cathedral, I noted more than one lowering countenance. Large numbers are at the earliest orisons and the latest vespers. The bells clang all day long. It is church, church, and nothing but church. There will be a big fight here before this Diana of Leon is dethroned. But it will come. These poor people inwardly sigh for a happy Christian experience. How happy they would be if they once experienced it! How they would throw off their rags and rejoice in a religion that lifted up soul and body! Pray for Leon, the city of superstition, that she may pre-eminently be the city of faith.

Gladly is the coach welcomed the next morning, and the ride is taken, hot and dusty, to Guanajuato.

V.

A HORSEBACK RIDE OVER THE SILVER MOUNTAINS.

Indian Dancing and Gambling.—A sleeping City.—Wood and Coal Carriers.—Mineral de la Luz.—A Mountain Nest.—Sometimes up, sometimes down.—Berrying and Burying.—The Apple-tree among the Trees of the Wood.—Off the Track.—A funereal Tread.—Lunch in the Air.—The Plunge.—A Napola Orchard.—Out on the Plains.—Valley of the Sancho.

I AM so tired with fifty miles of horsebacking that I would gladly get to sleep, especially as I have to be up by three, and off again at four. But the sound of guitars and harps in the open court without our quarters, to which Indian girls are dancing, prevents that luxury. They must be very busy by the unceasing sounds that flow into my open window. It is an Indian festa purely, neither Spanish nor Romish seeming to interfere with it. It is probably as ancient as any Aztec event now in vogue. A half-dozen tents have a girl or two each, trained to great nimbleness of toes and heels, who skip double and quadruple measure and all sorts of shuffles to the quick time of the harp, singing, in Indian, a murmurous accompaniment to the steps. The lookers-on can participate with her for a real a round. Of course there are plenty of men of all ages ready to pay their "bit." So the old folks earn much money out of the feet of their daughters.

Walking round these booths, I was invited by one of these venerable fathers to enter his shed. I assented, not knowing whither I went, for I had not yet spelled out the purport of the festa. He gave me the seat of honor, fronting the outside crowd. I soon saw the incongruity of my position, but was withheld from disturbing the meeting. It was the first ball I had seen since I was sixteen, when I had sat through the night a looker-on, as now. I was soon

relieved of my unwilling bondage to courtesy. I retreated to the rear of the gazing crowd in good order. In the midst of the whirl, at my feet lay two small dogs, a white and a black, nose to nose, fast asleep. Two children, also white and black, I saw at a Southern school festival, lying on a seat in like position, head to head, fast asleep. Each suggested peace and fraternity among both dogs and men, and no distinction on account of color.

The dancing-girl was modest in her goings, which Christian (?) dancers are not. She allowed her partners none of the immodest privileges of the waltz and polka, and kept her dignity both of carriage and conduct. The ballet troupes, cancan, and even the fashionable dancing of city balls are far less chaste. Civilization could get civilized at these festas.

Gambling was going on as busily as dancing. Groups sitting on the ground were rapidly losing their centavos to the cool heads that held the pool. Thus the earnings of the girls slipped through their fathers' fingers into the hands of the Aztec John Oakhursts, who probably, like him of California, were exceedingly honorable to those they robbed, and so might well be portrayed by the overturners of morality as the saints of their tribe.

This show saluted me on arriving at this hacienda, after a long, wearisome, but repaying ride. Let us get away from these poor creatures into the grand mountains, and draw from them the rest and strength the god-like creature man can not bestow.

It was hardly day-break when I mounted my horse, and rode through the silent streets of Guanajuato—silent only for the little season from midnight to sunrise; for no town of equal bustle have I seen in Mexico, and not many in the United States. Romantic in situation, and full of movement, it is one of the places one craves to see again.

We climb up the stone stairs, up and up, steep almost as the side of a house, looking down on the sleeping city with its fifty thousand souls. What is more lonely than a great city with all its people asleep? I have trembled with awe as that thought has struck me in a crowded population. All, as it were, dead! Every house has

not only one, as did the Egyptian, but all dead. The rich are as poor as the poorest, perhaps poorer, in their dreams; the poor rich as the richest, perhaps the richer in their dreams. The whole life wiped out, and as though it had never been. Ah, if only that unconsciousness could come after death, which some so anxiously seek to detect in the Word of God, but detect it not—an everlasting sleep—it would be a relief to the sinner! But it is not the revealed will of God thus to give relief to the sinner. He must dwell in his own consciousness. He that is filthy shall be filthy still. The lustful, the revengeful, the miserly, he shall still be possessed of his own passions. The saintly wife sleeping by the sinful husband may know no difference in this unconscious state; but the first breath of the awakening morn reveals to each no more clearly their existence than it does their character. The saintly one is still saintly, the sinful, sinful. The first thought of one is a prayer, of the second, an oath. Before the lips are awakened the mind is, and the heart, and out of their abundance the mouth speaks. So will the slumber of the grave be broken.

Eternity is not a sleep of the righteous or of the wicked, nor is it the sleep of one and not of the other. They are alike in their consciousness, as at the beginning; alike in their free choice; alike in their corresponding liberty of action; alike in their inward constitution; alike forever in heaven, forever in hell.

A mile or more up, and we enter a little suburb, whose church, perched on a scarfed cliff, looks down the gorge into the city, and out far away into the valleys that open on Leon and Queretaro. How apt in location of their churches this Church ever is, apt for effect, not always for utility! Here they combine, and the centre of the hamlet is the key of the landscape.

Still up we go, meeting at this gray hour the descending laborers. Who is this coming forth to meet us, with his coffin on his back, or the coffin of some Goliath of the mountains? It towers a yard above his head, and goes down his back to within a foot of his heels. If my fears had not pretty nearly given out by lack of any success in the employment of them (every attempt having

been a failure), I might have got up a little excitement over this apparition. As it is, I calmly await its coming. It proves to be a wood-carrier, and the coffin is a length of corded wood, lashed together in a symmetric and solid shape, and stretching out its eight or ten feet, two feet in width, a burden not easily to be borne, one is sure, though these men, old and young, seem to carry it lightly. They bend under it, and take a staff to stay their steps down the headlong descent. They, however, have erectness enough to recognize us, and give and get grateful "Adios." The charcoal burners follow the fagot bearers. There are degrees in every thing. A fagot is less than a straight stick, but above a chip and a knot. The latter go into coal, which goes down behind its aristocratic kinsman.

"Every thing's nothing except by position."

They are compactly and prettily arranged. Bound together with nets and with wisps of green grass, arranged along the level side, which is laid against the back, they look ornamental even, and make the charcoalist a florist. Why not? His stuff is diamonds in disguise. Why should not its arrangement be crystalline?

The rise of the sun and of the path set the city below, and the mountains above, and the plains beyond in clearer light. The town, romantic from every point, is not the least so from this hill-top looking down. It is waking up, too, and the sound comes up hither of the crushing mills grinding the rocks into powder, of the water washing the powder into mud, of the mules treading the mud into chemical mire, and of the furnaces evolving the chemicals, and burning the white metal out of its ancient, and as it perhaps had thought, eternal, companions. The street-cries, the rattling carts, the living man awakening from his death, and coming out of his grave the same that he went in—all these salute us with the breaking of the light over the mountains; at least so far as these sounds can reach the ever-ascending sense.

Not far to the west, on one of the peaks, lies a white cluster, called the Mineral de la Luz, or Luz alone, as these Yankeeized Mexicans cut it down. It is a famous mine, not now in its best

working order, but its yield has been wonderful; and draining of superfluous water will doubtless restore it to its former pre-eminence of value akin to its pre-eminence of position.

All around us rise these peaks of brown and gray, tall, even though their base is far above the snow-line of the Alps, and of every variety of shape, sharp, round, crater-like, cleft and gashed by the creative knife (as proper a figure as the "creative chisel," which has long been a stock-tool of the paragraphists). They are all probably full of silver, as the vast subterranean chambers of the chief mine of Guanajuato clearly illustrate. But the expense of digging is costly. Mining is no luxurious idling, but steady and slow, with small gains. So these mountains await the men that are not to be put off by any coyness or resistance, but will compel them to yield up their treasures. It is not the kingdom of heaven only that suffereth violence, and which the violent take by force; it is every valuable kingdom, whether of wealth or wisdom, of place or power, of reform or religion.

The sun comes up as we go down into the first of the valleys beyond this ridge, so many of which we must descend into and ascend out of ere the long looked-for hacienda appears. Over to our left, perched on the side hill, high up among the clouds, is a pretty bit of a village, whose name I have forgotten, that is the home of the charcoal venders and wood-cutters, as pretty an eagle's nest as one often sees; at least, at the distance of the mile or so which we are from it. Perhaps, like other eagle's nests, it would hardly bear examination.

We take our last glimpse of the city beneath us, the hills hugging it and bending over it, like a mother, or a dozen of mothers, fondling a childling. The plains of Queretaro and Leon glisten in the morning slantings, and Luz, like that of eld, sits at the top of the land, glowing like the silver at its bottom, responsive to the coming day.

When I was a lad, I remember hearing a good brother of limited variety of tones and themes engage in prayer. He almost always had in his petitions this verse, expressed in a peculiar rising

and falling sing-song. If the printers will help me, I will try and put the very tones in type:

"Sometimes up, and sometimes down,
Yet still for glo- ry I am bound."

So, as we ascended and descended, I thought of the good brother's sing-song verse, and hoped that his successful accomplishment of his purpose, for he has long been in glory, might be not only exemplified in this minor effort, but in the major and maxima ones that absorb the whole life and being.

We had been going up, up, up; now we go down, down, downy. Far below the level of our original point of departure we plunge, sliding down on the close-set feet of the safe little Mexican horse, plunging through more than one degree of latitude.

The top gave us the high blue-berry bush just blossoming, a dear reminder of boyish tramps in Lynde's Woods, yet uncut, but every day in danger of the knife of the spoiler. May some good providence turn them to a use that shall perpetuate both their memories and their berries! A big town, well-nigh a city, is growing to them. If it would only appropriate them to a cemetery, how happy would one wanderer be to come and haunt them occasionally while living, and to sleep under them at the last, in age, even as he has slept under them often in happy days of a vanished childhood, awaiting the call of the clarion of the resurrection. Grand old trees, dear high blue-berry bushes, lowly huckleberry bushes, not the less lovely for your sweet humility.

> "The lark that soars the nearest heaven
> Builds on the ground his lowly nest."

So these humble bushes, where we sat and picked and laughed, and strove as to who should first fill his pail, and broke them in big armfuls, and took them to the shelter of the big trees for cooler stripping, how your black eyes now beam upon me, little lus-

cious beads of light and life, through these long, long years! Ah, save, oh good fathers of my old home town, save us the Lynde's Woods, where we so often went a-berrying, for our own time-long burying. What a life-pleasure a boy bred in the country has over the city lad who only visits it on vacation! It is a joy and strength all his days; none the less so, if his after-life is passed among brick walls and stone pavements which give scarce a glimpse of either earth or heaven.

This high blue-berry bush on this high Mexic mountain has set me off on a high horse that is in danger of throwing me; for sentiment is the last thing any body allows in any body else but themselves. Balance is restored by the venerable nopal, better known as cactus, that stands stiff and changeless among these Northern reminders. No cactus is found by New England roadsides and country lanes. This is tropical and new. It is of yesterday to the land, but of to-day to the traveler. He can not shed imaginary tears over its earlier suggestions. The laurel is also here, beginning to put forth those pinky-white buddings that shall soon burst into complete blossomings. So the North country again appears, though this crown of poets and favorite of Apollo is a Greek rather than a Yankee.

The bottom of the hill brings us to a cluster of huts perched on the steep side of the opposite mountain. We pace along its base for some distance, enjoying the odor of its flowers, cultivated and wild, and especially the bloom and balm of its apple-trees. These are bursting into flower, not the broad, grand, full blossom of the North, where it really belongs, but still of the old blush and bloom. They are scattered all along the river's edge, where only wild trees besides are found; and, amidst the flowerless and odorless boughs of ash and birch and oak and nopal, one feels more than ever the force of that compliment and comparison which the love-lorn wife pays her husband, in the song of songs which is Solomon's, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." One sees the exquisite beauty of that compliment in these gorges of the Cordilleras, where the apple-tree stands

among the trees of the wood, clad in its many-colored robe, fragrant with that odor that gives it the headship in sweetness over all the trees of the garden. It is not impossible that this is the very tree of which Eve partook, and that its Edenic supremacy is still not largely lost. Whether so or no, the loving wife was right in her comparison, and this wood proves true, in that respect, that song of monogamy by a polygamic transgressor, that song of the spiritual longings and lovings of the Church and her husband, the Christ: "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons."

We cross the brook we had sauntered near so long, and pull up a steep grade; in fact, get off and pull our horses up, it is so steep. The road becomes less and less a road, and my guide is bewildered. He has lost his path. It is the second time already, and we not a quarter of our journey done. Across the ravine he spies a wood-cutter, and speaks softly to him. It is remarkable how low a voice they use in making inquiries. His was not above a drawing-room pitch. Is it humility or good breeding? A little of both, probably. The wood-cutter answers alike softly, but distinctly; we drag our horses down again, recross the brook, which we should have ever kept on our left, and pull up a steeper pitch, pass our wood-cutting befriender, through another long and shaded and luscious ravine—how summery cool it was!—and out upon a rancho, the midway spot of the journey.

The men and women and babies stared respectfully, and said "Adios" prettily. The men take off their hats usually as they meet us, especially the elderly ones. The young ones, if not very young, are more independent.

The rancho leads us up on the tepitati (I spell by the ear), a volcanic rock that is hardly a rock. It seems soft, and sounds hollow. It whitens under the hoofs of horses, and glistens like marble dust in the hot glare. It abounds all over this land; you strike it on almost every road, a soil seemingly without possibility of culture, yet a substance used in lighter buildings. It is a long climb up its white face, along a white ridge, and up another like white

ladder, to the crest of our road. The path is worn in its chalk-like surface, now in narrow grooves, scarce wide enough for the two legs of the steed to stand in, now over long slippery slides, now into stairs of unequal length, but of uniform smoothness, while the echo of the tread seems ever to make us shrink and heed that order of Emerson's,

"Set not thy foot on graves."

"The ground sounds hollow from below,"

is Watts's nervous putting of our mortal estate. It is not inapplicable here, on perhaps the highest point my feet have trod in all this exalted land. As these loftiest places of earth sound hollow, so do the loftiest stations of man. The ground beneath the feet of kings and potentates is not the echoless granite, but the reverberating tepitati. It is rotten, barren, glittering, resounding dust.

"Princes, this clay shall be your bed."

Nay, more; you are of the same clay. Let us take the lesson to heart which the topmost soil that we touch on the continent so sadly preaches.

Here we take a lunch of *pan y mantiquia*, bettter known to you as bread-and-butter, a piece of roast beef, and some German-made tarts that had, therefore, a tart in them, which Mexican dulces never have. Always choose well your table, if you can not your food. Where is a better place than this highest point in our pilgrimage? So we spread our lunch under a not-spreading cactus-tree. It makes me think of Elijah's juniper-tree, for it gives but little shade from a torrid sun, in a mountainous land. But it is something to eat a slice of meat and bread under a not-spreading cactus-tree. It will do to tell of, and it is told of. Then judgment gets the better of sentiment, and I adjourn my spreading limbs and spread bread to the large-leafed robli; so my guide told me to spell it. It is a sort of oak, with large leaves, some green, some brown. It gives shade, and the breeze gives coolness.

The view from this apex is grand. The hills, of all sorts of strange shapes, rise all about us, for miles and miles. Just below

is a hollow that has a bit of a white chapel, a few brown huts, a green sweet sward, and a glimmering of water; how I wish for a drop of it to cool my parched tongue, and wish in vain! Shall I ever have a like powerless craving from the opposite of this summit? Christ forbid! yet if another feared lest, having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway, how much more I! The basin looked, among these hard, stern, rough mountains, like the "Luck of Roaring Camp" among its hard, stern, rough protectors; only these mountains never swore, nor drank, nor gambled, nor murdered, nor were in any respect unfit protectors to the babe they embosomed. Would that their human imitators were as human!

They assume strange shapes. One of them lifts itself out an encompassing plain, like a bowl bottom side up and the bottom broken off, so that you can look into its hollow from its ragged edge, down side up. Others bend themselves in huge concentric arcs that look like the same bowl, with one-half of its already beheaded, or bebottomed, portion cut away from it, exposing to view the inside of the remaining part—a hollow hemisphered, truncated cone. Others look after the fashion of hills elsewhere, only handsomer, very smooth domes and cones of glistening rock. Among them glided, like huge mottled snakes, pastures brown and gray with stones and winter herbage, waiting the rains that shall clothe these rocky fields in "a mist of greenness," the mottled snake turning to its greener kindred. So precious are the bits of soil in this almost soilless region that you can trace the boundary lines of these patches far up the sides of the mountains.

Far away to the north and east, the grand plains above Queretaro roll out, a scroll written over with industry and its rewards. It will be yet better written, when this age shall be a palimpsest for the one, near at hand, of equal rights, higher faith, universal culture, and social reform. How intense the solitude of these mountains; how profound their silence! It is a stillness that can be felt. Not a bird wings its way across the summits, or sends an echo along their sides; not an insect hums. No leaves

"Clap their little hands in glee
With one continuous sound."

Yet there is strength in all this calm. "He setteth fast the mountains," is the emblem of Divine omnipotence, "being girded with power." But these mountains are not always set fast. The "everlasting hills do bow." Here, not unfrequently, they tremble and bow. Is it "at the presence of the Lord, of the Lord of the whole earth?" Why not? Is not this as proper a solution of that physical problem as those less spiritual? "For He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth." Does any earth need His coming to judgment more? "He shall judge the people righteously." Even so. "Bend the heavens and come down."

"Earth, tremble on, with all thy sons;"

and may His feet be on the mountains, publishing peace, and giving them, and all that they inhabit, everlasting righteousness and rest.

Our road soon descends again, more rapidly than it went up, though not more easily. It hangs half a thousand feet over a basin edged with a flowing river, skirts the rancho of Sancho (an alliteration not our own), with its tiny field of wheat and plat of gay flowers, and little peach-orchard, with flowers and half-grown fruit on adjoining trees. It is lovely in all save its dogs and their owners. How can nature be so grand and lovely, and man and woman so mean and unlovely?

"Like vermin crawling on a lion's crest,"

said Tom Moore, bitterly and not untruly, of Americans more than a half century ago. It is not untrue of some of these Americans to-day. But Christianity is coming. It has never really got here yet, and we shall see these "vermin" pretty, cleanly, cultured men and women. The girl that gave us a cup of cold water, or as cold as her cabin afforded, and illuminated my mozo with her smile, as well as with her answers to his inquiries, shall not she and her kin, who bow and take off their sombreros and salute us so courteously

over the wheat plat, yet arise from their hovels into comely homes, and be all beautiful in condition as in possibility?

It is a long following of a dry river-bed, crossing and recrossing its loose rocks many times under a sultry sun, before we strike a rattling brook of delightful water, and a hill-side that looked as if covered with an apple-orchard, and must certainly reveal a white house amidst its green foliage. It is a nopal, or cactus, orchard, and no white cottage glimmers among its leather lapstone-shaped leaves, but only the same adobe hut, the same half-naked women, three-fourths naked men, seven-eighths naked youths, and entirely naked children, all sitting on the bare ground in poverty and degradation extreme, yet as courteous and kindly as the princeliest soul in the princeliest palace.

We pass through this nopal-orchard, with its many-tinted blossoms and small egg-like fruit, and emerge on a wide plain. Our steps have turned a little too far to the south. A kindly-voiced native, neatly dressed in white, with a blue girdle about his loins, gives us directions, and our untired horses step away, *sobre passo*, or the "overstep," the favorite pace of long day traveling. Another rancho is traversed of like disgust and like courtesy; a high, hot, shadeless hill is mounted; a hotter cañon crossed; another long plain traversed; another rancho, with its organ-cactus walls, is entered and left; a long stretch of open upland paced over. The "cinquo leguas" (five leagues), gradually diminishes to "quatuor, tres, dos y medio" (two and a half) or "dos, mas y menos" (two, more or less), where it hangs a long while. At last an adobe cottage close to a waterless river-bed is reached, whose pretty maidenly girl says it is "una legua" (one league). For that information, as well as for her pretty ways and name (Arabella it was), and for the abundant and cooling water she gave us, we responded with *mille gracias* (a thousand thanks), the *débris* of our dinner, and a medio. Which of the three prized she the most, think you? A miss of fourteen would not hold the medio in chief esteem. That her mother prefers, and she the cakes and compliments. *Suum cuique.* Each gets her own, and all of us are satisfied.

The dry brook, with its superabounding rocks, is our highway for over a mile. A huge rock rising from its brink, is the last resting-place for horse and rider. It is of clay or soil of the country, and has embedded several strata of loose stones, as if formed by the deposits of freshets, and then left for the sun to bake into a solid pudding. The epizootic shows its green presence around the nostrils of the mozo's horse—a going and not a coming presence—which has notwithstanding walked and paced its nigh to fifty miles, patiently and pleasantly, and will rewalk it homeward on the morrow.

The high-road is soon struck, and the Valley of La Camada lies before us, like every valley of Mexico, a thing of beauty rare. The brown earth, soft and sown, awaits the coming rain that shall fill it with life. The silver-gray hills lie near us, seemingly, though a score of miles away, bare of all save sunlight. The river Sancho winds, broad and shaded, along the foreground; broad in its plans and ultimate fulfillment, though now it is dwindled to a shorter span along the farther bank and under the willows thereof, while grass is springing up in its bed on this side, and the cattle are eating it. Trees and grasses make this central line a line of beauty which, were we less tired, would be lingered over longer. But this fifty miles by an unused rider has made back and brains give out, and the plaza of the hacienda is more fascinating than all fields, or brooks, or trees, or grasses, or cows, or any other creature. The Indian festa, with its chirruping guitars and twinkling feet, is alike unheeded. The court is entered, and the couch is sought, and on its restful bosom all the mountain climbings and anti-climbings, and all the scenes and musings thereto belonging, are as though they had never been.