Some of the stone cabins are of respectable height and size; but quite a number are of a type too common in the land. Look in at this door, or hole in the wall, for door I saw not. It is four or five feet by two. The room is six feet by eight, short. The floor is of stone, well swept and clean. Against the back wall kneels a comely-looking, youngish housewife, of twenty or thereabouts, over a sloping stone, on which she is kneading her tortilla dough.

It is rolled out by a stone roller about the size and shape of the kneading-pin the women of the North employ. A pile unfinished lies at the upper end of the stone; the roller flattens and curls the lower portion into thin rolls, which drop off into a small bread-trough at the foot of the stone. This afterward she takes and pats in her hands several times, and lays it on the slightly hollowed frying-pan that stands near, in the corner of this room. It is a pleasant sight and sound, the slapping the dough and frying the cakes.

This is their only work almost, except that of washing, which is very similar, being also done over a smooth sloping stone, by the side of running water, with profusion of slapping, soaping, and rinsing, but with no boiling, except of the washer-women in the hot sun. They vary making tortillas and washing with combing their long black hair, and cleaning it of its contents, and with affectionate attentions of like sort to their friends and family. Besides the tortilla-trough and stone and pan, there are in this room half a dozen earthen pots and vessels of various sizes for culinary purposes. I hardly saw aught else. No chair, no table, no book, no paper, no bed—strangest of all, no looking-glass. Six feet by eight of space, walled in on every side, with only this hole for entrance, and the young matron as cheerful as if she were the wife of Lerdo.

You get an idea here also of the stables of the land. The burning of this town has compelled the erection of new stables. There is one thing always sure of good treatment in Mexico: the horse. House and wife and children may go uncared for, but not the horse. Look at this stable of the Diligence Company. Almost four hundred feet square is it. Along one side stables are built over three hundred feet long. The face of the stable, where the

stall is, is a dead wall against the street. The court side is built up four feet of stone and plaster. Every few feet round pillars, eighteen inches through, rise from this wall to support the roof, which depends courtward, leaving the stall higher at the horse's head, and thus giving him air. The space between the stone wall and the top of the pillars which support the roof is left open, thus securing constant ventilation. The horses are not stalled in here as in their boxes in the North, and as men are in oyster saloons. All the space is open from end to end. There is ample room behind them and around them, and air as good as a pasture affords. It seems to me a great improvement on our narrow-boarded stalls, without liberty and without air. The mules and horses are so tethered that they can not disturb each other, and yet the whole stable and court is as sweet and wholesome as an orchard. Here, too, we note another peculiarity in the building of the stone walls. They make a science of this here, for stone is an incumbrance of the land as much as in New England, or as trees are in Wisconsin. They put them into fences which beat New England's "all hollow." They make these walls very high—six to eight feet, and very broad—three to five. They put the small stones at the bottom, and not less than four feet up. Then they put on the big rocks. These big stones overlap the base with their rough edges, and make the wall look like a trim lad with a huge, tall, ragged sombrero. The lower half is very compact and comely; the upper very rough, yet strong. This is probably a protection, for the rough tall top stones are not so easily surmounted or dismounted. Where these are not sufficiently defensive, thorns are thrust into the upper tier to keep the robbing boys and men from the inclosed gardens. Sometimes they build the walls lower and of Yankee fashion, and once I saw them reduced to our narrow meanness of a single row of stones; but that wall was nearly all down, and soon disappeared, leaving the field open to every beast and boy. The only walls that were walls were the handsome structures built after the sombrero pattern.

The landscape lies rich and warm all the next posta to Venta

Aguilar (or Eagle Tavern), which is only a stage-house, and no village. Here I vary the monotony of waiting for the change of mules with helping three little girls, from three to five years old, make tortillas. They are pretty, laughing imps, brown of face, black of eye and hair, and would be called handsome by any mother or aunt of them, and will be by some not thus related not ten years hence.

They had a small piece of wood for the hearth, a little ground straw for the fuel, two or three black flakes of mud for the cakes, and a bit of earthenware for the frying-pan. The youngest and brightest of the three told me very chattingly what she wished to do. So, after all was in place, I astonished her by lighting a match and proceeding to kindle her fire. This was making the ideal into the actual a little too rapidly, and they declined the offered blaze. The mother came in from the next hut, and laughed with the children to see such a new friend of the family. Having been ordered by the doctor, a few years since, when prostrated with overwork, to play with the children, I am not quite weaned from that pleasurable medicine yet. But I will venture a guess that the mother and her tottlings of the Venta Aguilar will come to hear me preach when my Spanish is perfected, and I return to hold service at this solitary inn.

The soldiers who were busy gambling for coppers in the stable-yard, I fear will not so readily attend that service, for I made no impression on their minds while spending a moment watching their game. Two pitchers of cents followed the usual fashion of that game. Others sitting around put up their coppers on the throw. They got excited, and could easily have changed their laughs to blows. I prefer the gamboling of the little girls and their baby housekeeping.

From Venta Aguilar we have a delightful ride of six leagues, over as fine a prairie as ever gladdened the eyes of an Illinois farmer, finer, in fact, because encircled with grand hills. It is such a luxury, after our rocky roads and hideous joltings, to get on a plush carpet, and roll like a lad in the first spring grass on southern slopes. The air is warm and breezy. The fields lie twenty miles from hill to hill across our bows, and twelve from stem to stern. They are used for grazing, and were for a long while the favorite place for raising bulls for the bull-fights. These having been suppressed, the bull-raising has gone with them, and the splendid pastures are devoted to more honorable and peaceful grazing and tillage. I shall long remember with refreshing delight that posta, as the run of our team is called, across the airy plains of Cazadero.

We drive through the puerta of Palmillas, or gate of a gentleman of that name, and alight for breakfast at a high, cool, pleasant hacienda, where we get a warm and edible meal of the usual course: soup, three meats, salad, beans, dulce (or sweetmeats), and coffee, for one dollar. It is worth the money to us, though it cost the landlord hardly a quarter of that sum.

A blacksmith shop near the gate beguiled me of a few moments, and taught me a few lessons. An Indian boy was fusing some bits of iron in the usual fashion of his tribe. On the wall of the smithy hung a picture of the Virgin of Gaudalupe, and also one entitled "Misterio de la Santissima Trinidad," which was itself a sermon. The Father Almighty was depicted as a venerable man with gray beard, long locks, gown, and a triple crown on his head —the mitre of the pope. The Dove sat on his breast; and between his knees, with his arms over each begowned leg, on the ground half kneeling, half squatting, sat the Second Person in the Trinity, nearly naked, his wounded side exposed, his sad face crowned with a circlet of thorns. This cheap print is sold by the priests to devout lads like this; for a necklace of beads and charm attached beneath his open shirt showed that he was an honest devotee. I left that little smithy with a deeper ardor to give to this lad and his people a better Gospel than this idolatrous one.

"Eterne alternation
Now follows, now flies;
And after pain pleasure,
After pleasure pain lies."

This law exists even in postas. The last was so luxurious, I properly dreaded the one to come. I did not dread it too much. It was dreadful beyond description. We met it almost the instant we left the gate of Señor Palmillas. It was our descent into the Valley of San Juan. For six miles we plunged hither and thither over the rocky slabs and boulders and the gullies around them. The soil is worn away by the rain and the coach, and no attempts are made to build up an even pathway. It would not be difficult to make a pleasant drive-way down the hill; but *mañana* (to-morrow), and *no denario* (money), combine to make every hill-road I have seen in Mexico a torture to man and mule. The roads not ten miles from the capital that descend the hills into the city, and are frequented with teams and travel, are in the same condition. The landscape tries to soften the travel. It comes as a poultice to our bruised limbs. In the midst of the upheavals from beneath, we catch glimpses of a valley that shall soothe us for our tossings.

It is green with trees and fields, and stretches out along the base of the embracing mountains for a score miles and more. A mountain of a peculiar type comes into the landscape. It is off to our right, a cone of yellow rock with sub-cones truncated half up its sides. Alone it stands, not being connected with the ranges of ordinary volcanic hills that everywhere meet the eye in all these uplands. It seems a creation of another sort. Its color, shape, and solitariness are all its own. It stands back of the regular rim of the valleys, and looks at us through the openings between the hills. It may be fifty miles away, probably more. It is worth visiting, and were I here long enough I would make an excursion to the Lone Yellow Cone beyond the prairie of Cazadero and the hills of San Juan.

The road gets over its madness, or we over the road, and we scamper down, not easily, into the beautiful valley, reminding one of that finest line, rhythmically speaking, in all "Evangeline," which has many hexameters as musical as Homer's, as the world will find out when Longfellow is dead. How presumptuous of Bryant to

put the hot and mellifluous "Iliad" into his cold blank (very) verse, when Longfellow was alive, who could do it into English hexameters as honeyed and galloping as its own Greek! Why will he not give his next ten years to this Conquest of Troy? But I have got a long way from my quotation in my dissertation. It may seem tame to give it now. Yet here it is:

"Into the Sweet-water valley precipitate leaps the Nebraska."

Our Indian words are as good as the Greek, and Longfellow has handled them as deftly. So we were precipitated into the beautiful Valley of San Juan, and flew through the streets of a large town of that name, halting short at the hotel in the plaza, and there resting.

A dissertation on beggars may as well come in here as anywhere. Beggars are an institution in Mexico, the most developed of almost any one of her institutions. They are especially so in the outer settlements, but few of them being seen in the city, where the police represses them. They have graced every station on our route. The most finished specimens of this class I have seen were at Cuernervaca. As I was leaving my dining-room, a gentleman met me at the door, dressed in a faded but cleanly suit, not unlike a retired clerk, or a superannuated preacher. He spoke low and courteous. I listened, but could not understand, and turned to a companion, and asked him what this gentleman wished. He listened a moment. "Only a beggar!" was his translation. I was shocked, or would have been, but that in my solicitations for help of feeble churches and Christian causes, I had been myself often called by that contemptuous name. So I put this gentleman among the clergy, and gave him what we get on such occasions—a smile, but no shilling.

Returning from a walk amidst the gardens of that delicious spot, a smiling lady of seventy or seventeen—her smile was of the latter age, certainly—met us, and beamed on us; asked us if we had been in the flower gardens (our hands full of bouquets showed that); inquired if we stopped at the Hotel Diligencias; and then prettily put

her hands to her frock, as a courtesying girl would do, and sighed and smiled forth her soul for a sixpence. We were taken aback by the sudden unmasking of her battery, and staggered forth a broken promise, broken in language then, and in fact afterward, that when we returned we would grant her favor. But we did not return.

The beggars on this route have many arts. They whine and they smile. Blind men play the guitar and violin prettily; and one of them would not desist, though bribed with a medio, saying, with true Mexican independence, that "I play for the pleasure of it! Money! that is a mere trifling consideration." Old men and old women abound. The former whine, the latter grin. A jolly type of this last came at us in San Juan, and fairly beguiled our pocket of a penny by her bland mutterings and beaming eyes.

MEXICAN BEGGAR.

Two ways I have learned of treating these visitors. One is to say in broken Spanish, "I don't understand you. If you will speak in English, I will give you a medio." This Irish bull answers the purpose of getting up a laugh at their expense, and of nonplusing their wits for a moment. They are not ready for the proposition. Another is to give them a piece of bread or a banana. They reverse every thing here; and if you give them bread when they ask for a stone, or metal, which is stone actually, they are not pleased with your action any more than your children would be in the opposite process. So, standing among these beggars of St. John, and buying bananas and oranges, I courteously offer each of them one. They declined the offer, all but the one laughing old woman, and a make-believe crying girl. These accepted the less in hopes of getting the greater.

The market-place of this town was in the centre of the street, and each dealer had over him or her an umbrella eight feet high, consisting of a rude pole with a ruder canvas, six to eight feet square, spread across its top. It served as a narrow covering for themselves and their fruit, though its "looped and windowed raggedness" afforded about as much sun as shade.*

We are near the haunts of robbers. As we leave San Juan and climb the hill on the opposite side, they will surely assail us, it is said, with clubs and stones. Farther on, at Colorado, they are more sure to attack us with revolvers and Winchester rifles, which they lately stole, half-armed, from full-armed gentlemen in a stage. So we nerve ourselves for the coming possibility. One gets out three ounces, each of sixteen dollars' value, wraps them in a paper, and shows a cleft in the coach-door, where the window drops down, into which he proposes to drop them. Another, a French Jew and jeweler, has a box of precious stones with him. He is especially afraid of the stones and the metal not so precious as his own, and nervously describes the hoot and shout. A third is a clerk, with the only gold watch in the crowd. All these are armed with revolvers. One of the group has no revolver, and no gold ounces nor watches. He finds the Petrine admonition valuable here, as elsewhere, against the putting on of gold or costly apparel, and so leaves his watch in Mexico, while, as for weapons, he must rely on woman's and a minister's weapon—the tongue.

We take in another man at St. John, and rush madly out of town, and up the moderately high and immoderately hard hill. The men of the sticks and stones do not appear. The robber, as he has always been, thus far in my history, *non est*. We are in

* See illustration, p. 249.

jeopardy every hour. But the jeopardy is no worse than it was in England a century ago, when Dick Turpin reigned, and John Wesley traveled. Methodism will help do for this country yet what she helped mightily to do for England; make it safe everywhere. There are three prayers a day all over the land by all the people, and life is not safe three miles from any town. Yet it should be also said that most of the people are not robbers in act or sympathy. They are toiling, law-abiding, obedient, respectful. I have seen no Indian that looked ugly or dangerous. They treat you with great respect, take off their hats as you pass them on the road, and say, *Bueno dios, señor*, or *Adios, señor*, in the most courteous manner. The robbers are of their complexion, but not of their nature. These are getting less and less. They were created by poverty and politics, and with the cessation of pronunciamentos and the coming in of railroads they will die.

The Valley of San Juan is one of the loveliest I have ever seen. Irrigated by the rivers that come from the hills in the edge of Tierras Calientes, it glows in green as perfect as Cortez's emeralds. For more than twenty miles its enchantments lie under the eye. Trees are sprinkled over it; haciendas glitter here and there, white ships anchored in a green sea. There was one field of wheat which was not less than a hundred acres of level and rich color. I would say two hundred acres did I not wish to keep within bounds. This was a bit only of the big farm. Two of these haciendas belong to one man. They contain severally twelve square leagues, or over thirty square miles, and twenty-two square leagues, or about sixty square miles. They are called Ajuchitlan cito and Ajuchitlan grande, or small and great Ajuchitlan. Rodriquez y Helquera is the fortunate, or unfortunate, possessor of these vast tracts—well on to half the valley, and which ownership makes the people poor and robbers.

We pass two miserable villages, Arroyasecca and Sauz, fringing the magnificent fields with the rags of humanity, and stop at Colorado, the chief robber haunt, whose scowling gentry are sitting round a beer-table, or its Mexican equivalent, a pulqui stand. No

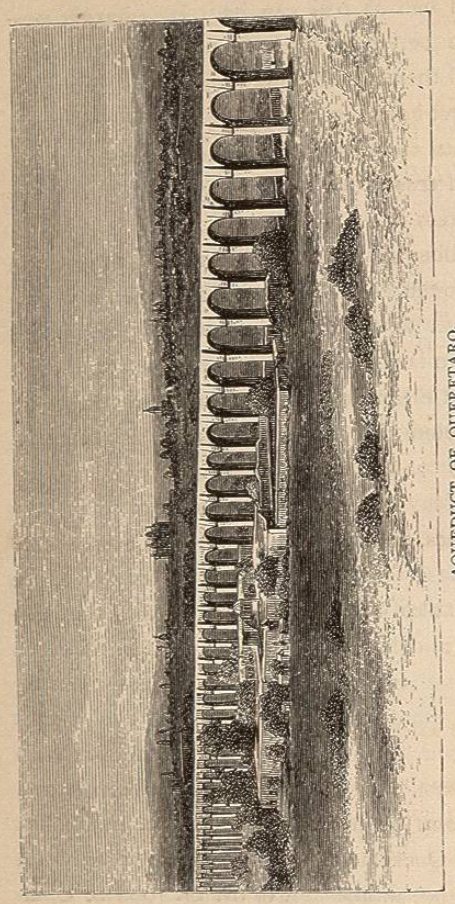
place or people sink so low or soar so high as to get out of the reach of alcohol. We do not admire their looks or their bamboo-like homes. Both are as bad as bad can be. It is hardly possible to make these men better till their condition is bettered. Grace is needed here, and then will come law, protection, progress. These horrid huts must first have family prayers, and then they will have goodly apparel, books, comfort, small farms of their own out of these broad farms, and true prosperity. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into this harvest.

This is the favorite robber haunt along the road. Stages are frequently overhauled between here and Queretaro. Only yesterday was there such a visit to the coach. Though government troops in large numbers are lazily lounging in that city, and though a few score of riders could clean out the whole pest, yet they are undisturbed, and the travelers are left to the cruelty of their tender mercies.

As we enter their paveless street, they eye us from under the coats of dirt upon their faces, and evidently reckon on some game in that stage for their rifles. When the mules are changed, the driver rushes from the stables with the usual whirl and mad display with which he enters and leaves the towns. But in this case it is evident that his scare adds wings to his speed. We fly through the village and in among the stunted oaks of a moderate hill-slope, up the rough road, hardly abating our speed, for such oaks are splendid for ambuscade, and we scarcely walk our tired mules until we emerge from the last low thicket that overhangs the valley and the city of Queretaro. The meadows of St. John are gone with their beauty, not unlike that of the St. John at Cambridge, England. The sun is setting in our eyes, sending a blaze like that of a furnace into the clouds he is looking down upon. What would not Turner have given to have seen that copper-smelting glow? No tint of canvas could approach it.

Far down the steep incline lies the city. One seldom sees a lovelier sight than this. We run down, over rocks and boulders, the terrible road knocking the passengers, if not the coach, to

pieces. The city ever allures us on. Its towers and domes glisten in the dying light, half hidden among abundant foliage. Damascus never looked lovelier. Though I never saw that earthly Eden, I fancied I saw it in this sunset view. The hollow of the hills looks small from this height, and the city seems embossed on the bottom of a bowl of radiant green. It looks large and majestic from this hill-top. It is perfectly in the grasp of the eye. A farther descent brings the aqueduct to view, the stateliest Roman that is extant in America, and there is no grander in Italy, nor one so grand. It strides across the hollow, forty feet high, with massive pillars and broad arches. We rush beneath it, fly round and round dirty, mud-faced streets, into the thick of the town, and halt suddenly at the Hotel of the Diligence. The day's ride of over one hundred miles is done, and gladly the couch is sought and found.



AQUEDUCT OF QUERETARO.

II.

QUERETARO.

Into the Town.—Maximilian's Retreat.—Capture and Execution.—Hill of Bells.—Factories and Gardens.—Hot-weather Bath.—A Home.—Alameda.—Sunday, sacred and secular.—A very Christian name.—Crowded Market, and empty Churches.—Chatting in Church.—Priestly Procession.—Among the Churches.—Hideous Images.—Handsome Gardens.

As I came rattling down the steep place into this fair city with the setting of the sun, I could only think of another sun that set here, and whose sad brilliance shot a lurid flame across the orb of the world. Here Maximilian met his fate.

This was the last landscape he ever saw; such a sunset on these same hills the last he ever looked upon. It brought a shadow over the picture, a shadow not of time, but of man. These are the fields and hills which

> "Do take a sober coloring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."

Maximilian and Montezuma, three hundred and fifty years apart in their history, are blended in a historic unity. They had much in common. Men of refined rather than of strong nature, loving art rather than arts, put in command of a turbulent people at a crisis in its history, with an instinct of honor rather than of government, they each fell into hands more powerful than themselves, and perished with regret, and yet with dire military necessity.

Maximilian retreated to Queretaro, after the French left the country, a step of exceeding unwisdom; for Mexico the city is Mexico the State, and the possession of that is nine points in the possession of all the country. He fled to this city probably because