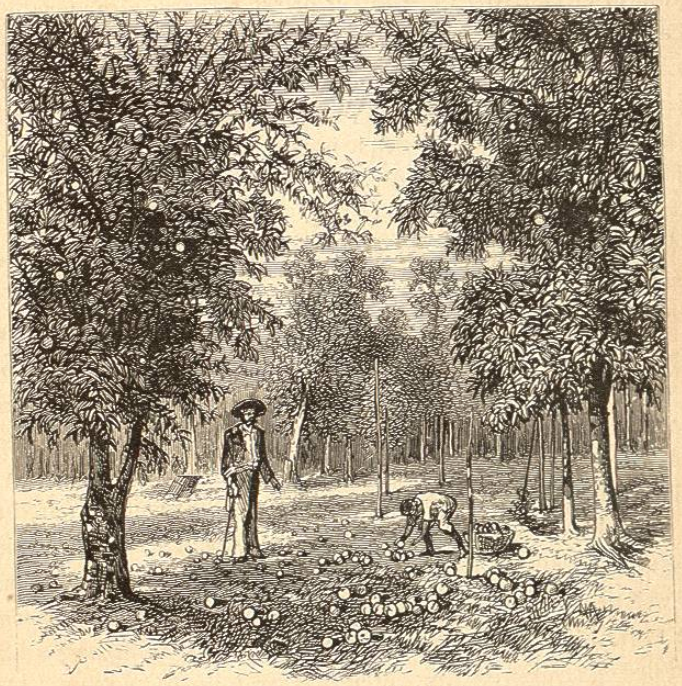
One gentleman says: "I ate armadillo steaks in a cabin on top of that mountain overhanging the Falls of Atoyac;" but he did not kill the choice lizard, and so I receive his assertion with some incredulity. Every body says monkeys are here, but nobody says he has seen them. They say that they have retreated away from the railroad, a sad reflection on Darwin's theory; for should they not accept the higher life to which their posterity have attained, and begin themselves to build railroads, and cut down timber, and speculate in corner lots, and eat armadillo?

The parrot is here, but does not flash his plumage among the trees. Only on the perch of the ranchos do we see his beauty and hear his ugliness. The cougar is reported present; one gentleman, and he a man of veracity, declares he saw a young tiger, or old cat of this species, as he was resting his stage legs by a tramp up another spur of these mountains. But I think the real sight was when he sat at meat that day, and beheld on the table a roasted creature, with a great gray-yellow eye staring at him, and saying, "Come eat me, if you dare." Asking the waiter what it might be, he was answered, "*El gato del monte*" (the cat of the mountain). Like they of the Rimini story, who read no more that day, he ate no more that day. That cat was a reality. Whether the cougar was or no, you must judge. *Quien sabe?* and a shrug is all I say.

A run of a few miles through verdant fields, by coffee-haciendas and banana-groves and orange-orchards and tobacco-fields, and Cordova is reached.

This ancient city of Cortez lies in an open plain, surrounded by mountains. The railroad leaves it a little to the right, and in a deeper vale, so that only its dirty church towers and domes are visible to the eye. It is a decayed town, but under the stimulus of the railroad may revive, especially if pure Christianity can come in here to energize and educate its people. Pure Christianity has come in. The Methodist Episcopal Church has already lay preaching in this city, and a society well gathered. The redemption of this fine old Spanish town is begun. Let it go on to a millennial completeness.

The fruit-sellers at the dépôt give us six oranges for three cents, and as many bananas for the same money. A picayune goes a good way. The oranges are very delicious. Havana and even Joppa are dry to these juicy Cordovas. They bleed at every vein. It is almost impossible to prevent their flowing over your lips on to your garments, like Aaron's oil. Could they be got into our Northern market, they would drive the mean little sour Messina



ORANGE GROVE, CORDOVA.

and the thick-meshed fibrous Havana from the fruit-stalls. And why not? Vera Cruz and Cordova are nearer New York by twenty days than Messina, and not two days farther off than Havana. The fruit-boats that go to the Mediterranean of the Eastern Continent should come to the Mediterranean of the Western. Five thousand miles against a little more than five hundred, and this rich fruit against that lime, falsely called orange. Here lies the

tropical garden of our land. Let us make it commercially our own.

This commerce is increasing. One haciendado, or farmer, west of the city of Mexico, sends to market one hundred and thirty thousand cargoes of oranges annually from his plantation. A cargo is a donkey burden, and weighs three hundred pounds. This makes almost twenty thousand tons. I give this tale as it was given to me. If you ask whether or no it is true, I answer, after the country's fashion, *Quien sabe?* You must remember that a hacienda often covers many square leagues, so that if devoted exclusively to this fruit, it could produce a vast quantity. Whether that statement be true or not, it is true that the fruit is the best of its sort I ever tasted, and that it could control the markets of America.

The plains about Cordova are very rich, and bear all manner of fruits the year round. The scenery is as grand as the soil is fertile. Mountains thousands of feet high rise on the west and north, green at the base, bare and black at the summit, while just before you, as you look and move westward, stands forth that perfect Orizaba.

I never remembered hearing of this mountain before, though a cultivated fellow-traveler informed me it was frequently referred to by English and Spanish writers. This statement set the memories and the wits of the listeners a-running, and a mass of quotations, as well adapted to this market as the "quotations" of change are to it, were fished up from the English poets. Probably a like knowledge, or ignorance, would have given like results from Calderon, The Cid, Lopez de Vega, and other like celebrities. For instance, had not Byron said,

> "Orizaba looks on Marathon,
> And Marathon looks on the sea?"

and also told us,

> "He that would Orizaba climb will find
> Its loftiest peak most clothed with mist and snow."

And Scott tells of his experience here, in the well-known poem beginning

> "I climbed the dark brow of the tall Orizaba;"

though its brow is whiter than a blonde Caucasian's; and Sheridan Knowles makes Tell say,

> "Orizaba's crags, I'm with you once again."

Emerson's "Monadnock" and Lowell's "Katahdin" are misprints for this splendor of a mountain. Surely English poetry is full of this name. Strange that one never saw it before.

It is worthy of its fame, for in this hollow among the hills it puts on especial majesty. You are well up to its base. The distant ocean and sea-port view is exchanged for one near at hand. Though still sixty miles away, it seems to rise at your very feet. How superbly it lifts its shining cone into the shining heavens! Clouds had lingered about it on our way hither, touching now its top, now swinging round its sides. But here they are burned up, and only this pinnacle of ice shoots up fourteen thousand feet before your amazed, uplifted eyes. Mont Blanc, at Chamouni, has no such solitariness of position, nor rounded perfection, nor rich surroundings. Every thing conspires to give this the chief place among the hills of earth. None these eyes have seen equals or approaches it in every feature. It will yet win the crowd from Europe to its grander shrine.

It is not difficult of ascent, in this being inferior to Europe's Mont Blanc, if that be an inferiority which makes its summit and the view therefrom accessible to ordinary daring.

The three Mexican volcanoes have been often under foot, though not till Cortez came was this achievement known. His men, in the exuberance of their superiority, scaled the peaks near the city, and astonished the natives by their feat. They brought back sulphur from the crater for the manufacture of powder, thus bringing the fatal mountain in more deathly shape home to the poor Aztec.

A run of five miles brings us as far as we are allowed to travel by rail; and Fortin concludes the luxurious cushions of a first-class car, and transfers us to the hard seats of a *diligéncia*. Misfortin it might be phonographically called, for here exit ease and pleasure, enter peril and pain.

V.

ON THE STAGE.

Our Companions.—Vain Fear.—The Plunge.—Coffee Haciendas.—Peon Life.—Orizaba City.—The Mountain-lined Passway.—The Cumbres.—The Last Smile of Day and the Hot Lands.—Night and Useless Terror.—"Two-o'clock-in-the-morning Courage."—Organ Cactus.—Sunrise.—The Volcano.—Into Puebla and the Cars.—The three Snow-peaks together.—Epizaco.—Pulqui.—"There is Mexico!"

BEHOLD us at Fortin, paying eleven dollars for our stage fare to Puebla, and three more, lacking a quarter, for three valises of moderate weight; eating a hasty plate of soup and nice cutlets, with fried slips of potatoes, washed down with Mexican coffee, which is usually first-rate; not so here. "Stage is ready!" jabbers in Spanish a brown boy. All boys are brown here.

Our seats are taken in a Concord coach made in Mexico, a big, tough, lumbering, easy affair when the roads are easy; when they are rough, it jolts and jumps as if the spirit of the paving-stones inspired it with their madness when they are whirled by a mob. But it is made to stand the jumping as well as the rocks that rock it, and tosses its human contents as unconcernedly as a juggler his balls. There are only five passengers, the first giving out of the dismal programme so faithfully served up to the affrighted appetite. These five men were the two Yankees, who, of course, had neither garlic nor tobacco about them, though one of them smoked all the time, but they were the best of cigars, and three Mexican gentlemen, on their travels to see the inauguration, one a son of a senator from Yucatan, and one an archæologist, and his friend, a light, German-looking gentleman, who had just been exploring the regions of Ixmail, which Stephens has so well described and illustrated. So the second terror disappears. The gentry chat freely